

Governance

eGovernance in Palestine and the MENA region (INDIGO)

Making lives easier through Inclusive Digital Governance

The challenge

While the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have developed their e-governance structures to very different extents, user-centred design approaches to digital transformation are still relatively unknown throughout the region. Digital services and participation formats are usually designed without the involvement of citizens as the actual users. If participation takes place, it is limited to the commenting on already developed products, rather than engaging citizens in a co-creative process from defining the problem to developing and testing solutions. Furthermore, the users are often seen as a homogeneous group, whereas the specific needs of certain social groups such as women, the elderly or people with disabilities are not taken into consideration. Digital solutions are therefore little user-friendly, and the uptake remains low. Thus, the great potentials of digital transformation such as increased accessibility, participation, and transparency are not yet being exploited.

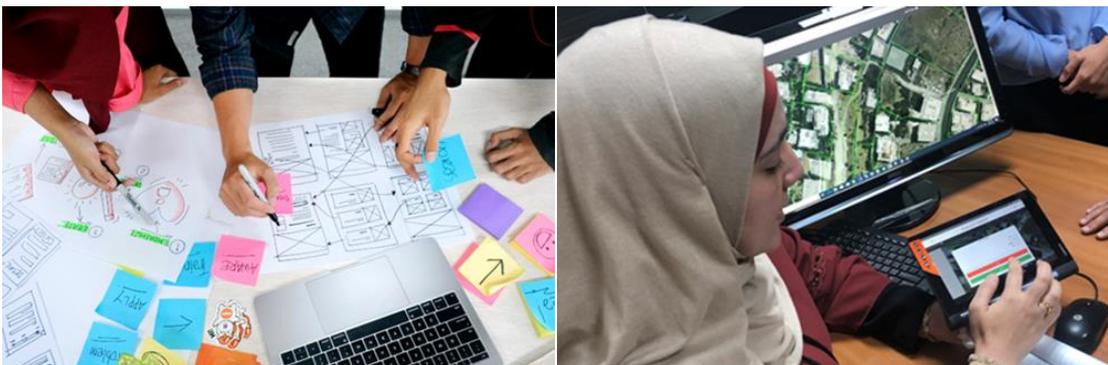
INDIGO aims to tackle this challenge by promoting citizen-centred, inclusive digital governance in Palestine and the MENA region with a specific focus on municipal service provision and participation.

Project name	E-Governance in Palestine and the MENA region (INDIGO)
Commissioned by	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ)
Project region	Palestinian Territories and countries of the MENA region
Main partners	Palestinian Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA), Municipal Development and Lending Fund (MDLF), selected Municipalities and Civil Society Organisations
Duration	01.01.2020 – 30.04.2024

INDIGO in Palestine

The Palestinian context is in many ways a special case in the region. Largely shaped by the Israeli occupation, the political reality is characterised by ongoing conflict, limited mobility as well as geographical and social fragmentation.

Against this background, effective municipal e-governance structures and a wide range of high-quality digital services can play a particularly important role in reducing regional disparities and strengthening social cohesion and inclusion.



L.: Design Thinking Workshop

R.: Presentation of e-services in Hebron Municipality

So far, and despite a relatively tech-savvy Palestinian population, public services and the interaction between state and citizens are predominantly analogue. The few existing digital services and participation formats are not designed in an accessible way and are hardly used.

In cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA), the Municipal Development and Lending Fund (MDLF), selected municipalities and civil society actors, INDIGO supports Palestinian municipalities in designing citizen-centered and inclusive digital services as well as innovative forms of citizen participation. Especially women, people with disabilities, and people living in marginalized areas of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank should benefit from the increased availability and accessibility.

The following main activities are being implemented in Palestine:

- Training on human-centered service design and innovative citizen participation
- Designing and re-designing municipal digital services
- Launching communication campaigns to foster the use of digital services based on behavioural insights
- Facilitating co-creative design processes in selected municipalities and implementing jointly developed ideas and solutions
- Organising creative citizens' festivals and youth innovation camps to increase digital competences, e.g. on digital rights
- Promoting partnerships between municipalities, private sector, and civil society
- Developing e-governance related policies and strategies, e.g. on data privacy and security

The regional component

The countries in the MENA region face similar challenges when it comes to the digital transformation of their administrations. The unique chances that technology offers for a citizen-centred innovation of the public sector are not yet fully used. Also, regional collaboration in the field of e-governance is still limited to smaller initiatives.

Together with its regional partners, such as the OECD 'Working Group on Open and Innovative Government', INDIGO aims to improve the building and exchange of knowledge with a focus on user-centred service design and innovative forms of citizen participation throughout the MENA region.



The countries of the MENA region

In annual festivals, hackathons, and innovation labs, various stakeholders from the public sector, civil society, and the regional innovation ecosystem, have the opportunity to share their experiences, build their knowledge, create networks and synergies, and to engage in co-creative design processes to develop innovative solutions for concrete challenges in the region.

This project is part of a special initiative designed to stabilise and promote development in North Africa and the Middle East run by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Through the projects that make up this special initiative, BMZ is helping to open up economic and social prospects for people in the region.

Published by Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Registered offices Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

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As of

Juli 2020

Photo credits

List of photographers:
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GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.

On behalf of

Federal Ministry for Economic
Cooperation and Development (BMZ)