Strengthening host municipalities: The ‘Municipal know-how for host communities in the Middle East’ Programme

Since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, millions of Syrians have fled the country. The most important host countries are the neighbouring states of Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. The majority of Syrian refugees in these countries live in towns and communities, as opposed to refugee camps. These municipalities face numerous challenges in maintaining basic services and performing their core tasks not only for the benefit of the refugees, but also for their own population. They are confronted with shortages of resources, as well as expertise to maintain communal services, for example in waste management, water or energy supply, provision of social services, etc. and to strengthen and improve local government structures.

Numerous German municipalities can offer the knowledge and experience required. Because of this, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung – BMZ) has launched a programme that promotes cooperative partnerships between the host communities in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, and German municipalities.
The programme arranges partnerships between communities from Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, and German municipalities. German municipalities also benefit from exchanging experiences. They strengthen their international profile, promote awareness amongst local people about global links and support successful integration.

Through an array of instruments, the programme aims to create an enabling environment for municipalities and local government actors to pool their knowledge, expertise and skills for improving communal services in host communities. It provides an expert pool of municipal practitioners from Germany and a multilateral, municipal learning and exchange network, as well as financial and personal assistance for bilateral communal project partnerships. In the long term, the programme also aims to help rebuild the capacity of local governments in Syria by training refugees in local government authorities and public service institutions. The programme is being jointly implemented by the Service Agency Communities in One World (a department of Engagement Global referred to as the ‘Service Agency’ for short), and Connective Cities – the International Community of Practice for Sustainable Urban Development.

Online platforms for the programme are available in English, German, Turkish and Arabic. They provide information on the project and news from the region, enable municipalities to connect with suitable experts for their needs, and allow users to share ideas and lessons learned online.
English: www.initiative-middle-east.com/en/
German: www.initiative-nahost.de
Arabic: www.initiative-middle-east.com/ar/
Turkish: www.initiative-middle-east.com/tr/