Background:

Jusoor Training Center in cooperation with No Peace Without Justice organised a workshop on “Municipal Administration and Anti-corruption policies”. The workshop was conducted between 19 and 23 February 2018 in Jasem City in Daraa province, Syria. The main objectives of the workshop were introducing the basics of good governance, its concept, philosophy, principles, standards and means by which local governance promotion represents one of the key elements on which Syrian civil society organisations can contribute to the future of Syria.

Daraa’s local institution actors exerted efforts to improve their performances, adhere to principles of transparency and social participation, still these efforts did not yet necessarily translated into a local governance capable to to achieve its goals. Standards of transparency, participation, accountability, justice and the rule of law cannot be achieved through wishful thinking, but they need learning and work. Some of the local institutions’ actors have not had sufficient education to qualify them to be appointed to these positions while others have not had the chance to acquire practical experience in these fields.

Also, the success of these institutions is linked to society’s acceptance; however, this acceptance cannot be obtained without the society’s participation in the work of the local institutions. Furthermore, funders and donors adherent to offer support to the eligible to
achieve the desired goal are keen to involve society in the work of these institutions in order to secure institutions’ continuity and functioning.

Hence, Jusoor and No Peace Without Justice aimed at local councils and civil society organisations with this training program. Since these institutions take pioneer role in society, they are considered a perfect baseline to start implementation of good governance principles and elimination of administrative and financial corruption long-cultivated by the regime. As well as, transformation to a positive culture that rejects corruption and nepotism and adheres to the implementation of standards of good governance.

Training Program Structure:

Jusoor for Training and No Peace Without Justice conducted a pilot survey targeting workers in local civil society organisations and those interested in attending the program as well as individuals interested in good governance in Daraa. The survey was conducted to understand the extent of their knowledge of good governance and examine prior knowledge, identify interests to measure the suitability of the training agenda in light of the participants’ needs and to build on the prior knowledge of the participants.

The targeted group included employees in the Local Councils and civil society organisations in Daraa, including 14 women (constituting the 70% of the training attendees). The sample size was 20 questionnaires, and the questionnaire included 19 questions focused on the trainees’ personal information, their opinion of the proposed training program, its significance and some choices related to the themes of the training program. Also, there were questions related to minority rights, women representation, adopting the principles of democracy and their expectation of attending the training in order to ensure that the training would meet their expectations and practical and learning needs.

When analysing the questionnaire results, the concept of good governance was absent for many participants. This absence is evident in the analysis of the results of the survey. The questionnaire forms were entered into an excel sheet to facilitate working through the data by using SPSS. The results of this analysis were:

1- The vast majority of the applicants to the training program knew very little about good governance.
2- Major weakness in the implementation of principles of good governance in the local councils and civil society organisations, and the urgent need to develop their skills.
3- Major weakness in society participation especially minority and women in the work of the local councils.
4- Applicants to the training program had high hope that the training program would improve the administration of local councils and local organisations.
Trainers

Ahmad al-Naseer was born in 1972. He holds a PhD in agriculture economic policies from Damascus University. He is the head of the academics council in Daraa and Quneitra and teaches in the Free Agriculture College. He is a former dean of the agriculture technology institute in Daraa. He is a trainer in good governance, leadership, negotiations, conflict analysis and institutional crisis management and analysis of public policies. In addition, he has 10 years training experience in project management and monitoring and evaluation that exceeds 1500 training hours.

Obaida al-Said Ali holds an MA in biomedical engineering and worked as a manager of the development section in American Item Company for four years. He has several publications in Arabic. He also worked as an executive director of Bab al-Hawa Hospital for two years, and he is currently the Syria director of Midmar Organization for Training and Rehabilitation.

Participants:

21 trainees from Jasem Local Council and civil society organisations in the province of Daraa attended the workshop. The trainees were from Nawa and al-Jaydour area because these are the most populated areas in the liberated parts of Daraa. Also, the difficulty of moving between villages and high transportation cost in Daraa prevented others from attending the training, like those resident in the distant eastern countryside, Daraa al-Balad and al-Lajat area.

The specific actors targeted in the training were the local council in Jasem, the local council in Nawa, Olive Branch Organization, Morphine Theatrical Band, Sila Training and Development Center, Crossing to the Future Center, IRD Organization, Juri Initiative, Nama Seed organization, al-Salam Center for Development and Women Empowerment, Basmet Amal Center, the Women Center in the Syrian south, Hulm al-Yasmeen Organization, Free Women Collective, General Women’s Union, and Shams Bukra Band.

The first day - 19 February 2018

Presenting the training program objectives and identifying expectations and rules of the program

The training started with a breaking-the-ice session, during which trainees introduced to each other and the training material was distributed among the trainees. The trainees were very excited to start the training. Next, the attendees set the rules of the program committing those inside the hall, the times for break and refreshments, use of telephones, permission to exit, preventing side talks, smoking and respecting other’s opinion. All these phrases were pasted on the wall.

The first part of the training was allocated to identify trainees’ expectations. Each trainee was given a colored paper and marker to write their expectations on a wall that we called the expectations’ wall. In this way trainees’ expectations took a visual form and the trainees paste the paper in the form and place s/he likes on the wall (see picture 1). We made sure the paper was always in front of the trainees to keep their attentions alive, and every now and then, they were reminded to assess the links between the program and their expectations.
Later, the concept, origin and philosophy of good governance and the justification of its existence were explained as follows:

The training started by noting that good governance is related to decision making and decision implementing processes. It does not relate to the “correct” decisions, but it is the search for the best possible process to make those decisions. Then, it was emphasised that the process of making good decisions has a positive effect on all aspects of the work of local councils and civil society organisations, including consultation practices and policies, meeting procedures, quality service protocols, behavior of members of the local councils and civil society organisations and good work relations.

Then the concept of good governance was explained with the origin and meaning of the word. Later, the origin of good governance was discussed indicating the growing importance of good governance due to many world countries moving to capitalist economic regimes depending on corporate companies to achieve high and continuous economic growth. Also, the effect of the expansion of the size of projects and separation of ownership from the administration was explained as the birth of the real need for good governance.

At the beginning of the 4th session, the discussion moved to the philosophy of good governance, and here it was explained that modern institutions are distinguished by two characteristics which necessitate the existence of regulations for administration. The first characteristic is the fact that modern institutions are distinguished by the separation of ownership and administration. The second characteristic is the influence that is enjoyed by senior benefactors according to the least fortunate groups. These two characteristics pushed countries to establish a supervisory system that assures stakeholders that the administration is doing its tasks in the best way possible. At the same time, this system protects the least fortunate groups from the domination of senior benefactors.
The first exercise:

The session moved to the first practical exercise where trainees were divided into three groups:

1- Each group searched for the concerned parties of responsibilities and rights in good governance for 10 minutes.
2- Each group discussed the terminology they assigned in no more than 15 minutes.
3- The terminology is merged within the three parties; each terminology to the appropriate party.

The three groups reached almost the same terminology; stakeholders, executive administration and administrative council. The relation between these three was demonstrated in the following chart.

![Diagram of the first exercise](image)

The second exercise:

The session moved to the second practical exercise where we asked the three groups to adopt one of the roles of the parties of good governance and to send three messages to the other two groups. The trainees were given 15 minutes to prepare what is required, and then each party responds to the indications provided by the other two parties.

And indeed the messages sent by each team to the other two teams were perfect. The messages showed that the trainees understood the role of the three parties, and that they had discussed these extensively. After that, the session moved to demonstrate the extensive good governance of the parties as well as identifying the objectives of good governance. The session then continued to the third exercise.
After that, the objectives of good governance were narrated without talking about the concept or meaning of any of them. The objectives were written on the blackboard with a question mark at the end of each one.

- Transparency?
- Accountability?
- Liability?
- Justice/Equality?

**Third exercise:**

The third exercise was conducted in the following way:

1. Participants divided into 4 groups.
2. Each group was named with an objective of good governance.
3. Each group was asked to discuss the adopted objective.
4. Each group was asked to draft a definition of the adopted objective.
5. Each group recounted the drafted definition and time was allocated for discussion of how accurate the definition given is. This exercise proved sufficient for trainees to build knowledge on the objectives of good governance.

In the last session of the first day, sub-headings of the previous sessions were recalled, discussed and compared with the attendees’ expectations wall. Attendees were then reminded of the importance of arriving on time on the second day.

**The second day, 20 February 2018**

The second day started with a session devoted to recall the points addressed in the first day and addressing outstanding questions from the trainees. Then, the discussion moved to the benefits of good governance for a proper local administration. Good governance encourages institutions to use resources efficiently, helps to achieve sustainable growth, and encourages productivity. It facilitates performance supervisory and monitoring processes by identifying frameworks for internal supervision and forming specialised committees and implementing transparency and disclosure. Also, proper good governance and a sound municipal administration can attract funding and support because funders and donors are supportive of local councils and local institutions that have a track record of good and transparent administration systems. Good governance reduces the element of uncertainty and increases the chances of donors and funders approaching institutions, and secures institutions’ proximity to the targeted group.

Then, the discussion moved to explaining internal and external regulations. The discussion focused on the idea that external regulations indicate the general atmosphere of the local institution. This include laws regulating the activities of the council or institution in the form of internal regulations indicating the rules and principles which set the modality of decision-making and distribution of authority inside the institution between the various organs of the local institution. The availability of these regulations and their implementation decrease conflict of interests among the parties. After that, time was allocated for trainees to add or suggest regulations to be included in the book.
Then the discussion moved to talking about good governance rules according to the different parties which set the rules. The discussion included a historical narrative of its development by comparing rules set by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and those set by the Bank for International Settlements, Basel Committee and finally comparing the rules with the International Monetary Funding rules.

Next, the principles of local governance were discussed focusing on the more significant ones:

1- Ensure there is an effective framework for good governance in institutions and that this framework is represented in laws, legislation, effective monetary markets and lifting restrictions on the movement of funds as well as the presence of an effective institutional system that guarantees legislation and implement the necessary hierarchical structure.

2- Guarantee the rights of service recipients. Also one of the most important emphases of a proper local administration is the rights of the beneficiaries and the citizens. The most prominent rights rely on guaranteeing secure ways to document their rights and that this information regarding the institution or council should be available at a suitable time and on a regular basis. As well as ensuring that everyone can participate and vote. Other than ensuring that everyone can benefit of the local services.

3- Ensure equal treatment for everyone where there are less fortunate groups and groups with less capability to reach the service.

The last session wrapped up the points discussed during the day and a final exercise was conducted. (know as really, if only). In this exercise, we mention each sub-heading or information and we leave it to the trainees to choose a word. If the trainee used really that means the information was explained well and understood. If the trainee uses if only, it means that they wish the information was explained more extensively or in a better way.

This exercise is one way to measure feedback and identify themes that should be explained again or change the way ideas are presented to ensure knowledge is passed on to the trainees. The results were great as the trainees’ comprehended the training material quickly.
Third day - 21 February 2018

The training started with a review of the points discussed in the previous day and answers to some trainees’ questions. The discussion then moved to explaining the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention Against Corruption.

The day included an extensive explanation of corruption, its negative effect on all aspects of society and the ways corruption can be countered. During the explanation, it was indicated that the United Nations Convention Against Corruption was the first comprehensive framework to combat corruption. The convention was implemented in 2005. The trainers explained about the transparency report and how Syria ranks 13th on the corruption indicator. The rank indicates corruption is very high in Syria. Trainers also clarified the inverse relationship between corruption indicator and transparency.

Then the discussion moved to the effects of corruption. Trainees voiced their opinion about the negative effects resulting from corruption and they were grouped under six themes: political life, economic development, social peace, national security, human rights and human dignity, and the spread of a culture that justifies corruption.
The exercise about the risks of corruption

The exercise involved:

1- Dividing trainees into three new groups to insure the diversity of ideas within the groups.
2- Time was allocated to each group to choose two types of risk resulting from corruption from the following:
   - Political life
   - Economic development
   - Social peace
   - National security
   - Human rights and human dignity
   - A culture that justifies corruption
3- Each group identified the effects of corruption in the chosen category.
4- Each group was asked to identify at least 5 partial risks of corruption in each category.
5- Each group was asked to write the identified points on a big piece of paper and paste the paper on the wall.
6- After that, each group explained the points to the other trainees while they took notes.
7- The points identified by the groups were discussed. The main points were identified as follows (it should be noted that groups were asked to focus on writing two types of risk within each category):

The first group (the administration council group):

1- Risks of corruption on social peace: moral decay- poor social relations
2- Risks of corruption on national security: organised crime- inability to control security apparatus in the country.

The second group (the executive administration group):

1- Risks of corruption on political life: unqualified individuals in authority positions- exploiting political position for personal interests
2- Economic development: money leakage to outside the country- the high unemployment rate

The third group (stakeholders):

1- Human rights and human dignity: child labor- unsuitable individuals working in high positions
2- Culture that justifies corruption: non-compliance with the principles of work- bribery for personal gains

After finishing this discussion, we moved to the second part of the exercise where we asked each group to suggest preventive mechanisms or solutions that address the abovementioned points. In response, each group listed steps to counter the points.
Each group wrote suggestions on another paper and the paper was discussed with the other groups in the following way:

The solutions for the problems were written down

- Human rights and human dignity
  1. Finding binding laws to prevent child labor
  2. Secure job opportunities

- Culture that justifies corrupt
  1. Placing/appointing individuals to the appropriate positions
  2. Activate role of accountability
  3. Raise awareness to limit to family disintegration

- Social peace:
  1. Raise awareness within society
  2. Impose penalties to limit children dropping out

- National security:
  1. Border control
  2. Finding strict laws and implementing them

- Politics:
  1. Actualize rule of law
  2. Keeping and maintaining the right to vote

- Economic development:
  1. Monitoring projects
  2. Increasing national income

This exercise offered significant knowledge for the trainees especially as they alone put forward the problems and solutions and discussed them among themselves. We allocated enough time for discussion between trainees regarding this topic which made them realize the high risk of corruption.

At the end of the exercise, we wrote the following statement; **corruption is the main enemy to sustainable growth, the absence of transparency and accountability which makes it spread like cancer.** We wrote the statement on a big piece of paper and hung it in a visible place in the training hall.
Then we took a break, and asked each trainee to choose a colored paper and write on it the following sentence “where did corruption come from”.

They wrote several reasons, and then we identified overlapping points. It is worth noting that the statement “presence of inappropriate persons as the head of an administration hierarchy” was written down by all trainers though expressed differently.

Then the discussion moved to talking about the United Nation’s concept of corruption and Transparency International and its annual report as well as perceptions of corruption and Syria’s place in this report before the revolution. There was an indication that the corruption rate was very high in Syria and it was increasing.

Then the United Nation’s approach to good governance was discussed including sound and effective management of financial and human resources, justice in offering services, liability to accountability, developing a sound legal framework to resolve conflict and disputes, just and effective judiciary, transparent institutions that permit participation and
contribution.

Later, the discussion addressed good governance in civil society organisations and its importance in these organisations.

The five principles to implement good governance in civil society organisations were discussed as follows:

1. Non-profit organizations have a responsibility towards local communities and society in general.
2. Good governance means a clear organisational structure clarifying the mission and authority of those involved.
3. Good governance involves separation between governance and administration.
4. Regarding the mission of non-profit organizations.
5. Ability to mobilize resources and employ them effectively.

Then we clarified the main actors in the good governance systems of nonprofit organisations (local communities-administrative boards-managers).

The optimal rules of procedure to achieve good governance in civil society organisations- what are the rules of procedure- what is the difference between rules of procedures and administrative regulations. We also explained the rules of procedures and demonstrated using three of them while analysing them in content and form. After that, we elicited participants’ feedback on the previous points and the training ended on a high note. The trainees confirmed they benefited from the training and that they will work to implement what they learned in their organizations and in the local councils.
An evaluation was conducted at the end of the training using a specific model, a distant evaluation for the training was conducted and trainees obtained course certificates.

Also, the Morphine Theatrical Band performed a theatrical sketch showing the effect of corruption and the violations of principles on society. Two members of the band participated in the training.

Conclusion

The training enabled the trainees to build knowledge and increase awareness on the basics of local administration and good governance, on the tools and mechanisms that could make governance processes more effective and efficient and to develop local accountability mechanisms to measure performances and results of the local administrations and counter corruption. The training also facilitated participants' understanding of leadership theories and it insured that they acquired basic skills to lead a team.

In light of the lack of new institutions, with the employment of unqualified people into management roles in institutions and with the lack of supervisory standards, in many cases, lead institutions to move away from transparency, work without any accountability and without any consideration for community participation. All these factors lead to the regression of the work of many of these institutions and resulted in many cases in these institutions being refused funding or support or the halting of their funding in other cases. These issues reflect negatively directly and indirectly on the whole local communities.

Jusoor in cooperation with No Justice Without Peace prepared an efficient training program with respect to the targeted group, the value of the information offered and its ability to transfer knowledge to the trainees in the best way possible. The training is also distinguished as the number of hours was sufficient to cover all the training material and choosing a relatively secure place and convenient hall to hold the training had a role in improving the training atmosphere.

Finally, it is possible to say that the training program fulfilled its goals and received approval from the trainees as well as achieving the forecasted benefit for the trainees.