



Libyans Rebuilding Libya
Local Governance Best Practices

Executive Summary

Strengthening bottom-up governance through local initiative and innovation with an eye towards restructuring the state to make peace more likely going forward

Despite wide recognition that local authorities ought to play a major role governing Libya, no one has provided a comprehensive vision of how this should work. Moreover, no one has provided a roadmap for how these local authorities can bolster their various governance capacities so that they can take a leading role. Nevertheless, the country is increasingly decentralised as local actors take increasingly ambitious and innovative initiatives to expand the scope of their activities in response to the needs of their communities and the inability of central authorities to meet their obligations. This process, however, is highly ad-hoc and piecemeal.

For example, several municipalities—including Sūq al-Jum'a—have built mini statistics bureaus to collect data on their populations, schools, businesses, and shopping districts in order to improve decision-making. Others have sought to creatively cooperate with state-owned enterprises to improve local service delivery. In Elbeida, local authorities established a temporary arrangement with the national water company that enabled investment in a series of small projects. In Benghazi, private companies were recruited to enhance solid waste disposal. Sebha has sought the support of UNDP to provide solar panels to supply urgent electricity needs to hospitals.

But, these lessons are rarely shared amongst local authorities. Indeed, the more successful locales are isolated from one another. They have no way to learn from the best practices and initiatives occurring elsewhere in the country. International efforts to help abound, but emphasize learning from abroad—undervaluing what Libyans can learn from each other—arguably the best way to quickly improve governance. Locals have the specific knowledge of what works best, and how outside knowledge can best be adapted to local needs.

The goal of this booklet is to encourage this sharing process—to establish an avenue for Libyans to learn from each other—with the idea that this interlocal cooperation is just a start. It identifies initiatives in ten areas that successfully improved local governance in municipalities across Libya:

1. **Enhancing data acquisition and analysis**

Suq Aljuma, Tripoli Centre, and Janzur

2. **Improving planning**

Zliten, Zawia, Tripoli Centre, Suq Aljuma, Sabha, and Benghazi

3. Increasing local revenue

Zliten, Zuwara, Tripoli Centre, and Tarhuna

4. Enhancing institution-building and governance

Tripoli Centre, Abusalim, Sabha, Traghin, Hay Andalus, and Khomes

5. Promoting local business development

Janzur, Sawani, Benghazi, Misrata, Tripoli Centre, Khomes, and Zawia

6. Enhancing education

Janzur, Tarhuna, Zuwara, Tajura, Jufra, and Zliten

7. Improving solid waste disposal

Zliten, Abusalim, Sirte, Sabha, Zliten, Suq Al-Juma, Tripoli Centre, Hay Andalus and Zuwara

8. Improving water provision and sewage treatment and disposal

Ghat, Sabha, Ain Zara, and Tripoli Centre

9. Empowering women

Tripoli Centre, Ghadames, Hay Andalus, Janzur, Nalut, Edri al Shati, Garabulli, Al-Sharquia...

10. Improving community engagement

Tajura, Janzur, Sabha, Benghazi, Tripoli Centre, and Suq Al Juma

As this booklet suggests, it is vital to bolster these efforts in order to strengthen efforts to restructure the state and provide a new model of how it might succeed given Libya's various divisions and weak national institutions. Adopting a wider bottom-up, locally-driven approach to improving governance, with institutions deeply grounded in local social forces and leadership, is more likely to succeed than current top-down efforts. But this requires more creativity and horizontal cooperation. There is a great need to learn from the local innovations examined here so that municipalities across the country can adopt more of these practices and cooperate across locales to jointly improve how the state operates.

The Libyan Expertise Forum for Peace and Development was formed to ensure that Libyans have a strong voice in determining their future. The LEFPD brings together expertise from different fields, and from different Libyan regions.

The group aims to contribute to the rebuilding of the Libyan state through a bottom-up model that emphasises decentralisation and local governance as well as citizenship and human rights. It aims to achieve its goals through an inclusive, knowledge-based approach that prioritises democratic dialogue, wide participation, and positive communication.

The group has a vision of a new peaceful and prosperous Libya built on equal citizenship, broad inclusivity, wide participation, and effective institutions. This requires fostering solidarity, nurturing community participation, and decentralising power to and strengthening the organs of local governance. In addition, the group seeks to promote the following co-existence, tolerance, respect for diversity and the rejection of exclusion, hatred and violence; social peace and national reconciliation; and better governance, transparency and accountability.