MINARET

NETWORKING FOR THE FUTURE | الترابــــــط من أجل المستقبــل

COMMUNICATION & VISIBILITY PLAN FOR

KARAK, JORDAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The development of Communication and Visibility Plans for the municipalities falls under component 2 of the project document, namely "Communication and Networking at Local and Regional Levels." The framework for the communication plans was developed in close cooperation and coordination with the municipalities. Their buy-in was critical to developing a live document based on the communication opportunities and infrastructure in place, the challenges, the limitations, municipalities' aspirations and sustainability. The framework was then customized for each municipality based on its unique set of challenges and opportunities. Each localized Communication and Visibility Plan sets up approaches and tools required to keep all stakeholders properly engaged and informed and to ensure their visibility.

Communication objectives:
- Support targeted municipalities with capacity building in their communication efforts; help them increase awareness about the project and become strong advocates of the MINARET project in their communities.
- Assist municipalities to establish a local knowledge-sharing mechanism to exchange information, experience and lessons learned.
- Support municipalities to engage with the MINARET collaborative information-sharing platform and website to enhance communication and share policies, practices, experiences and expertise between municipalities and communities throughout the region.
- Ensure timely and effective communication with relevant stakeholders about project activities.
- Support positive behavioural change towards key components of the project by promoting bottom-up change in targeted communities.
- Raise awareness about 5 main SDGs as outlined in the MINARET project's objectives.
- Promote inter-municipal regional cooperation to enhance good governance and share knowledge and skills.
- Encourage and facilitate communication activities and outputs that will showcase the donor.

Using a local, bottom-up approach, the communication plans will identify and prioritize key audiences and target groups in terms of relevance, contribution, decision-making, level of involvement, etc. A list of beneficiary institutions will be taken from the stakeholder's assessment, which the partners previously conducted. Other cross-cutting issues will be identified and addressed in the plan, such as gender mainstreaming, economic opportunities, private-public partnerships and networking. Joint communication activities will be coordinated in line with MINARET's strategic communication directions and its branding toolkit.

Specifically, the purpose of this Communication and Visibility Plan for Karak municipality is to ensure proper and

valuable communication about MINARET in Jordan, in the region and worldwide, where and when possible, by informing stakeholders and the public about the impact of the project. Thus, the project relies on successful internal and external communications. The plan also intends to build the municipality's capacities by suggesting actions needed to empower staff and equip them with the necessary skills to showcase MINARET and the municipality's work.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT

The "MENA Region Initiative as a Model of NEXUS Approach and Renewable Energy Technologies (MINARET)" aims to address the MENA region's unique sustainability challenges and opportunities by using the synergies between renewable energy technology and efficiency, water management and food security to increase local and regional sustainability capacities. The four-year project kicked off in the first quarter of 2017 and is operating in Jordan, Tunisia and Lebanon.

The MINARET project intends to build the municipality's resilience to climate change by adopting renewable energy resources, energy efficiency practices, water management techniques and food security. This is in addition to strengthening the institutional capacities of relevant governmental authorities involved in the project by promoting policy dialogue, implementing capacity building programmes as well as promoting inter-municipal regional cooperation to enhance good governance. The project also seeks to reinforce the roles of women, youth and marginalized groups by developing and implementing the NEXUS approach. The last objective of the project, which is the main topic of this Communication and Visibility Plan, is to develop a MENA website and the online dialogue platform that focuses on knowledge-sharing, education and lessons learned at the national and regional policy levels.

The NEXUS theory is that water, energy and food security can be achieved on a global level through the integration, management and governance of the three sectors.

The project partners include the Royal Scientific Society/National Energy Research Center (RSS/NERC), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Future Pioneers for Empowering Communities (FPEC). The project will be implemented through Sahab and Al Karak municipalities in Jordan, Jdeidet El Chouf in Lebanon and Monastir in Tunisia.

The project, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation (SIDA), is aligned with its strategy and goals of an improved environment, a reduced climate impact and increased resilience to environmental impacts, climate change and natural disasters. The project also embraces five of the UN Sustainable Development Goals:

SDG 5-Gender equality; SDG 6-Water; SDG 7-Affordable and clean energy; SDG 11-Sustainable cities and communities; and SDG 13-Climate action.

METHODOLOGY

This Communication and Visibility Plan was developed in close consultation and coordination with the key staff of the Karak municipality who were nominated by the Mayor to take part in the consultation process, namely:

- Sajeda Al Rahayfeh, Executive Manager
- Rami Sehaymat, Head of the Electricity Department
- Abdallah Al Qaisi, Human Resources Officer
- Ibrahim Addmour, Head of the Public Relations Department

The consultation meetings were conducted in one day at the municipality offices both in group and individual meetings. The discussions were supported by official documents and correspondences.

COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY PLAN FOR KARAK MUNICIPALITY

A. **Existing Communication Structure**

The Karak municipality organizational structure reflects a top-to-bottom communication style. The municipality is headed by the Mayor and employs staff. The municipality is considered one of the biggest ones in Jordan. The municipality follows the governmental municipal decentralization law enforced a few years ago. The municipality has yet to learn more about the decentralization law application, which is enforced by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

The municipal council is composed of 14 members. Karak municipality covers 14 areas, 25% of whom are women. Each area elects a local council of five people and the head of the local council joins the municipal council. The Mayor is elected directly by the public every four years. The vice Mayor is elected by the municipal council on bi-annual basis. The municipal council's members and the local committees' members are paid with the municipal council members having offices in the municipality in which to

work. The municipal council takes the decisions up the chain of command to a certain level. Beyond that, the making-decision authority sets with the Prime Ministry. The Mayor is a public figure who signs agreements, conducts fundraising activities, etc. with the day-to-day management carried out by the Executive Manager. Major decisions are made by the Mayor after he consults with the municipal council; these decisions are then transmitted to the Executive Manager for implementation.

One of the decentralization issues that has yet to be addressed is the municipality's budget. The Jordanian decentralization law application doesn't yet account for the decentralization of budgets. The fees from citizens and businesses in Karak governorate are collected by the governorate and distributed to all municipalities. This includes Karak municipality, which limits the municipality's ability to respond appropriately in terms of service provision. The fees collected from the Karak municipality don't entirely go to its budget rather than the governorate's budget and fixed subsidies are transferred to the municipality.

The official communication within the municipality comes in the form of memorandums that are distributed through the Registry Department. In emergencies, the instructions are communicated via phone. Also, the communication between the Mayor and the staff maintains a certain degree of flexibility, yet the staff needs to fill out and submit a form requesting a meeting time with the Mayor should they need to discuss a particular matter privately with him.

The municipality has the required infrastructure for communication including a website, office email addresses, Facebook page and regular newsletter.

The communication between the municipality and the general public is neither systematic nor structured. rather than initiatives by the Mayor himself. There are no regular meetings with the public nor is there a defined mechanism to deal with citizen's suggestions and concerns. The municipality has established a consultative council with members from the local community, but this council is not currently active.

Although the municipality is very active and involved in some donor-funded projects, the municipality's staff in charge of media and public relations are not trained on how to write success stories to promote the municipality's achievements or how to raise the public's awareness of the municipality's work.

B.   Objective and Goals

In a series of prior meetings and discussions with numerous municipality staff, it was decided that Karak municipality should have a developed work plan in place to direct communications and help the team meet its objectives and goals. The work plan is based on the following:

→ **Objective 1**: Establish a baseline for communication activities.

Goal 1: The municipality begins a structured communications campaign to share information within the municipality itself and the municipal council.

Goal 2: The municipality begins a structured communications campaign to share information with the general public.

Goal 3: The municipality encourages the general public to submit suggestions.

For Goals 1, 2 and 3, the municipality should begin by making a 12-month Communication Activity Plan. Then as this plan is implemented, the goals are carefully tracked for the duration of the plan. This tracked data becomes the baseline to which all future data will be compared.

Reaching goal 1, "the municipality begins a structured communications campaign to share information within the municipality itself and the municipal council," entails opening the channels of communication within the municipality itself, from the Mayor all the way down the ladder. It's imperative that all levels and all branches know what's happening all along the chain of command to keep activities and information flowing smoothly. A suggested method of sharing information internally may be to begin by conducting a regular bi-weekly meeting for all senior management. From there, these managers hold bi-monthly meetings as well (after the higher-level meeting) with their direct reports to pass the current information along the chain and get feedback from their staff. This way, everyone in the municipality knows what's happening and is fully engaged. They are all assigned a task, when possible, and feel like they are an active participant in the municipality.   Another idea may be for the municipal council and Mayor to select an "Employee of the Month" based on well-defined criteria; this will help motivate and engage all employees.

The municipality could produce a monthly internal newsletter highlighting achievements and challenges of the month, sharing news about current and upcoming projects.

For goal 2 "the municipality begins a structured communications campaign to share information with the general public," the infrastructure to communicate with the public is already established, yet the communication style with the public is not structured or systematic. To build on the existing communication infrastructure and to expand potential outreach, the municipality could hold monthly open meetings. The first step to getting the public involved is to tell them that the municipality will be holding regular meeting and when these meetings will happen, i.e. first working day of a given month. The municipality needs to be sure to uphold this schedule and also track outgoing communications: the messages delivered and the frequency with which they are released.

Goal 3, "the municipality encourages the general public to submit suggestions," can be achieved by utilizing a suggestion box at meetings to collect suggestions from the public. These suggestions should be logged and recorded. The system for citizens to submit their suggestions should be a simple one, and the public should be aware that their suggestions are welcome and encouraged. Also, through awareness-raising campaigns, the municipality could encourage the public to submit their suggestions to the Facebook page,by email or to the website.

→ **Objective 2**: Develop annual communication plans.

Goal 1: The municipality begins a process of developing annual communication plans with indicators concerning external and internal communication, visibility events and fundraising opportunities.

Goal 2: The municipality develops the communication plans in close consultation with the municipal council and staff.

Goal 3: The municipality communicates the plan to the general public and gets their feedback.

Objective 2 advocates for creating a structured process that brings all stakeholders on board. The consultation mechanism to be adopted throughout the process will provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to be involved and create a sense of ownership. The mechanism will also give the municipality the chance to assess resource allocation based on needs and priorities.

The annual communication plans intend to design a road map for the mayor, municipal council and staff concerning the primary messages, activities, opportunities and communications required to improve synergies among stakeholders. Coordinated messages are a vital component for any successful communication effort to synchronize messages and avoid any lapses or overlaps.

For goals 1 and 2, "the municipality begins a process of developing annual communication plans with indicators that include external and internal communication, visibility events and fundraising opportunities" and "the municipality develops the communication plans in close consultation with the municipal councils and staff," the municipality will ensure that all stakeholders are involved in this interactive process. Staff will play an important part in identifying needs, setting priorities, designing showcase events and identifying potential fundraising opportunities. Including all staff in this process boosts morale and creates a sense of excitement throughout the municipality.

The municipality will also reach out to the private sector at the national level and other funding organizations at the regional and international levels. This is to expand the municipality's donor base and diversify funding opportunities. The communication style of the municipality, among other important factors, can increase its potential to compete for project funding. The networking provided by the MINARET project is highly likely to establish and expand the municipality's connections and improve the municipality's chances of securing new funding sources.

C.   Target Groups and Specific Objectives

Target group	Specific communication objectives
General public	Raise public awareness of MINARET and the project's objectives.
Staff	Keep staff informed of the progress of this project and others that are implemented at the municipality.
Government departments	Ensure proper and timely communication about the project to avoid any delays that might occur and adversely affect the implementation of the project.
Media	Keep the media engaged throughout the life-span of the project for visibility purposes.
NGOs	Keep constant and informed communication with the Grand Blu NGO and

	initiate and establish working relationships with other NGOs.

D.   Main Communication Tools

There are many communication tools that the project can utilize to share information with the general public, such as:

- Advertisements in public places and municipality offices
  - o   Billboards on busy roads
  - o   Posters
  - o   Flyers on bulletin boards
- The Karak Festival will showcase MINARET and NEXUS
- The annual agriculture conference to be held under the title "Connections among Water, Food and Energy"
- Radio
- The municipality's website
- The municipality's Facebook page

The communication tools inside the municipality include official correspondence in the form of instructions, official letters, telephone calls, one-on-one meetings, scheduled meetings and ad hoc meetings. Most of these communication opportunities, however, involve formal interactions with little room for discussion. The media engagement is restricted to the Mayor or other staff authorized by the Mayor, which ensures the consistency of the messages.

E.   Communication Activities

Recurring communication activities are required to effectively disseminate information with stakeholders and the public concerning MINARET.

- It was agreed that the municipality will start the process of joining the Covenant of Mayors. The municipality will need support throughout the process from MINARET project partners, such as NERC, which is leading the process.
- The Green Club and Ambassador of Change initiatives will be launched in 2018. These programs offer support to help ensure that schools joining the International Green Initiative will be facilitated by MINARET project's partner, Future Pioneers for Empowering Communities (FPEC)

- The quarterly meetings with the public provide an opportunity to showcase MINARET in Karak. This is an ideal time to share information with the public about progress made on any ongoing projects. It is also an ideal opportunity to answer any questions that the public may have.

- The Karak municipality will have a space on the collaborative platform established specifically to increase dialogue among MINARET stakeholders. The municipality's project-related news will be posted on the MINARET website as well.

- The branding toolkit for the MINARET project will be shared with the municipality to ensure that all communications within and about the project will showcase donors and partners of MINARET and NEXUS.

- The MINARET First Regional Learning and Exchange Event will provide an opportunity for the municipal staff to connect and network with other stakeholders and experts attending the event and the workshops.

F.   Challenges and Opportunities

The current structure of the Karak municipality provides opportunities and poses challenges. There is a communication infrastructure in place, which could be utilized to increase visibility, raise awareness, engage the public, etc. However, there is a need to build the staff's technical communication skills, including story-writing, social media, website management, reporting skills and functional English language.

Challenges:
- Lack of regular and structured awareness-raising campaigns
- Lack of municipal authority over the public and other governmental institutions, which are sometimes required to facilitate the municipality's activities
- Lack of financial resources
- No evaluation and assessment system
- Lack of staff competencies with regard to strategic planning and project management
- Lack of staff competencies with regard to story-writing and targeted social media management
- Key staff needs functional English training. Their poor English language skills compromise the municipality's ability to report project updates to the donors.

Opportunities

- Karak annual festival could be organized to showcase MINARET and NEXUS
- The municipal website
- Press and Media (interviews and PR)
- Social media (Facebook)
- Exchange of knowledge and information
  - Within the municipality
  - With the general public
  - With other municipalities
  - With the private sector
- Workshops and annual meetings
- Satisfaction surveys

G. Monitoring and Evaluation

At present, many, if not all, MINARET initiatives in Karak are in the very early stages. This is an exciting time because every success can be celebrated as a success that wasn't seen prior to MINARET.

Before benchmarking can begin to assess current progress in communication and social media, municipality visibility, public engagement, etc. against that of the past, Karak needs to begin monitoring its programs, projects and all associated activities to establish a baseline.

Why Karak should monitor its activities:
- Having past data would help Karak assess its current situation.
- If an ongoing project isn't working as well as expected, a monitoring system could identify the shortcoming and the team could take prompt corrective action.
- It's extremely useful to take past learnings and apply them when planning future activities.
- Collected data can be used to compare municipalities to each other.
- Collected data can be used to mobilize support of other municipalities to influence the decision-making process at the governmental level.

After the monitoring process, Karak municipality will be armed with the information it needs to evaluate its efforts. Did the program or project achieve desired results? Why or why not? The evaluation process can only be completed with the data that comes from monitoring. Without either of these processes, teams cannot possibly be sure if their projects were successful or why.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The current communication structure of the municipality poses some challenges in terms of designing and implementing successful communication activities. The communication with the public is not structured or systematic. Municipality staff who were interviewed and consulted throughout the development of this plan expressed some concerns over the success of these communications. Some of their worries stem from a lack of competencies among the communication staff at the municipality. As for internal communication, that is yet another challenge. Most staff don't have direct access to senior management and most of the communications between staff and management includes sending instructions rather than getting staff buy-in, which limits staff involvement and engagement. It is currently a strict top-to-bottom communication approach where staff might feel disengaged and lack motivation to contribute to the municipality's success.

Having said that, staff capacity building and team-building skills are two important areas in which the management should invest. Specifically, there is a need to give training on social media engagement and management. In addition, training on strategic communication, fundraising and outreach could be provided to key staff to ensure coordinated efforts and a common understanding at all levels.

The quarterly newsletter is a good medium to communicate within the municipality to inform staff about successes, challenges and progress made.

A new Communications Committee should be established to support the municipal committees and ensure effective, efficient, periodic communication regarding the municipality's activities. The Communication Committee's primary goals would be to increase visibility, foster communication with the public and share feedback about the municipality's activities.

Current communications at the municipality include the timely delivery of news, work instructions and response to public concerns and demands, but there is little flexibility with this communication style. It is almost exclusively a top-down approach. It doesn't allow for increased visibility of the municipality's achievements or for a mobilization of public support.

Finally, women occupy only 25% of the municipal council. The municipality should consider gender equality to increase women's strategic participation on the municipal council and with all municipal activities.