

# ALEPPO CITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY START-UP FORUM

29 November 2008

Executive Summary



Aleppo City Development Strategy



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# **Madinatuna**

## **The Start-up Forum (SUF)**

### **for the Aleppo City Development Strategy ACDS**

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## **Executive Summary**

The Aleppo City Council took its first steps towards urban management in 2003. That was through setting the first collective work plan with all the stakeholders in urban management in the city with the use of objective orientated planning for a period of four years. It was clear from the outset that a four year plan was not enough to identify development trends in the city of Aleppo.

Discussions with the World Bank and the Cities Alliance started on the sidelines of a conference organized between the Ministry of Local Administration and the World Bank in Damascus. It was agreed that the city of Aleppo was to prepare and send an application for a grant from the Cities Alliance in order to set a strategy for the development of the city of Aleppo 2025. That has coincided with the efforts to expand the successful cooperation between the Aleppo City Council and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation for the rehabilitation project of old Aleppo to cover the whole city of Aleppo. Thus the fruits of these efforts have led to the gathering of support for the city of Aleppo by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation and the European cities which have cooperation agreements with the Aleppo City Council ( Hanover, Heidelberg , Lyon) in addition to the Arab Towns Organization and local stake holders, in developing the sustainable urban development programme for the city of Aleppo which includes ( Aleppo city development strategy , informal settlement management strategy , the rehabilitation project of old Aleppo).

Accordingly, the city of Aleppo has started in a manner consistent with the government's reform action and modernization strategy present in the tenth five year plan. With the priorities identified in the Aleppo City Councils 2003-2007 planning matrix, for the future of its own development which has been strengthened in the Aleppo City Council 2007-2011 planning matrix to begin setting the development strategy through identifying of five focal areas. Working within them will help in generating sustainable and long term benefit for the citizens of Aleppo city , through a positive collective vision for the future of the city, and participatory methodology which focuses on local ownership of the strategy , participatory analysis and the implementation through forming a local team, partnerships alliances, cooperation agreements and a network of relations with the private and public sector, non government organizations and local society representatives and Arab and International donors . These help it to remain in the planning and assistance period and will help later on in the implementation of the Aleppo city development strategy 2025.



## **Focal Areas:**

### **Local Economic Development:**

The city of Aleppo seeks to strengthen the local economic development as a way to alleviate poverty, increase income and provide employment opportunities. This includes:

- Strengthening the local economic competitiveness
- Developing local economic development tools
- Reconsidering the granting of licenses and permits
- Strengthening the role of the private sector
- Preparing a sectoral policy

### **The urban services delivery and disaster management:**

There is a need to provide better infrastructure, in a more integrated way. In addition to educational and cultural services and parks. The strategy will also be concerned with preparing a plan for facing potential disasters in the city of Aleppo.

### **The urban environment:**

The city of Aleppo is concerned about its environmental pollution (water, air, solid and liquid waste) in addition to both visual and noise pollution, and distortion of buildings' facades with either permanent or temporary additions, which also affect the city's aesthetic appearance. Here there are many points which need different interventions in the short, medium and long term.

### **Spatial urban development:**

The city of Aleppo is updating its General Master Plan, in addition to the preparation of detailed studies as a step on the road to the implementation of the General Master Plan. It is not too late to introduce amendments to the existing plans, and prepare an implementation strategy providing it meets the economic and planning feasibility criteria. Also the intervention in the process of identifying the physical urban form of areas and developing pedestrian areas are one of the present concerns here.

### **Financial and administrative modernization in the City Council:**

Studies have identified a wide range of reformatory needs, which are likely to be adopted at the central level as well, according to the following:

- Decentralization, increasing local authority over the planning and services delivery.
- Improving human resources development
- Improving the collection of resources and the preparation of budgets
- improving financial management
- Improving data collection and public access to information
- Improving the quality of management and urban governance



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Work will be done for setting a development strategy for the city of Aleppo (Madinatuna Programme) in six phases which are as follows:

- The inception phase
- The assessment phase
- Preparation of shared vision phase
- Identifying the strategic options phase
- Preparing action plans and identifying investment/reform projects phase.
- The implementation, the dissemination of knowledge, and replication phase.

This report was prepared as one of the basic steps in the inception phase, A special work team , in every area of the intervention areas , which is composed of a group of volunteers representing all segments of society from the city of Aleppo , has compiled this report in one month of joint effort as an introduction to the first forum with the aim of shedding light on the current status of the city and identifying work axes in every area of the intervention areas, in order to stimulate dialogue with the participation of all the stake holders involved in the city of Aleppo. This aims to achieve a collective vision through a range of strategies which are translated into short, medium and long term projects under the umbrella of the Madinatuna Programme.



This report includes five chapters; each chapter focuses on a particular area of the intervention areas, according to the following:

## Chapter One:

### Local Economic Development

This is by presenting rapid assessments of the economic reality of the city of Aleppo through reviewing all the key economic sectors. And defining the competitive advantages and local problems for each sector using these sectors as intervention areas for implementing instantaneous plans with a future purpose so the local economy can provide better living conditions and a competitive business environment. Aleppo has been highlighted as a national economic engine for a number of factors most importantly:

- A population with a business acumen and strong principles of self-employment
- The presence of a diverse historical economic portfolio
- A Geo-strategic location.
- A long history and heritage.

It also identified key challenges and problems facing the city of Aleppo today, most importantly:

- A local unemployment rate above the national average
- The average size of the informal economy, higher than the national average
- A local poverty rate, higher than the national average

Also the problems and obstacles of each sector of the economic sectors in the city have been reviewed, these sectors included are:

- Tourism sector
- Handmade and handicraft occupations sector
- Industrial sector
- Bank and insurance companies sector
- Construction and real estate development sector
- Transportation sector
- Education and higher education sector
- Health and medical services sector

The subject of employment and the informal economy in the city has also been reviewed. Also the stakeholders in developing the local economy have been identified. This chapter concludes: That in order for local economic activities to compete in these climates they must provide high quality goods and services at competitive prices. Local stakeholders can contribute in habilitating local economic activities through:

- Solving the economic problems and obstacles in every sector mentioned in this chapter
- Providing continuous technical and educational training for all citizens
- Encouraging and sponsoring innovative activities for each sector
- Providing appropriate infrastructure and competition to attract new investments
- Networking to create policies (milestones) where the local product stands out

The goal is to create an active investment climate in a competitive economic environment, after which the city of Aleppo can become the ideal candidate, from amongst the Syrian cities, to attract regional investment from neighboring countries and international investment, if it is able to build:

- A global economic centre in a country with rapid growth
- A rare and unique tourist destination visited by all the countries of the world
- A gateway to entering the Arab markets through (GAFTA)
- An important industrial centre for all the companies that intend to enter the Turkish and European markets

## Chapter Two:

### **The Urban Services Delivery and Disaster Management**

This includes assessing the current situation of Aleppo city's urban services, In addition to the need for a counter disaster plan within the city. It also aims to identify the required standards of urban services for the city in accordance to its specificities and for each separate region. Setting a preliminary vision of the work mechanism to raise the level of these services, starting from the current position and completion of the previous work and efforts in the urban services delivery for the city, in order to reach the standards set and identifying subsidiary work axes and available and potential stakeholders.

This chapter identified the reasons for intervening and improving urban services delivery in three points:

- The accumulation resulting from the delay in the provision of urban services in previous years
- The migration from rural areas to the city
- Increasing population, economic and social activity

It has classified work areas within the city into three areas:

- The expansion areas for the current Master Plan.
- Areas that are planned and have detailed study.
- Informal Settlements.

It has also divided the work up into:

- Infrastructure (sanitation, water, electricity and lighting, pavements and roads, communications)



- Superstructures (education and health, architectural landscapes, traffic and transportation, public services (parks and playgrounds))

It considered social and public intervention the essential ingredient for the implementation of these services (family planning, public and media enlightenment, population participation, organized voluntary work, social and artistic work).

It has also reviewed past experiences in this field: The Old Aleppo Revival Project with gtz, City Council 2003-2007 work strategy, City Council 2007-2011 work strategy, Municipal Administration Modernization MAM project, The water project with Dorsch. This chapter concluded in determining:

Potential risks:

- Poor financing
- Qualified human cadres
- The population's reaction to the requirements of sustainable urban development.
- Laws and procedural regulations
- The reaction of departments and institutions involved in urban management to the components of the project

Suggestions:

- Intervention in geographically specific and various work areas (organized residential area – informal area – expansion area). and working to implement the ideas and the sustainable provision of urban services to these areas
- Creating the sufficient means of providing urban services requirements
- Follow-up to the implementation of some strategic projects at city level (traffic jams – beautifying the river bed - work area of Bab Jenane)

## Chapter Three

### Urban Environment

This includes assessing the current situation of the environment of the city, with emphasizing on the sustainable planning for the urban environment which should be done through analyzing social, economic and environmental indicators of the urban activity of the city of Aleppo, for it to be a basis for the advancement plan and the starting point for development and a beginning of the implementation, through identifying subsidiary work axes potential and available stakeholders. These axes are as follows:

- Environmental pollution: noise pollution, visual pollution, air, water and soil pollution.
- Decentralization, participation (public participation)
- Cooperation and international agreements
- Legislative axes (legislation and enactment of laws)
- Housing in: safe and healthy housing, slum housing.
- Environmental planning



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- The use of alternative energies
- Solid and liquid waste management
- Awareness

It concluded in determining the potential risks and recommendations which are as follows:  
Potential risks:

- Population growth and its impact on the urban environment, and being unrelated to economic growth.
- Legislative and legal aspect:
  - Lack of currently appropriate laws (environmental legislation, the city architectural body controls...)
  - Not updating the existing laws in accordance with new developments
  - Not creating new laws to keep pace with the new developments
- The density of traffic and its impact on infrastructure and environmental pollution (visual, noise, air, water and soil)
- Urbanization and the difficulty of securing the infrastructure services, in addition to the effects of the significant shortage of water and its negative repercussions.
- Technological development and its needs, and the necessity for providing safe methods for its applications
- The continued expansion of informal settlements (and the inability to control the process)

General recommendations:

During the discussions that took place within the work axes, the work group set some recommendations:

- Proposing a pilot project within the field of social awareness.
- Development of the rural areas and the encouragement of remaining in them to reduce the migration from rural to urban areas
- Activating the monitoring of the various levels to ensure the fair application of the law
- The necessity in providing statistical study centers and human development centers, to be one of the responsibilities of the Urban Observatory
- Defining the city's identity
- Full anticipatory solutions to the problems of the city prior to the commencement of the implementation.
- Focusing on the city's projects and what is required to raise its prestige

This chapter concluded that any process to develop any strategy requires the concerted efforts of the people involved in the work and participation of the people with experience





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and an effective contribution from the citizens to reach the required solutions, which must be:

- Correct and sound based on the laws and regulations
- Feasible based on the reality
- Implementable based on the available resources

## Chapter Four

### **Spatial Urban Development**

This chapter aims to provide a picture of the current status of all the aspects related to the urban activity of the city, in forms of land uses, distribution and quality of properties, architectural structure and its infrastructure, including its strengths and weaknesses, in preparation for analyzing and evaluating them and setting the appropriate intervention strategies in any of them. Also stimulating the local community and those who are interested in participating and providing suggestions and contributions. Where this chapter has dealt with the following axes in detail:

1. Land uses
  - Includes descriptions of the economic, environmental, social and tourism reflections on the city and the general master plan.
  - A summary of the current situation.
  - Identifying needs
2. Property and land tenure:
  - Identifying the expropriated areas within the urban fabric and the general master plan.
  - Clarifying the applied rules within the existing urban fabric, informal areas and residential expansion areas.
  - Types of tenure in the city.
3. Urban spatial composition
  - Describing the current reality of the city.
  - Building code.
  - The perspective of the city
4. Social and technical infrastructure.
  - A description of the current reality
  - Identifying needs
5. Traffic and Transportation
  - A description of the current reality
  - Some of the studies which have addressed some of the traffic problems within the city.



6. The informal settlements
  - A description of the current reality
  - Current studies

On the **economic level**, it has become imperative to find organized planning which directs the spread of commercial and industrial activities Firstly, based upon economic studies of the city's current status, and Secondly, starting from the future vision of the city in a proactive form and on the economic level.

However from the **environmental aspect** within the framework of updating the general organisational chart, the environmental problems of the city of Aleppo have been monitored on various levels and the causes have been identified for the formulation of solutions. Also on the **social level** various social segments within the city have settled in the form of groups within specific areas which has given each area a different character, which in turn reflects on the general shape of the city. It can be noted that the city of Aleppo beyond the borders of the city centre is basically divided into two areas east and west. In the western side the richer social segment lies. Whereas in some eastern and north eastern areas poor social segments reside. On the **tourism level**, considering what the city of Aleppo has, as the oldest inhabited city in history, in addition to it being registered as a world heritage site since 1986. Therefore cultural tourism is one of the possible tourism patterns for which the city is famous for, in addition to other types of tourism which should be stimulated

This chapter has dealt in a concentrated manner with each axis of the above mentioned axes and concluded with some recommendations, some of them are:

- Studying and implementing some projects so they are leading projects and rapid intervention areas ,such as:
  - The project of planning and beautifying the Kwek river bed
  - Carrying out a pilot project within the informal settlements.

## Chapter Five

### **F**inancial and **A**dministrative **M**odernization of the Aleppo City Council,

This chapter aims to present the work as a start to the dialogue which is to reach the optimal administrative and financial combination, and the new work mechanism that fits with the new role of the city councils as a stimulus for all the stakeholders in the urban management of the city, to lift up its reality and place it in the ranks of international cities. Through reviewing what has been achieved in this regard, the Aleppo City Council development strategy has included several areas 2003 – 2007, 2007 – 2011, the following areas have been selected to be focused on primarily.

Administrative areas:

- Decentralization and linking service departments with the centre
- Organizational structure and linking relationships and work-flow between the administrative units
- Streamlining the procedures and work mechanisms
- Developing monitoring and tracking mechanisms



- The use of sophisticated methods in planning and decision-making
- Human resources management and expertise and skills development

The areas of finance:

- Development of financial resources
- The optimal management of the expenditure
- Development of the investments of the city
- Financial Planning

It also shows the self efforts which have been carried out within the council through 2003 – 2007, in addition to the technical support which has been introduced through the MAM project funded by the European Union in the decentralization and fiscal modernization, to be the basis of continuing the development efforts, either with the City Council or in cooperation with the Madinatuna Programme (The German Agency for Technical Cooperation, and the Cities Alliance).

Where problems were identified in detail within the following key axes, according to the following:

- Decentralization and service departments
- Management of financial resources
- Expenditure management and financial planning
- Warehousing and inventory management
- Treasury
- Contracts
- Human resources management
- City Council property management and investment development
- Technical affairs management

The same applies to the potential risks and challenges

- A deficiency in the administrative procedures and some inconsistencies
- The loss of some expertise and the difficulty of building new expertise
- Lack of job stability in the application of the new organizational structure
- The ability to coordinate with some stakeholders (central level)
- Governing laws, decrees and resolutions
- Lack of resources
- The prevailing mentality and routine
- Lack of expertise and skills and difficulty in contracting experts

The initial proposals for the activities came as follows:

- Preparing preliminary descriptive analysis studies on the current reality by the members of the commission and seek the help of whoever is needed to achieve this
- Holding workshops to develop the initial studies
- Presenting the results of the studies and workshops to the experts in the field of management and financial development
- Setting operational plans to achieve the results of studies



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- Forming a monitoring and evaluation system for tracking the implementation of the proposals and the results of studies
- The formation of work forces to carry out the required work for the administrative and financial development process

## **Conclusion:**

Based on the foregoing, the first phase is concluded by established an institutional structure for ACDS (steering committee, technical and coordination unit, working groups and resource network), identified the stakeholders, a preliminary picture of the current situation of the city has started to take shape, and so we move on to the second phase which is the phase of evaluation, which is through the following:

- Starting the assessment phase within the five focal areas.
- Preparing survey tools and implementation of surveying studies.
- Identifying the problems, strategic options and research needs through workshops and directed discussion sessions.
- Distributing the results between the partners and stakeholders, holding meetings with partners and stakeholders.
- Receiving contributions about the best practices.
- Networking with other cities (cities status report).
- Dissemination of the reports and help in achieving quick results.
- Finalization of the evaluation reports in accordance with each area of the focal areas.
- Documenting the relevant experiences and lessons learned at this phase.