

## Local Administration Councils Unit (LACU)

The Local Administration Councils' Unit (LACU) is a Syrian civil society organization specialized in promoting the concept of local administration in Syria through providing local councils in Syria with all needed services, monitoring and developing their activities, building their capacity, and contributing to the enhancement of active civil participation in local governance.

LACU was established in February 2013 by a group of Syrian experts, specialists and civil society activists who believe that effective local governance for the Syrian context is necessary, essential and vital. The Local Administration Councils Unit (LACU) is a Syrian civil society organization specialized in empowering the concept and methods of good governance for local administrative councils (LCs) in Syria. LACU provides necessary services and support for LCs through activities such as assessments, developing, implementing, and evaluating local projects and initiatives, institutional development, and capacity building. LACU also seeks to strengthen democratic practices and promote effective civic participation in local administration.

LACU is considered a Reference for Local Governance in Syria. Empowering local governance and developing its institutions, practices, and methods to support the Syrian society in building a better future.

LACU aims to support institutional development and capacity building of the local councils and are eager to deploy the principles of good local administration, active citizenship, and civic engagement in local governance. LACU has also the capacity to provide necessary legal consultations in the field of local governance.

### Overview of the Context and our understanding of the Dynamics in Syria:

Over the five years of work directed towards the Syrian society in areas controlled by the Syrian opposition and the siege areas, the Local Councils Unit, has reached the complete balance of the network of local relations based on the confidence it has gained as a result of several factors that distinguish the work and approach of the local councils unit team from impartiality, transparency and self-accountability.

LACU has signed more than (50) memorandum of understanding and cooperation with the authorities involved in the local administration, including:

1. Ministry of Local Administration- the Syrian Interim Government.
2. Seven elected provincial councils.
3. A large number of local councils at all levels (cities, towns, municipalities).
4. A number of community organizations, trade unions and bodies working on the ground that their work intersects with LACU

LACU's experience on the ground has been immense in various fields (governance, local administration, projects, training and capacity building). As a result of direct and continuous contact with local actors and stakeholders, LACU was able to develop and strengthen its network and resources on the ground in Syria. The Local Councils Unit is keen on emphasizing the community participation in accordance with gender standards by supporting and rehabilitating Syrian women active in the field of community service through local councils and civil society organizations.

Since establishment LACU has gained a good reputation through its continuous efforts to develop its skills by diversifying the nature of the projects and the consultations it provides to local councils in accordance with the changes of the stage to cope with all the impact imposed by the political and military situation on the ground in the opposition areas. That is through carrying out many questionnaires and community surveys for all segments. The primary distinguish in LACU's work in the Syrian context is that the working group has its entire staff of competent local experts who have the ability to read the characteristics of the Syrian society that qualifies it to enter between its spectrum and gain confidence, especially with regard to the implementation of surveys and questionnaires, which are often theoretical and do not carry direct/ or tangible benefit to the target segment.

### LACU's Methodology

Since the beginning, LACU has taken into consideration the necessity to building the capacity of the local councils, whether collectively or on an individual level. With that consideration comes the need of the targeted local councils to develop their expertise in technical areas, and the donor's consideration of capacity building in general.

The primary responsibilities of the capacity-building team at LACU were to select the most appropriate expert in governance, relevant trainers, and to facilitate the implementation of the training workshops.

In early 2015 LACU was identified among the donor's community as a Syrian Civil Society organization, working for building the capacity of the local councils while establishing a huge network of 450 LACs inside Syria, this holistic approach consists of the following methodological approach:

1. Prior to any project implementation with the local councils, conducting a need assessment survey of the 450 local councils network particularly in non-governmental controlled areas, and areas under besiegement, with an extensive focus on the understanding of the good governance holistic approach.
2. Identifying the need required for each local councils based on the geographic locations and previously provided resources, according to need assessment results.
3. Identify the selection criteria for experts, trainers and targeted LACs, which are consistent with the training approach. Including (Local Councils and its executive officers

and permanent staff - Civil society activists – CBOs representatives/with focusing on women participation in all our training events.

4. Training materials are identified after stakeholder participation, categorized based on the geographic locations as well.
5. Expanding scope of beneficiaries within the training programs through mini-workshops dedicated to be implemented in Non-governmental controlled areas and besieged areas in Syria.
6. Ensuring maximum capability to report on implemented activities that all results of training programs are shared with donors, communities who are interested in Syria's context, and beneficiaries as well.

### **Past Experience:**

Assessing local governance structures and exploring ways to strengthen their link to the international peace talks

#### **Partnership with SWISSPEACE**

##### Objectives:

The overall goal of this research project is to generate evidence-based and applicable knowledge on the nature, opportunities, challenges, and gaps in the area of peacebuilding and state building in Syria.

The specific objectives are:

##### **A) Provision of new evidence-based insights:**

- Highlight new evidence-based insights regarding governance structures in opposition-held areas in Syria.
- Analyze how the communities they seek to govern perceive the legitimacy of these structures.
- Identify gaps in relation to international policies towards peacebuilding and state building in Syria.

##### **B) Unlock generated knowledge for practitioner organizations:**

- Disseminate the new insights including recommendations through the publication of a report and policy brief as well as two conferences and a workshop among policy makers and peacebuilding practitioners working on Syria with the objective to increase the relevance of their programs.
- Integrate research findings into training modules for peacebuilding practitioners, diplomats and local stakeholders in order for the latter to apply them in the strategy making of their programs.
- Advise international and Syrian partners during coaching and capacity strengthening activities to facilitate the application of the findings in their programs.

The main target groups benefit in the following ways:

- For the people living in Syria, the project will contribute to governance that is more legitimate inside Syria and better responds to the needs of the people.
- For the actors working on Syria, the project will offer new perspectives for action in the field of security and rule of law reform programs.
- For researchers on security and rule of law systems, the project offers new insights on legitimate governance and its influence on peacebuilding and state building programs.

Activates:

- Developing a concept for a more structured dialogue.
- Designing and implementing a 2-day pilot workshop.
- Designing and organizing a 3-day training on workshop facilitation for all the LAC representatives and other participants.
- Organizing 9 pilot in-country sessions with the sub-local councils.
- Results communication.

### Strengthening Resilience and Promoting Local Governance in Northern Syria

#### **Partnership with ACTED**

#### Objectives:

Overall objective

To sustainably and inclusively improve the governance of conflict-affected Syrian communities, enhancing their resilience to future shocks and stresses.

Specific objective

To strengthen the capacities of Local Councils and civil society to contribute to the early recovery of Syrian society and support communities through basic public services in a participatory manner.

Results:

Result 1:

Local Councils have improved capacity on how to administer local services in an effective, transparent, accountable, and participatory way.

Result 2:

Communities have a clear understanding of community needs and relevant actors; and the roles and responsibilities of each of those actors in fulfilling those needs.

Result 3:

Local Councils demonstrate improved ability to deliver services.

Activates:

- Capacity Assessments of LCs
- Training LCs on Good Governance
- Participatory Needs Assessment of the community
- Participatory Mapping of Local Actors
- Definition of Roles and Responsibilities of LCs
- Establishment of communication structures
- Creation of a Grassroots Development Plan (GDP)
- Provision of Small Grants
- Community Monitoring, Accountability, and Evaluation of Performance

### Grassroots Organization Capacity Assessment (GOCA)

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#### ***What is the GOCA?***

GOCA stands for Grassroots Organization Capacity Assessment (GOCA). The GOCA can be used to analyze the capacity of grassroots Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and/or small national Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Specifically, the tool can be used to identify capacity building needs, plan technical support interventions, and monitor and evaluate the impact of capacity building support.

#### ***Why was the GOCA developed?***

The GOCA was developed to enable the use of participatory processes to assess capacity gaps/needs grassroots CBOs and small national CSOs in a number of areas (domains). The tool also enables the development of capacity building action-plans to address the identified gaps/needs.

#### ***Who is the GOCA for?***

The GOCA is primarily intended for use by individuals and organizations that support grassroots CBOs and/or small national CSOs in their organizational and institutional capacity development. Organizational capacity refers to the existence of systems, strategies, structures and culture in organizations for effective and sustainable organizational functioning and performance. Institutional capacity refers to the ability of organizations to effectively establish, sustain linkages and partnerships with other development actors and respond appropriately to their operating environment. It is important that people using the tool are competent Organizational Development/Institutional Development (OD/ID). They should have basic facilitation skills to guide large discussions and small group activities.

## **HOW DOES THE GOCA WORK?**

The GOCA is conducted according to a 5-level indicator system that assesses 5 domains of organizational and institutional development, or in other words "organizational health/viability". Organizations assessed can range from 0 (very weak and not functional) to 5 (very strong and exemplary) in each of the following 5 domains:

### **1. Governance and Administration**

- 1.1. Vision, Mission and Values
- 1.2. Legal Status
- 1.3. Board Composition and Responsibilities
- 1.4. Constituency and Membership
- 1.5. Infrastructure and Logistics
- 1.6. Human Resource Management
- 1.7. Reporting

### **2. Organizational Management**

- 2.1. Organizational Structure
- 2.2. Management Capabilities
- 2.3. Internal Communication
- 2.4. Participatory Decision Making
- 2.5. Strategic Planning
- 2.6. Operational Planning
- 2.7. Succession Planning

### **3. Financial Management**

- 3.1. Bank account
- 3.2. Cash Management
- 3.3. Treasurer / Accountant
- 3.4. Accounting
- 3.5. Internal Control
- 3.6. Budgeting
- 3.7. Financial Reporting
- 3.8. Audit

### **4. Project Cycle Management (PCM)**

- 4.1. Needs Assessment
- 4.2. Project Conceptualization / Design
- 4.3. Program Implementation
- 4.4. Technical Expertise
- 4.5. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

### **5. External Relations and Resource Mobilization**

- 5.1. Community Engagement
- 5.2. Government Engagement
- 5.3. Donors - Resource Mobilization
- 5.4. Media Engagement
- 5.5. Coalitions and Networks
- 5.6. Advocacy, Communication, Branding and Marketing

