Municipal Institutional Capacity Assessment
Final Report

1. Introduction

In the work plans of USAID CITIES for year 1 and 2, MICA (Municipal Institutional Capacity Assessment) figures as the method used to assess the quality of municipal services in the 33 municipalities USAID CITIES will work with (for the list of the USAID CITIES partner municipalities see Annex 1).

After completion of the assessments a Service Delivery Improvement Plan will be developed, defining the priorities so assistance by USAID CITIES to the municipalities. Future activities in the remaining project years are based on the results of MICA and these SDIP’s.

2. Method

2.1. The method in general

MICA is a method developed by Chemonics for rapid assessments of the capacity of municipalities to perform their tasks. It has been used in several countries.

Basically the method consists of a scoring system to reflect the quality of a given activity. In order to perform an activity, an organization is needed. For the purpose of this report, organizations are defined as the combination of staff, budgets, internal and external regulations and work processes, geared towards the implementation of a group of tasks. In the case of USAID CITIES, the organizations are a group of 33 Jordanian municipalities.

The scores are based on structured interviews with staff of municipalities. They are asked questions about the tasks they perform. For each task, questions are asked about the staff responsible for the task, their qualifications and skills, about the budgets available and about the work processes, both planning and implementation. Special attention is given to the planning process and the participation of external stakeholders, including groups of special interest such as women, handicapped, youth, and in the case of Jordan, refugees.

For each task six levels of performance are described (in some cases only four or five). The scores range from minimum 0 to maximum 5. If there is no qualified staff and the task is not performed at all, the score is 0. If there is qualified staff available as well as sufficient budget, and the implementation of the task is planned with involvement of external stakeholders and implemented according to plan, the score is 5. In between these, the scores reflect various levels of availability of qualified staff and budget and various levels of quality of planning and implementation.
2.2.  The method as applied in Jordan

The method may be easily customized for each country where it is applied. In the case of Jordan, 23 tasks have been selected for review. They closely reflect the tasks defined for municipalities in Law 41 of 2015, the Municipal Law, especially section 5 of this law, but also include some other municipal tasks, mentioned in other laws, such as urban planning and building control.

The tasks reviewed are the service related tasks. They are mentioned in Law 41, unless stated otherwise:

1. Citizens’ Services: delivery of permits and statements to citizens, organizations and enterprises
2. The records and information management of the municipality, their archiving systems and degree of computerization
3. The interaction between municipality and the citizens: handling of requests, complaints and suggestions
4. Training of staff in basic administrative and technical skills
5. Training of staff in advanced administrative, management and technical skills
6. Urban planning: the preparation and monitoring of urban plans
7. Local development planning: the capacity to develop such plans, implement them and monitor local development
8. Participation of citizens in identification of development needs
9. Building licensing and building control (not mentioned on Law 41/2015, but in Law 79/1966)
10. Planning construction and maintenance of infrastructure such as roads and gardens
11. Maintenance of assets such as buildings and equipment (not mentioned anywhere in Laws but essential)
12. Solid waste management: collection, transport and disposal, recycling etc.
13. Cleanliness of public spaces: streets, squares, gardens etc.
14. Utilities: water and electricity. Law 41 speaks about coordination of work with the utility companies
15. Waste water management. Sewage system and waste water disposal. Not a direct municipal responsibility but affecting citizens lives directly
16. Public transport, in fact only construction of bus stops
17. Street naming and building numbering
18. Markets, shops and restaurants: supervision and control of security and quality of goods
19. Tourism, culture, leisure time accommodations, including sport accommodations, supervision and control of activities.
20. Public health services, advisory tasks only
21. Fire prevention. The municipality supports and facilitates the work of the civil defense authorities
22. Calamity management. The municipality supports and facilitates the work of the civil defense authorities
23. Reporting by the mayor to the council every six months
2.3. GESI aspects

Strengthening of attention for GESI aspects of the municipal work is an essential part of all efforts of USAID CITIES. Therefore, in parallel with the questions about municipal services, for 17 selected services, questions were asked about the attention for GESI aspects in the planning and implementation of these services. Here the score per service could range between 0 (no attention paid to GESI aspects and 1 (proven attention for GESI)

2.4. The scoring system

For services, the maximum score is 115. In some services it was not possible or meaningful to describe six differ levels of task performance. Sometimes only five, or four were defined, the highest possible score always being 5 and the lowest 0.

For GESI aspects, the maximum score is 17. Here the score may vary between 1 (effort made, attention paid to the issue) and 0 (no attention paid to the issue, no efforts made)

The scores are given by the expert based on the interviews with municipal staff and evidence on the ground or in documents. The scores are based on the level of service delivery that most resembles one of the six (or five, or four) descriptions.

3. Results

For an overview of all results, see Annex No 2 (A class municipalities) and 3 (B&C class municipalities)

3.1. Services

The ten A municipalities score an average of 43 (38%). The highest score is Greater Irbid wit 64 (56%), the lowest score is Greater Ma’an with 26 (23%) points.

The 23 B and C class municipalities score an average of 22 (19%). The highest score are Sahab and Deir Alla with 38 (33%), the lowest score is Hussainiya with 11 (8%).

The scores are generally low, as several tasks are simply not carried out at all. Mostly this is because the municipalities do not know about them, or they feel it is the responsibility of other agencies. Examples are
- the semi-annual report by the Mayor to the Council. No mayor ever does this, and nobody is asking for it.
- fire prevention. Not implemented at all. This is seen as a task of the civil defense
- health: advisory tasks. Does not occur
- calamity management. Implemented at a very basic level. This is seen as a task of the civil defense.
- waste water management. This is seen as a responsibility of the water company
- training of staff, both on technical skills and administrative/management skills is only done if aid projects offer the training

The difference in scores between A class and B&C class municipalities is divided over all tasks. A class municipalities score more than twice as good than B&C municipalities in tasks such as training, maintenance of assets, waste water management, street naming and numbering, inspections of shop etc., and tourism, cultural, leisure time and sport accommodations

3.2. GESI

In summary the ten A class municipalities score an average of 2.10. The highest score is Greater Irbid with 6, five municipalities score 0.

The 23 B and C class municipalities score an average of 1.52 points. The highest score is Sahab with 7, the lowest score is 0, scored by 8 municipalities.

4. Some conclusions

4.1. The methodology of MICA

The method of MICA has proven to be suitable for application in the Jordanian situation. It is sufficiently flexible and may be customized easily.

The method proved a very suitable way to start the conversation with municipal staff and the municipal leadership about their technical and institutional situation. It proved a good way to start building a relationship.

The method is suitable as rapid assessment method only. In the case of USAID CITIES this was exactly what was required. Even though USAID CITIES is a five years’ project, no more time should be spent on base line assessments than strictly necessary.

In Jordanian municipalities, the financial management system does not allow for easy access to financial data. Nor do municipalities have good data on performance in services. Therefore, financial data and data on performance could not be included. This means that the method leaves some room for personal interpretations by the interviewer. These perceptions will however not affect the overall picture of all municipalities.

The method may be applied again during a mid-term and end-term evaluation of the improvement of service delivery in the 33 municipalities.
4.2 The municipalities

There is no statistically predictable pattern of results. Some A class municipalities perform like B class municipalities, and the performance of some B class municipalities would well fit in the A class. The same applies for the distinction between B and C class municipalities. Some C class municipalities perform better than some B class municipalities and vice versa.

There definitively is a relationship between the performance of a municipality and its size. The three biggest municipalities achieve the highest scores: Greater Irbid with 64, Greater Zarqa with 61 and Greater Salt 53.

All A class municipalities score 45 on average. Without the big three mentioned before, they score on average 36.8, the highest score being 47, and the lowest score 26.

The B and C class municipalities have been analyzed together. The average core for the whole group is 22. The highest score is 41 (Sahab), the lowest score is 11 points (Al-Husseiniya).

The relationship between size and performance is not linear. E.g. New Ramtha, with more than 100,000 inhabitants, has a relatively low score of 22 points.

There is a clear relation between performance and the geographical situation of municipalities. The municipalities far away from the center of the country perform less than those in the center of the country, e.g. New Ruwaished in the east of the Kingdom, Al-Jafr, Al-Husseiniya, Hud Al-Dissa, Wadi Araba in the south.

This also applies to the A class municipalities: Greater Tafila and Greater Ma’an score 27 and 26 respectively, the lowest scores in the A class municipalities. Both are in the south of the country.

The conclusion seems justified that the municipalities in the three southernmost Governorates score lower than similar municipalities elsewhere in the Kingdom.

The research carried out does not allow for solid conclusions about the causes, but the sheer fact that smaller municipalities show a weaker performance than the bigger ones may be caused by less financial means, resulting in lower staff qualifications, and less equipment.

4.3 The municipal services

Without exception, municipal services suffer from:
- a lack of funding,
- a lack of knowledge and skills, as well as deficient qualifications of staff,
- a lack of equipment
- a lack of (participatory) planning and control.
USAID CITIES may address the first and fourth issue through focused technical and above all practical training programs, it may address the third issue to a very limited extent through assistance in kind, but the second issue is beyond its means.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Developing the municipal classification

During the assessment is was noticed that due to the growth of the population the classification of municipalities has become obsolete. Some B class municipalities have more than 100,000 inhabitants. Some C class municipalities have more than 15,000 inhabitants. The group of B class municipalities shows a great diversity, from 15,000 to 100,000 inhabitants. This makes it difficult to develop focused development policies for this category of municipalities. Municipalities of 50,000-100,000 inhabitants are totally different organizations from municipalities of 15,000 to 50,000 inhabitants. MoMA may consider to update the classification and to revise the border line between B and C class upwards, e.g. to 50,000 inhabitants.

5.2 Addressing the lack of knowledge and skills of staff

During MICA is was observed that many municipalities (even bigger ones) do not have dedicated Executive Directors nor dedicated staff for their LDUs. Very few road engineers work in municipalities. There are hardly urban planners. MoMA may consider facilitating municipalities to recruit qualified staff for these key positions, and in later stage even to subject funding of municipalities to the conditions of presence of qualified staff in these positions.

5.3. Addressing the lack of funding of small municipalities

a. All Jordanian municipalities suffer from a lack of funding, but smaller municipalities suffer more from this lack of funding than the bigger ones. The mere existence of a municipality requires a certain basic quantity and quality of staff. Each municipality needs at least a qualified Executive Director with academic qualifications, a road engineer, a building engineer, a legal specialist, a development specialist, etc. The mere existence of a municipal council requires decent secretarial support. In order to enable municipalities to recruit qualified staff for these basic positions, MoMA may consider to rethink the funding of municipalities and - within the distribution mechanism - to introduce a large basic amount of funding equal for all municipalities and enough to cover the costs of these basic positions. Well performing small municipalities in the countryside may facilitate economic growth in the countryside more effectively and thus contribute to diminishing the constant migration of people to the bigger cities and to Amman.

b. Predictability of government support to municipal budgets is a precondition of performance improvement of municipalities would greatly increase the quality of policy making and
service delivery. MOMA could plea with the Ministry of Finance to change the formula for calculation of the budget support to municipalities into a more stable formula, and it should consider to introduce multiannual predictions for general budget support to municipalities.

5.4 Addressing the lack of equipment

During the MICA interviews and in follow-up meetings the lack of basic equipment for essential municipal tasks became ever more clear. Basic equipment includes IT, surveying equipment, rolling stock for waste collection, and tankers for disposal of the content of septic tanks etc. MoMA may consider approaching international donors with the specific request to fund this kind of equipment in addition to the contributions of USAID CITIES in this area.

5.5 Introducing performance monitoring of municipalities

The landscape offered by Jordanian municipalities is varied and complex. The municipalities play a pivotal role in the newly created decentralized system, especially in the development tasks mentioned in the Laws 41 and 49 of 2015. It is therefore of the utmost importance that MoMA be well informed about the performance of municipalities in an integrated manner. This means that for each municipality data are available about its staff, its finances and about the way it carries out its tasks, through well-defined performance indicators, and accessible to all departments in MoMA and to outside stakeholders. The semi-annual reporting by mayors (Section 28 of Law 41) could be developed into the main feeder of such a system. USAID CITIES may assist MoMA in developing such a monitoring system.