



USAID | JORDAN

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Subject: Request for Information (RFI) No. RFI-278-21-DRG-Sawt
Activity Name: USAID/Jordan - SAWT ACTIVITY
Date of Issuance: 12/21/2020
Closing Date/Time: 01/11/2021 /16:00 (Jordan Time)
To Email: StrengtheningCivilSociety@usaid.gov

INTRODUCTION

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission to Jordan seeks information from interested organizations and individuals on a proposed USAID civil society strengthening activity. A draft program description is included in Attachment 1. USAID anticipates supporting this activity over a five year period in an approximate amount of \$35 million, depending upon the availability of funding.

This activity is in-line with USAID's Country Development and Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) and the Journey to Self-Reliance (J2SR) Roadmap for Jordan. USAID Sawt: A Voice for Civic Engagement aims to position Jordanian civil society and media to actively and effectively represent and advocate on behalf of citizen-driven interests. A more active and effective civil society and better informed public will assist the Government of Jordan (GOJ) in producing policies that respond to citizen's needs while also promoting increased trust between government institutions and those whom they govern.

Interested parties are requested to provide feedback to USAID/Jordan using the email address provided below. No other form of feedback will be accepted.

DISCLAIMER

This is a Request for Information (RFI) only: it is not a Notification of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). This RFI is not an indication that USAID will proceed with a NOFO, and any resultant activity is subject to final approval and availability of funding. This RFI is an opportunity for USAID to obtain information from interested parties regarding the anticipated activity. USAID will confirm receipt of submissions, but will not respond to questions submitted by organizations related to this RFI.

Responses to this RFI are strictly voluntary. USAID will not pay respondents for information provided in response to this RFI. Responses to this RFI will not be returned and respondents will not be notified of the result of the review. USAID reserves the right to use the information submitted, or may decide not to incorporate any/all feedback in its activity, if one is ultimately approved. USAID also reserves the right to make changes to the scope, term and potential funding amount of the activity as it completes its design and approval process. If a NOFO is issued, it will be announced on the Grants.gov website <https://www.grants.gov/> at a later date,

and all interested parties must respond to that NOFO separately from any response to this announcement. Should an organization not wish to respond to this RFI, it may still respond to any potential NOFO. This RFI does not restrict in any way the Government's approach on a future solicitation or NOFO.

INSTRUCTIONS

USAID requests that respondents provide information and recommendations for a more effective activity design.

The submitted response should include:

1. Reference: USAID/Jordan Sawt Activity
2. Organization Name
3. Organization Address
4. Contact Information
5. Responses may be provided for any or all of the questions below.

Organizations/Individuals are limited to only one (1) submission per entity. Multiple submissions by the same organization/individual will not be considered. Please do not send information about corporate or organizational capacity, applications, proposals, resumes, or promotional material, as they will be discarded.

Responses to this request for information must be in ***English and not exceed four pages***. The submission must be electronic and typed on standard 8 ½ x 11 paper (216 mm x 297 mm paper), single spaced, font size 12, with each page numbered consecutively.

Technical Questions:

Suggestions/recommendations on the following questions:

1. Based upon your experience, are there any lessons learned that you wish to share, relative to working with civil society or media in Jordan to achieve similar objectives?
2. What specific global trends, innovations, or new thinking relevant to civic engagement, independent media and capacity development should be considered?
3. How might USAID advance trusting relationships between the GOJ and CSOs, or between the GOJ and independent media?
4. What are the key issues or concerns that USAID should consider to better promote inclusion, and engagement with marginalized populations?
5. What lessons can be shared about balancing national versus local priorities in Jordan's civil society and media sectors?

6. What could USAID do to enable more meaningful collaborating, learning and adapting (CLA) approaches?
7. How could this activity constructively engage with the private sector to advance the objective?
8. Is there anything that you would like to add?

Thank you for your continuing partnership in this important development initiative. Responses regarding this Request for Information (RFI) must be submitted in writing to: StrengtheningCivilSociety@usaid.gov by 01/11/2021 at 1600 (Amman, Jordan time). Responses in formats other than electronic via email to the address indicated will not be accepted.

Sincerely,

Camille Garcia
Agreement Officer
USAID/Jordan

Attachments:

1. **Draft Program Description**

ATTACHMENT 1: DRAFT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Sawt: A Voice for Civic Engagement

Executive Summary

Jordan is currently facing multiple challenges to its stability, from an economic downturn that has been exacerbated by COVID-19, to severe limitations on water resources, to a growing sense of cynicism amongst voters. Citizen trust in their government depends in part on whether citizens feel their voices are heard. A civil society that is effective, with organizations that are relevant to their constituents, should build trust between the governed and those who govern.

The USAID/Jordan Sawt “Voice” activity aims to position Jordanian civil society to effectively represent and advocate on behalf of citizen-driven interests, while leveraging the use of digital media to enhance civic knowledge and discourse. A more active and effective civil society and better informed public will assist the Government of Jordan (GOJ) in producing policies that respond to citizen’s needs, while also promoting increased trust between government institutions and those whom they govern.

Success in this activity will advance Jordan on its path to self-reliance by supporting measurable improvements in civil society and media effectiveness, sustainable democracy, and social group equality indicators in USAID’s Journey to Self-Reliance (J2SR) Country Roadmap for Jordan.

Civil society sustainability should be based on the ability to generate grassroots support, trust, and a diverse range of local and international funding. Ideally, this would be measured at both the sector and organizational level.

Sawt is anticipated to be a single cooperative agreement estimated at \$35 million over the course of five years. USAID anticipates this activity could start in Summer 2021.

For the purposes of this activity, USAID will use the terms civil society, civil society actors, civil society entities, and civil society organizations (CSOs) to include: non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Royal non-governmental organizations (RNGOs), community based organizations (CBOs), societies, media organizations, trade unions, professional associations, business associations, chambers of commerce, and cooperatives, unless otherwise specifically stated.

Background

The USAID/Jordan’s 2020-2025 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS)¹ identified increased political participation and a vibrant civil society as key to Jordan’s ability to increase citizen trust in the GOJ and achieve consensus on needed reforms. USAID/Jordan implemented two activities targeting the development of civil society at substantial investment of several millions of dollars over the

¹ USAID/Jordan’s 2020-2025 Country Development Cooperation Strategy
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/CDCS-Jordan-2020-2025.pdf>

2008-2018 period.² These efforts were complemented by numerous programs targeting CSOs funded by other members of the international donor community.³ During this period, the number of CSOs registered with the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) tripled, to reach 6,800 in late 2018⁴, up from the 5,294 CSOs registered in 2016.

USAID's last stand-alone civil society support activity, USAID Civic Initiatives Support (CIS), cultivated strong and vibrant CSOs in Jordan by supporting a broad range of civic initiatives. USAID CIS was a \$40M, five-year project (2013-18) implemented by FHI360. CIS resulted in 168 subawards to 114 Jordanian organizations. Some of these CSOs had shown strong skills in civic engagement, financial and administrative sustainability, and ability to engage with decision-makers at the national and local levels. During the final two years of the activity, USAID/Jordan provided advocacy grants to three thematic coalitions and individual CSOs. These advocacy efforts resulted in the advancement of women's rights through the abolishment of Article 308 of the Penal Code (allowing sexual assault perpetrators leniency if they married their victims); increased health services in the Madaba governorate; improved beach safety procedures and messaging in Aqaba; and improved water treatment facilities in Karak. These campaigns proved that CSOs in Jordan can shift to listen to their communities and prioritize their needs, conduct evidence-based research, and present their findings to key decision makers in a persuasive manner. In addition, under CIS, USAID supported media organizations in enhancing the capacities of journalists to more effectively cover elections and enhance the role media plays in election coverage. This work also supported the production of online films about parliamentary affairs and the opportunities and challenges of decentralization.

There has only been one significant stand-alone media development activity funded by USAID in the past 15 years; the USAID Jordan Media Strengthening Program/JMSP was a five-year project implemented by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) from 2006-2010.

Civil Society

Networks

Jordan's most developed and enduring CSOs enjoy a web of regional and global networks and are becoming more skillful advocates. The emergence of civil society networks holds the promise of better sector governance and more productive advocacy for citizen engagement. New social enterprises are emerging that could help resolve some of the key pain points in the relationships between the government, civil society, and the private sector. Overall, however, achieving a robust civil society that is able to advocate and influence requires a shift in civil society's forms of engagement.

The sector's networks generally remain extremely fragmented and the level of cooperation, sharing of ideas, and coordination among CSOs remains low. CSOs have been unable to form durable alliances and coalitions to articulate a coherent and compelling vision for reform. While they bemoan this state of affairs, they demonstrate little inclination or capacity to change it. Meanwhile the opportunity to enhance advocacy will remain weak as long as the sector's engagement with government entities remain limited.

² Civil society activity resources, including a 2016 civil society assessment, can be found here:

<https://jordankmportal.com/collections/jordan-civil-society-sector-studies>

³ Other donor governments working with Jordanian CSOs include, but may not be limited to, the Dutch, French, and Canadian embassies, the European Union Delegation, and Germany's GIZ.

⁴ Civil Society Sustainability Index, 2019 <https://www.fhi360.org/resource/civil-society-organization-sustainability-index-reports>

Perceptions of CSOs

Civil society actors seem strikingly aware of and willing to acknowledge publicly the serious failings of their sector, and furthermore, appear resigned to those flaws and skeptical that they have the power to change a state of affairs that reflects powerful cultural, political, and economic forces. Many civil society activists (especially CBO members) have a superficial understanding of both the concept of civil society and the realities of the sector in Jordan. They share two main views: that civil society's role is to "fill the gaps" left by the government, especially in the area of service delivery; and that, as it currently exists in Jordan, civil society is mostly a business driven by, as one respondent put it, "professionals looking for work," people whose drive for positive change is lacking.

One organization addressing the challenges of trust faced by CSOs is Naua. Since 2016 Naua has been inviting CSOs to join their network, vetting their projects through due diligence and project monitoring. Naua vouches for its member organizations, connecting them to a variety of donors, from private citizens to private sector philanthropies and international donors. By establishing trust between CSOs, private sector, citizens and government, Naua may be discovering a promising and impactful way forward for CSO development.

Constituencies

Citizen support for civil society remains weak. CSOs could engage more with citizens by informing them about policy issues of mutual interest, but they fail to do so in a meaningful way. They also broadly fail to analyze citizen priorities or represent their sentiments about policy. The lack of genuine grassroots support may be related to the fact that many CSOs are insufficiently specialized and lack a vision that responds to citizens' needs that they can rally behind.

Media⁵

The Jordanian media landscape is undergoing a paradigm shift driven by the fast-developing digital infrastructure, increased number of internet users, and changing consumer behavior. Jordanian society's reliance on mainstream media, in particular print media outlets, declined recently in favor of digital and social media. Audiences increasingly look for trustworthy news and innovative local content on digital platforms and social media networks. Unfortunately, online news websites, though widely read and viewed by Jordanians, including youth, continue to suffer from a lack of credibility. Audiences show low trust in media content across all formats, including television (around 18%) and social media (from 2% to 52%, depending on the platform).⁶ Newspapers have lost youth readership while TV still leads in audience share, with Roya TV becoming the choice for the youth audience. The failure of traditional media to embark on digital transformation drove them to declining readership.

⁵ USAID's recent media landscape analysis can be accessed here: https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WQVG.pdf and an executive summary of the findings, with recommendations, is also available here: https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WQVH.pdf

⁶ Center for Strategic Studies opinion poll, published January 2020, Link: [cssjordan News - نتائج استطلاع الرأي العام حول حكومة الدكتور عمر الرزاز بعد مرور عام ونصف على تشكيلها](https://www.cssjordan.org/news/نتائج_استطلاع_الرأي_العام_حول_حكومة_الدكتور_عمر_الرزاز_بعد_مرور_عام_ونصف_على_تشكيلها)

The majority of Amman-based mainstream media fails to cover themes of interest to local communities. Traditional media, in particular, tend to focus on official news and do not cater to audiences interested in local issues. It is worth noting that Jordan boasts a number of community radio stations that started to emerge early in the 2000s, developed with international community support. Some community radio stations are now building their online presence, with attention to local issues.

Most Jordanians are turning to four main platforms to consume news: Facebook, WhatsApp, online news websites, and television. Television remains the most watched platform in Jordan, while radio listeners and print readers have decreased. Newspapers failed to embark early on to digitization and have been slow to adopt formats that youth prefer, such as data visualization, multimedia, and social media. Innovative platforms such as Roya News, 7iber, and Sowt, have emerged with strong Arabic content and a digital focus, as digitization drives innovative approaches to using digital platforms for video and audio content.

Media Literacy

With the overwhelming increase in the amount of data and information that people consume now, it is important to educate and train them on how to navigate the abundance of information and skillfully use the available tools to critically receive and share information. In 2016, the Jordan Media Institute (JMI) officially launched its media literacy efforts, which aim to integrate media and information literacy into education at both schools and universities across the country. A curricula and study plan have been finalized for universities and a teacher's manual for student clubs, as well as a pilot program which is now running in eight public elementary schools in Amman (four boys' schools and four co-ed schools) with three trained teachers in each school.

Media Education

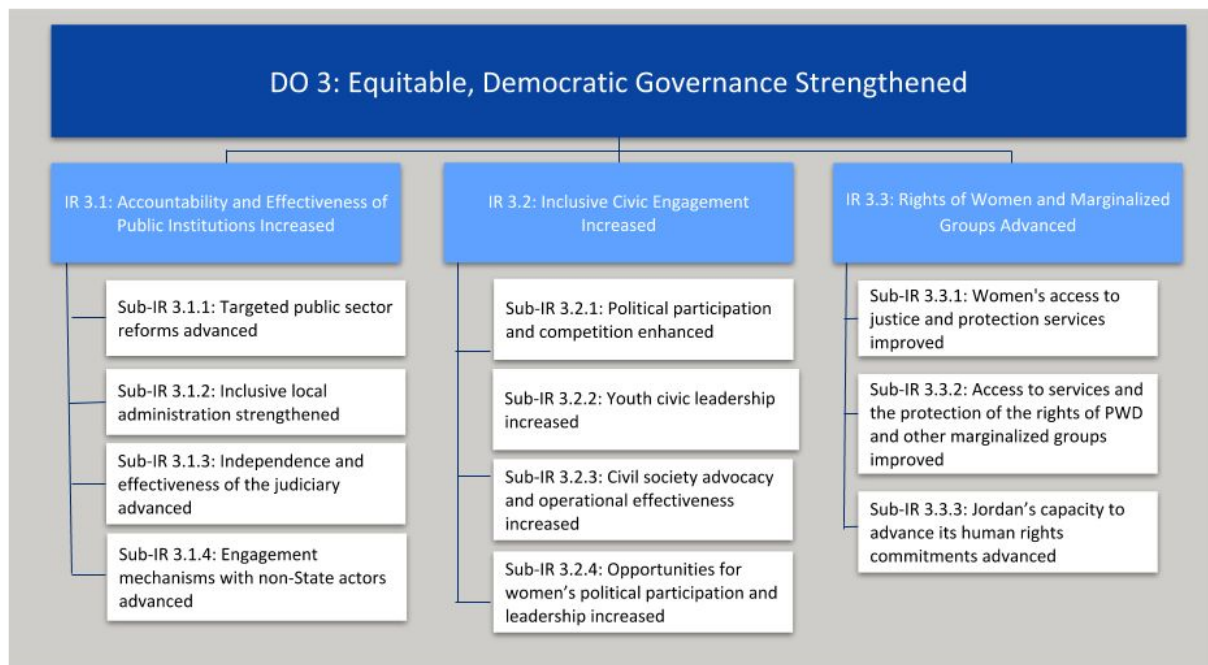
Journalism is taught at seven universities in Jordan with three main specializations of basic programs at these faculties and departments - journalism, radio and television, as well as public relations and advertising. However, these academic programs fall short of the required industry and professional standards and skills. Digital media/electronic press courses are available at two universities only, while none offer data journalism or occupational safety courses. Investigative journalism is offered by six universities with legislation and ethics offered by all seven. There is also a shortage of specialized teachers in most fields of the sciences of journalism, media, and mass communication. Most universities do not have teachers with prior practical experience in the field of journalism, television, or any communication field. In Jordan, unemployment amid graduates of journalism and media programs exceeds 65%, with the exception of graduates of the JMI, who are regularly recruited by regional and local media organizations. Their employment success rate has reached 92%, taking into consideration that only around 40 students graduate annually from JMI.

International Media Assistance

Two comprehensive and notable media development programs were implemented previously, the USAID-supported, IREX-implemented, "Jordan Media Strengthening Program" (2006-2010), and the EU-supported, UNESCO-implemented, "Support to Media in Jordan Project" (2014-2018). Meanwhile, IREX's Department of State-supported "Learn to Discern" program has demonstrated measurable success advancing media literacy by helping people of all ages to develop healthy habits for engaging with online and offline information.

Strategic Context

As part of the long-standing partnership between Jordan and the United States, the USAID/Jordan Mission developed a new CDCS in 2020. The new strategy retains the goal of supporting Jordan's stability. Supporting citizen-state interaction is a critical component of this strategy.



The Sawt activity is expected to contribute mainly to IR 3.2 and will also contribute to IR 3.1's Sub IR 3.1.1 and IR 3.3's Sub-IR 3.3.1, 3.3.2, and 3.3.3. It would also contribute to IR 5.3 (Inclusive participation in public life enhanced.)

Purpose

The purpose of the Sawt activity is to discover new ways of developing sustainable civic engagement through civil society and digital media. Successful implementation will leverage new paradigms for civic engagement, greater citizen participation, and more capable networks of organizations that constructively engage in advocacy, while representing the interests of citizens. Sawt also aims to enhance citizen knowledge by developing the quality and professionalism of digital media communications within private and public media outlets, while helping consumers discern between misinformation/disinformation and quality reporting.

The Sawt activity is expected to advance self-reliance by strengthening the capacity of actors within the civil society and media systems in Jordan and the commitment to see these solutions through effectively, inclusively, and with accountability. The focus on sustainability aligns with USAID's J2SR; namely, USAID defines self-reliance as "a society's capacity to plan, finance, and implement solutions to local

development challenges, and its commitment to see these through effectively, inclusively, and with accountability.” The activity aims for a high degree of local ownership and sustainability within the “system” of interactions between Jordanian CSOs and their counterparts in government. USAID aims to hand over a greater level of responsibility to local Jordanian partners than they have experienced under previous awards. CSOs with higher capacity should receive mentorship and awards to serve as “anchor” organizations that lead advocacy networks and eventually coalitions. USAID also seeks creative ways to foster capacity development that is driven by local priorities and demands.

Conceptual Framework

CSOs and media have the potential to be a vehicle for civic engagement. A mental model for such engagement⁷ describes a virtuous cycle with four domains, which include knowledge, participation, accountability, and inclusion (Figure 1). *Knowledge* relates to citizens’ understanding of their rights as well as policy issues that affect their lives. Media and outreach by CSOs can play a large part in building citizenship through knowledge. Once citizens gain knowledge, they may be inspired to participate in processes of policy development, service delivery, and social change. CSOs provide an avenue for *participation*, particularly when they enjoy a strong constituent base and engage in knowledge strengthening. The knowledge that participation is possible and effective may be an important driver of citizen engagement. If participation is effective and government actors believe it is constructive, the government may demonstrate a form of *accountability* by acknowledging citizen demands and inviting dialogue about how to improve policies and services, thereby building trust and partnership between citizens and government. While policies may improve at this stage, social cohesion advances more effectively when *inclusion* occurs. In other words, the group of knowledgeable participants expands; a growing sense emerges that civic participation is possible and effective for all citizens. This generates more demand for reform and more nuance within that demand. In this final stage of the virtuous cycle, Sawt should consider the inclusion not only of more citizens, but of minorities and vulnerable populations, including, but not limited to, women, youth, other minorities, and poor communities.

⁷ This model has been adapted from ideas by John Gaventa and Gregory Barrett from the Institute for Development Studies. See, for example: *So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement*, October 2010 <https://www.ids.ac.uk/download.php?file=files/dmfile/Wp347.pdf>



Figure 1: Virtuous Cycle of Civic Engagement

Knowledge

Opportunity lies in supporting the group of media and civil society actors that are either digitally nascent or have integrated digitization into their strategy and practice, and are committed to their independence, professionalism, and quality content (see USAID’s Media Landscape Assessment, referenced above, for examples). Digitization is driving innovative approaches to using digital platforms, particularly video and audio content. Meanwhile, Sawt has the opportunity to mainstream media literacy so that citizens become informed consumers of information and constructive contributors to public discourse.

Participation

CSOs should become an avenue for public participation in civic discourse. Often, gaining and retaining access to donor funding and satisfying donors’ reporting requirements is more important to CSOs than representing the needs and aspirations of issue-based constituencies or particular communities in Jordan. Sawt seeks to right that balance by helping CSOs become relevant, because they address issues in response to and with the support of Jordanian citizens, and effective, because they skillfully engage citizens, government officials, and other stakeholders through collective action and advocacy.

Accountability

CSOs serve a key function in the public’s demand for government accountability. Meanwhile, citizens will enjoy a greater “supply” of accountability from government and private sector counterparts when CSOs themselves demonstrate accountability. Therefore, the concept of accountability needs to move in two directions for CSOs: they must demonstrate accountability in order to effectively demand it from the government. Negative perceptions about civic engagement and the capacity of CSOs to be constructive advisors will only change when CSOs are accountable to themselves and the public. In order to achieve

this, the sector continues to require significant capacity development investments from donors. This shift will take time, requiring resources and the development of both collective and internal capacities. Civil society accountability is a key step in establishing trust with constituents and decision makers, therefore organizational capacity development cannot be ignored in this early stage of Jordan's civil society development. In order for civil society to help hold the government accountable on behalf of citizens, they have to hold themselves accountable first.

Inclusion

Sawt should seek to include a greater diversity of voices and the issues concerning them, thereby building momentum for civic engagement and expanding the reach of media and CSOs. Civil society and media coverage must ultimately include a diversity of voices from all walks of civic life, recognizing that exclusion can be a form of structural violence that can lead to instability. In particular, Sawt should include the voices of people who are often unheard and who do not often benefit from public policy decision-making.

Proposed Objectives

The following draft objectives are organized based on the conceptual framework described above:

- Online media provides ethical and verifiable information that citizens can rely on for constructive contribution to civic discourse.
- Citizens and civil society organizations effectively participate in civic spaces and advocate for policies through collective action.
- CSOs demonstrate measurable improvements related to their networks, organizational development, and advocacy.
- CSOs and media content creators more effectively serve marginalized communities.

Intervention Approach

Knowledge and Media

Objective 1: Online media provides ethical and verifiable information that citizens can rely on for constructive contribution to civic discourse.

The Sawt activity should contribute to both media development (to advance sustainability, professionalism, and freedom of the media), and media *for* development (media and communications components to advance social and policy changes). Each has distinctive goals and objectives. In other words, Sawt may take a “media for development” approach by working with media organizations and other CSOs to advance public knowledge about social and policy issues that contribute to advocacy agendas. The Sawt activity should also include a media development approach to develop the sustainability, professionalism, and freedom of the media.

Opportunities in the Media Sector

Sawt should strengthen the independent digital media sector with a focus on those entities that have embraced digital transformation, or are considered “digital first” and committed to producing high quality digital content that is in demand. Beneficiary media actors should also be experimenting and/or open to experimenting with new business models that can safeguard their independence and further their sustainability. The aim is to increase the availability of quality content in digital formats (in line with audience consumption trends) for an audience that is searching for trustworthy content focused on local issues.

Sawt’s media component should ideally **strengthen citizen knowledge both at the national and local level**, through digital media. It should reflect the concerns and interests of various communities, engage communities, and give voice to a diverse variety of communities (including some marginalized groups) so that the marketplace of ideas flourishes. New and innovative forms of spreading knowledge may take root to form a new landscape, if they have support from communities and donors.

Based on USAID’s media assessment, digital media content creation is often outsourced to **freelance professionals**. Therefore, successful approaches may need to find ways to build the skills and knowledge of individual content creators while encouraging them to collaborate creatively. This could include not only reporters, but also copy editors, film editors, graphic designers, photographers, videographers, animators, producers, etc. Ideally upgrading a diverse range of skills within the media “system” would result in creative collaboration, the formation of small media firms, and an increase in new forms of digital content, such as infographics, videos, podcasts, etc. Increasing the number of professional content creators could also lead to better communications and advocacy materials among CSOs.

Universities with communications programs received support from the “Jordan Media Strengthening Program” and the “Support to Media in Jordan Project,” which was focused on training academic staff to adopt teaching methodologies, techniques, and knowledge relevant to the digital transformation. Donors also provided support in developing curricula for new courses, which was highly valued. There is an expressed need by the universities to follow up on those initial achievements.

An interesting shift is taking place in journalism education, whereby graduates of journalism programs rarely enter the field of journalism. Unemployment among graduates of journalism programs exceeds 65%. Meanwhile, graduates of other programs express interest in journalism. This may indicate the need for a cultural shift within university programs, considering the role of social media and creative news content. It may also present an opportunity to build civil society capacity by training young communications professionals to provide content for CSOs’ advocacy and outreach efforts.

The GOJ’s plan for 2019-2020 officially adopted a strategic framework and plan to mainstream **media literacy** under the Ministry of Culture, specifically focusing on integration of national curricula, methods, and textbooks in the elementary and higher education system over four years. Implementation is currently hampered by a lack of funding as there was no budgetary commitment at the time of writing. Sawt could help facilitate the Government’s media literacy strategy by supporting the Jordanian Media Institute in the implementation of the National Strategy’s Action Plan, as well as to focus on other well-elaborated, experienced, organization-led programs (e.g. IREX’s “Learn to Discern”). Youth centers, civil servants, local councils, and CSOs could be other avenues for developing media literacy.

Finally, Sawt's media component should be integrated with a larger strategy that includes civic participation, linking citizen knowledge to participation, through the consumption and production of digital media. Advancing the quality of digital media content need not be limited to media outlets. Civil society must also upgrade its outreach and communications in order to enhance its relevance and build constituencies. Young Jordanians in particular are participating in civic life through social media. Civil society may find avenues for engaging citizens by upgrading its media content and use of social media tools and/or enhancing its networking and engagement with media actors.

Participation

Objective 2: Citizens and civil society organizations effectively participate in civic spaces and advocate for policies through collective action

Successful collective action will require Jordanian CSOs to work together in new ways. Networks become more than the sum of their parts when they:

1. Establish shared goals
2. Identify and analyze stakeholder priorities (including government priorities)
3. Expand and track their network
4. Build coalitions
5. Identify niches for members
6. Plan together
7. Agree to track progress in the same way
8. Communicate regularly and consistently
9. Pool resources that can help them reach their social change and advocacy goals

While knowledge of rights and issues is a key component in positive civic engagement, it is the knowledge that participation is possible and effective that will make citizens constructive actors in Jordan's democracy, building trust between citizens and government. Civic engagement then serves as a pressure valve to relieve political discontentment, and leads to greater prosperity, happiness, and social cohesion.

USAID seeks to advance the role of civil society to foster civic engagement by developing networks of skilled organizations that eventually form advocacy coalitions. The difficult and meaningful work is expected to lie in the discovery of issues that resonate with citizens, as well as the discovery and nurturing of leadership that can catalyze collective action and public participation. Initially, USAID will aim to work with one or two networks, which have potential for grassroots support, traction with decision makers, and a sufficient number of CSO actors to eventually build an advocacy coalition. As new opportunities emerge, additional advocacy topics may be supported. Sawt may seek to leverage innovative approaches in specific geographic areas, or with select populations, and then scale up those that are successful.

In order to be effective advocates within an issue-based network, CSOs should find ways to measurably expand their own networks. A simple way to envision this approach is by reaching up to decision makers,

down to constituents, and across the advocacy network (Figure 2). Reaching up means engaging with officials within government, who have the influence to make decisions and affect policies. If CSOs approach government officials skillfully, this interaction can benefit officials by providing ideas, data, talking points, and alternatives. A CSO’s ability to deliver such messages depends not only on its own capacity, but its ability to network with other actors in the advocacy network. This can include universities and think tanks possessing quality data and research, media, which can amplify an agenda, as well as other NGOs or CBOs with ties to communities and experience in the sector. Meanwhile, CSOs are only relevant if they reach down to respond to the needs of the communities they serve and build support for their efforts. A strong constituent base brings legitimacy to an organization, while an understanding of the priorities of their supporters means that the CSO serves its representative function.

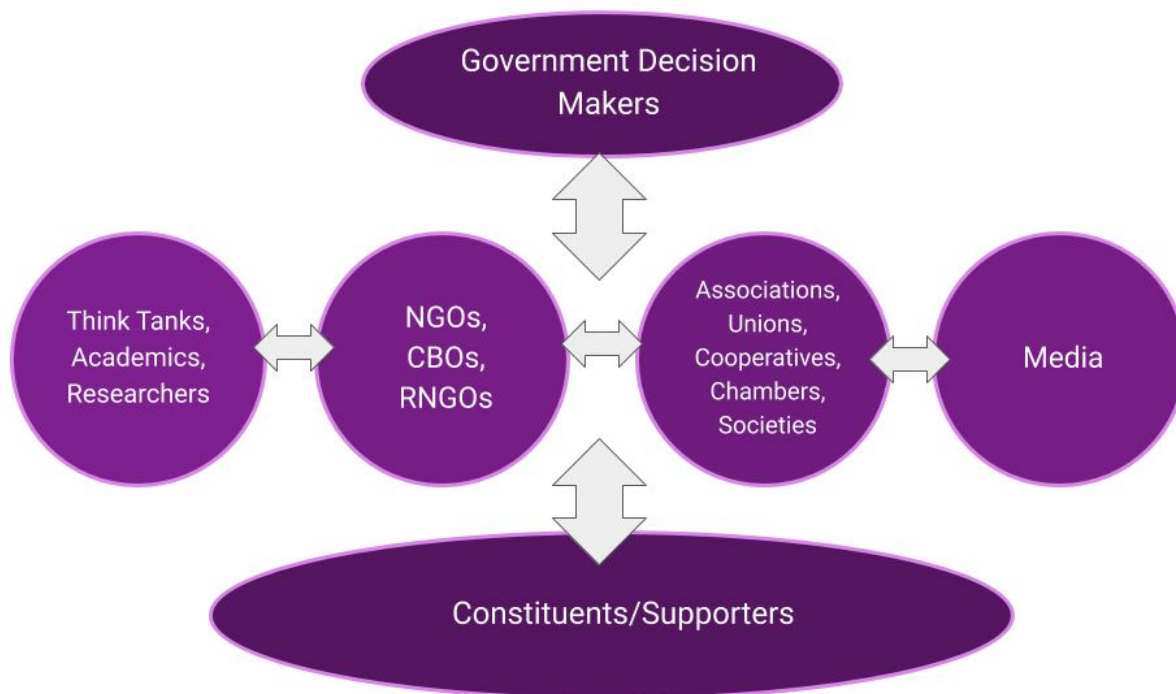


Figure 2: Advocacy Networks “Reaching Up, Down, and Across”

The keys to successfully expanding advocacy networks in Jordan will require analysis and effort. Through the process of analysing networks, USAID may discover that some organizations are more effective in Jordan with regard to reaching up, down, and across a network. Sawt may then be able to amplify or replicate this success. Social network analysis or similar tools may be an effective approach to making these discoveries or measuring changes in network behavior over time.

USAID believes that strengthening systems is more important than strengthening individual organizations. One way to approach systems strengthening is to focus on “sectors” and the interactions between organizations in a given sector. There is sufficient capacity in Jordan for networks to expand and form coalitions that are focused on specific advocacy priorities. Some CSOs are ready to play a leadership role, given proper incentives, while others may offer research, external communications, technical

capacity development, etc. Sawt should, therefore, be more focused than previous civil society activities by exploring sectors around which CSOs can coalesce.

Under Sawt, USAID will explore and choose advocacy sectors as the process of learning and adapting unfolds. However, USAID has identified three potential advocacy sectors to begin the conversation. These topics were identified based on strategic importance for Jordan's development, existing interest among civic actors, the existence of entry points with the GOJ, and the existence of an existing network of advocacy organizations. Potential advocacy sectors for consideration:

- Water resources
- Human rights
- Private sector-driven economic reform

USAID is less interested in a comprehensive list of potential advocacy sectors and more interested in understanding potential approaches to discovering topics that resonate with citizens and have the potential to generate meaningful reform, as well as how USAID will know when it is on the right track.

Water Resources

Jordan faces a long-term crisis managing groundwater and surface water resources that are shrinking each year, partially due to overuse, wastage, and climate change. Water scarcity is having a negative impact on municipal water shortages, leading to tensions, especially in communities with large refugee populations. A wide range of CSOs, including unions, cooperatives, and associations play roles in this crisis. The Farmer's Union has a powerful position, with mandatory membership under Jordanian regulations, while USAID-supported water user associations play a role in maintaining infrastructure and ensuring fairness in distribution. Private sector cooperatives and association interests vary from plumbers promoting the use of water saving technologies to family-based associations maximizing their members' access to irrigation. Despite the wide-ranging capacities and interests among CSOs concerned with water, USAID believes there could be opportunities for some of these organizations to find a common agenda and then raise awareness or advocate for strategies that better serve a common good. CSOs in this space would need strong convening skills to build dialogue around important topics and explore common interests. Topics for support may include raising awareness about water losses in municipal networks, advocating for social acceptance of recycled water as an important source of water, highlighting individual and societal responsibility in water conservation, addressing the water tariff for different uses (e.g. industrial, municipal, agricultural), etc.

Human Rights

Human rights issues cover a broad spectrum of groups in Jordan. Though Jordanians no longer require government approval to hold public meetings or demonstrations, Jordanian authorities sometimes block public events without written orders. Discrimination against women is also an urgent human rights concern, including women's economic participation, access to services, political participation, and their passage of citizenship to their children. Similarly urgent issues include protections for labor migrants, police brutality, and rights for people with disabilities.

While human rights is a challenging topic, there are entry points to help the GOJ meet commitments to international organizations and agreements, such as the Open Government Partnership and the Financial Action Task Force. During the 2018 Universal Periodic Review⁸ procedures, Jordanian CSOs advocated for human rights and fundamental freedom changes. As a result of these efforts, the government endorsed 149 recommendations. These recommendations pertained to the status of women, child rights, the status of people with disabilities, torture, judicial prosecution, administrative detainment, and freedom of speech, the press, and opinion.

One civil society coalition to address human rights was formed in 2015 with 16 organizations, calling itself The Coordination Committee for Civil Society Organizations (HIMAM). It has been active in discussing human rights matters with the GOJ and issuing positions papers. HIMAM is a pioneer reinforcing the values of democracy and human rights in the community. It aims to advance the performance of civil institutions related to human rights, citizenship, rule of law, justice, and good governance. It also provides a benchmark for best practice models in civil society in supporting integrity and accountability within its member organizations.

Economic Reform

Jordan's stability may depend largely on job creation, therefore, the private sector's collective voice is essential to guiding realistic economic reforms. The business community has formed CSOs to help advocate for collective economic interests at both local and national levels. Chambers of commerce and many business associations enjoy the comfort of laws that require businesses to become members, but with no incentive to excel, the services these organizations provide are often lacking. Therefore, businesses have formed new market-driven associations with optional membership structures, which survive based on the merits of their services. These services typically include advocacy, research, marketing, capacity development, and corporate community engagement. Businesses and private associations report having little to no input on municipal budget planning, infrastructure, and COVID-19 restrictions. However, the GOJ recognizes the need to create jobs and build the tax base through a thriving private sector. The existence and continued formation of free-market business associations presents an opportunity for Sawt to build a coalition of associations that advocate for policies enabling more competitive businesses and job creation. Businesses should ultimately decide the topics, but there are opportunities for collective action in infrastructure planning, registration and permitting, COVID prevention, inspection regimens, etc. Meanwhile, private associations are often nascent and could benefit from capacity development aimed at enhancing services and building long-term financial sustainability that is based on membership revenues.

Accountability

Objective 3: CSOs demonstrate measurable improvements related to their networks, organizational development, and advocacy

Media and CSOs ideally create the “demand” side of an equation in which the government provides the “supply.” A key premise of accountability for Sawt is that citizens will enjoy a greater “supply” of

⁸ <https://www.upr-info.org/en/review/Jordan>

accountability from government and the private sector when CSOs become effective, efficient, relevant, and sustainable in the eyes of both constituents and decision makers. This shift will take time, requiring resources and the development of both collective and internal capacity.

Capacity development must be driven by the priorities of Jordanian CSOs. CSOs do not fail to build constituencies and generate policy changes because they fail to complete a checklist of best practices or compliance measures. CSOs will succeed or fail based on issues that they are more qualified to identify and respond to. Again, a process of discovery and creative responses will be necessary, not only to discover what remedies Jordanian CSOs require, but the system through which those remedies are provided.

Capacity to create social or policy change can only be understood with reference to the wider system that surrounds any organization. Capacity describes how an organization can perform within its context: the system of other actors that an organization affects and is affected by in carrying out its activities. Efforts to strengthen the capacity of an individual organization must derive from a clear understanding of the roles that organization plays within a local system, and the space for its roles and performance to change. USAID envisions a set of tailored and measurable approaches to meeting the capacity development needs of organizations at different stages of their development, which could include mentorship, embedded consultants or volunteers, classroom training, etc. This ideally recognizes that organizations in a system can serve different roles in a greater effort to achieve results.

Measuring Performance

Sawt should utilize capacity development tools⁹ and models that allow CSOs to measure their performance, and empowers them to make decisions about their capacity development needs. USAID's Local Solutions team has endorsed the Organizational Performance Index (OPI)¹⁰ tool as an appropriate indicator for tracking organizational capacity development. The OPI as an index indicator is fully consistent with the latest USAID Recommendations on Capacity Development Measurement. It measures performance rather than capacity and aligns incentives, and considers performance holistically, tracking performance of the organization across multiple areas of work, both in terms of more immediate aspects of *Effectiveness* and *Efficiency*, and longer-term aspects of *Relevance* and *Sustainability*. The OPI is labor intensive and may be more appropriate for measuring changes within a coalition, or inside key partner organizations as a proxy for the health of the coalition.

The Institutional Capacity Assessment Tool (ICAT)¹¹ is another tool that was developed by USAID's CIS activity in Jordan around 2013. It was based mainly on the Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) tool, which is a structured tool for a facilitated self-assessment of an organization, followed by action planning for capacity improvements.¹²

⁹ USAID Learning Lab materials on measuring capacity development can be found here:

<https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/measuring-organizational-capacity>

¹⁰ <https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/organizational-performance-index-measurement-tool>

¹¹ <https://jordankmpportal.com/resources/institutional-capacity-assessment-tool-icat>

¹² The OCA can be effective for helping organizations recognize their capacity needs and prioritizing their organizational development. It is labor intensive, often requiring two weeks to conduct. It can be conducted at multiple stages over time to gauge changes. However, it is important to note that the OCA is not an objective measurement tool. It's findings are generally subjective measures relevant only to the organization undertaking the OCA.

USAID would not specifically require the use of the OPI, OCA, or ICAT tools for this objective, however, these tools provide useful examples of how capacity development can be measured and facilitate prioritization in organizational development. During implementation, USAID will recognize that efforts to measure incremental change at the organizational level is only valuable if it serves the ultimate achievement of responding to constituents' needs for social change. In other words, time and resource investments to measure incremental changes should not outweigh efforts to generate and measure positive changes at higher levels.

Local Ownership of Capacity Development

Under this activity, USAID will aim to support a system that is demand driven, locally owned, locally led, respectful of the priorities of CSOs themselves, and supported by a diverse array of capacity development experts, organizations, companies, donors, and projects.

One such model has been developing in Ukraine since 2008 called the NGO Marketplace, which uses a voucher system that empowers local organizations to address their capacity development needs through a virtual market of service providers (see text box). The purpose of mentioning the Marketplace model here is not necessarily to replicate it, but rather to demonstrate how one USAID Mission animated the work of local capacity development provision, improving connections and offering investments to local actors in ways that meet individual organizations' priorities, rather than based on external "expert" assessments.

Capacity Building Marketplace Model in Ukraine

Around 200 Ukrainian NGOs have taken advantage of the NGO Marketplace and received services in such areas as finance and accounting, fundraising, organizational and project management, organizational assessment, strategic planning, communication, etc. Individual trainers use the Marketplace to sell their services on a fee-for-service basis, decreasing their own donor dependence. The Ukrainian model consists of three components:

- Fairs: organized regularly for service providers and customers, which are convened as side events of other civil society gatherings.
- An online "NGO Marketplace" platform: the centerpiece, where demand meets supply. The site includes an inventory of capacity development services and references from customers.
- Voucher system: a pool of donor funds to be invested in capacity development.

The concept of the Marketplace is intriguing for several reasons:

- It empowers CSOs to make their own choices and take full responsibility of their development path.
- Implementing partners become the regulator of the system and can eventually hand this function over to a local organization.
- Businesses also may take part in the system, impacting the knowledge and behavior of NGOs.
- It can increase service provider's capacity since the free market approach forces service providers to offer high quality services in order to attract more customers.
- Organizations outside the capital enjoy the same opportunities as those in the capital.

- Other USAID projects and other donors can use the NGO Marketplace to develop the capacity of their partners.

USAID recognizes that this model comes with the challenge of handing off management of the Marketplace, which requires buy-in from a mature local organization that is committed to expanding the availability of services without giving itself the advantage.

Intermediary capacity development organizations could be another model to explore if it includes a plan for local leadership and delivery of capacity development services that is responsive to the priorities of Jordanian CSOs. Several donors have invested in this model with organizations including the Jordan River Foundation, the Noor Al Hussein Foundation, and Al Thoria Center for Studies.

Previous Investments in Capacity Development

USAID has already invested significant resources into the “infrastructure” for basic capacity development support, in Arabic, for CSO capacity development. The Societies Toolkit¹³ provides a comprehensive resource for organizational management required for any start-up CSO, including resources covering topics from board governance to registration. Meanwhile, CIS provided rigorous training and international certification in Dialogue Education, a methodology for adult education and facilitation. Six teachers were certified in Jordan, who can now certify others, and approximately 50 trainers and facilitators received certification to design and deliver training to individuals and organizations on a wide range of potential topics. The strength and status of this network is currently unknown and may be explored during implementation.

Sustainability

J2SR recognizes capacity and commitment as critical to achieving and sustaining development outcomes, and Sawt should use a systems approach to sustainability and civic engagement. This includes leveraging the strengths of different stakeholders within the system, while working to create more effective and sustainable systems for civic participation, advocacy, media, capacity building, and funding.

Civil society sustainability should be based on the ability to generate grassroots support, trust, and a diverse range of local and international funding. Ideally, this would be measured at the system level and at the organizational level.

USAID’s Local Systems Framework of 2014 says, “realizing improved development outcomes emanates from increasing the performance of multiple actors and the effectiveness of their interactions.” In keeping with this systems approach, USAID’s Acquisition and Assistance strategy discusses, “shifting from expressly transactional relationships with local organizations to more equal partnerships between development actors with mutual accountability and shared goals and values. The key to this relational realignment lies in engaging with our partners and beneficiaries much earlier in the planning process as co-designers, co-implementers, and co-owners of their own development objectives.”

¹³ <https://jordankmportal.com/resources/dlvtl-lmnzmt-gvr-lrbhy-at-lnshy-at>

Models for the financial health of Jordanian CSOs that may be worth exploring include enhanced membership models, fees for services, venture philanthropy, social enterprise, and reform of tax regimes for non-profit organizations. Multiple discussions and assessments have also contemplated the need for core operational funding for some civil society organizations; USAID is open to considering how such an approach could be fruitful.

Constituent Outreach

USAID will encourage partners to explore and discover new paradigms for CSO outreach in Jordan. As Sawt builds the skills of media and communications professionals, some individuals may provide communications services and content to CSOs. Others may cover advocacy efforts in traditional journalistic formats. An enhanced presence online may be an indispensable way of building a base of support.

Volunteerism may be another way to build a base of support, and USAID's existing investments in civic engagement for women and youth may become a source of supporters for CSO activities. For example, USAID's *Ana Usharek* activity, implemented by the National Democratic Institute, has generated 30,000 graduates of its political participation program for youth, while 50,000 youth at the university level have attended at least one session. These young leaders have been trained in advocacy tools such as community mapping and community mobilization. Sawt's advocacy networks could build on USAID's investments in this area, offering young people a channel for their energy and desire for change. A critical mass of young people whose interests coincide with Sawt could provide grassroots support and amplify reform agendas in a way that is more constructive than street demonstrations.

USAID's municipal sector support activity, Cities Implementing Transparent, Innovative, and Effective Solutions (CITIES), is helping municipalities communicate better with communities through town hall meetings, Facebook pages, and transparent decision making, while learning about citizen priorities. Local CSOs could join citizens at the community level to consolidate demands into constructive representation and cohesive local reform agendas.

Enabling Environment for Civil Society and Media

The Law on Societies governs the majority of CSOs, requires government approval of foreign funding and term limits for CSO leaders. Businesses are required to join and pay dues to sector-specific associations or to geographically-based chambers of commerce/industry, which sometimes results in poor services and weak advocacy. Meanwhile, no public consultation laws exist in Jordan, making it difficult for CSOs to enter into policy dialogues with decision-makers. In the media environment, orders to limit press coverage of certain issues and the use of other laws to detain and imprison journalists are common. CSOs and media actors have advocated on issues related to freedom of expression, association, and assembly, but no clear success stories stand out.

At the end of 2019, the GOJ introduced new foreign funding approval procedures; committing itself to making these procedures more transparent. Potential avenues for advancing open civic space and the enabling environment may include leveraging the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Jordan is currently implementing five commitments from their OGP 2018-2020 action plan, which includes "enhancing partnership and dialogue between the public sector

and Civil Society.” Meanwhile, Jordan is evaluated on its commitment to implementing 40 FATF recommendations, including FATF Recommendation eight, which requires that “the laws and regulations that govern non-profit organisations be reviewed so that these organisations cannot be abused for the financing of terrorism.” Sawt could help ensure that the GOJ has the capacity to implement the commitments related to the Universal Periodic Review, OGP, and FATF. Greater protections for civic space and freedom of expression are expected to enhance civil society or media effectiveness and some of the important civic reforms that the GOJ is currently slated to implement within the next few years.

While USAID recognizes that citizen engagement and advocacy related to the enabling environment for CSOs and media is much needed, CSOs do not yet enjoy the levels of trust with the government or with constituents to build the grassroots support necessary to make this a fruitful, citizen-led campaign. At this stage, support to CSOs and media may come from other stakeholders, such as the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, which provides information and analysis on the legal environment in Jordan for civil society and public participation. International donors may need to continue leading efforts on behalf of CSOs and to secure foreign funding approvals. Sawt should consider how to provide the legal and regulatory support that CSOs require to operate as effectively as possible under current conditions.

Inclusion

Objective 4: CSOs and media content creators more effectively serve marginalized communities

Through Sawt, USAID will seek to eventually expand the base of citizens participating in policy dialogue and supporting reform efforts, while expanding the reach of media and CSOs. This will also include the voices of people who are often unheard and who do not always benefit from public policies. USAID would also like to see specific attention given to CSOs and media content creators serving or representing marginalized groups, even if not participating in an advocacy coalition, and particularly when such organizations provide a lifeline to their community in accessing information, services, or protections. Such actors are strategic partners in the effort to support an inclusive democracy. Support could come in the form of capacity development, small grants, or other approaches.

Under this objective, USAID could seek to support organizations that work on behalf of people with disabilities, youth, women, religious and ethnic minorities or other marginalized populations.

Activity Parameters/ Principles

Geographic focus: The activity can include CSOs and digital media actors from anywhere in the country, although the selection of advocacy topics will likely determine appropriate reach. USAID could support the piloting of innovative approaches in specific geographic areas, or with select populations, and then scale up those that are successful. While some advocacy campaigns may require consultation with actors based in the capital, constituency building and momentum may come from outside of the capital.

Flexibility: The activity should incorporate flexibility and adaptive programming that changes in response to emerging evidence or strategic needs. The activity should be able to respond quickly to unanticipated program needs such as engagement with new stakeholders, support to nascent advocacy

topics, rapid research, capacity development for strategic partners, etc. Flexibility may also require an iterative management approach that regularly reassesses and re-evaluates the operating environment(s), and adjusts as necessary.

Strengthening local systems: Each set of interconnected actors whose collective actions produce a particular development outcome is a local system. Improving that development outcome necessarily requires a systems approach. Building the capacity of a single actor or strengthening a single relationship is insufficient. Rather, the focus needs to be on the system as a whole: the actors, their interrelationships, and the incentives that guide them. Improvements in development outcomes emerge from increasing the performance of individual actors and the effectiveness of their interactions. Similarly, sustaining development outcomes depends on the sustainability of the local system, its built-in durability, and a level of adaptability that allows actors and their interrelationships to accommodate shocks and respond to changing circumstances.

As part of this principle, USAID encourages engagement in partnerships that strengthen the networks of local organizations, without limiting local CSOs' ability to engage with multiple stakeholders through exclusive teaming agreements that provide minimal benefits to them.

Measurable change and learning: A simple way to express this principle is to say, “if you can’t measure it, don’t do it.” USAID cannot afford to invest in organizational development, policy change, or social change unless it can demonstrate that there has been a result or a lesson learned. This does not mean that innovation is discouraged. To the contrary, innovation is encouraged, and even failure is acceptable, as long as USAID can learn from the experience.

Conflict and context sensitivity: Activities are expected to integrate conflict mitigation principles, such as “do no harm,” by not disproportionately benefiting one demographic group at the expense of another, creating additional barriers to participation, or increasing physical security and privacy risks faced by partners and beneficiaries.

CLEARANCES

Subject: Request for Information with draft program description for Sawt civil society and media activity

Drafter: USAID/Jordan: Kipp Efinger (+962-6-590-6500 Ext 6137)

<u>USAID/Jordan Clearances</u>	<u>Clearance Status</u>	<u>Date</u>
USAID/Jordan DRG: EKrunic	Clear	12/10/2020
USAID/Jordan PRO: JSpears	Clear	12/13/2020
USAID/Jordan AAO: CGarcia		