MINARET

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COMMUNICATION & VISIBILITY PLAN FOR

SAHAB, JORDAN

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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, this communication plan 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 the Communication and Visibility Plan for Sahab 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.

The situation of Sahab municipality is particularly significant compared to the other municipalities participating in the project. The MINARET project was the upshot of another project funded by SUDEP.

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 Sahab municipality, namely:

- Fatima Hassouneh, Vice Mayor
- Haneen Hassouneh, Head of Research and Development Department

The consultation meetings were conducted in one day at the municipal office. The discussions were supported by official documents and correspondences.

COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY PLAN FOR SAHAB MUNICIPALITY

A.   Existing Communication Structure

The Sahab municipality organizational structure reflects a top-to-bottom communication style. The municipality is headed by the Mayor and consists of 420 staff, 130 of which are paid daily. The municipal counsel is composed of 14 members, 60% of whom are women. Both the Mayor and the municipal council were elected by the general public.

The Mayor holds regular meetings with the department heads; however, these meetings are neither structured nor systematic. Basically, the Mayor decides on the frequency and structure of the meetings. There is no communication about news within the municipality even though the municipality has an official website and a Facebook page. There is no municipal newsletter, and communication depends on the Mayor's initiatives and his willingness to communicate with staff. Instructions are transmitted to staff over letters sent through the municipal mail. The Mayor, department heads and key staff share a WhatsApp group to facilitate communication. This is in addition to face-to-face communication.

As for the general public, the Mayor meets with them on an irregular basis. These meetings are also not structured or systematic. The Mayor decides on the frequency and structure of these meetings as he sees fit. The majority of the local community is supportive of the municipality's work. The projects being implemented are based on a needs assessment and prioritization.

The Mayor also communicates with media, but at times, he gives approval for key staff to handle the media and press relations.

Sahab municipality has already joined the Covenant of Mayors and has given a presentation to approximately 54 municipalities in Jordan on the joining process.

B. **Objectives and Goals**

In a series of prior meetings and discussions it was decided that Sahab 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 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 and the municipal council," entails opening the channels of communication within the municipal 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. Perhaps, there will also be monthly social gatherings for the entire municipal staff to discuss projects and ideas. Another idea may be for the municipal council and Mayor to select an "Employee of the Month" based on a staff member's role in a project; 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.

To reach goal 2, "the municipality begins a structured communications campaign to share information with the general public," communication with the public must become structured and systematic. The municipality may consider holding regular meetings with the public; the agenda and structure of these meetings would need to be communicated properly and in advance. The municipality could also produce quarterly newsletters to share information with the public on social media platforms and the municipal website. The first step to getting the public involved is to communicate that the municipality will be issuing news updates along with when and where these updates will be released. 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 creating a tab on the website, developing a designated email address and/or utilizing a suggestion box at quarterly 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.

→ **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 council 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 projects 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 raise awareness 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
    - Billboards on busy roads
    - Posters
    - Flyers on bulletin boards
- The summer festival will showcase MINARET and NEXUS
- Radio: The municipality can develop monthly communication plans to broadcast important messages and news.
- The municipality's website
- The municipality's Facebook page
- Regular quarterly municipal council meetings

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.

E.   Communication Activities

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

- The municipality has already joined 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 municipality's key staff needs training on raising funds, project proposal writing, capacity building and professional topics, such has energy efficiency and water management. Also, technical training on the energy tendering process is needed.

- 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 meetings with the public provide an opportunity to showcase MINARET in Sahab. 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 Sahab 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

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

- Some civil society organizations and NGOs are not supportive of the municipality's activities

- Lack of human and financial resources
- No evaluation and assessment system

Opportunities
- Awareness-raising events
- Information material
- The municipal website
- Press and Media (interviews and PRs)
- 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 Sahab are at 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, Sahab needs to begin monitoring its programs, projects and all associated activities to establish a baseline.

Why Sahab should monitor its activities:
- Having past data would help Sahab municipality 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, Sahab 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 and 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 and the non-existence of a committee dedicated to communications. The lack of competencies and motivations among the municipal council members also pose a challenge to effectively carrying out the municipality's work. As for internal communication, that is yet another challenge. Most of the staff doesn'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 for both key staff and the municipal council members are two important areas in which the management should invest. Specifically, there is a need to give training to key staff on project proposal writing and fundraising as well as technical training on the energy-related tendering process. There is also a need to give training on story-writing to enrich the municipality's website and training on social media platforms to celebrate the municipality's achievements and showcase its work. Also, training on strategic communication and outreach could be provided to key staff to ensure coordinated efforts and a common understanding at all levels.

A quarterly newsletter (in printed form or ideally, an e-newsletter) could be 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.