

**Short Description of main achievements:**

Al-Madinah Local Urban Observatory (MLUO), established in 2004, is the first Urban Observatory in the Arab Region with solid database and analytical skills and reports. MLUO has based its work on the UN-HABITAT key indicators, on Millenium Development Golas (MDGs) and other international indicators. In addition to that, MLUO has formulated a number of local specific indicators.

MLUO's major achievements include the followings:

1. Establishment of a solid partnership between Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah Municipality, the Central Government, Academics, NGOs, civil society and private sector, where the data and indicators are collected, analyzed and tested through partners.
2. Establishment of women working team for the Urban Observatory.
3. Supporting the decision makers in the municipality and at governorate level as well as several governmental departments to shape their decisions according to the indicators' analysis provided. MLUO is a focal point for urban management and urban development policy at local level.
4. Strenghtening the connection with the Regional Physical Planning Department and other departments in Al-Madinah Al-Munawaarah Municipality.
5. Indicators and reports were instrumental in shaping the development policies in Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah. The Urban Observaotry is analyzing and monitoring several development issues such as:
  - Health situation in collaboration with the Directorate of Health Affair and the Council region.
  - Illiteracy and education (in collaboration with the department of education in Al- Medinah Al-Munawarah Municipality).
  - Social and Economic Situation (in collaboration with UNDP experts and World Bank).
  - Urban poverty at municipal level.
  - Achievement of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs).
  - Child Protection Initiative.
6. The Al-Madinah Local Urban Observatory (MLUO) cooperate with UN-HABITAT Office in Amman to assist in the establishment of National and Local Urban Observatories in the Arab Region and in the capacity building of staff.

**Human Settlement Achievement:**

In collaboration with UNDP, Madinah Local Urban Observatory (MLUO) developed and analyzed indicators on the informal settlements in Al-Madinah Al-Munhawarah. The Slum Improvement Programme was developed based on the analysis provided by MLUO.

## **1. Background**

The idea of establishing Urban Observatories has emerged from the recommendations of UN-HABITAT Conference in 1996, in order to monitor urban trends and to provide urban development institutions with relevant information periodically. With the adoption of the member states to the HABITAT Agenda, world leaders announced their commitment to the implementation of the recommendations of the conference, which included the establishment of Urban Observatories at the global, national, regional and local levels (GUO, NUO, RUO and LUO).

In a commitment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to implement the recommendations of UN-HABITAT for the establishment of urban observatories, Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah Municipality has taken the initiative for the establishment of the first Local Urban Observatory (LUO) in the Kingdom in 2003 in cooperation with UN-HABITAT, Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) besides to the participation of different governmental departments, private sector, NGOs and civil society organizations.

Over the years, it was felt through the Al-Madinah Local Urban Observatory's (MLUO) outcomes and achievements through the regional activities and new tools for monitoring urban trends and progress in urban expansion with special measuring tools for all the development sectors.

UN-HABITAT GUO provided the exact framework for the felt needs. Administrative decisions have been taken by the government of Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah to establish MLUO.

In 2004, Global Urban Observatory office at UN-HABITAT assessed Al-Madinah Local Urban Observatory and certified that it is functioning as a Local Urban Observatory (LUO), according to UN-HABITAT conditions.

## **2. Description of the initiative or project**

AL-Madinah Local Urban Observatory (MLUO) is a network between data producers, governemental institutions involved in urban isseus, NGOs, civil society organizations and urban policy makers in Al-Madinah Al-Munawara. The host institution for MLUO is the department of Regional Planning in Al Madinah Municipality. A strong connection and mutual cooperation exist between the Regional Planning Department and MLUO.

The cooperation and the sense of ownership at decision making levels are key elements for the success of MLUO. MLUO is recognized from the decision makers as an effective and necessary tool for urban management and policy development.

MLUO is collaborating with several International Organizations and Governmental Department to develop and analyze indicators related to the current situation of different urban issues in Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah (such as socio-economic situation, health, housing, infrastructures and transportation, poverty reduction strategy, the achievement of the Millenium Development Goals-MDGs, the informal settlements development and the child protection strategy). MLUO supports also in prioritizing issues, identifying constraints and elaborating proposals on urban development isseus.

At present MLUO includes 107 indicators that are periodically updated, analyzed and disseminated through brochures, website, annual reports and city profile. The indicators are also visualized and analized through GIS maps, tables and graphics.

Scroll of Honour submission  
Madinah Local Urban Observatory (MLUO)

The indicators are related to several prioritized sectors that are not only the ones recognized as priorities at international level, but also some others that are local priorities. MLUO is working as an effective tool for analyzing and monitoring local issues such as the pilgrimage to Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah ( Hajj and Umrah) in order to plan for efficient infrastructures and services for the peregrines.

Moreover MLUO cooperates with other Urban Observatories for exchanging experiences and disseminating information at national, regional and global level.

MLUO is cooperating with UN-HABITAT office in Amman in supporting several Governmental Institutions around the Arab Region on establishing Urban Observatories and developing their capacities on formulating and using urban indicators:

- National Urban Observatory in Jordan (with the Ministry of Municipalities).
- Local Urban Observatory in Amman (with the Greater Amman Municipality-GAM).
- National Urban Observatory in Syria (with the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment).
- Local Urban Observatory in Sweida, Syria (with Sweida Governorate).
- Sub-regional Urban Observatories in 6 governorates in Saudi Arabia and 8 local urban observatories within Al Madinah Al-Munawarah Region.

#### Institutional Framework

Al-Madinah Local Urban Observatory's (MLUO) institutional framework includes a Steering Committee (Governor of Al Madinah Al-Munawarah, 25 members from Government Departments, NGOs and private sector), an Executive Committee (representatives from Municipality, Ministry of Hajj/Pilgrimage and Health Affairs, General Administration for Education for male as well as for female, General Organization for Social Insurance and from Civil Defence and Policy Directorate). Moreover the MLUO's institutional framework includes three Technical Units (1.GIS, 2.Indicators Analysis and 3.Information Dissemination). A women working team is also part of the MLUO institutional framework.

#### Objective

MLUO's main objective is contributing to the formulation of new urban policies or reform existing urban policies as well as acting as a focal point for decision makers in their policy formulation at local, national and regional level.

#### Outcomes

In order to fulfill the above mentioned objective, MLUO has achieved the following outcomes:

1. Analytical and syntetic urban information is produced, disseminated and periodically monitored. Priority urban issues and main constraints are identified throught the indicators analysis.
2. The quality of urban information in Saudi Arabia and in the Arab Region has been enhanced through the establishment of urban observatories at local, regional and national level.

## Outputs

1.1 MLUO has developed 107 indicators (60 international including Habitat Agenda indicators, 22 related to the child protection initiative, 25 specific local indicators) related to the following prioritized issues on sustainable urban development:

- Economic and social development (households below poverty line, informal employment, child mortality, education, illiteracy, unemployment, child protection initiative indicators, etc.).
- Infrastructure indicators (household connection to services, infrastructure expenditures, etc.).
- Transport (transport modes to work, expenditures on road infrastructure, etc.).
- Environmental Management (wastewater treated, solid waste generated, air pollution concentration, etc.).
- Governance (decentralization, transparency and accountability, etc.).
- Pilgrimage (*Hajj* and *Umrah*).
- Community Information.

1.2 Brochures with the list of all the indicators were published both in English and in Arabic in order to increase awareness on urban indicators and to encourage their use in urban policy formulation. (***Annexes 1-2***)

1.3 MLUO is developing and monitoring the achievement of the following MDGs in Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah (***Annex 3***):

- Eradication of poverty and hunger.
- Provision of primary education for all.
- Achieving gender equality and women empowerment.
- Reduction of child mortalities.
- Improvement of pregnant mothers health.
- Combating HIV – AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
- Developing a global partnership for development.

Some of the indicators related to the mentioned goals are already included in the list of MLUO indicators and some others are in process to be collected.

1.4 MLUO is developing studies on specific development issues such as health situation, socio-economic conditions and education. MLUO conducted a socio-economic analysis at Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah level and at neighborhood level producing related GIS maps, graphics and tables. A development strategy based on the MLUO socio-economic indicators analysis has been developed. The identified poverty alleviation strategy, based on the indicators analysis provided by MLUO, includes (***Annexes 4-5***):

- Establishing the Saudi Arabia Authority for alleviating poverty in Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah.
- Establishing a specific fund for the poor.
- Facilitating the access to the basic services through the exemption from education, water and electricity fees.

- Facilitating the access to credit and creation of Small Micro-Enterprises to be integrated in the market system.

1.5 MLUO is monitoring the Al –Madinah Child Protection Initiative through 22 indicators. (**Annex 6**).

1.6 MLUO has developed a study and supported the formulation of proposals for the slums improvement in Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah. MLUO developed indicators on general physical conditions of the slum areas and socio economic conditions of the vulnerable groups living in the slums areas. The non-Saudi Arabian population living in the informal settlement was also included in the study. The slum improvement strategy included resettlements, rehabilitation and access to basic services such as water and solid waste collection (**Annex 7**).

1.7 MLUO, in collaboration with UNDP, developed the physical indicators initiatives at Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah and neighborhood level (**Annex 8**).

1.8 Moreover, based on the prioritized urban issues, MLUO is planning to develop more detailed indicators on education sector and to monitor the juvenile crime situation in Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah.

1.9 MLUO has developed several information products such as brochures, reports and a number of GIS mapas, tables and graphs on urban indicators analysis. Annual reports have been produced starting from 2004 to 2009 (**Annex 9**). Specific report on the selected indicators (including definition, methodology for data collection, computation and source) was produced both in english as well as in Arabic (**Annex 10**).

1.10 MLUO has developed a website (in Arabic, English and French) in order to increase the access to urban information and establishing a network with other urban observatories around the world and similar entities.

2.1 MLUO, in collaboration with UN-HABITAT, provided the translation in arabic of the UN-HABITAT document "Guide to setting up an Urban Observatory" in order to support the establishment of urban observatories in the Arab Region.

2.2 Various Urban Observatories in Saudi Arabia and in the Arab Region (Jordan and Syria) has been established trough training and technical support from UN-HABITAT in collaboration with MLUO.

### Activities

The implementation steps for the establishment MLUO and for achieving the intended objectives and outcomes has been composed of the following activities:

Inception – This phase included capacity building workshop and training in collaboration with AUDI and UN-HABITAT. Moreover it included the development of institutional framework, the establishment of MLUO within the Regional Planning Department of Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah Municipality and the creation of the three technical units. The identification of the main partners was also carried out during this phase. Particular attention was given to the involvement of

women organizations such as the General Girls Education Department in Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah and Women's Tayba Charity Organization.

Implementation – A core set of indicators was prioritized during several workshop with the identified partners. The developed indicators database was linked to the GIS system in order to present indicators and their analysis via geographic maps, charts and graphics.

In consultation with all the partners and according to the urban priorities in Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah, MLUO's Steering Committee decided to use the urban observatory as a tool for monitoring the MDGs and the other above mentioned projects. The list of indicators was extended from 20 in 2004 to 107 in 2009. Meanwhile the MLUO's Information Products Unit became operative and it started the dissemination of urban information through brochures, website, CD and reports.

Periodically meetings are conducted to define the annual work plan for MLUO and for selecting the priority areas. A permanent body evaluate the operational activities of MLUO and give suggestions for the future plans.

Replication of the MLUO Initiative - Based on the experience developed during six years, MLUO has supported the establishment, set up and improvement of other Urban Observatories in the Arab Region. In collaboration with UN-HABITAT, MLUO carried out several workshops for establishing NUO in Jordan and Syria, LUOs in Amman and Sweida in addition to National and Local UOs in Saudi Arabia. MLUO, in collaboration with UN-HABITAT conducted training on the necessary steps for establishing UO, on indicators formulation/development, on UO action plan and on indicators monitoring system.

MLUO was also conducting a follow up meeting and assessment to review the formulated indicators for Syria and Sweida Urban Observatories. Specific recommendations and lessons learned from MLUO were provided to the Syrian staff.

#### Lessons learned

- Proper Institutional framework with solid networking among all the involved stakeholders (technical experts and data producers) are the key conditions for the functioning of MLUO. MLUO is an essential tool in the urban development planning process as each partner and involved stakeholder provide MLUO with the necessary inputs in term of needs assessment and available data.
- MLUO is working as a focal point for the urban information in Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah. Data are usually scattered over different institutions and places. The existence of one institution responsible for collecting and analyzing urban indicators avoid the duplication of efforts in data collection and analysis.
- Key synthetic information coordinated with policy needs are more useful than large quantity of data, often unanalyzed because of the expense and complexity involved. The synthetic urban indicators are the best way (recognized from Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah decision makers) to apply the urban knowledge in formulating and implementing urban policies.
- The periodic updating and analysis of indicators is critically important for reliability and validity of data. MLUO makes continuous efforts to constantly improve data reliability by routine examination, comparative analysis and study that attest the quality of current data or data collection process.

- The Urban Observatory is an institution that needs continuous working. The list of indicators will never be the final one; it is continuously modified according to the decision makers needs.

### **3. Main partners**

#### Governmental Institutions, Services Departments and International Organizations:

1. Government of Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah.
2. Board of Madinah Region – represented by Directorate of Regional Development.
3. Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI).
4. UNDP.
5. UN-HABITAT
6. UN\_HABITAT-GUO, NAIROBI.
7. Municipality of Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah Region.
8. Tayba University.
9. Ministry of Hajj / Madinah Branch.
10. Health Affairs Department in Madinah.
11. The General Boy Education Department in Madinah.
12. The General Girls Education Department in Madinah.
13. Social Welfare Department / Madinah Branch.
14. Technical Education Department / Madinah Branch.
15. Labor Office in Madinah.
16. Saudi Electricity Company in Madinah.
17. Saudi Telecom Company in Madinah.
18. The General Directorate of Water in Madinah.
19. Ministry of Justice / Madinah Branch.
20. Department of Traffic in Madinah.
21. Civil Defence Department in Madinah.
22. Special Force of the High Roads in Madinah.
23. Red Crescent Branch in Madinah.
24. Police Department of Madinah.
25. Ministry of Commerce and Industry / Madinah Branch.
26. Ministry of Information / Madinah Branch.

#### Civil Society Organizations

27. Coordination Board of Charity Organization.
28. Women's Tayba Charity Organization.
29. Charity Organization for Social Services.
30. Al-Ber Organization in Madinah.

#### Private Sector

31. Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Madinah.
32. Ahmed Farid Company.

#### Role of the partners

During the inception phase, the mentioned partners signed an agreement with MLUO and they participated to the workshop and meeting for preparing the MLUO workplan including their commitments.

During the implementation phase, the national and local partners provide MLUO with the need assessment, with the available data and possible indicators to be developed and analyzed according to the need.

UN–HABITAT and AUDI supported the establishment of MLUO through workshops, capacity building and training.

#### **4. Impact**

- MLUO has a relevant impact in decision making process. Data and indicators are updated on a continuous basis for a variety of projects and they are stored, analyzed and disseminated in different ways to meet the need of the decision makers.

- Direct beneficiaries of the project are the urban population in Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah. The population is becoming more and more aware on the situation of their city particularly through the information disseminated by media, through brochures, reports disseminated by MLUO and through the website. Transparency and civil society awareness increased.

- MLUO has having a relevant impact on vulnerable group as it is monitoring the achievement of the MDGs, it cooperated in developing the poverty alleviation strategy and in developing an upgrading programme for informal settlement. Poverty alleviation, gender equity, education, child mortality and their related indicators are continuously monitored and are prioritized as urgent issues at decision making level.

- MLUO has having a relevant impact on community participation in decision making process. Several civil society organizations participated in the following activities:

- Identification of urban situations and priority issues.
- Selection of a group of indicators that meet the specificity of the local community with main focus on vulnerable groups.
- Preparation and implementation of field surveys.

- MLUO has a relevant impact on women participation on the decision making process. Women associations are involved in all the MLUO's process from the priority sectors identification to the indicators definition and analysis. A specific women working group is part of the MLUO Institutional Framework.

#### **5. Sustainability**

MLUO has the long term vision of expanding its support to different development sectors in order to become more and more effective as a tool for urban planning. This long term vision is an important component for MLUO sustainability.

MLUO has a strong institutional and financial support. The network between different institutions and department is more and more strong. Moreover the annual budget allocation is ensured including funds for day-to-day MLUO's functioning and improvement, capacity building and training in order to provide necessary skills and inputs.

Decision makers demonstrate continuous sense of ownership over MLUO. They consider MLUO as a necessary tool for planning, they refer to MLUO for prioritizing urban issues, for policy formulation and reform. This sense of ownership at decision makers level is a crucial step toward sustainability.

The consultation approach is another essential component of MLUO. Partners and governmental departments usually provide need identification and recommendations, while the executive committee have regular meeting in order to follow-up the effective operational activities and to implement the recommendations. This continuous consultation approach is a determinat component to ensure the MLUO sustainability. All the MLUO stakeholders have a key role in formulating and implementing MLUO activities and they also are aware of the benefits of their participation.

#### **6. Transferability and upscaling**

The experience of Al-Madinah Local Urban Observatory (MLUO) is a key resource on the process for establishing other urban observatories in the Arab Region. MLUO, in collaboration with UN-HABITAT, is promoting Urban Observatory in the Arab Region and it is supporting the establishment of UOs all over the Arab Region. As mentioned above, several workshops were organized for establishing UOs in the Arab Region.

Moreover MLUO and UN-HABITAT launched an Award for excellence in urban observatories that is called " Al-Madinah Award for Urban Observatories" to promote the establishment of Urban Observatories in the Arab Region.

#### **7. Innovation**

- MLUO is an integral part of the Urban Planning process and development for Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah. The host institution for MLUO is the department of Regional Planning in Al-Madinah Al-Munawara Municipality.
- MLUO is the focal point for reliable urban information in Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah. Several local, national and international organization strength partnership with MLUO for formulating and analyzing indicators on specific prioritized issues.
- Provision of advisory, technical and scientific support for the establishment of new urban observatories in the Arab Region.

#### **8. Recognition of the initiative**

MLUO is formally recognized by UN-HABITAT in order to fully benefit from Global Urban Observatory (GUO) network and in order to disseminate information about its work and achievement. In 2004 MLUO Steering Committee, the host institution and the partners prepared and submitted to UN-HABITAT MLUO action plan in order to certify MLUO as an Urban Observatory.

MLUO was also recognized as a best practice in the field of regional planning from the Organization of the Islamic Capitals and Cities (OICC).