

Local Authorities & Civil Society Organisations: Key to participation and services

Through local authorities and CSOs, it is possible to improve services for people and strengthen participation at the local level

Challenges and chances

Since 2014, the conflict in Yemen has led to one of the world's biggest humanitarian crises. The country faces wide-ranging social and economic challenges. 4.3 million people had to leave their homes. Almost half of all inhabitants live below the poverty line in 2022 and the number is rising due to increasing prices of petrol, food, and other goods.

Due to the ongoing armed conflict, Yemen is divided into different spheres of power and influence, in which various actors claim power. State institutions are often dysfunctional, and political fragmentation continues. Only some local councils are still in place. The election to the parliament (2003) and local elections (2006) are long ago. Hence, the democratic legitimacy of those who take decisions is low.

Despite these developments, local governance structures still exist on governorate and district levels. Local Authorities (LA) play an important role in providing services to the population. They maintain state functions, albeit to a limited extent, for example by keeping schools and health centers running. Their capacities, resources, and quality of governance differ greatly from region to region, and they are strongly influenced by local conflict dynamics. Against this background, civil society actors play a key role in communicating people's needs to LAs for inclusive decision-making and improved service delivery.

Our objective

Our aim as the "Supporting Good Governance in Yemen" (SGGY) project, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), is to strengthen

context-sensitive approaches to good local governance in selected governorates. Following the "Whole of Yemen" approach, we focus on the population of Hadramout, Ibb, and Taiz.

Project name	Supporting Good Governance in Yemen (SGGY)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Hadramout, Ibb, and Taiz
Lead executing agency	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Duration	04/2021 – 06/2024

Our approach

We work with local authorities, civil society organisations (CSOs) and grassroots groups in three complementary fields of action. In doing so, we pursue a context- and gender-sensitive approach that considers the impacts of the conflict.

The target group of the project is the population in the selected governorates; intermediaries include functionaries employed by the local authorities, civil society organizations, grassroots initiatives as well as traditional and private sector actors.



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Introducing the SGGY project to local authority representatives from As-Sayyani district in Ibb.

Discussing capacity development needs with members of the Sah education office in Hadramout

Field of action 1 – developing evidence-based approaches for good local governance

Effective service delivery based on the needs of citizens is a major challenge. Consequently, it is important to know which approaches work and which do not. Together with local stakeholders, promising practices and lessons learned are documented and processed. The results are presented in short studies which include context-sensitive recommendations. They can be used to strengthen good local governance.



Field of action 2 – strengthening cooperation & coordination among local authorities for improved service delivery

To enhance service delivery, local authorities need to coordinate and cooperate with each other on different levels. Further, the involvement of actors from the private sector and civil society are of paramount importance for inclusive planning and decision-making processes. During workshops, we build actor networks and strengthen capacities of LAs regarding their roles and mandates in service delivery.



Field of action 3 - strengthening civil society's capacities in the field of social accountability

Yemenis know very well what kind of basic services they need in their communities. But their concerns are sometimes not sufficiently reflected in decision-making processes. Therefore, we strengthen CSOs and grassroots groups to raise awareness of community needs. Through trainings, especially in the fields of project management and social accountability, we support civil society actors acquiring relevant skills for interacting with LAs in a conflict-sensitive manner.



Hadramout, Ibb, and Taiz will be implemented. This laid the foundation for further cooperation.

- In field of action 1, we contracted the Yemen Policy Center for the design of context, conflict and actors' analyses
- In field of action 2, we held several workshops with LA members to conduct a capacity development needs assessment
- In field of action 3, the commissioned international NGOs Safeworld and Search for Common Ground started to conduct projects to foster social accountability (Hadramout and Taiz) and enhance social cohesion (Ibb). Both work with grassroots initiatives and capacitate them by closely accompanying their actions and initiating learning loops.
- In response to a call for proposals, 123 Yemeni CSOs - on the condition of a joint application - submitted 65 bids. Eight projects from 16 NGOs were selected and will use innovative methods (i.e., community score cards, radio interviews, electronic complaint mechanisms, etc.) to strengthen partnerships between LAs and citizens regarding service delivery.

Insight - local authorities discuss strengths and weaknesses

"What works well in your district?" asks an SGGY team member during a workshop in Hadramout. Three female and eleven male representatives of various LAs from Sah district participate in the roundtable discussion following the introduction of the Supporting Good Governance project. At first, the group discusses in an open exchange the strengths and needs on the ground and what LAs can do - and what is beyond their reach. LAs are under pressure since citizens voice their needs particularly regarding inadequate health care. This weighs heavily on the LA representatives. They conclude that, in addition to more financial resources, further training is needed. "How to cooperate, how to coordinate, how to manage participatory planning, how to prioritise the needs of the district, and how to improve the output for communities", the SGGY staff summarises the intensive discussion. There will be further meetings and trainings to work out practical measures. For now, the start is made for enhanced service delivery and more inclusive decision-making.

What we have achieved so far

Together with our partners, the target governorates (and districts) were selected. In field of action 2, activities in Hadramout (Hajr and Sah district) and Ibb (Al-Makhadir and As-Sayyani district) are planned, while in field of action 3, activities in various districts in

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