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STEPS TOWARD A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK FOR ASEZA

**AQABA COMMUNITY and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (ACED)
PROGRAM**

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DISCLAIMER

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development, AECOM International Development or the ACED Program.

ACED Program Frequently-Used Acronyms and Abbreviations

(Not all of the following will appear in every ACED Program document)

ACED Program	Aqaba Community and Economic Development Program (USAID)
ACT	Aqaba Container Terminal
ADC	Aqaba Development Corporation
ADS	Automated Directive Systems
AIDAR	USAID Acquisition Regulation
AIIE	Aqaba International Industrial Estate
APC	Aqaba Ports Corporation
ASEZ	Aqaba Special Economic Zone
ASEZA	Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority
ASRI	Aqaba Skills Readiness Index
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
ATASP	Aqaba Technical Assistance Support Program (USAID)
AUC	Aqaba University College
AZEM	Aqaba Zone Economic Mobilization Project (USAID)
AGDTF	Aqaba Garment Development Task Force
BAFO	Best and Final Offer
BDC	Business Development Center
BDS	Business Development Services
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CMT	Cut-Make-Trim
CO	Contracting/Contracts Officer
COB	Close of Business
COP	Chief of Party
CP	Cost Proposal
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
D&G	Democracy and Governance
DCA	Development Credit Authority
EG	Economic Growth
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EO	Economic Opportunities
EOI	Expression of Interest
EPC	Executive Privatization Commission
ERfKE	Education Reform for a Knowledge Economy (USAID)
EU	European Union
ETF	European Training Foundation
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulation
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FDR	Fixed Daily Rate
FHR	Fixed Hourly Rate
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
FZC	Free Zones Corporation
GDA	Global Development Alliance
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Gender Entrepreneurship Markets
GIS	Geographic Information System
GOJ	Government of Jordan (the central governing entity of Jordan)

GPS	Global Positioning System
HR	Human Resources
ICDL	International Computer Driving License
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
INJAZ	Economic Opportunities for Jordanian Youth Program
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
IQC	Indefinite Quantity Contract
ISP	Internet Service Provider
IS-ASEZA	Institutional Support to ASEZA (EU funded project)
IT	Information Technology
JD	Jordanian Dinar
JITOA	Jordan Inbound Tour Operators Association
JIB	Jordan Investment Board
JNA	Jordan National Agenda
JNCW	Jordanian National Commission for Women
JSCED	Jordan Standard Classifications of Education
JUSBP	Jordan-United States Business Partnership
JUSFTA	Jordan-United States Free Trade Agreement
KOJ	Kingdom of Jordan (the country within its physical boundaries)
LCDD	Local Community Development Directorate (ASEZA)
LECP	Local Employee Compensation Plan
LOE	Level of Effort
LTTA	Long-Term Technical Assistance
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MFI	Microfinance Institution
MIS	Management Information System
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOL	Ministry of Labor
MOPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
MOTA	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSME	Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises
NCHRD	National Center for Human Resources Development
NDA	Neighborhood Development Activity
NDC	Neighborhood Development Committee
NET	Neighborhood Enhancement Team
NICRA	Negotiable Indirect Cost Rate
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTS	National Tourism Strategy
PACE	Participatory Action for Community Enhancement
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PR	Public Relations
PSD	Private Sector Development
R&D	Research and Development
QA	Quality Assurance
QC	Quality Control
RFP	Request for Proposal
RFQ	Request for Quotation
SABEQ	Sustainable Achievement of Business Expansion and Quality (USAID)
SIYAHA	The Tourism Project (USAID)
SFU	Satellite Factory Unit
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SOW	Scope of Work

STTA	Short-Term Technical Assistance
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threads
TA	Technical Assistance
TBD	To Be Determined
TO	Task Order
TOT	Training of Trainers
TP	Technical Proposal
TRIDE	Trilateral Industrial Development
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VTC	Vocational Training Center
WAEDAT	Women's Access to Entrepreneurial Development and Training
WEPIA	Water Education and Public Information for Action
WTO	World Trade Organization
WTTP	Workforce Technical Transformation Program

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of this research was to gain insight into the internal and external communication capacity of ASEZA. This report is based on a review of the development communication, PPP, and organizational communication literature. The consultant met with ASEZA leaders and ASEZA stakeholders during March and June 2009.

Internal Communication Challenges

The interviews with ASEZA Commissioners and Directors showed that weak vertical and horizontal coordination and communication hinder organizational effectiveness. Directorates in ASEZA lack both the structural and process-based mechanisms that facilitate coordination. This lack of internal coordination must be resolved before ASEZA can effectively communicate with external stakeholders.

External Communication Challenges

Evidence from the 2008 Customer Satisfaction Survey showed that the local community is not satisfied in their interactions with ASEZA's Directorates. The residents of Aqaba need clarity of information, improved response to their questions, standardization in rules and procedures, and overall better customer service/competency from ASEZA staff. External communication suffers from a weak public relations function and few mass communication channels in Aqaba.

Steps to Build ASEZA Communication Capacity

A multi-layered strategic communication framework will allow ASEZA to move from tactical to strategic coordination and will allow for integrated solutions to internal and external communication problems. This strategic communication framework needs to be part of a larger ASEZA effort in organizational capacity building.

Step 1: A retreat with ASEZA Commissioners, ADC, and Ministry/Governorate level leaders will clarify roles and responsibilities and set up formal processes for coordination/responsibility.

Step 2: A Communication Audit will identify the existing capacity of ASEZA communication. The Communication Audit should be truth-tested during Summer 2009 on a forward thinking Directorate or tested on the ADC. This will allow ACED to refine and revise the Audit Tool to better meet the needs of ASEZA's unique organizational culture.

Step 3: Once the Communication Audit tool is refined, there should be an ASEZA-wide application of the tool to help the Directorates identify both strengths and weaknesses in their internal and external coordination and communication.

Step 4: After the Communication Audit is conducted, ASEZA should begin plans for a directorate level Communication section that can facilitate internal and external communication.

Envisioning a New ASEZA After the Research

The Zone-level retreat will provide the starting place for real organizational change. The Directorate-level Communication Audit will provide a baseline of the actual capacity of ASEZA. The findings of the audits will help the Commissioners and Directors envision a new ASEZA.

The creation of a Communication Outreach Directorate will develop the internal structures and processes that will help ASEZA better serve external stakeholders in the ASEZ.

II. OVERVIEW

The purpose of this document is to summarize the research visit to Aqaba Jordan and propose the next steps in developing a Strategic Communication Framework for the ASEZ and ASEZA. A review of the communication, economic development, and Public Private Partnership (PPP) literature suggests that successful economic and community transitions are focused around Communication, Decision making and Enactment.

Successful transitions share the following characteristics:

- Communicating timely, useful information in an easy to understand format
- Consistent communication and implementation of rules and laws
- Creating traditional and mass communication channels for message dissemination
- Developing organizational transparency in decision-making
- Developing community capacity to participate in decision-making
- Enacting small visible projects (signs, roads, sanitation, public spaces) that benefit community

The consultant spent nearly two weeks meeting with over 30 ASEZA officials, members of the local media, and community stakeholders. Each interviewee was asked two broad questions:

- How does communication at ASEZA currently work?
- What suggestions do you have to improve ASEZA communication?

The answers to the first question identified several problems in communication in the ASEZ and in ASEZA. The answers to the second question provide the foundation for the steps noted in section 5 of this report.

The communication situation in the ASEZ is problematic at several levels. Internal communication is the Achilles heal of ASEZA. Therefore, any attempts to improve external communication will first require improved internal communication and coordination.

III. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION SITUATION

The interviews with ASEZA Commissioners and Directors showed that there is weak coordination and communication across the organization. This weak communication manifests in both vertical and horizontal coordination.

Top down (vertical) communication is desirable because it can allow leaders to solicit and/ or process information from members who work directly with stakeholders. But top-down communication alone isolates that leadership from valuable information that is only available from down within the organization which has or should have closer communications links with ASEZA's stakeholders. Vertical communication is needed to coordinate and motivate employees. Yet, Directors often noted that they have little power to hire, fire, or force members of their unit to actually do their jobs. Because managers have limited reward and punishment authority, there is little accountability. There is no mechanism for someone on the lower end of the hierarchy to communicate information upward. In sum, vertical communication inhibits coordination among and between Commissioners and Directorates.

Horizontal communication is also a key for organizational effectiveness. There are few horizontal communication or information channels within ASEZA. The organizational chart of the Directorates shows few structural relationships among units. The reality of complex organizations such as ASEZA shows that a project may require two or more Directorates to cooperate to accomplish a task. Many interviewees spoke of calling a friend in another directorate to actually accomplish something. Organizationally, it is unsustainable for personal rather than positional relationships to be the means of organizational execution of activities.

Horizontal communication is weakened when there exist overlapping functions and lack of clarity in job and department descriptions. This weakness diminishes the locus of responsibility and accountability. Interviewees mentioned that organizational leaders can easily push decision making from one directorate/commission to another. This lack of responsibility and accountability has contributed to the common practice of individuals going directly to Directors or Commissioners to solve their problems. Highly personalized problem solving also diminishes the capacity of the organization.

ASEZA also suffers from communication channel weakness. There is weak capacity in the current e-mail system. The weak capacity of the system limits mass dissemination of messages and attachments. While there appears to be an Intranet for ASEZA members, it does not seem to be very highly utilized for posting updated information, sharing forms and documents, or coordination of inter or intra Directorate activities. There are no weekly newsletters for employees. Poor internal communication leads to poor external communication with stakeholders in the ASEZ.

IV. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION SITUATION

The Customer Satisfaction Survey (2008) showed very clearly that the local community is less than satisfied in their interactions with ASEZA's Directorates. The research shows that the public seeks clarity of information, improved response to their questions, standardization in rules and procedures, and overall better customer service/competency from staff.

ASEZA's past actions/promises frame the local community's understanding of its current communication messages. The local residents do not have timely, useful, and easy-to-understand information. In general, rumors substitute for official information from ASEZA. There is a widespread perception (and personal experience) that the only way to get something done is to use *wasta* or face-to-face communication with high-level ASEZA officials. Both of these "solutions" burden the system and, ultimately, diminish the capacity of ASEZA to become an efficient and modern public sector organization.

A major weakness in communication with stakeholders is the lack of capacity in local mediated communication channels. There are no local mass communication channels in Aqaba. Even if they existed, it is doubtful if ASEZA could take advantage of those channels because the public relations function within ASEZA lacks capacity. Many Directors noted that they need to write their own news releases and that they receive little help from the media relations staff.

A public media usage survey is scheduled for July 2009 to identify the capacity of national media outlets and general public preferences about media channels for receiving information. This public opinion survey is important because a radio studio is planned for Fall 2009. The radio studio has great potential to reach external stakeholders. However, if the radio studio is used as a one-way propaganda tool it has great potential to create negative attitudes. ASEZA needs to start formulating a clear editorial and content policy that is based on using the radio studio to develop two-way communication. The first two months of radio studio's operation will be the most crucial to its long-term value to the community as a information tool. ASEZA needs to have the first two months of programming reflect its mission and vision statements. The radio studio should be developed in

coordination with and reflecting changes in ASEZA structure and communication processes. The radio studio could be the tool to announce a new and improved ASEZA.

V. SUMMARIZING THE COMMUNICATION REALITY

ASEZA's internal and external communication fails to provide the organization with the means to accomplish its objectives. Internally, ASEZA lacks the internal structures and information sharing processes necessary to coordinate the services of the different Directorates. There is no clear strategic communication message to the public and even if these messages existed, the public relations function lacks the capacity to communicate these messages.

ASEZA has missed opportunities for gathering information from its stakeholders. One-way reactive communication appears to be the norm. The organizational functions tasked with communicating with the community such as the LCDD and the public relations departments do not appear to be serving their intended functions.

VI. THE SOLUTION: A MULTI-LAYERED STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK

Before ASEZA can engage its stakeholders, it first needs to improve internal communication, information processing, and coordination. Based on the literature review, document review, and interviews with key personnel, this consultant concludes that a multi-layered approach is needed to coordinate a strategic communication framework.

This strategic communication framework needs to be a part of a larger ASEZA effort in organizational capacity building. It will fail if it is implemented without coordination with other information, customer service, and public relations functions. A multi-layered strategic communication framework will allow ASEZA to move from tactical to strategic coordination and will allow for integrated solutions to internal and external communication problems.

A. Step 1: Start at the Top

A Zone-wide communication framework is only possible after there is a review of relationships, capacities, and functions within the ASEZ. Recommendations include:

- Hold a retreat with ASEZA Commissioners, ADC, and Ministry/Governorate level leaders
- Formalize an Intent Chart of ASEZA and ADC
- Clarify roles and responsibilities and set up formal processes for coordination/responsibility of marketing, promotion and government relations
- Translate this review into Zone-wide strategic communication objectives
- Identify key messages to different publics (investment, local business, local community, Amman/Jordan wide)

B. Step 2: Audit ASEZA Capacity

After the retreat, ASEZA will have increased clarity about its roles and responsibilities. It then needs to evaluate its capacity to follow through on its part of the Zone level strategic objectives. It must also build the capacity required to enact the vision and mission statements developed in spring 2009.

The International Communication Association Audit provides a useful framework for evaluating the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of organizational members. The ICA Audit is a proven tool that allows a small team of communication researchers (2 or 3 people) to help organizations enact communication change. See Appendix A for a general description of the Audit Tool. A modified version of the Audit Tool would be a good place to gain a clear, objective picture of ASEZA's capacity.

The ASEZA capacity audit should begin at the directorate level. This directorate level audit should include (but is not limited to):

Internal Communication Structures and Processes

- Each directorate will specify its mission within ASEZA.
- Each directorate should develop an organizational chart with names, titles, pay grade, and any open positions. Each director will be responsible for compiling another document that identifies the strengths of each member in his or her assigned position.
- Each directorate will develop an information flow chart identifying which other Directorates it communicates with on a regular basis. This flow chart will include the unit's role in both providing information to others and receiving information from others. It will also indicate how the information is shared with other Directorates (face to face, memo, phone call, email, etc.)

External Communication with Stakeholders

- Each directorate will review the documents that are disseminated outside of the directorate. This review will examine forms, applications, policies, and other materials that are intended for both ASEZA members and external stakeholders. Documents may need to be updated or changed based on this review.
- Each directorate will review if and how it enacts two-way communication with its stakeholders. Additionally, it will identify how it actually processes feedback from stakeholders when it engages in two-way communication.

The Commissioner-level Review

- Each Commissioner will develop an information flow chart identifying which other Commissioners he formally communicates with on a regular basis. This flow chart will depict how the Commissioner provides information to others and how he receives information from others (face to face, memo, phone call, email, etc.).
- It is important to gain a baseline of how often the Commissioners are called upon to solve individual stakeholder problems. This takes time away from strategic planning and more importantly this practice fails to hold the individual Directorates accountable. Each Commissioner should identify the situation types and frequencies that provoke personal requests for problem resolution by community members. This review will identify weaknesses in the system that can be addressed by organizational change.

C. Step 3: Envisioning a New ASEZA

The goal of the communication audit is to identify the existing capacity of ASEZA in terms of human, information, and communication resources. The findings can provide a starting place for envisioning a new ASEZA that can better serve its employees, residents, businesses, and visitors to the ASEZ.

Organizational change is never easy. Organizational change is a time of high uncertainty and risk. Members often resist change because they are not clearly informed how it will actually improve their work experience. However, ASEZA needs to change in both its internal and external communication in order to fulfill its mission.

The Directorate level is the logical location for change at ASEZA. The Directorate level ensures the greatest chance for transparency and accountability in enacting the change. The Directors will not be alone in moving their employees toward change. ACED should work with the Directors throughout this process to facilitate the review process and help the different units in ASEZA work toward greater capacity. One important tool in this change is the creation of a Directorate of Communication Outreach.

VII. CREATE A FORMAL DIRECTORATE OF COMMUNICATION OUTREACH

There is a need for a directorate level section that can bring together existing organizational capacity in internal and external communication. Currently, the public relations function is an unconnected ancillary unit. ASEZA would benefit from the creation of one organizational unit that coordinates internal communication, media relations, marketing, electronic and print publishing, community outreach, and government relations.

In other complex organizations, such as the Port Authority of New Jersey and New York (PANJNY), the public affairs function integrates media relations, government relations, community outreach and other communication functions into one unit. Members of this unit treat the different Commissions of the PANJNY as clients and facilitate the internal and external communication of the Commissions. The value is that PANJNY public affairs staff is linked to the operational units and also provide these units with links to the community. This type of

organizational structure facilitates information flow in and out of PANJNY. It can also work for ASEZA.

The exact nature of an ASEZA Communication Outreach Directorate could be sketched out to include titles, job positions, and duties but it is recommended that the final nature of the unit emerge from the communication audit.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Any change at ASEZA needs to be participative, transparent, and based on objective criteria. The findings of the audits will help the Commissioners and Directors envision a new ASEZA. The creation of a Communication Outreach Directorate will develop the structures and processes that will help ASEZA better serve stakeholders in the ASEZ.

APPENDIX: A

THE ICA AUDIT TOOLS

The International Communication Association (ICA) is a professional society composed of communication researchers, practitioners, and teachers from over 100 countries. The ICA Communication Audit provides organizations with reliable, factual data about their internal communication.

The tool includes five standardized instruments (questionnaire survey, interview, communication experience, diary, and network analysis) but most organizational audits combine the first three.

For ASEZA, we would modify this tool for use a) in a Arab cultural context and b) a public sector organization.

Surveys

At ASEZA, an initial step of the Communication Audit would ask each Directorate to draw up an organizational chart. This would provide us with a sampling frame and force ASEZA Directorates to begin thinking about the skills sets and capacity of their units.

Once we have this list, we can create a roster for a random sample of ASEZA members. The Audit Tool includes 100+ Likert style (agreement) questions about:

- Communication Climate and Internal Organizational Culture/Values
- Supervisory Communication
- Organizational Integration
- Communication Channel Quality
- Co-Worker Communication
- Organizational Information Sharing
- Organizational Feedback
- Relationships With Subordinates

The process for the survey data collection begins at the department level. Respondents will answer the survey anonymously during group sessions (perhaps in a conference room) lasting about 30 minutes. The survey allows respondents to indicate their perception of the *current status* of their communication system as well as their *desired or ideal status*. This greatly helps to identify *communication needs* in the organization.

Identifying a workable but large enough sample size is key to getting meaningful data. In past studies, the ICA Audit Tool has surveyed anywhere from 12% of the organization to 100% of the organization. Given ASEZA's size and mission, I recommend a random sample encompassing about 30 % of the professional members of the organization (N = 1500 total members, N= 400-500). The 30% sample size is necessary because there are so many different directorates and departments in ASEZA. Too few people surveyed in each department or Directorate would give us incomplete data that would be difficult to generalize.

I recommend a pilot test of the survey at the ADC. Given its size, I recommend surveying the entire organization (N = 68) in June 2009. This will allow us to see if the findings are meaningful.

Interviews

While the surveys provide concrete quantitative data, there is also an interview format that collects in-depth qualitative data from purposively selected members of the organization. These one-on-one interviews corroborate and/or expand upon concerns reported in survey section of the audit tool. Two interview schedules are used. The first interview guide is structured to provide exploratory information before the survey is employed. These interviews use open-ended questions that help us to refine the survey. For ASEZA, this portion of the research (pre survey) could be started during Maureen Taylor's May/June 2009 visit to Aqaba. Indeed, many of the interviews conducted during the March 2009 visit have already been used to refine the ICA Audit Tool. A few more interviews that probe specifically into ASEZA specific communication situations would make the survey even more valuable.

The second question guide follows up on the initial findings of the ASEZA survey (post survey) in late July 2009. The sample for the interviews should include mid level organizational leaders and heads of departments. The goal is to probe into the general findings and contextualize the survey findings and network analysis results. This is a great opportunity to reach out to those who display leadership potential in envisioning and enacting a new ASEZA. The participation in the interviews may provide valuable input into the organizational change process. It may also be used as an initial screening tool for identifying motivated leaders in the eventual restructuring of ASEZA.

The interviews last approximately 20 minutes and all are conducted confidentially (using tape recorders to facilitate translation and data analysis).

Network Analysis

ASEZA needs to better understand the flow (or lack) of information between Directorates. I recommend a third part of the ICA Audit tool: network analysis. An intra organizational analysis of the 27 Directorates and key departments will identify both formal and information communication processes amongst the middle/top level leaders of each directorate. The network analysis would require that 4 or 5 persons from each directorate complete a simple 2-3-page network analysis tool. The outcome of this portion of the tool will show linkages and identify communication obstacles to inter department communication.

The network analysis tool takes only a few minutes for participants to complete. The real LOE is in data input and interpretation of the data. At the end of the network analysis, the actual patterns of intra department and Directorate interaction will emerge. Then, new patterns of interaction can be conceptualized.

The three data collection techniques will provide a well-rounded, quantitative and qualitative picture of the current communication situation. More importantly, the three sets of findings will provide sound analysis upon which to base the new ASEZA structure.

The ICA tool recommends that the organization establish an "audit liaison committee" composed of organizational members whose functions would be:

1. Help implement audit logistics (set up interviews, etc.)
2. Receive interim and final audit reports
3. Communicate pre-, during, and post-audit information to the organization (via newsletters, memos, meetings, etc.)

4. Begin to prioritize conclusions and recommendations.

Proposed 2009 Timeline

Late May	RFP for Local Research Firm Sent Out
Early June:	ADC Pilot Test of Instruments
Mid June:	Local Research Firm Awarded Contract
Late June:	ASEZA Interviews
Mid July:	ASEZA Communication Audit Inter-department Network Study Media Usage Survey in Aqaba
Late July:	ASEZA Follow-up Interviews
August:	Data Analysis and Report
September:	ACED Program and ASEZA Audit Committee Review of Report
Sept.- Dec:	Begin Implementation of Priority Recommendations
November:	Maureen Taylor Presentation to Board

Summary

The ICA Audit tool will provide the research needed to help ASEZA change its internal and external communication. The research team should include Jordanian communication researchers whenever possible and be conducted in a transparent manner. The pilot testing at the ADC will be crucial for modifying the research to meet the unique cultural needs of ASEZA.