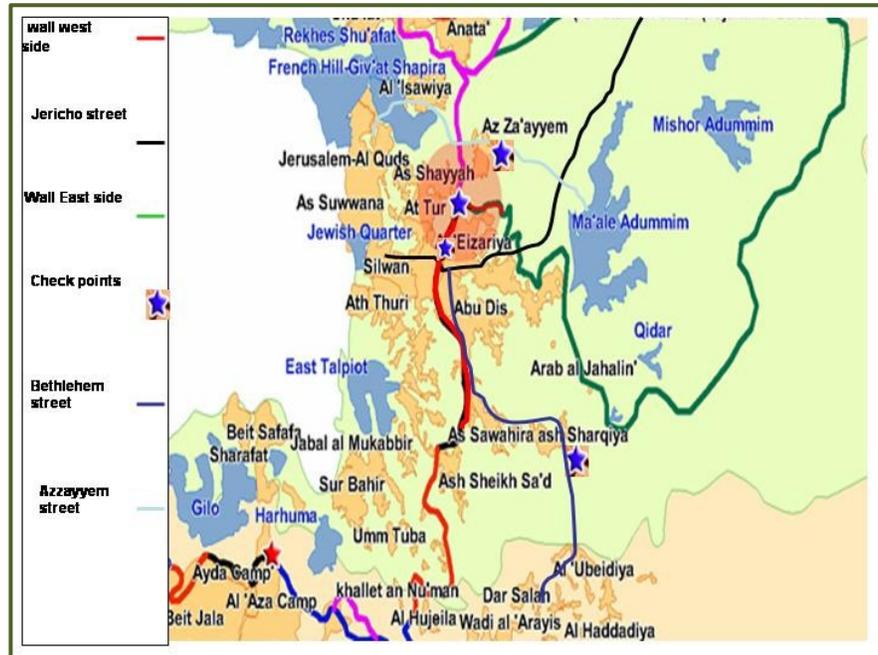


Case Study Abu Dis Municipality

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Located in Jerusalem Governorate, Abu Dis is a marginalized town due to its geographical proximity to the separation wall. It has been part of Area B, under joint Israeli and Palestinian control. Surrounded by the separation wall, Abu Dis residents face major difficulties in accessing services including access to schools, hospitals, and work. The separation wall has also damaged the social fiber of the village, and separated families from each other, and cut shepherds off from their grazing land and farmers from their fields.

Despite all the difficulties and challenges facing the residents of the community, LGI has supported local citizens and the LGU in making positive strides. Under the Local Democratic Reform program, Global Communities worked with the municipality to establish a Youth Shadow Local Council. Currently, LGI's interventions with Abu Dis include the SDIP process, establishing a Citizen Service Center, and developing a Municipal Strategic Corporate Plan.



Under leadership and management, the self-assessment process left an impression on the council and was greatly appreciated by council staff members who were actively involved throughout the process.

“The SDIP committees and the institutional development committee were very active and committed. Women were highly active and visible in all the committees namely the social and sports. We noticed an absence of women in the infrastructure committee later in the process. – Abdel Rahman Afaneh – Municipal Engineer at Abu Dis Local Council

The LGU identified the lack of planning and vision as its main challenge. *“The self-assessment helped the council to identify their weaknesses. One of them was the importance of establishing a planning unit and electronic archiving”*, says Safwat Da'na – Projects Engineer at Abu Dis. During the exercise, all staff members were exposed to the wide range of roles and responsibilities among the various departments as well as the individual roles of each staff member. As a result, the internal communication among staff has improved.

Under community participation, one can see initial improvements. In the past, the local council would send out invitations and not worry much about the actual representation. This changed during the implementation of the SDIP process, where the local council ensured maximum levels of representation; they used this intervention as an opportunity to pull together and remobilize the community to become more committed and proactive. From the start, the council began sending out emails, text messages, and invitation letters as tools to communicate with citizens.

Additionally, the SDIP planning process encouraged citizens to participate in the selection and implementation of projects. It encouraged many specialists working in Al-Quds University to provide voluntary support to the local council in their respective specialties. The SDIP support committee also ensured that proper networks are established with relevant ministries to promote Abu Dis's SDIP locally and internationally. For example, networks have been established with Turkey to receive funding support for some projects listed in the SDIP manual.

“The SDIP Support Committee acted as an advocacy arm to motivate and monitor the local council in carrying out their role in implementing the SDIP. They played a vital role as well, especially in building bridges between the local council and citizens.” - Abdel Rahman Afaneh – Municipal Engineer at Abu Dis Local Council

Community participation is witnessed in the constructive relationship established between the SDIP Support Committee and the Youth Shadow Local Council (YSLC) members. A historical dilemma facing the town was the presence of various political factions within the community. In the past, each faction would mobilize youth to serve their own personal agendas regardless whether it's a common need for the community. As a result, the local council was keen on formulating the SDIP Support Committee to try and minimize the differences among political parties, and bring youth together regardless of their various political backgrounds. Today, SDIP Support Committee provides feedback to the YSLCs plans and initiatives. Knowledge sharing between both parties is essential to complement the work of both sides.

“The SDIP and the institutional development processes and mechanisms are very promising. They both tackle realistic issues. During the past two months, our local council's classification has been moved up to B from C (based on the MDLF scale) as a result of identifying all fixed assets of the council as well as identifying all lands within the boundaries of Abu Dis. The CSC will eventually raise us to B+ as we enhance our service delivery.”- Safwat Da'na, Project Engineer at Abu Dis Local Council.

The YSLC consists of 13 members (eight males and five females.) Since January 2013, YSLC members became more focused. Recognition is highly visible now by the local community as a result of the important role youth play even in terms of networking and reaching out to other organizations. For example, the YSLC was responsible for networking with doctors to participate in a health day held in the health center in Abu Dis; they were also responsible for holding a health awareness day for youth in Abu Dis. Being productive and present within their own community encouraged conservative parents to allow their daughters to become active in implementing initiatives with full support from their families, and the surrounding community. According to Mohammad Qrai', YSLC council member, the key achievement for the YSLC was stated in his own words as follows *“The political differences are now absent. We all stand united in implementing the YSLCs' initiatives. Political factions no longer have any influence on our achievements despite our political differences.”*