

# AQABA COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (ACED II) PROGRAM Final Report

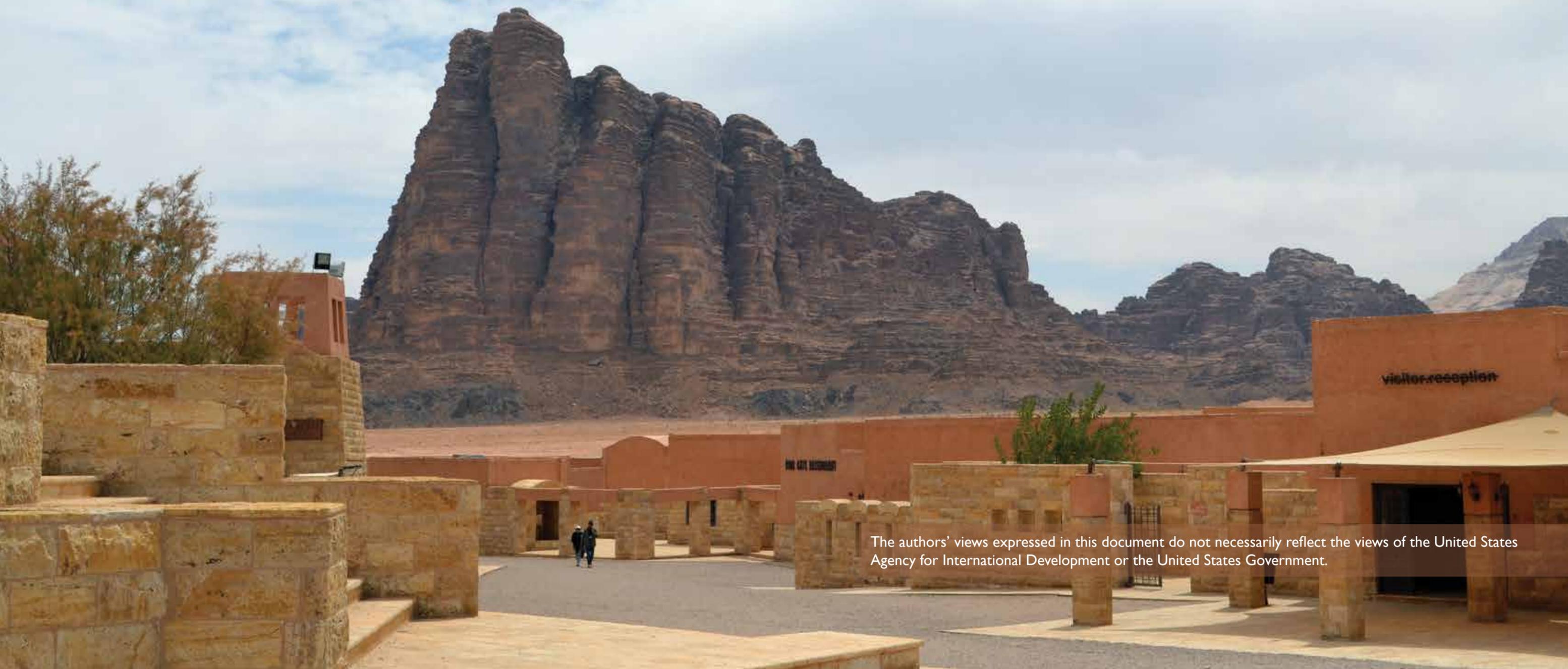


**NOVEMBER 2014**

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by AECOM International Development.

# AQABA COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (ACED II) PROGRAM

Final Report



The authors' views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The USAID/ACED II Program improved the livelihoods and access to services of thousands of beneficiaries throughout the governorate of Aqaba. This was made possible in large measure by the constant and valuable support from the Jordanian government, in particular those individuals from the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority who assisted our efforts, as well as from the USAID Mission in Jordan, community representatives, community support organizations and numerous NGOs.

The leaders of these institutions and organizations provided ongoing guidance and shared in the challenges and opportunities offered by the USAID/ACED II Program, thereby making the success of the program their own. Our particular thanks goes to the USAID Economic Growth and Contracting Office teams. The project team is grateful for their support and understanding that a program with so many expected results in such a short duration, operating in remote areas throughout the governorate of Aqaba and urban centers, was essential to sustainable poverty alleviation and economic development in Jordan.

Finally, we offer our heartfelt gratitude to all the partners, volunteers, staff and beneficiaries identified in this report for their tireless efforts and contributions. Each individual effort and each single act have come together to constitute a formidable and sustainable impact on the lives of Jordanian men, women and children living in the southern region of Jordan.



# ACRONYMS

ACDF	Aqaba Community Development Fund
ACED	USAID/Aqaba Community and Economic Development Program
ACED II	USAID/Aqaba Community and Economic Development Program II
ADC	Aqaba Development Company
AHA	Aqaba Hotels Association
APTC	Aqaba Public Transport Company
ASEZ	Aqaba Special Economic Zone
ASEZA	Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority
ATAPS	Aqaba Technical Assistance Support Program
AVTI	Aqaba Vocational Training Institute
AZEM	Aqaba Zone Economic Mobilization
CBO	Community-based organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
HR	Human Resources
IDD	Institutional Development Directorate
JD	Jordanian Dinar
JOHUD	Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development
KACE	King Abdullah II Center of Excellence
LCDD	Local Community Development Directorate (ASEZA)
LTCD	Long-Term Community Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSME	Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises
NCC	NGO Coordination Committee
NDA	Neighborhood Development Activity
NET	Neighborhood Enhancement Team
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSS	One-Stop Shop
PACE	Participatory Action through Community Enhancement
PMS	Performance Management System
QSIP	Quality Service Improvement Program
RFA	Request for Applications
RFP	Request for Proposal
SIGI	Sisterhood is Global Institute
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMP	Syndicate of Mechanical Professions
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
STTA	Short-Term Technical Assistance
TAGI	Talal Abu Ghazaleh & Co. Consulting
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
VTC	Vocational Training Center
VTS	Vehicle Tracking System



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Due to a dramatic increase in regional political instability as well as the global economic downturn, Aqaba – the only port city in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan – has faced a challenging development environment. In addition to competing with neighboring countries for tourism revenues, the city recently faced an economic slowdown in which the construction and completion of mega projects designed to attract more foreign direct investment and a wider range of activities for visitors and residents came to a standstill. In light of this challenge and regional political turmoil, the United States Agency for International Development set out to continue to support to Aqaba—its institutions, the private sector and local communities—under the Aqaba Community and Economic Development (ACED) II project.

USAID awarded AECOM International Development the ACED II Program which spanned 18 months and built upon previous USAID assistance to the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA). Through a multi-faceted

approach, ACED II supported top-down, bottom-up and cross-cutting initiatives with the government, private sector and community. This 360 degree development strategy opened channels for dialogue between stakeholders to address problems and mutually create long-term solutions. Among these, volunteers with the Neighborhood Enhancement Teams worked with the ASEZA to identify and solve neighborhood needs including providing the first-ever available services for over 620 children with disabilities while private sector organizations like the Syndicate of Mechanical Professions reduced operational costs up to 10% through the use of new technologies in their shops. Meanwhile, ACED II's support to ASEZA permitted the government to become more responsive to the local community with improved public transportation management and the broadcasting of a pilot radio station to be managed by the government.

Through the Aqaba Community Development Fund (ACDF), a cross-cutting initiative for grants and procurements, ACED II provided

the local community with nearly \$750,000 in trainings, tools and equipment designed to stimulate growth in the region. Building on lessons learned from past projects, ACED II carefully identified potential counterparts to learn about their commitment to sustainability. Among these recipients, ACED II identified a number of women-owned small businesses in Aqaba that received customized trainings and tools for their work. The support enabled many of the women to enter into new markets, produce better quality goods and increase their sales by up to 35%.

While the ACED II Program only last 18 short months, these examples are only a small sample of the work the program was able to accomplish. The true impact of these interventions will be realized over time, but in the meantime, this final report aims to highlight ACED II's overall milestones, activities under each of the three components, gender considerations, lessons learned and recommendations for future programming.



## PROJECT LEGACY

The ACED II Program met or surpassed all of its program objectives and contractual obligations on or ahead of schedule. The Program's team was a small and highly cohesive unit that interfaced extremely well with all of its program partners including its principal donor, local government, the local community, the private sector, and partner organizations. Building upon previous outputs and successes from ACED I, ACED II was able to complete several milestones that benefit the Aqaba Special Economic Zone including:

- Defined public bus routes and new bus shelters for increased public transportation.
- Introduced a redesigned radio station with broadcast content to reach the residents of Aqaba.
- Enhanced customer service skills of government employees through capacity-building trainings to improve business relations and attract FDI.
- Restructured the layout of the One Stop Shop service by allotting each counter at ASEZA to serve one specific purpose based on the workload and number of transactions per day, which in turn speeds up the transactions and improves efficiency.
- Strengthened business associations such as the Syndicate of Mechanical Professions which have enabled welders and car mechanics to offer improved services for Aqabites saving residents a trip up to Amman for similar services.
- Provided access to clean and cheap energy solutions through the installation of solar panels at 12 Bedouin camps in Wadi Rum reducing operational costs.
- Supported market-driven curriculum and hands-on experience for practitioners and students at the Aqaba Vocational Training Center enabling youth to become more competitive when applying for employment opportunities.
- Increased the capacity of civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations who are now able to advocate for their organizational needs and apply for donor funding as needed.
- Sustained communication between neighborhoods and ASEZA to implement community needs including installing several playgrounds for children to have a safe place to play.
- Improved tourist infrastructure through community events such as the "Sweet Gathering in Aqaba".
- Facilitated the creation of the *Aqaba Women* website, a site devoted entirely for different women-owned and women-led businesses from Aqaba.

# CONTEXT

Located in one of the most volatile regions of the world, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has remained as one of the few politically stable nations in the Middle East. One of the reasons for this politically and economically stable environment has been due to the safety net and subsidies the government has provided to protect the people from poverty. However, the recent global economic recession combined with civil unrest and war in neighboring countries, Jordan has recognized that in order to maintain this stability, the nation must pursue alternative policies to create sustainable growth within the country.

With the potential for civil unrest coming from the large unemployed youth population in Aqaba (and in Jordan more generally), the Government of Jordan recognized the need to have better communication and transparency with its citizens as a tool to develop a level of trust and understanding. Along with this, the immediate need for employment and particularly addressing the role of women and youth in the labor force became an immediate priority.

The southern city of Aqaba is strategically important to Jordan as it is the country's only access to the Red Sea and is Jordan's only sea port. In 2001, the Aqaba Special Economic Zone was established

to serve as a duty-free, low tax and multi-sectorial development zone encompassing the entire Jordanian coastline (27km). In order to regulate the zone, an Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) was established. This single authority replaced three key institutions that operated and managed the Governorate of Aqaba: the Free Zone Corporation, the Aqaba Regional Authority and the Aqaba Municipality. ASEZA has been charged with the responsibility of ensuring that development activities result in economic and social benefits for all residents of Aqaba.

Since its establishment, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has supported the Zone through a wide range of programs including the Aqaba Technical Assistance Support Program (ATASP), the Aqaba Zone Economic Mobilization (AZEM) Program, and the Aqaba Community and Economic Development (ACED) Program. Building on this existing relationship with the (USAID), ASEZA and USAID worked closely together to design a program to address these needs and build on the work of USAID's past projects in the region. From this, the Aqaba Community and Economic Development (ACED) II Program was established.

The ACED II Program focused on three successful main areas of intervention:

### **Component I: Improved ASEZA Institutional and Service Capacity.**

ACED II provided support to ASEZA in order to strengthen its performance as an institution and ensure that ASEZA is better able to service its citizens and promote economic growth in Aqaba. ACED II worked closely with ASEZA to develop three key areas: improved service delivery to constituents, internal systems development, and long-term economic growth initiatives. ACED II provided skilled consultants for training, procured equipment and tools for public service provision, and reviewed and upgraded internal systems at ASEZA. Work under this component was targeted directly at the directorates and staff within the local government itself.

### **Component II: Strengthened Private Sector.**

The ACED II Program strengthened the private sector by enabling the business environment to support the capabilities of Micro, Small and Medium-Size Enterprises (MSMEs) and strengthening the business associations of which MSMEs are members. ACED II worked closely with the Aqaba Hotels Association (AHA), a non-profit organization

established in 2010 to enhance the hospitality sector in Aqaba; and the Syndicate of Mechanical Professions (SMP) – Aqaba, an organization representing the interests of the mechanical trades in Aqaba; to support these growing sectors through capacity building trainings and grants. ACED II also worked closely with the Aqaba Vocational Training Institute (AVTI)’s local Vocational Training Center (VTC) on workforce development initiatives. The VTC offers alternative education courses for high school students pursuing careers outside of the public sector. Finally, ACED II worked closely with the Wadi Rum Bedouin Cooperatives and the Wadi Rum and Environment Directorates of ASEZA to bring solar powered energy into the tourist camps in Wadi Rum and Disi.

**Component III: Enhanced Community Participation.** The ACED II Program worked with the local community, NGOs and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to empower and develop their capacities to prioritize, plan and participate in local development activities. The program also supported local community development activities and priorities by fostering a sustainable relationship between local neighborhoods and ASEZA. Working with the Local Community Development Directorate (LCDD) of ASEZA, ACED II supported the Neighborhood Development Activity (NDA) to identify priority community needs and find sustainable solutions through groups of volunteers organized in Neighborhood Enhancement Teams (NETs). ACED II worked closely with a local grant partner, Talal Abu Ghazaleh & Co. Consulting

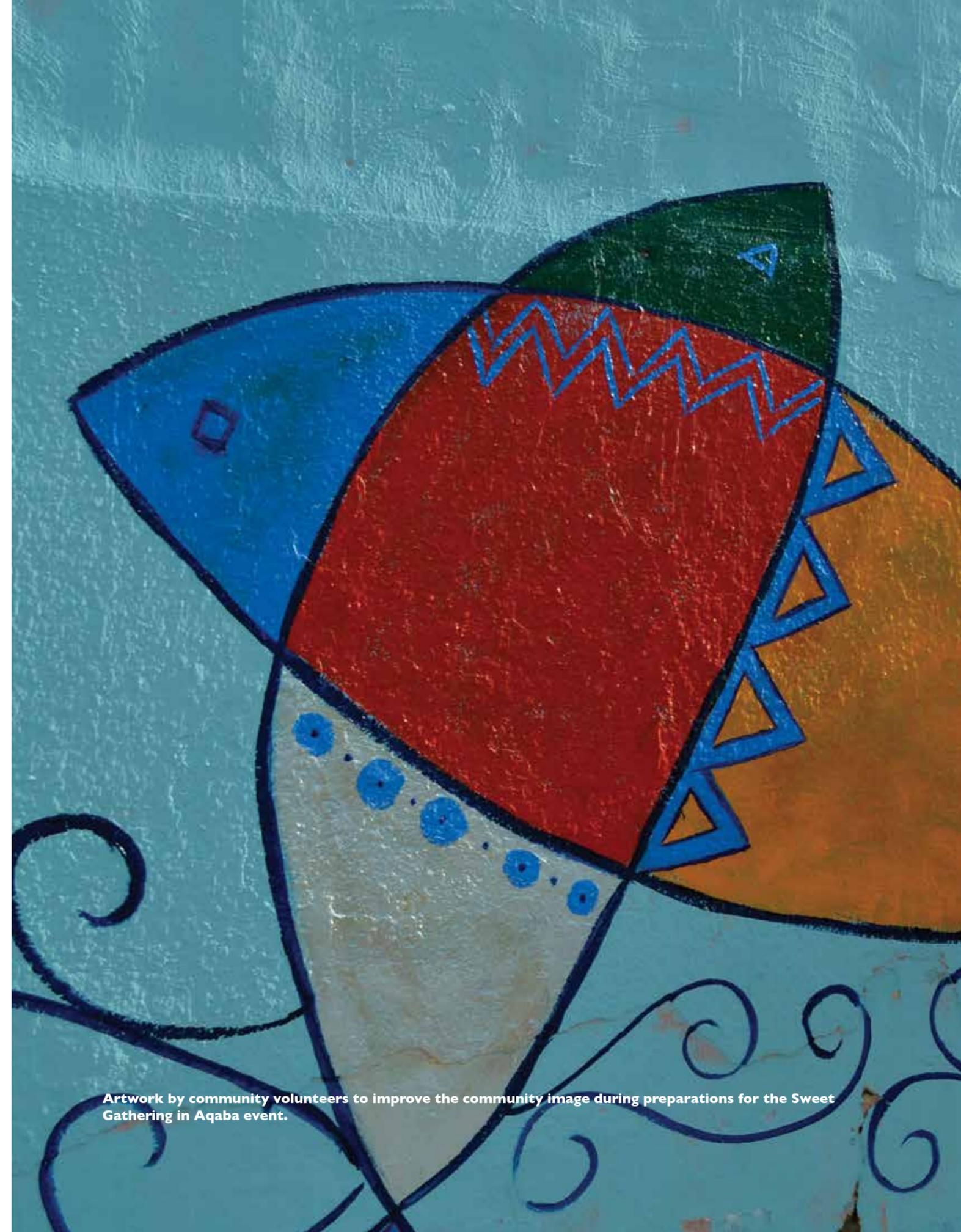
(TAGI), to build on previous efforts to increase the capacity of CSOs in fundraising skills, improve their ability to network with the private sector, and to facilitate their interaction with the public sector.

## CROSS-CUTTING INITIATIVES

ACED II’s project design contained a robust grants and procurement fund called the Aqaba Community Development Fund (ACDF). The ACDF was used as a strategic tool for maximizing outreach to CSOs and residents in the Zone and to increase the number of Aqabite partners that participate in ACED II activities, especially in the areas of private sector and local community development.

ACED II utilized the ACDF to mobilize approximately \$750,000 to provide capacity building trainings, tools and equipment to serve as a catalyst for economic growth for the private sector and local community organizations in Aqaba. The grants were awarded and implemented in accordance with the ACED II Grants Manual approved by USAID.

In addition to utilizing the ACDF, ACED II was implemented with a particular focus on developing and executing broad-based programming that maximizes women’s participation and increases women’s stake in economic development in Aqaba. From a range of capacity building and training interventions, technical assistance to public and private sectors and support through community grants, ACED II sought, designed, and implemented programs that promote gender equality and increased women’s involvement in the decision-making process.



Artwork by community volunteers to improve the community image during preparations for the Sweet Gathering in Aqaba event.

# INCLUSIVITY: THE KEY TO SUCCESS

## EXAMPLES OF ACED II TOOLS

- Developed a revenue forecasting model for ASEZA's finance department
- Implemented Participatory Action through Community Enhancement (PACE) methodology in the Neighborhood Development Activity
- Installed public transportation monitoring systems through the Vehicle Tracking System
- Upgraded Supply and Procurement modules of Oracle e-Business Suite software
- Created brochures and introduced effective social media marketing tools for women-owned and small businesses
- Solar panel maintenance plans for Wadi Rum camps at Aqaba's VTC
- Implementation of the Long-term Community Development Plan (2013-2017)
- Grant Manual and beneficiary handbook especially designed for Aqaba and available in Arabic.

ACED II used an *inclusive* approach to the implementation of the program's goals and objectives. Fundamental to this approach was the integration of gender throughout all three components of the program and using the Aqaba Community Development Fund (ACDF) to maximize outreach, support and participation of Aqabites. The program was further supported by fielding qualified Jordanian nationals to provide technical assistance throughout the life of ACED II.

At the outset of the program, the team carefully coordinated program activities with ASEZA, private businesses and the local community. The contract deliverable list was transparently shared with counterparts to ensure that all sides collaborated to accomplish the milestones set in ACED II's contract. The project set out to undertake an inclusive approach to activities by:

- **Engaging neighborhoods** through community engagement and participatory planning. Through the support to the Neighborhood Enhancement Teams (NETs), the project fostered an inclusive approach by allowing residents to prioritize needs and communicate these through Neighborhood Coordination Committees where members of ASEZA were present. ASEZA's Local

Community Development Directorate (LCDD) worked with the NETs to solve priority issues. Some of these activities included: awareness sessions on health matters, the dangers of illegal drug use, and women's law/rights to over 500 people; the creation of children's clubs and summer camps for over 400 children; addressing sewage and wastewater issues; street paving; improved public health facilities; and specialized education for over 620 children with disabilities.

- **Expanding our reach to private sector businesses** – at micro, small and medium levels – to strengthen private sector economic growth to improve livelihoods and increase employment in Aqaba. The program supported an inclusive methodology by working with membership based business associations, such as the Aqaba Hotel Association, the Syndicate of Mechanical Professions and the Wadi Rum Bedouin Cooperatives.
- **Integrating gender and youth engagement** throughout all program activities. ACED II conducted a robust gender assessment to better understand the needs of women in Aqaba and to ensure program interventions were carefully designed with gender considerations. For example, the gender assessment led to the addition of an activity

not originally planned in the work plan aimed to support women microenterprises in Aqaba where twenty-four local business women were able to participate in a workforce development training. In addition, the program understood the importance of youth participation and heavily tracked youth involvement with the NETs and ensured support to Aqaba's Vocational Training Center more succinctly targeted youth unemployment needs.

- **Consulting with the local government** through close and regular communication to ensure project goals continued to align with ASEZA's needs and expectations. ACED II staff worked closely to involve all relevant stakeholders within the government to reduce redundancies and maintain buy-in for project activities. ACED II coordinated with the 20 different branches within ASEZA as shown in the org chart below.

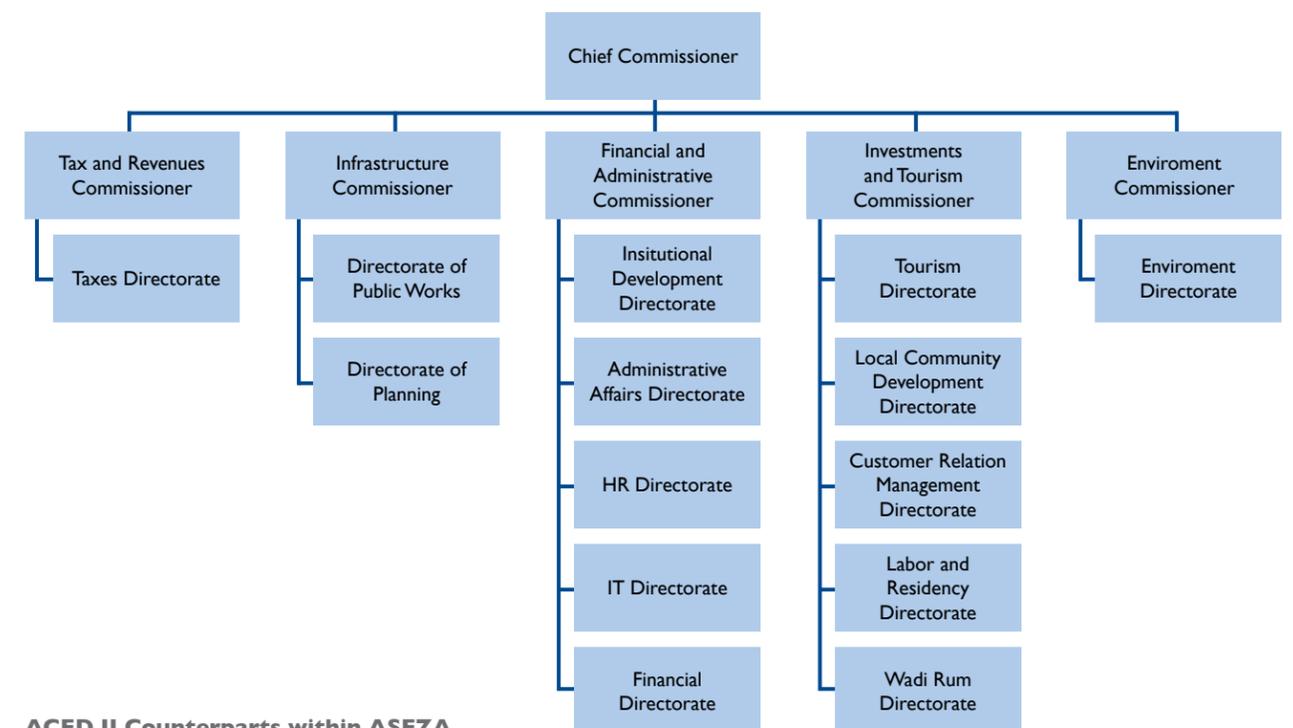
## AQABA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUND

ACED II used a grants fund called the **Aqaba Community Development Fund (ACDF)**. ACDF was capitalized with a pool of \$795,000 in funds, which served as a strategic tool for maximizing outreach to CSOs and residents in the Zone and increasing the number of Aqabite partners that participate in ACED II activities, especially in the areas of private sector and local community development. Utilizing 94% of this fund, ACED II's grants program continued the efforts that began under the ACED I program and focused primarily on the following activities:

1. Procurement for ASEZA to include bus shelters and ASEZA's radio station;
2. Support to associations such as the Aqaba Hotels Association (AHA), the

3. Direct support to Herafyah micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs);
4. Capacity building for Vocational Training Center (VTC) trainers and providing commodities to the VTC;
5. Support to the Neighborhood Development Activity (NDA), Neighborhood Enhancement Teams (NETs), and direct grant awards to qualified Civil Society Organization (CSOs).

Through the use of the ACDF and in accordance with the ACED II Grants Manual approved by USAID, ACED II provided capacity building trainings, tools and equipment to serve as a catalyst for economic growth for the private sector and local community organizations in Aqaba.



ACED II Counterparts within ASEZA



# OVERALL ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES

## INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- ✓ Improved access to public transportation by defining bus routes and installing 14 bus shelters which would serve as a model for ASEZA to install double the amount in the future.
- ✓ Streamlined government processes to reduce operational costs by developing comprehensive regulations and instructions needed to operate ASEZA's Vehicle Tracking System efficiently.
- ✓ Increased channels of communication between the government and people through renovating a broadcast studio for ASEZA and developing pilot broadcast content.
- ✓ Facilitated the development of service manuals, Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with utility companies, and provided capacity building to ASEZA's One-Stop Shop (OSS) employees in the fields of English language and call center training.
- ✓ Improved customer care and communication skills through the training of 80 ASEZA staff on different subjects aiming to enhance service delivery through the Quality Service Improvement Program (QSIP).
- ✓ Facilitated 10 ASEZA employees in becoming King Abdullah II Center for Excellence (KACE) Approved Excellence Mentors.
- ✓ Increased transparency and reduced barriers for conducting business by updating OSS services manuals to clarify service procedures to ASEZA's clients.
- ✓ Developed and customized a comprehensive Performance Management System (PMS) for ASEZA's Human Resource staff on all aspects of the new system, in addition to conducting orientation sessions for the new system for ASEZA's Directors and Section heads.
- ✓ Developed 35 HR Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in the Human Resources Manual in line with the Civil Service Bureau Regulations.

- ✓ Installed the Oracle E-Business Suite's™ Financial, Human Resources, Property Management, and Supply Chain (Inventory and Procurement) modules with full historical data migration of ASEZA's pre-existing data.
- ✓ Prepared a Revenue Forecasting and Costing Model for ASEZA which identifies feasible income sources to pay for ASEZA's on-going obligations within the Aqaba region, as well as to identify applicable cost reductions (when applicable) given recent legislation requiring ASEZA to send additional local revenue to the national government.

## PRIVATE SECTOR STRENGTHENED

- ✓ Enhanced the caliber of the tourism sector by assisting four hotels in becoming ISO22000 certified, setting an example for other hotels in Aqaba.
- ✓ Utilized grants to support the Aqaba Hotels Association (AHA) to develop localized, high-profile events to attract greater tourism revenues including three "Sweet Gathering in Aqaba" events which featured a wide range of Jordanian entertainment and activities of interest to the local population and tourist alike.
- ✓ Produced new promotional materials and publications for AHA.
- ✓ Provided environmentally friendly energy solutions in Wadi Rum and Disi through the procurement and installation of twelve solar panels to reduce the current dependency on fossil fuel powered generator.
- ✓ Conducted three technical skills and equipment needs assessment studies for local carpenters, blacksmiths and aluminum fabricators.
- ✓ Conducted specialized trainings on computer literacy, occupational safety, AutoCAD, and welding technology to improve the capacity of local tradesmen.
- ✓ Organized an Industry and Service Exhibition for local MSMEs featuring 36 SMP members, women-owned businesses, and other service and handicraft enterprises from the Herafyah and downtown Aqaba areas to encourage investors, partners and clients to engage with local businesses.
- ✓ Revitalized the mechanical and electricity labs at the Vocational Training Center (VTC); equipping both with 76 world-class educational equipment and tools including an advanced hybrid engine educational unit.

## ENHANCED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- ✓ Leveraged approximately \$200,000 from local government to support community development initiatives such as empowering women and youth, educational enhancement for students with disabilities, workforce development, health services and public service provision all of which were identified as community needs by the Neighborhood Enhancement Teams (NETs).
- ✓ Leveraged private sector CSR funding of \$238,000 through Microsoft's Citizenship Program for local CSOs.
- ✓ Added two new NETs to the Neighborhood Development Activity (NDA) programs to enhance civic participation.
- ✓ Sponsored an annual meeting between all NET representatives and the task force committee on September 16, 2013 to develop 2014 action plans.
- ✓ Organized a CSR workshop on May 12, 2014 for over sixty members of the NETs, CSOs, private sector and governmental associations to strengthen the relationships among the attendees to serve the local community.
- ✓ Updated the step-by-step NDA operational manual for neighborhoods and translated it from Arabic to English to be available for use by any USAID program or other implementation partner(s).
- ✓ Held regular meetings and monthly site visits with the participating CSOs to support the execution of their development plans.
- ✓ Developed a Monitoring and Evaluation manual for use during the implementation of the Long Term Community Development Plan (2013-2020) and trained all stakeholders.
- ✓ Implemented community-identified priority projects including: awareness sessions on health matters, illegal use of drugs and women's law and rights to over 500 people; the creation of children's clubs and summer camps for over 400 children; addressing sewage and wastewater issues; street paving; improved public health facilities; and specialized education for over 620 children with disabilities.



ACED II prepares the installation of a new bus shelter in Aqaba.

## PROGRAM ACTIVITIES: COMPONENT I

# INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As a relatively young governmental body, the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) is striving to become an effective public entity to provide for its constituents, work with the national bodies, and ensure long-term economic growth and development of the region. ACED II focused interventions in three key areas: improved service delivery to constituents, internal systems development, and long-term economic growth initiatives.

### IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY

#### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

##### **Increase Effectiveness of Aqaba's Public Transport Company**

The Aqaba Public Transport Company (APTC) was established in 2009, with a mandate to organize and develop the public transport sector within the ASEZ. APTC, which is owned by ASEZA, runs nine different bus routes and owns a total of 30 buses to serve the increasing demand for public transportation by residents and tourists alike.

ACED II worked with APTC to define bus routes and install bus shelters with information panels for local riders. ACED II procured and installed fourteen bus shelters throughout the city of Aqaba along the most important bus lines in the city. The locations of the shelters optimize access for locals and tourists.

##### **Implement Aseza's Vehicle Tracking System**

Under ACED I, the program supported ASEZA in developing

and installing a Vehicle Tracking System (VTS) with the necessary instructions and training to effectively use the system from a technical standpoint.

The ACED II team developed comprehensive regulations needed to oversee ASEZA's Vehicle Tracking System efficiently. The regulations were developed in accordance with ASEZA and central government by-laws regarding appropriate vehicle use, schedules for appropriate use, prohibitions on personal use, and procedures for addressing inappropriate use. ASEZA revised and approved the new regulations, and currently the regulations are being processed internally by ASEZA's Legal Affairs Directorate.

ACED II coordinated with ASEZA in the adoption of these procedures to ensure proper use and maximum effectiveness of the system. However, Jordan's central government announced new directions for unifying vehicle tracking management in all governmental entities. As such, this will likely change ASEZA's direction in enforcing the regulations drafted by ACED II.

# SUCCESS STORY

## “Voice of Aqaba” Aqaba’s First Radio Station



Through the USAID/Aqaba Community and Economic Development II (ACED II) Program a number of innovative economic development projects are being implemented that address issues related to institutional development, micro, small and medium sized enterprise support and community development. One such project is “The Voice of Aqaba” radio station that was established with the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority’s (ASEZA) headquarters.

The Voice of Aqaba Radio station is the first local community station benefiting Aqaba and surrounding towns in the governorate. It will provide programming and promote community awareness for the city’s youth, families, visitors and investors.

This radio station will broadcast promotional programs for the Aqaba Special Economic Zone, educational and awareness programs, and local and international news. It will serve as a means of interaction between ASEZA and the Aqaba community.

After the USAID/ACED II Program finalized constructing and insulating the studios and assisted in the station content development, ASEZA assumed management of the project.

*The Voice of Aqaba started its pilot broadcasts in mid-August 2013 on 93.1 FM.*



**The Voice of Aqaba main studio and control room.**

**“The radio station project is a dream coming true to the people of Aqaba, it will be an important media platform that will transmit the voice and dreams of Aqaba.”**

**ENG.FARID AL EKOUR  
ASEZA PROJECT MANAGER**



**USAID makes a visit to the newly refinished radio station.**

### FRONT LINE COMMUNICATIONS

#### Complete a New Radio Station

ACED II renovated a broadcast studio for ASEZA to establish a new communications platform and provide quality communications between ASEZA and the local community. Housed within ASEZA’s offices, ACED II renovated the broadcast studio with new air conditioning units, specialized acoustics, and insulation in accordance with international standards. The renovations allowed ASEZA to install and begin using state of the art radio station transmission equipment that had

been warehoused and un-used for several years.

Then, for the first time on August 21, 2013, “Voice of Aqaba,” the only local radio broadcast station, aired a pilot broadcast on 93.1 FM. With the potential listening audience of over 100,000 local residents, ACED II continued to support the development of the radio station following this initial broadcast. ACED II finalized the program schedule and content in January 2014 in coordination with the Radio Station staff.

Furthermore, ACED II assisted ASEZA in developing the operational plans, radio station

internal staffing plan, initial staff capacity building plans, and conducted a training needs assessment. ASEZA staff now operates the radio station. The station runs pre-recorded programs and songs on a daily basis.

#### Quality Service Improvement

Striving to become one of the top regional destinations for investment, tourism and residential real estate development, ASEZA is determined to offer better and easier means of doing business than its neighbors. In order to reduce transaction barriers, ASEZA aims to improve the services provided through its One Stop Shop (OSS). The OSS is a designated location where multiple business



ACED II leads a training to the future call center staff.

and resident services are offered, improving the ease of doing business and therefore attracting investors.

ACED II facilitated the development of service manuals, Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with utility companies, and provided capacity building to OSS employees in the fields of English language and call center training.

**Soft Skills Development.** As one of the key initiatives in soft-skills development, ACED II worked with ASEZA's Institutional Development Directorate (IDD) and the OSS to address their staff's ability to interact with customers both in person and on the phone.

ACED II supervised and supported ASEZA's Institutional Development Directorate in the implementation of selected Quality Service Improvement Program (QSIP) initiatives which included improving customer care and communication skills through the training of 80 ASEZA staff on different subjects aiming to enhance service delivery. These subjects included customer services skills, communication skills, English language and organizational excellence modeling/implementation.

Special training on customer services skills was provided for ASEZA front line staff that interacts directly with citizens and clients. The training

was provided under the QSIP and focused on building the One Stop Shop staff capacities in the areas of serving customers and providing high quality services. In total, 43 of ASEZA employees attended the training, 40% of which were women.

In addition, the ACED II QSIP expert supervised the execution of an ASEZA customer satisfaction survey. The survey results served to guide ASEZA's future development efforts and targeted areas for service improvement.

ACED II provided two courses one customer services skills training for 43 staff expected to directly interface with customers. The course

addressed communication skills, work ethics, how to handle tough customers, how to gather feedback and how to improve service.

ACED II also held two call center skills training courses in March and April 2014. Attended by seven participants selected by ASEZA expected to work in the call center when it opens, ACED II addressed topics including ASEZA's call center readiness, qualifications of ASEZA's call center agents, skills needed to run the call center, and call center agent skills. Additionally, following discussions and analysis of the OSS' needs, ACED II agreed to provide English language training courses to OSS staff. ACED II provided three different courses for varying levels of English speakers for over 40 participants in December 2013. In December 2013, English language training was provided for the OSS staff in order to improve their communication skills and enable them to better interact with investors and foreigners, 36 ASEZA employees were trained; 11 of whom were females.

Additionally, as a part of the QSIP initiative, ACED II finalized the trainings in coordination with the King Abdullah II Center for Excellence (KACE) to certify mentors and assessors. KACE, the only entity authorized entity to provide Official Excellence Training and Certifications Excellence in Jordan according to the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Standards, provided the trainings. In January 2014, ten ASEZA employees (some of them from the group of certified mentors) attended the official Excellence Certified Assessor training. All ten, including three women, passed the

examinations and requirements, received their certification as Assessors. These Assessors are now capable of determining the level of achievement in improvements that ASEZA has made and will continue to make.

**Systems Development.** In parallel to the above mentioned capacity building activities, ACED II worked closely with the ASEZA's Institutional Development Directorate (IDD), to update OSS services manuals. The updates to these manuals clarify service procedures to ASEZA's clients and enhance transparency in public services provision. The manuals describe the service details for beneficiaries and instruct them on how to access the services with step-by-step instructions on how to apply including identifying the documents needed, the services provider, fees (if any), and any other information relevant to expedite the process. This included developing and updating service manuals for ASEZA's Residency and Work Directorate and ASEZA's Architecture and Planning Directorate that provides their services through the OSS.

ACED II created the service manuals for these entities in the form of a template for ASEZA to use for other divisions in the future. A key aspect of the service manuals is that they are also designed to identify other public service providers and beneficiaries to decrease redundancy in ASEZA's service provision and begin the integration of information systems. Based on this model, ASEZA has the building blocks upon which to be able to build its own Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

ASEZA's service improvement teams used the QSIP activities to support

the One Stop Shop (OSS) activities. Under QSIP, ACED II restructured the layout of the OSS by allotting each counter to serve one specific purpose based on the workload and number of transactions per day. The QSIP activities focused on how to lessen the burden on beneficiaries and create a more efficient process including the installation of an ATM and new photocopiers on site for the beneficiaries to use. ACED II also oversaw the activation of the flat screen televisions to broadcast information to the customers waiting for service as well as the programming of automatic queuing systems.

## INTERNAL SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

### PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (PMS)

In the past, ASEZA implemented its own human resources and performance management system. However, following the release of the 2012 Jordanian Civil Service Bureau regulations, ASEZA became obligated to conform with the policies and procedures used throughout the country.

ACED II worked with ASEZA on the development and customization of a comprehensive Performance Management System (PMS) in line with these regulations. After finalizing the PMS, ACED II provided comprehensive training for ASEZA's HR staff on all aspects of the new system, in addition to conducting orientation sessions for the new system for ASEZA's Directors and Section heads.

ACED II also provided intensive training and capacity building activities on strategic planning and HR policies. Training

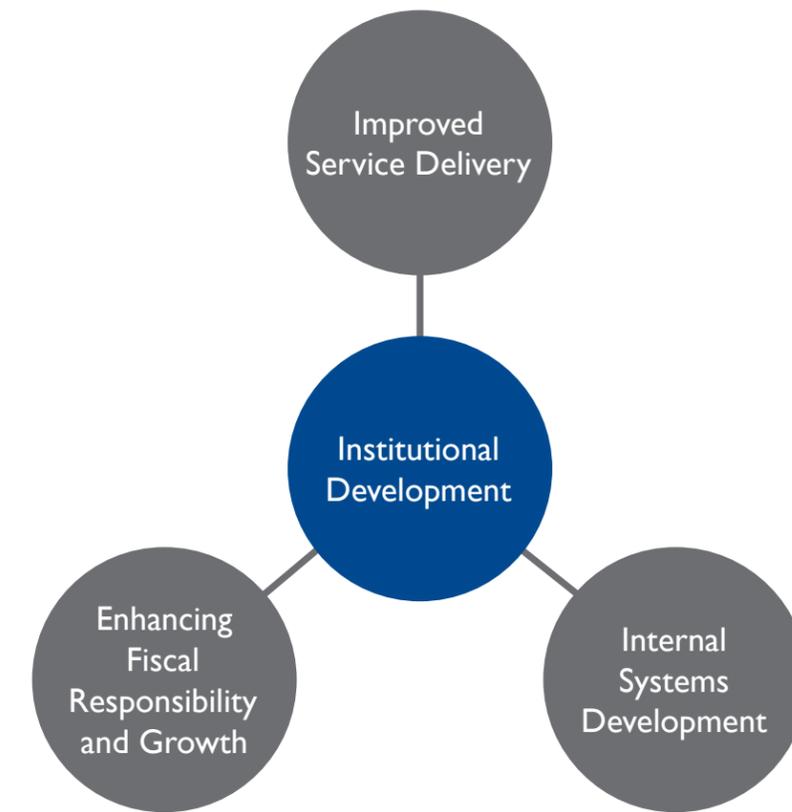
topics covered human resources planning, recruitment, training and development, linking individual performance to strategic planning, and effective interviewing techniques.

In line with the Civil Service Bureau Regulations, ACED II also worked with ASEZA to develop 35 HR Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in their HR Manual. The SOPs included procedures related to the main HR functions such as preparing training plans, assessing training needs, evaluating training, preparing job descriptions, and performance evaluation. The ACED II HR consultant coached the HR senior staff at ASEZA on the Civil Services Bureau Regulations and Bylaws incorporated into this manual as well as how the complete evaluation system functions. ASEZA officially received the system on November 19, 2013, and began to implement the new system on its own.

### IMPLEMENT AN UPGRADED VERSION OF ORACLE E-BUSINESS SUITE

ACED II supported the development of internal governmental systems to improve transparency and improve customer service delivery. ASEZA suffers from outdated systems and weak controls breeding an environment susceptible to corruption.

In 2005, ASEZA upgraded applications for Oracle e-Business Suite (EBS). At the beginning of ACED II, ASEZA was using Oracle version 11.5.7 (release environment 11i), and were not eligible to receive technical support from the Oracle Corporation unless the system was upgraded to release Oracle environment 12.



ACED II began providing support to ASEZA in mid-2013 by updating four modules: HR, finance, inventory and procurement. In coordination with ASEZA's IT Directorate and in line with the ACED II work plan, ACED II fielded a team of eight specialized consultants and an IT Project Manager housed within ASEZA. The team began by assessing and mapping business cycles with the various ASEZA directorates and sections (mainly finance and HR). ACED II, with the support of the IT Directorate, moved forward with the process of implementing modifications to, and/or re-engineering of the business cycles,

where necessary, to comply with best practices and international standards required of the Oracle EBS R12 upgrade process.

ACED II implemented the Oracle EBS Financial, HR, Property Management, and Supply Chain (Inventory and Procurement) modules with full historical data migration of ASEZA's files. ACED II also introduced of a new Property Management module to ASEZA's Oracle system.

On the 23rd of March 2014, ASEZA and ACED II started the first phase of the "Go Live" exercise with the new system. The success of the Go Live exercise confirmed that ASEZA's

Oracle EBS existing modules (HR, Finance and Inventory) were fully upgraded to version R12 on ASEZA's old HP servers.

Following this Go Live phase, ACED II also oversaw the transfer of the new upgraded system to new IBM servers. With the transfer to the new servers, the upgraded existing modules of HR, Finance and Inventory, and the newly designed Property Management and Supply Chain (including Procurement) were installed and ready for customization and testing.

The final phase of the Oracle upgrade was to ensure that all new functionalities were working



ASEZA staff learn about financial forecasting.

on the new servers. ACED II worked closely with ASEZA's IT Directorate to implement all Oracle functionalities through the end of July 2014. However, at the time, ASEZA began reviewing their internal files and decided to delay the implementation of the final user test of the financial module. ACED II worked closely with USAID representatives and ASEZA to establish a plan to ensure that when ASEZA decides to pursue this final module, they will have the human and financial resources needed to do so. As for the other modules, ASEZA staff is becoming familiar with how to use the platform on a daily basis and are ironing out minor technical issues to make the system run more smoothly.

## ENHANCING FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND GROWTH

### IMPROVE ASEZA'S FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

ASEZA is the financially and administratively autonomous institution responsible for the management and regulation of the ASEZ. Five ministerial-level commissioners, each one responsible for a major area of regulatory or operational activity, govern the ASEZ. ASEZA has had the authority to raise its own revenue since it became operational in 2001. Now, ASEZA's revenue is divided into "own source revenue" – locally derived revenue exclusive to, and collected by, ASEZA including

fees and licenses, lease income, and other; and "shared revenue" – revenue shared between ASEZA and the Government of Jordan including sales and special (excise) taxes, income tax, and land and building tax. The ACED II Financial Management Specialist reviewed and finalized ASEZA's Financial Policies and Procedures Manual which includes all policies related to financial transactions such as purchasing, payment, and invoicing. The specialist then conducted two workshops for 20 of ASEZA's financial directorate staff to review and discuss its content in May 2013.

Furthermore, ASEZA and the central government have agreed to share Aqaba-generated revenues on a 50%-50% basis. In the face of this growing division of revenue, there

is a serious and immediate need for ASEZA to identify every feasible income source to pay for quality public services and other obligations within the Aqaba region. Without revenue restructuring, ASEZA will experience financial difficulties in the future. The ACED II Public Sector Financial Management Specialist prepared a Revenue Forecasting and Costing Model for ASEZA. This Revenue Forecasting and Costing Model identifies feasible income sources to pay for its on-going obligations within the Aqaba region, as well as to identify potential cost reductions given that ASEZA now splits its revenue with the central government. The model takes into consideration all of ASEZA's comments and requirements and has been presented to ASEZA to be utilized for ASEZA's financial planning.

In January 2014, following the completion of the financial forecasting model, ACED II conducted a training on financial forecasting for 20 targeted members of ASEZA. However, because of the heightened interest on behalf of ASEZA, ACED II extended the training to over 70 ASEZA staff members, including commissioners, directors and section heads of revenue-generating directorates.

### ASSIST ASEZA IN ENCOURAGING INVESTMENT AND GROWTH

In an effort to facilitate dialogue between ASEZA and the private sector and to encourage investment in the Aqaba Special Economic Zone, ASEZA needs to develop its relationships with public service providers and private sector organizations. ACED II conducted a comprehensive workshop on

October 7, 2013 for the OSS, the public utilities (Water and Electricity), and other major service providers that are linked to the OSS such as the Public Security Directorate and Civil Defense. Additionally, ACED II supported the public utility providers--namely water, electricity, and communication providers. ACED II hosted a Utilities Partnership Workshop on October 7, 2013 where the Institutional Development Directorate, Customer Relationship Management Directorate, and IT Directorate of ASEZA and representatives from the utility companies met to discuss new approaches to utility provision and identify new areas for cooperation.

The purpose of this workshop was to identify areas of cooperation and service improvement utilizing ASEZA's One Stop Shop. The attendees agreed on implementing a systematic communications mechanism, assigned a series of focal points, agreed on a series of regularly scheduled meetings, and amended the current MOUs between ASEZA and the utilities to improve their cooperation in service delivery.

The initial improvements will include online systems and data integration, in addition to physical representation of utilities and partners in the One Stop Shop through dedicated counters/windows.

Following this event, the utility companies assigned points of contacts to represent each utility to ASEZA. By April 2014, the Contact Officers and ASEZA drafted a Memorandum of Understanding addressing how the entities will work together in the future, and deliver their services through ASEZA's One Stop Shop (OSS).

## PRIVATE SECTOR

The city of Aqaba is a growing tourism and port hub, both nationally and regionally. However, Aqaba's private sector requires further support to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that have not yet adopted modern management or marketing principles, effectively hindering chances of success in the global economy. Existing sector associations also face numerous challenges that threaten the growth and prosperity of different sectors, including services and product quality, lack of qualified human resources, lack of market access and effective partnerships, networking, and linkages.

ACED II supported several sector-specific associations, Aqaba's MSME's and the local vocational institute to ensure that Aqabites are better poised to join the modern workforce and to improve the competitiveness of the private sector in Aqaba. ACED II worked specifically with members of the tourism industry and the manufacturing/logistical services sector. ACED II also worked closely with women-owned businesses to increase their presence and competitiveness in the marketplace.

### IMPROVE CAPACITY OF SECTOR ASSOCIATIONS

Sector associations in Aqaba are in need of capacity building to advocate on behalf of their members. As such, ACED II supported various business and sector associations to respond to this challenge.

### TOURISM SECTOR

Aqaba's tourism industry faces numerous challenges that threaten the prosperity of the sector, including seasonality, high levels of competition from neighboring countries and lack of qualified human resources. To overcome these challenges, ACED II supported the sector's efforts to achieve its vision of providing tourists and hotel guests with high-quality service that will encourage them to extend their visits and return to Aqaba.

### AQABA HOTELS ASSOCIATIONS

With the support of a grant mechanism, ACED II continued providing technical assistance and guidance to the Aqaba Hotels Association (AHA) as the growing representative body of the tourism industry in Aqaba. AHA, which aims to better the status of all subsectors of the tourism industry, received funding for providing capacity building initiatives, promotional/marketing activities, tourism events, and facilitating networking activities between the private sector and local government.

### Customer Service Delivery

In cooperation with AHA, ACED II also conducted customer service training programs for participants from different tourism sub-sectors including, hotels, restaurants, tour operators, water sports, and recreation services.

## SUCCESS STORY

### Solar Power Lights 12 Wadi Rum Tourist Camps



Clean energy replaces costly non-renewable sources of energy.

Wadi Rum and Disi are desert and mountainous areas located in the south of Jordan. They are popular for sightseeing, outdoor sports such as rock-climbing and trekking, and for its connection to Lawrence of Arabia. The area is now internationally recognized as a world heritage site and is one of Jordan's important tourist destinations. The influx of tourists to this once isolated area has substantially increased the financial stability of the Bedouin people who rely heavily on local tourism as a source of income.

Most Bedouin camps in Wadi Rum and Disi depend heavily on non-renewable sources of energy that are costly and difficult both to obtain and maintain. They depend on burning fossil fuel to meet their energy demands for lighting, cooking, heating, and hot water. In addition to environmental concerns, these energy sources emit gases and noise detracting from the tourists' experience.

The ACED program conducted a comprehensive feasibility study for developing "green power" solutions that would eradicate the use of diesel generators to power lighting systems in the remote desert camps. The ACED II Program, in cooperation with the environment directorate of ASEZA, implemented the study results and installed the solar energy power systems at twelve camps in Wadi Rum and Disi area.

Each camp received a 500 Watt solar power system that is sufficient to replace diesel generators and provide lighting power supply for the camp facilities. This environmentally-friendly solution restored the natural quiet of the desert night and enriched the eco-tourism experience of the tourists.

**"It has been very good for business. The tourists like the idea of clean solar energy.**

**There no smell and no noise."**

**ZAID JUAOAN  
CAMP OWNER**



Entertainers perform at the Sweet Gathering in Aqaba street event.

Training included housekeeping and supervisory skills, and top management skills, marketing, financial management and HRM.

AHA also began the process for ISO 22000:2005: Food Safety and Quality Management at its member hotels. ACED II and AHA, in coordination with the USAID/ Siyaha Project worked with four hotels to prepare for the certification. Following an assessment by an independent auditor, all four hotels, (Aquavista Hotel, Days Inn, Aqaba Gulf Hotel and Captain's Hotel), became ISO22000 certified, making them a safer and more desirable place for clients.

#### Marketing and Promotional Events

AHA conducted three tourism promotion and networking activities under the title of "Sweet Gathering

in Aqaba" in cooperation with ASEZA Tourism Directorate. The main objective of these activities was to introduce a new product into the annual tourism calendar of Aqaba to enrich the tourist experience and lead to repeat visits. AHA will repeat the event on a quarterly basis and promote it as a regular event. These events were conducted in cooperation with the Tourism Directorate at ASEZA and other stakeholders from the private sector.

Additionally, AHA produced new promotional materials and publications (brochures and maps) which describe the association's vision, mission, and objectives. They also outline AHA's contribution to the hotel sector and tourism industry in Aqaba.

#### Public Sector Linkages

Furthermore, as the Aqaba Hotel Association (AHA) became a core player in the tourism industry in Aqaba, it signed an agreement with the Aqaba Development Company (ADC), and ASEZA's Chief Commissioner on April 9, 2014. The agreement specified a piece of land (70,000 m<sup>2</sup>) on Aqaba's south beach for AHA to create a complex of three star hotels and commercial/entertainment facilities. The agreement was a good example of a public private partnership which will have a positive impact on the tourism sector. It is also a good sign that ASEZA is actively looking to improve networking channels with Aqaba private sector.

**"We suffered from poor lighting in our camps because we used gas, kerosene, and lanterns, and it was dangerous. Then, USAID provided us with four solar panels. After the first four from USAID, we bought another four solar panels for our camp to have sufficient lighting after dinner so our customers can enjoy the stars without any disturbance [from the sound of the generators]"**

**MR. MEZYED AL ZALABYAEH, CAMP OWNER IN WADI RUM**

#### ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY SOLUTIONS IN WADI RUM CAMPS

Wadi Rum and Disi are in a remote region full of mountains and hills located in the southern Jordan desert. The area is popular for its natural beauty and is a popular eco-tourism and rock-climbing enthusiast destination. The area is now also one of Jordan's important tourist destinations, and attracts an increasing number of foreign tourists, particularly trekkers and climbers, camel and horse safaris, and day-trippers from Aqaba or Petra. The influx of tourists to this once isolated area has substantially increased economic opportunity for the local community.

Tourist camps in Wadi Rum and Disi currently depend mainly on burning fossil fuel to meet their energy needs for lighting, cooking, space heating, and domestic hot water, and transportation purposes. In addition to environmental problems, both emissions and noise, these practices have a negative impact on the touristic experience.

Following an environmental review, ACED II procured and installed 500 watt Photovoltaic (PV) systems for twelve camps in Wadi Rum and Disi camps to replace the current dependency on fossil fuels. All PV systems were tested and successfully commissioned.

ACED II held a training workshop on PV maintenance for the camp owners to ensure proper functioning of these systems. An additional training course was given to ASEZA and the Aqaba Vocational Training Center staff to build their capacity in PV system installation, maintenance and testing.

#### MANUFACTURING AND LOGISTICAL SERVICES SECTOR – SYNDICATE OF MECHANICAL PROFESSIONS

One of the core objectives of the ACED II program is to support employment and income generating programs for small businesses in the ASEZ. As part of this effort, the ACED II Program provided technical assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Herafyah Area of Aqaba through the Syndicate of Mechanical Professions (SMP).

#### Capacity Building

ACED II conducted three technical needs assessment studies for the carpenters, blacksmiths and aluminum fabricators members of the SMP. According to these studies, technical assistance, training and capacity building activities were provided to nearly 50 SMP members including computer literacy, occupational safety, AutoCAD, and welding technology.

**Computer Literacy Training.** Many members of the SMP lack basic computer skills necessary to function in today's society. Consequently, ACED II provided a computer literacy training program through a local training provider, the Noor Al-Hussain Foundation, to SMP members from the Herafyah area. The training focused primarily on basic computer skills and how to use programs including Microsoft Office to improve their work. The training covered various subjects including spreadsheets, word processing, Internet browsing, and multimedia presentations. Participants learned to use specific programs including Windows, Internet Explorer, Word, Excel and PowerPoint. At the completion of the training, each participant was subject to a test to

assess their progress. All participants successfully passed the test and satisfied the requirements to be granted a personal computer for use in their businesses. The recipients now use the computers to improve service delivery and to market their services through social media sites.

**Occupational Safety Training.**

While negotiating a grant agreement with the SMP, ACED II and the SMP noted that many members lacked overall training in occupational safety. This training was offered primarily to the same participants who attended the computer literacy training. The SMP members learned about occupational safety, work related accidents, chemical hazards in the workplace, fire prevention and first aid. This activity was conducted in coordination with the Aqaba Vocational Training Center (VTC). The VTC was able to provide its premises for the SMP members to learn and practice these new concepts.

**Auto-Mechanics Training.** One of the challenges facing the SMP in Aqaba is the high turnover of workers. In partnership with ASEZA, the VTC, and the SMP, the ACED II Program launched a pilot workforce development initiative to revamp and develop the car mechanical and electrical training workshops at the VTC and to build the capacity of local auto-mechanics and electricians in Aqaba. ACED II contracted a specialized training institution to provide a Training of Trainers (TOT) for the AVTI technical staff, and a group of Herafyah professionals from the electrical and mechanical trades. The TOT equipped local trainers with the skills to train other professionals and students at the VTC. They learned about identifying training

needs, methods and types of trainers, communication skills, the differences in training adults and youth, and how to prepare training plans and topics.

These professional trainers—ten members of the SMP and four from the VTC—started providing technical training for a group of electrical and mechanical practitioners as well as VTC graduates. As a result, ACED II certified 24 members from the SMP and equipped them with knowledge and practical training on new hi-tech items to share with other professionals and students. These members received particular training on electronic injection and auto diagnosis, automatic gearboxes, anti-lock braking systems (ABS) and hybrid engines.

**Autocad Training.** The AutoCAD training program was subcontracted to a local training institution by the SMP to develop the skills of the labor force. The training institution provided comprehensive AutoCAD training for 20 SMP members to learn about the interaction, documentation design, connectivity, and general enhancements. Twelve participants successfully completed the training. The training program topics included:

- Auto-CAD interface
- Coordinate system
- Display controls
- Object properties
- Utility and inquiry tools
- Collaboration tools
- Model documentation, and
- Rendering.

**Welding Technology Training.**

In cooperation with the Aqaba Vocational Training Center, the SMP conducted welding training



Members of the SMP learn about new technologies like AutoCAD to improve their daily work.

**“We took advanced courses in welding such as argon, to learn how to weld different kinds of metals. The courses gave us the ability to raise our standards and the caliber of our work.”**

**MR. SAMIR EL SA’II,  
CHAIRMAN OF THE PUBLIC  
SYNDICATE OF MECHANICAL  
PROFESSIONS-AQABA**

for 16 SMP members. The training was conducted in Arabic. The training program covered various topics, including:

- Blacksmithing and decorative welding technics using MIG welding machines including the use of consumable wire electrodes and shielding gas in order to create quick, strong welds.
- Sheet metal welding technics using TIG welding machines in order to weld thin metal sections including stainless steel, copper, aluminum and magnesium.
- Plasma cutting techniques to cut the metal and other materials smoothly and quickly.

Following the trainings and deployment of the new welding machines, five of the welding firms reported a decrease of nearly 10% in their operational costs.

**Product Development Activities**

Based on the training and capacity building activities, forty members of the SMP and Herafyah workshops benefited from receiving modern equipment and tools that would assist them in providing better quality products and services and expand their target market.

**Personal Computers.** All fifteen participants in the computer training program received personal computers, which they use in their work. Many of them started a web page or established a Facebook page to advertise their work. Some of them also are using the PC in their accounting and bookkeeping. Others even benefited from the Auto-CAD training and started developing their own product standards and now present their offers for clients using computerized designs.

**Car Diagnostic Scan Tools.**

Following the certification program of auto-mechanics, twenty participants passed an exam and received a new scan tool, which they use in their work in automotive repairs. These tools enable them to accurately diagnose automotive problems and identify the proper solution. All new cars need this type of tool in order to quickly identify problems and solutions.

**Welding Machines.** Each of the sixteen participants in the welding training program received a new, state-of-the-art arc welding machine. Twelve of these work in the blacksmithing and decorative metal profession. The remaining four were in the car painting profession.

# SUCCESS STORY

## Women-Owned Businesses Join the Industry and Service Exhibition



**A woman prepares her display at the third SMP Industry and Service Exhibition in order to promote sales and establish new market linkages.**

Since the event's inception, the Syndicate of Mechanical Profession (SMP) has limited participation in the Industry and Service Exhibition to its registered male members. The Exhibition is a pinnacle event that showcases the available skills and services of local craftsmen to investors, vendors, and clients in Aqaba.

The USAID/Jordan Aqaba Community and Economic Development (ACED II) Program worked with key stakeholders to understand why a growing number of women-owned businesses in Aqaba were not able to participate in the event. ACED II then provided a grant to provide targeted capacity building trainings on marketing and sales, business management, and how to network to 26 local women-owned businesses.

Simultaneously, ACED II worked with the SMP leadership and other stakeholders to create an environment that promotes a gender balance and encouraged the women to register to participate in the third SMP Industry and Service Exhibition.

At the third Industry and Service Exhibition that took place at Movenpick Hotel Aqaba during the period from 5th – 7th May 2014, around twenty (20) women-owned businesses participated for the first time. Their participation in the event enabled them to, not only promote their products through direct sales, but also connect them to potential new markets and clients including locals and tourists.

The event was so successful that many of the women requested to extend the Exhibition's duration and all insisted in participation in future exhibitions. Their requests were received positively by other stakeholders as well, including the SMP Chairman, who promised "I will ensure that these women owned businesses will participate in all future exhibitions."

**“This program played a big role in letting us know our rights and responsibilities as an association. Through the training, we learned about HR, marketing, time management and product design. This helped us become successful in our business. We can deal better with our customers and donors. We’ve received four sewing machines and this will hopefully lead to a new project.”**

**MS. QUTNAH AL HUWEITAT, HEAD OF DISI WOMEN ASSOCIATION, (AQABA BUSINESS WOMEN (WAEDAT))**

### MARKET DEVELOPMENT AND INCOME GENERATION

One of the core objectives of the ACED II program was to support employment and income generating programs for small businesses in the Herafyah and downtown Aqaba areas. ACED II worked closely with women-owned businesses and industry associations to strengthen organizations and provide opportunities for market linkages and growth.

### WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES

Business women in Aqaba still face a number of constraints in trying to grow and expand their businesses which include a lack of business management skills, qualified human resources, marketing capabilities, and other skills. In order to address

these constraints and further enhance the integration of women and gender equality in the private sector, the ACED II issued a grant specifically to develop women's business skills. Through the grant, 18 women improved their technical skills and were equipped with necessary tools in order to compete in the local market.

Following discussions with local community leaders, ACED II identified common themes and worked with local grantee, WAEDAT, to create a customized training program to address the skills gap that these business women in Aqaba face. A group of 24 women were nominated by their peers and then joined the two week training program in June 2014. Eighteen of the women completed the entire two week training. Among other topics, the women studied communication skills, human resources management, and product design.

Upon completion of the training and capacity building activities the WAEDAT and ACED II team evaluated each of the business women's needs in order to identify trainings, tools, and equipment necessary for their business development. With their business plans in place, ACED II's grant sponsored on-the-job training and the business women were granted the needed equipment related to their product development needs and assessment results.

### INDUSTRY AND SERVICE EXHIBITION

The growing industrial sector in Aqaba suffers from the inability to create strong market linkages. As a way to overcome this challenge, the ACED II Program organized an Industry and Service Exhibition for local MSMEs.

### WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES IN AQABA THRIVE WITH APPROPRIATE TOOLS AND TIPS

- Cristina Handmade Soap is producing new items and reports increased sales of 35% because of improved product quality and finishing and plans to expand into new a market in Amman.
- Da'ad Najeh Sultan of Die'et Jdodana Restaurant reports better operational efficiency with an improved accounting and billing system, better customer relationships, and new products resulting in increased sales of 25%.
- Sarab for Handicrafts introduced new high-quality products enabling the business to expand in the current market and entry into new markets. Sarab, the owner, established new contracts with local schools to make uniforms and crochet products, increasing her sales by 20%.
- Entisar Rasheed Abu-Nigum of Entisar Abu-Nigum for Tapestries reports that she is renting and will soon open a new workshop with a variety of large, high quality products. She has increased her sales by 10%.
- Hanan Naeem Al-ghaimat of Hanan Dghaimat for Colored Sand introduced new products (using wax with colored sand), improved the finishing and overall quality of her products, and entered into new markets resulting in increased sales by 25%.

# SUCCESS STORY

## Creating Opportunities for Life-Long Success Through Vocational Training



Students and practitioners explore the recently procured hybrid engine unit.

Vocational training in Aqaba, Jordan was a forgotten art. Many of the students that lacked the academic qualifications to excel in high school were sent off to vocational training to learn a trade; but they were to learn their trade merely by reading textbooks. The Vocational Training Center (VTC) in Aqaba barely had any equipment for the students to on which to practice and develop the skills they need to succeed in life and the textbooks were often outdated and unrelated to needs facing the modern-day market demand.

The USAID/Jordan Aqaba Community and Economic Development (ACED II) Program worked closely with the VTC and Aqaba's practicing professionals at the Syndicate of Mechanical Professions (SMP) to identify the tools, equipment, and training needs of the Center to adequately prepare students for jobs after graduation. Based on their input, ACED II revamped the mechanical and electricity labs at the VTC and equipped both with world-class educational equipment including an advanced hybrid engine educational unit on which the students could begin to practice the information they learned in their textbooks.

Recognizing the value of the day-to-day practitioners, ACED II and the VTC encouraged the senior members of the SMP to attend the ACED II sponsored a Training of Trainers (ToT) course. With adequate training qualifications on the new equipment, both the SMP senior professionals and VTC trainers can now train the students at the VTC on the latest market trends.

Today, students are now having a combination of theoretical learning mixed with hands-on training on topics including, welding, auto diagnostics and repair, and solar panel maintenance—opening the door for a lifetime of opportunity after graduation.

The event featured 36 SMP member representatives, women-owned businesses, and other service and handicraft enterprises from the Herafyah and downtown Aqaba areas. The Industry and Service Exhibition attracted nearly 3,000 visitors and was widely covered in the local media.

The exhibitors had the chance to make direct contacts and business linkages with visitors from other business owners, contractors and the local community.

### ENHANCE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Vocational training in Aqaba is often viewed as a place to send failing students to remove them from the academic school system. Students, who lack the academic qualifications and deemed unlikely to succeed in school, are sent off to learn a vocational trade. However, the vocational training centers are ill-equipped to provide the students with opportunities for success and personal growth. In the vocational training centers, students learn by reading materials but hardly ever work directly with the items on which they are trained work.

ACED II worked closely with the Vocational Training Center (VTC)

in Aqaba and Aqaba's practicing professionals at the SMP to identify the tools, equipment, and training needs of the VTC to adequately prepare students for jobs after graduation.

On May 9, 2013, ASEZA, the VTC and the SMP signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ASEZA and the Ministry of Labor. According to the MOU, ASEZA would perform rehabilitation works for the VTC's automobile repair laboratory infrastructure while ACED II would procure and install new training equipment and tools, build the capacity of trainers from the VTC and the private sector, and involve private sector professionals in developing and conducting the training programs for VTC students. Together, these initiatives were designed to ensure that VTC graduates would have the qualifications to meet real market needs.

ACED II supported both Aqaba's VTC and SMP through revamping the mechanical and electricity labs at the VTC; equipping both with 76 pieces of world-class educational equipment and tools including an advanced hybrid engine educational unit.

ACED II then delivered a comprehensive training of trainers (ToT) on the new equipment for 14

VTC trainers—four from the VTC and ten from the private sector to enable the practitioners to teach at the VTC. ACED II also trained 14 SMP professionals and 29 recent VTC graduates to enhance their technical abilities and to enable them to serve as mentors for current and future students.

Furthermore, under the workforce development initiative, ACED II along with ASEZA and the VTC, trained 24 car mechanic professionals from the SMP in the area of fixing and maintaining new automobile systems including electronic injection and auto diagnosis, automatic gearboxes, anti-lock braking systems (ABS) and hybrid engines. The mechanics are now qualified to provide maintenance of new automobile systems and are also trained on maintenance of new technology such as hybrid engines.

Based on a request from the VTC, the ACED II program also installed one solar energy power system module at the home electricity laboratory in the VTC. Four of the VTC staff and trainers were trained on the PV system. This module is used to train the VTC students and equip them with new skills in line with new market demands, including maintaining the solar panel systems installed in Wadi Rum.

### EMPLOYMENT AFTER GRADUATION

After graduating from the Aqaba VTC, all 40 graduates found employment within the SMP's membership. Two of the graduates even opened their own shops.

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Following the establishment of ASEZA, local municipalities were reorganized and lost much of their say in the decision-making processes related to their neighborhoods. ACED II worked closely with ASEZA to support the Neighborhood Development Activity (NDA), a participatory action tool aimed at mobilizing Aqaba's community through neighborhood engagement. Under ACED I, the Program coordinated with ASEZA's Local Community Development Directorate (LCDD) to begin forming local neighborhood enhancement teams (NETs) to institutionalize the participatory decision making approach. Specifically, ACED II worked through the NDA to mobilize and empower local community volunteers through conducting community surveys and forming gender-balanced NETs. The program and ASEZA also engaged civil society organizations (CSOs) to support prioritized local needs including orphan care, disability issues and women's rights. Finally, the end of ACED I saw the development of the Neighborhood Coordination Committees (NCC)—a combination of ministers and counselors from ASEZA charged with overseeing the work of the CSOs. ACED II continued to support these activities, improving areas of weakness and expanding the reach of the organizations. ACED II expanded the NDA, reaching a total of 12 neighborhoods.

## CREATING A PLATFORM FOR COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

One of the key goals of the ACED II Program was to encourage the local government and community to work together to identify needs and find creative solutions to local issues. After years without working together, ACED II provided technical assistance and training to ASEZA's Local Community Development Directorate (LCDD) leadership and staff to lead the Aqaba community through the Neighborhood Development Activity (NDA) mobilization process. ACED II offered trainings in the fields of participatory decision making, communication skills, strategic/action planning, proposal

writing and fundraising. These skills were essential to strengthen the capacities of the LCDD to carry out local community priorities and needs in a participatory manner. In total, ACED II delivered 142 person days of training on local community development methodologies and social services to NETs' members, exceeding the originally anticipated 100 days.

Before conducting the training module ACED II's grantee, TAG-Consult conducted a training needs assessment (TNA) workshop to select the participants in the training modules and to highlight the topics that should be covered. The results highlighted the needs for strategic planning and how to increase and effectively utilize community participation in the decision-making process. As a result, ACED II offered



Neighborhood Enhancement Teams (NETs) gather together to partake in the Clean the World Campaign.

**“We worked with different demographics in the community including children, youth and women. We tried to work with all the sectors in our society. We worked to empower them through training courses. For the children, we put together a summer camp. We focused on the women in the 3rd Area Neighborhood because most of the team was women and they were very active. This initiative created women leaders who identified community concerns and solved problems in their neighborhood.”**

**MS. SUHA SHEDAHEH,  
MEMBER OF THE  
NEIGHBORHOODS  
DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY**

a series of training modules that included theoretical and practical tools for these topics along with a manual to help the LCDD staff going forward.

Then, ACED II delivered a similar training to members of the NETs. These trainings focused on how NETs can focus on strategic planning, preparation and the execution of their plans. They also incorporated proposal writing and communication skills training so that the NETs understand how to work with LCDD to achieve their goals.

### **ENGAGING CITIZENS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**

ACED II seeks to improve the quality of local community life by supporting the relationship between the Neighborhood Development Activity (NDA), Aqaba’s civil society organizations (CSOs) and the local community of Aqaba. Through capacity building programs for Neighborhood Enhancement Teams (NETs) and CSOs, they have the opportunity to address issues that directly affect their neighborhoods and local communities.

ACED II continued to assist neighborhoods with the implementation of long-term development plans (LTDP) and neighborhood enhancement activities under the Neighborhood Development Activity. As a testament to the growing sustainability of the NETs started under ACED I, ACED II was able to handover responsibility of funding the NETs program activities directly to ASEZA. ASEZA supported more than 10 NET priority activities and projects over the past year. ASEZA

contributed more than 141,000 JDs—approximately \$200,000—to support programs such as empowering women and youth, educational enhancement for students with disabilities, workforce development, health services and public service provision, all of which were identified as community needs by the NETs.

ACED II also supported ASEZA in adding two new NETs to the NDA program: Al-Shamiyah and Al-Jamayiah; for a total of 12 neighborhoods in the NDA. By adding these two neighborhoods, 20 new local community members—half of which were women—were able to become actively engaged in identifying and implementing priority community projects.

### **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Additionally, ACED II worked with the NETs to provide capacity building trainings to NET and CSO members. ACED II focused on fundraising and communication skills—tools that are necessary to grow and support these civil society organizations. In November 2013, ACED II trained 17 participants on fundraising skills and an additional 18 participants on communications skills.

Over the past year, ACED II and ASEZA conducted two events involving multiple NET and CSO members to emphasize taking a participatory approach to the community development process. These events were: (1) an annual meeting between all NET representatives and a task force committee on September 16, 2013 to develop 2014 action plans and (2) a Corporate Social Responsibility workshop on May 12, 2014 for over sixty members of the NETs, CSOs,



**In response to needs identified by the community, ASEZA provides a safe place for children to play. ACED II worked with ASEZA to provide additional playgrounds throughout the Zone.**

## **UNDERSTANDING THE NDA: A QUICK OVERVIEW**

Originally started under the ACED I Program, ACED II works with the ASEZA Local Community Development Directorate (LCDD) to lay the foundation for increasing local community participation through the PACE Methodology in decision-making by designing and establishing localized processes, implementing activities to increase citizen participation, and executing broader efforts to link ASEZA and the local community.

The PACE methodology was used to increase community participation in the development activities and decision-making. The local implementation of this methodology can be summarized by three stages:

- Stage 1: Community Outreach and Mobilization
- Stage 2: Establishing the NET
- Stage 3: Capacity Building of the NET

A key component of community mobilization is the Neighborhood Development Activity (NDA). The NDA consists of the following:

- Establishing and building the capacity of NETs and mobilize their neighborhoods in order to foster an enabling environment for local community development.
- Building the capacity of ASEZA staff to enable them to engage the local community of Aqaba neighborhoods and increase their participation in coordination and planning

Under the NDA, neighborhood leaders are selected by residents to form a NET. The NET members volunteer their time through a facilitated process to analyze the neighborhood’s current situation and propose high-priority projects to their neighbors. Together with the entire community, they select an initial project that addresses their most pressing needs.

The project is designed and implemented in close collaboration with partners including ASEZA, neighborhood citizens, other government entities, and the private sector. After completion of a first neighborhood project, the NET leads the neighborhood to create a Long-Term Neighborhood Development Plan which is then shared with potential partners. The NET then continues to lead the implementation of the activities in the Long-Term Neighborhood Development Plan and to update the plan on a regular basis.

## NEIGHBORHOOD ENHANCEMENT TEAMS IN AQABA

ACED II worked with twelve Neighborhood Enhancement Teams (NETs) to implement community-driven projects (see map at right).

In implementing the NET's long-term plans, the following activities were achieved under ACED II:

- Women, Youth and Minority Development
  - Students' Club and Mothers' Council at the Assarah School to improve writing, reading, math and English language skills
  - Providing the first ever educational support to over 620 children with learning disabilities in Aqaba by fielding qualified teachers and developing and utilizing specialized curricula including field trips and hands-on activities
  - Provided more than 500 citizens with awareness sessions on health matters, illegal drug use, and women's laws and rights.
  - Drawing courses for children
  - First aid courses for 40 women
  - Children's Club for 77 children
  - Sport School for children ages 10 to 18 for a period of 11 months
- Community Enhancement
  - Community clean-up campaigns including "Clean Up the World"
  - Playgrounds for children
  - Ayla Marathon organized by the NETs Youth Committee
  - Neighborhood Soccer Competition
- Infrastructure Development
  - Street paving
  - Improving the Old Town Health Center
  - Addressing sewage and wastewater problems in the community
  - Establishment of a soccer field
- Workforce Development
  - IT training to 20 unemployed youth
  - Boat maintenance for 20 unemployed youth
  - Handicraft training for 30 women and 15 unemployed youth
  - Copper drawing course for 12 unemployed youth
  - Manufacturing soap course for 21 women
  - Drawing on cloth and ceramics for 55 women
  - Basic computer skills for 15 housewives



**“This training center opened in February 2014, AICA conducted 13 workshops here for the local community serving 130 people. We also held seven other professional courses which served 220 people here. They came from the local community, school students and even some employees from AICA. Through our work with ACED, we were connected with Microsoft where we received 56 software licenses which helped to improve our capabilities at the center.”**

**DR. ALI KARAM, HEAD OF AQABA CHARITABLE ISLAMIC ASSOCIATION**

the private sector and governmental associations to strengthen the relationships among the partners to serve the local community.

In addition, ACED II and ASEZA updated the operational manual for NDAs and translated it from Arabic to English to be available to use through any USAID or other implementation partner(s). The manual includes detailed processes and guidelines on how to create and operate the NDA including forming the NDA, selecting representatives and forming NETs teams, doing the area needs assessment, selecting priority projects, designing, planning and implementing community projects.

### ENHANCE THE CAPACITY OF CSOS TO PROVIDE RELEVANT SERVICES

#### NETWORKING AND CSR FUNDING

CSOs in Aqaba are at varying levels of development and sustainability. Many of the CSOs in Aqaba lack the requirements that international donors and private sector organizations expect before they are willing to offer support. ACED II, therefore, tailored its approach to support the CSOs at every stage of development from the most advanced organizations to the least. ACED II improved local NGOs/CBOs' capacities to receive funding from donors and the private sector through relations established through many networking events, awards ceremonies and capacity building trainings.

The ACED II Program introduced the Microsoft Citizenship Program to Aqaba's local NGOs/CBOs. This program is an international

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program that applies Microsoft's technological expertise and resources to solve global and local societal issues. On December 5, 2013, ACED II and the Microsoft Corporation organized a workshop for 25 CSOs from Aqaba to introduce the Microsoft Citizenship program. During the workshop, Microsoft representatives explained the benefits of the program and the required steps for the application process. Some of the benefits of the program include receiving free software and application licenses.

For many of the 25 CSOs in attendance, this workshop provided detailed information about what can be achieved in the future, once the CSOs develop their capacity. However, for three of the more advanced CSOs, this presented an opportunity to actively pursue additional funding streams. After the workshop, ACED II assisted the three CSOs, Aqaba Charitable Islamic Association, Royal Marine Conservation Society of Jordan (JREDS) and Aqaba Sons' Society for the Care and Rehabilitation of Orphans, in preparing proposals to the Microsoft Citizenship Program. ACED II provided guidance as needed when the CSOs filled out their applications. All three CSOs secured grants from Microsoft valued at a combined total of US\$238,000.

For those unable to meet the prerequisites for Microsoft's CSR program, ACED II supported the CSOs who needed immediate assistance in providing local community services. In line with the goals and objectives for human development and poverty reduction identified by ASEZA and recently promulgated in ASEZA's poverty reduction strategy, ACED II issued

three small grants to the following CSOs:

- **Aqaba Islamic Charitable Association.** The grant was designed to equip a local training center with computers. Previously, the center provided training courses to the youth and local community of Aqaba. Access to these computers has enhanced and improved the essential work skills for students and adults in order to (1) expand their opportunities to remain in their current job, (2) increase their opportunities to get better job and/or (3) establish their own business. The courses offered by the center were designed and reviewed periodically according to local community and market continues changing needs, taking into consideration supporting both local individuals and small businesses. Three training courses were conducted for local community since the training center opening.
- **Al-Sahraa Association.** Al-Sahraa Association provides psychotherapy services for local residents. A grant was awarded to build the capacity of two qualified locals who started to provide psychotherapy services to people with special needs living in the Wadi Araba area.
- **Al-Shareif Nasser Association.** A third grant was awarded to Al-Shareif Nasser Association to establish a safe and well equipped playground. The playground established in Qreqara village is now a popular place where children enjoy safely playing outdoors.

#### STRATEGIC PLANNING

ACED II assisted fourteen CSOs in crafting development plans. ACED II, along with the NGO

Coordination Committee (NCC), held regular meetings and monthly site visits with the participating CSOs to support the execution of their development plans to address challenges faced in implementation and other outstanding issues. Once the CSOs began to execute their development plans, the NCC provided guidance by adhering to the following process:

- Encourage multiple CSOs – which share the same objectives- to work together on projects or services and to share their experiences;
- Track the status of the CSO's work and projects, recording any changes in the CSOs and provide recommendations to improve the work;
- Provide the required capacity building trainings and follow up with CSOs to ensure they are applying the skills they were they acquired in order to improve the CSOs' work.

In collaboration with the NCC, ACED II completed two training modules and implemented six training programs to empower members of the CSOs who required support to be able to access private sector and international funds. These courses were divided into three levels based on shared needs identified in development plans which focused on fundraising, strategic planning, and at least one tailored course based on the CSO's needs. These specialized topics included principles of accounting, needs assessment, fundraising, developing concept papers and proposals, and advanced skills in sales and marketing and project management and monitoring and evaluation. In total, seventy eight (78) members of the CSOs (fifty five of which were female), attended the trainings.

#### TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE NGO COORDINATION COMMITTEE (NCC)

In addition to working with the CSOs, ACED II also concentrated its efforts on supporting the capacity of the NCC in working with CSOs and the private sector. ACED II led two training modules for NCC members on leadership skills in February 2014 and on monitoring and evaluation techniques in May 2014. Stakeholders identified these courses as areas for improvement in order to successfully apply for private sector funding and to improve NCC skills on monitoring and evaluation during the execution of the development plans of CSOs.

#### COMPETITION BUILDING

ACED II transferred responsibility to ASEZA for the management of the Aqaba Excellence Award for CSOs. This award recognizes achievements in local development through enhancing CSOs institutional and financial stability and building partnerships with local communities. Award objectives are to: 1) Showcase successful models of non-profit CSOs; 2) Enhance the public trust in civil society work; 3) Build stronger organizations through the encouragement of transparency, governance, and credibility; 4) Support civil society organizations' participation in sustainable local development efforts.

As a testament to the sustainability of the program, for the first time, ASEZA led the Aqaba Excellence Award for CSOs event on June 26, 2013. At the time of writing, ASEZA is preparing the 2014 Aqaba Excellence Award for CSOs.



A child receives customized physical therapy care for the first time as the result of ACED II funding.

# GENDER

Over the past several decades, Jordan has achieved impressive results on a host of social indicators - among them women's high literacy and the bridging of gender gaps in education. Yet women's participation in the economic arena has not kept pace with these impressive gains, mainly attributed to a host of barriers that women face in access to opportunities in the public sphere as well as cultural barriers to working outside of the home. Lower participation rates of women in the economy are generally attributed to a lack of access to information, business skills and finance. Additionally, an increasing number of opportunities for employment in the private sector, coupled with a burgeoning young generation who are starting to consider alternative choices, are changing the face of workforce participation.

Although the ACED II program did not have specific gender targets to reach, gender considerations were prioritized as a cross-cutting theme that was integrated holistically into the design, implementation, and evaluation of all project components. ACED II designed activities in such a way that sought to address the overall constraints to women's participation in the economy, and sought to employ strategies that support women yielding more influence in decision-making at the community level. The project worked to ensure that women were recipients of ACED assistance, both in grants and training and capacity building initiatives.

In April 2012, the ACED II project completed a comprehensive Gender Assessment. The assessment examined the challenges and opportunities that women face in workforce participation and

SME development in Aqaba; and also completed a thorough analysis of how gender norms and inequalities could be addressed in programming. The assessment provided recommendations on opportunities to develop appropriate interventions to offset existing gender-based inequities and increase access to information and training opportunities for women.

In support of USAID's overall requirement that data collection be disaggregated by gender, where feasible, the ACED II project disaggregated performance indicators, where feasible. Some important performance indicators that highlight the project's accomplishments are included below, those of which ACED II both met and exceeded its end of performance targets:



Women from the Disi Cooperative practice their new pottery skills at a workshop.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS RELATED TO GENDER			
Description	Performance	End of Performance Target	Met or Exceeded Target
Percentage of Trained Who Were Women	33%	30%	Exceeded
Percentage of Women who Sit on Business Meetings Working to Encourage Investment and Growth	5	4	Exceeded
Percentage of Women Trained on Local Community Development Methodologies	13	13	Met
Number of Additional Women and Youth Actively Engaged in NET Activities	20	20	Met

## COMPONENT I: IMPROVED ASEZA INSTITUTIONAL AND SERVICE CAPACITY

Component I focused primarily on improving the institutional capacity of ASEZA. Thus, ACED II took every opportunity to promote equitable participation of men and women in the targeted areas of technical assistance and training. The ACED II team, in close collaboration with ASEZA, worked to encourage female employees to participate in trainings to gain further exposure to different concepts and for professional development within the institution.

Over the course of the last 18 months, ACED II provided significant support to training and capacity building to ASEZA staff. Training was offered in human resources management, financial forecasting, and community development management. Out of a total of 322 ASEZA employees trained, 98 were women, accounting for approximately 30% participation rates. ACED II was successful in encouraging female participation in selected Quality Service Improvement Project (QSIP) initiatives, such as improving customer care and communication skills. Through the QSIP Initiative, 30% of those trained were women and went on to become Certified Excellence Assessors and Mentors.

## COMPONENT 2: STRENGTHENED PRIVATE SECTOR

The ACED II Gender Assessment examined constraints that Jordanian women face in the private sector, in starting their own business and maintaining successful operations of their businesses. Additionally, the Gender Assessment explored what challenges women faced in accessing employment opportunities in the private sector, in critical growth sectors such as hospitality and tourism.

As a result of targeted interventions and outreach to women, ACED II reports significant achievements that addressed gender-specific constraints



**Local business woman discuss best practices and learn new skills to help them become more successful.**

in accessing economic opportunities. In Aqaba, the hospitality and tourism sector offers the most potential for employment. During the Gender Assessment, it was learned that there are constraints for women in entering and advancing in this sector given socio-cultural perceptions of the industry. The project made consistent efforts to address these constraints and increase outreach to women to improve access to opportunities. ACED II provided capacity building and training to senior and middle managers of hotels that are a part of the Aqaba Hotel Association (AHA). Women comprised 42% of the total number of trainees who received training in financial management, human resources, and marketing.

One of the issues cited in the Gender Assessment was that job placement was particularly an issue for women graduating from the female vocational training centers.

In response to this challenge, ACED II held two career fairs in Aqaba to introduce youth to jobs in the tourism and construction sectors, and encouraged women to participate in the fairs. Young women were active participants in the career fairs and gained access to information not previously available to them about jobs in these sectors.

Many women in Aqaba who own and manage their own companies are in need of training in business development services. The project conducted a comprehensive business development training program, including courses in human resources, marketing and product development. ACED II also provided the women who participated in this training much needed equipment in order to further develop their businesses. In addition, ACED II provided support to establish the Aqaba Women website, a site devoted entirely for

different women-owned and women-led businesses from Aqaba. The site provides a platform for women-owned businesses to market and promote their services and offers an electronic brochure that includes more details on their companies that can be widely circulated to increase their client base.

ACED II provided targeted support and outreach to local women's associations in Aqaba, as well as women's associations in the Wadi Rum and Disi areas. In particular, the Disi Women's Association received two grants from the ACED II program to fund a ceramic manufacturing workshop, where the women received technical skills in product development, equipment operations and maintenance. Through support offered to touristic camp sites in the Wadi Rum area, employment opportunities were created for twelve women from the area, which improved their

**“The biggest constraints identified by female owned businesses and female entrepreneurs were access to financial capital to start their business.**

**Women face higher risk when starting their own business as they are confronted with such factors such as high rent costs, high costs for factors of production, and being able to serve as the sole guarantor to secure a bank loan.”**

**FROM ACED II GENDER ASSESSMENT, 2012**

economic status significantly, and helped broker better relationships within their families. Finally, ACED II supported a local women's NGO in Aqaba called Green Creations, which employs women in making jewelry from recycled materials. The NGO has been extremely successful in employing women in order to provide them with a source of income, so that women can support themselves and their families.

### **COMPONENT 3: ENHANCE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

ACED I and ACED II both have a long history of working closely with local community organizations to build capacity and empower citizens. As a result of targeted interventions and the support of ASEZA, local citizens were encouraged to participate in the modern economy and have access to social services and infrastructure. Aqaba now has a vibrant network of community engagement through the neighborhood enhancement teams (NETs). Citizens across Aqaba have taken a firm stance in their communities' development and implemented numerous social projects under the Neighborhood Development Activity (NDA) in conjunction with ASEZA.

Over the course of the project's implementation period, more than 52 civil society organizations across Aqaba and surrounding villages have received comprehensive training in needs assessment and field surveys, fundraising, and project management skills. In these trainings, female participation exceeded 50% of those trained.

Today, and partly attributed to the work completed under ACED I, women have taken a much more

active role in decision-making, in development planning, and specific community development initiatives. Women represent nearly 46% of the representatives on the Neighborhood Enhancement Teams (NETs) and advocate strongly for activities and projects that meet their community's needs. Women who serve as representatives on the NETs not only play a critical role in decision-making and development planning in their communities, but they are also contributing significantly to the shift in attitudes of women's capabilities in decision-making. Female NET representatives serve as role models to the youth looking to take a more active role in their community. All members received training on local development methodologies (proposal writing, communication and presentation skills, and strategic planning).

Based on support to neighborhood enhancement teams, where women played a significant role advocating for community infrastructure that responded to the needs and priorities of families, several important types of projects were completed with the support of ACED II. Over the course of the project's implementation period, seven playground complexes were installed in Aqaba City and Qreqrah Village, which provided safe environments for children and families. Three kindergartens were established in the remote villages of Al Ghal, Tweisah and Qreqrah; all of which provided children in those areas with educational facilities at a critical age. Finally, two libraries were built in the remote villages of Rahmeh and Qreqrah, to provide support to young students and their families in those villages with access to books and other learning materials.

# LESSONS LEARNED

## BEST PRACTICES

ACED II, in cooperation with all counterparts, worked to implement best practices in all activities that include, but is not limited to:

- Followed world-class standards in designing bus shelters and routes, taking into consideration modern transportation master plans and urban design directions.
- Implementing best governmental practices while developing ASEZA's performance management system, taking into consideration localization according to ASEZA requirements and Jordanian Civil Service Bureau bylaws.
- Implementing Oracle Corporation methodologies and best practices while developing ASEZA Oracle e-Business Suite modules.
- Implementing European Foundation of Quality Management (EFQM) standards under ASEZA quality service improvement program (QSIP).
- Designed Wadi Rum camps solar systems according to international standards.

Jordan receives a large amount of donor funding each year and is dependent on foreign aid to plug its budget deficits. Foreign grants covered nearly 60% of the budget deficit in 2013<sup>1</sup> (JD 433.2m). Many entities and counterparts supported by donor programs heavily depend on continued technical assistance and procurements to sustain their plans. This requires each implementing partner to ensure that a robust sustainability plan is in effect so that grantees, institutions and government counterparts are not paralyzed when a project shuts down.

In Aqaba, ACED II's predecessor project, ACED I, worked closely with many of the same counterparts but was designed to be a more flexible project. The flexible nature of ACED I's project design enabled counterparts to have a greater say in the type of work to be completed throughout the project's implementation.

Recognizing the inherent difference between the project designs of ACED I and ACED II's more rigorous agenda and short timeframe, ACED II immediately engaged in a different approach to safeguard the opportunities for sustainable development and minimize the reliance on foreign aid. This approach was filled with challenges of its own from which a number of valuable lessons emerged. This section breaks out these

<sup>1</sup> <https://economics.rabobank.com/publications/2014/january/country-report-jordan/>

lessons learned in the following categories: Clear Communication, Sustainable Grants, and Information Technology Systems.

## CLEAR COMMUNICATION

As a firm fixed price contract, ACED II set out to complete a rigorous set of deliverables and milestones, which required close consultation with both USAID/Jordan headquarters in Amman as well as ASEZA. Given the nature of high turnover in leadership at ASEZA, the team set out to work with USAID in issuing a Program Implementation Letter (PIL) which clarified all the deliverables and outputs of ACED II. The PIL served as a document that both ASEZA and ACED II staff could turn to when any clarifications or questions were raised.

ACED II attempted to mitigate questions about the project's goals by housing a full-time team of advisors recruited for major initiatives within ASEZA's offices to work in unison with ASEZA's staff. However, during ACED II's implementation, ASEZA continued to request out of scope activities. The ACED II team remained receptive to ASEZA's needs but was unable to commit to activities outside the scope of ACED II. ASEZA's requests included, but were not limited to: new training courses, implementing new Oracle modules, and requesting new resources for activities such as study tours abroad.

In order to resolve the constant out of scope requests, ACED II team members reminded ASEZA of the PIL and the dual commitments made by ASEZA and USAID and the specific deliverables that have been set in the contract. This was a repeated exercise during the life of the program but the close consultation and communication allowed by ACED II and ASEZA to stay on track of program deliverables and prevented the project from derailing.

## SUSTAINABLE GRANTS

While three of the partner organizations inherited by ACED II (the Disi Women's Association, the Syndicate of Mechanical Professions and the NETs) continued to function during the six month hiatus between the conclusion of ACED I and the commencement of ACED II, many of the other organizations<sup>2</sup> simply stopped functioning and ceased operations between ACED I and II. This indicated that some of the grant programs were not sustainable.

This lesson – sustainability – was learned right at the start of ACED II and the team quickly responded to this reality by ensuring that the Aqaba Community and Development Fund (ACDF) had rigorous grant agreements, scopes of work and created a CSR mechanism for grantees to receive funding and learn how to seek donor funding without the need of an intermediary program. In addition, ACED II screened potential grantees more carefully to seek out grantees with capacity, strong leadership, and a well-articulated mission with whom

<sup>2</sup> Such as Aqaba Divers Association, Aqaba Fishermen Association, Aqaba Astronomy Association, and Aqaba Hotel Association

to partner. ACED II transferred skills and organizational capacity to counterparts and grantees to limit the dependency on donor organizations. Both the SMP and AHA received additional technical support under ACED II and continue to be active after the program's close.

## IT SOLUTIONS

Implementing highly technical IT solutions, such as the Oracle e-Business Suite upgrade, can be very challenging. Often, public sector institutions do not understand the technical work and the overarching business models infrastructure is not mature. Consequently, a combination of low executive buy-in, poor planning and communication, and changing laws and regulations which can make any IT solution obsolete within just a few short years make implementing a flawless IT project near impossible.

IT solutions development programs usually operate under limited budget and timeframe which does not lend itself to support the large IT solution in the public sector needs. Most IT solutions require highly skilled technical experts accustomed to earning private sector wages and an extended timeframe to ensure proper implementation of the project. Local IT subcontractors, which are often used in lieu of the more expensive consultants, are often constrained by limited resources and high employee turnover rates as they move on to better paying jobs—and with most international development firms lacking their own IT division, a heavily reliance on these local subcontractors for IT project management is jeopardized each time an individual leaves the IT firm.

# WAY FORWARD

## FUTURE PROGRAM DIRECTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The city of Aqaba has received support from USAID since the early 2000s. The most successful interventions have been on the community level – creating mechanisms of coordination between neighborhoods and ASEZA. This sustainable relationship and coordination reduces government mistrust in Aqaba and improves participatory planning where citizens feel

involved, not disenfranchised, during Aqaba’s transition.

Any potential follow-on program in Aqaba should take into account ACED II’s lessons learned and best practices. Furthermore, future assistance to Aqaba can be carried out through existing USAID/Jordan programs as well as future program plans. Several USAID/Jordan programs carry out country-wide assistance that could be extended to support the southern region and Aqaba in particular. The region could benefit from a southern only

focused scope, similar to USAID’s program legacy in Aqaba and prioritize community development and private sector strengthening. Future donor support to public sector reform requires adherence to the vision set in the 2009 Strategic Directions Plan (SDP) developed under ACED I. ASEZA has made excellent progress on organizational development, coordination with local community through its Local Community Development Directorate, e-governance systems through a fleet management system and Oracle functions to improve transactions within the institution and improve transparency – to name a few. However, support to public sector reform in Aqaba requires the appropriate amount of buy-in as many activities and interventions are likely to change and/or be canceled due to changes in leadership and lack of public sector employee engagement with the SDP vision. Meanwhile, local organizations such as the SMP and the VTC continue to need external support in order to develop their skills and equipment to become domestically and internationally competitive. These tradesmen and women are lacking in advanced technical and managerial skills to make them competitive in the market which often results in the loss of business to practitioners in Amman.

Similarly, enhancing community engagement serves to benefit the whole of Jordan during a politically challenging time. Continuing support to community development, participation and CSO capacity will enable citizens to voice their opinions and needs to the government, creating a space for dialogue and constructive results—potentially leading to political stability in a region filled with civil

unrest. Several existing USAID/Jordan projects (see table to the left), may be able to provide assistance in the interim, but USAID and other donors should consider the strategic interventions in the future.

After 18 months of implementation, the ACED II Program is pleased to have worked with many counterparts and present the overall program approach, milestones, detailed activities, lessons learned and recommendations for a way forward. The ACED II Program hopes that all assistance and support will be sustained for years to come.

SUPPORTING AQABA THROUGH EXISTING AND FUTURE USAID/JORDAN PROJECTS	
Project Name	Areas of Assistance
Jordan Competitiveness Program (JCP)	To support Aqaba’s micro, medium and small businesses as well as business associations.
Civic Initiative Support Program (CISP)	To support CSOs strengthening and provide grants to local communities for sustainable development. Also to support the Aqaba Water Company.
Building Economic Sustainability through Tourism (BEST)	To support Aqaba’s tourism, creation of destination management organization and support to hotel associations and overall workforce development in areas related to hospitality.
Jordan Workforce Development	To support the vocational training center for additional curriculum, equipment and training of trainers for improved quality of vocational education in Aqaba.
Jordan Local Economic Development Project (LENS)	To support localized SME development and support to business associations in the southern region of Jordan.
Jordan Municipal Governance*	A future project to continue to support ASEZA’s financial own source revenue, improved service provision for Aqaba, and capacity building of government staff.
Institutional Support and Strengthening Program (ISSP)	To provide institutional support to Aqaba Water Company.



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