

Concept Note¹

Support of the Municipal elections by the Future Saudi Cities Programme

I. Background

The forthcoming election is of high relevance to the Future Saudi Cities Programme² and is aligned with its objectives and strategies, particularly with its **Programme Output 3 on 'Enhanced individual and institutional capacities for managing sustainable urbanization nationally, regionally and locally'**. The elected officials and local representatives, both male and female, will become a key stakeholder group for the Programme to engage with during its implementation process. The Programme is expected to address the need of information and data for well-informed decision making and policy making.

The programme support will fall under the overall umbrella of the United Nations system that supports to the municipal elections in the country.



It is proposed that the programme sponsors the design and implementation of a tailor-made training programme focusing on the **key principles of sustainable urbanization** that UN-Habitat is promoting through the Future Saudi Cities Programme. UN-Habitat is the mandated United Nations Agency on sustainable urbanization and through this training programme it will be in a position to draw on the Agency's extensive international expertise both on technical as well as training dimensions.

This training course will be combined with a set of **locally elected leadership competencies** for which UN-Habitat also has extensive experience in delivering globally. This series is already available in Arabic and could be tailor-made to the Saudi Arabia context.

The Local Elected Leadership (LEL) series presents two roles and ten competencies that are essential for every elected official to effectively perform his/her job when serving local communities in an elected body such as municipal council or alike. These consist of: representation, communicating, facilitating, using power, decision making, policy making, enabling, negotiating, financing, overseeing, institution building and leadership. The series contains many training exercises and tools that can be used as practical on-the-job guide after the leadership training has ended.

¹ The purpose of this concept note is to input in a discussion between UN-Habitat and the Ministry of Municipalities and Rural Affairs-MoMRA about the training and capacity building of municipal councilors

² The Future Saudi Cities Programme is a joint initiative of UN-Habitat and MoMRA

II. Design of Future Saudi Cities Programme training for municipal officers

The support provided by the Future Saudi Cities Programme to the municipal elections can be designed and implemented in a variety of modalities, to be discussed and determined by MOMRA.

The following factors need to be considered:

1. **Phasing/timing of technical support:** The technical support could take place at very specific moments of the municipal elections process, although the focus will be on (ii) below. Potential areas of support, upon consultation with MOMRA, could include:
 - i. **Prior to election** (such as orientation workshops combining the themes of the Programme with the roles of elected officials; advocacy for participation in voting, focused on women and youth; training for candidates on running election campaigns; and provide advice in terms of improving access to election and voting centers) (with the participation of UNDP)
 - ii. **After the elections:** In the form of capacity building and training courses for newly elected councilors (key proposal that combines urban planning, legislation, indicators with the legislative and monitoring roles of the councilors, aiming at strengthening the quality and content of the work as elected officials).
 - iii. **Ongoing monitoring and impact assessment:** (workshops to reflect on roles, achievements, impact, and difficulties faced by councilors; combining on-the-job research with refresher courses); and recommendations for future elections (with the participation of UNDP)
 - iv. **Ongoing support:** In the form of backstopping, coaching and short refresher trainings on special issues during the tenure of municipal officers.
2. **Mapping of ongoing municipal election training initiatives and training needs assessment:** This will be necessary to ensure synergy and coordination with local/national Saudi institutions. Some of these institutions have already been contacted by the programme during the inception phase of the training needs assessment exercise carried out by UN-Habitat. It is important to consider ongoing capacity building programmes or planned initiatives to support the elections and the newly elected councilors. Should we opt for a capacity development programme to address the needs of councilors, not only the mapping becomes necessary to judge relevance and potential for partnership, but also the assessment of knowledge gaps amongst councilors that prevent them to perform their function so that training responses are designed to fill these gaps There are both individual capacities and structural (institutional) actors to consider.
3. **Thematic focus:** The proposal is for the content to primarily managerial skills (competencies) combined with technical skills tailored to enable the elected councilors to perform their functions effectively (this could include urban planning principles, urban management, development control, land management, monitoring and indicators) and, and to be delivered

to both male and female councilors. There could be a specialized model on leadership skills for female and male councilors.

III. Training delivery model for trainings for (ii) and (iv) above

Some options for delivery of training include:

1. To utilize an international University with extended experience in running training courses for councilors.
2. To engage a National training institution and facilitate international partnerships with experienced local government organizations (such as IBAM in Brazil or VNG (Association of Dutch Municipalities) to deliver the training in cooperation with UN-Habitat.
3. To utilize UN-Habitat expertise with local leadership training and on selected thematic sessions focusing on urban planning, urban indicators, land management, etc.
4. To ensure the sustainability of the programme and continuity through training- of-trainers of staff of the partnering Saudi Institute.
5. A combination of the above.

One of the goals of the programme is to build institutions in addition to human resources. Therefore it will be essential to anchor training and capacity building activities sponsored and/or carried out by the Future Saudi Cities Programme on existing Saudi institutions and its programme. Not only design but also training delivery mechanisms should be considered involving one or several local Saudi institutions. This means that the approach must consider training of trainers for future trainings.

A training impact evaluation must be part and parcel of this initiative. A post-training evaluation and follow-up must be included. After one year (or at a set date) training will be evaluated, its impact assessed and recommendations concluded in order to inform future training programmes. UN-Habitat has tested models for undertaking such evaluations.