

*A Special Case Study about:*

*Al-Ram Municipal Council*

Prepared by:



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## **1. Introduction**

Local authorities play a key role in leading their communities as well as ensuring the delivery of high quality services to them. Good governance structures enable an authority, whether local or national, to pursue its vision effectively and reinforce that vision with mechanisms for control and management of risk. Good governance leads to good management, good performance, good stewardship of public money, good public engagement and, ultimately, good outcomes for citizens and service users. All authorities should aim to meet the best standards of governance arrangements which should not only be sound but be seen as sound.

It has come to be widely believed that strengthening local authorities, municipalities, and other local level agencies is important because many policy choices are best made at the local level where local needs and preferences are clearly felt and articulated, and implementation is best left to institutions at the local level. Local authorities have much experience in service delivery at the local level which can be developed and built upon for a more effective performance, at the local and national levels. Additionally, local authorities are best suited to be focal points for coordination between various governmental agencies involved in governance, and planning.

The purpose of this case study is to evaluate the work of Al-Ram Municipal Council (A.M.C) in delivering wastewater management and solid waste management services for the Palestinian city of Al-Ram, in order to identify major challenges that prevent A.M.C from providing best quality services to its citizens. Moreover, this case study, shall tackle some governance aspects of the Palestinian Ministry of Local Governance (MOLG) for its direct and clear relation in service delivery and the influential role it plays in any local authority. In addition to the literature review, the data and arguments of this case study were presented by the people of Al-Ram as well as A.M.C and MOLG officials, through a focus group workshop and interviews organized by Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ) as part of Pro-Poor

Integrity Program (PPI) in Palestine implemented in partnership with TIRI and AMAN and funded by UK Department for International Development (DFID).

The PPI program aims to increase capability, responsiveness and accountability on the part of local civil society and key local state institutions –responsible for solid waste management, water, and sanitation– that positively impacts the achievement of MDGs in the targeted localities of Nablus, Hebron, Al-Ram, and Jericho. The program works directly with local civil society to improve the accountability of key local state institutions in the mentioned areas to help these local state institutions become more responsive to community needs in the targeted districts.

## **2. Legal Framework**

The Palestinian Local Authorities Law of 1997 assigns local authorities twenty two specific functions, including solid waste management, local road development and maintenance, libraries, parks and recreation, slaughter houses, markets, land use planning and development, business and professional licensing, environmental health and pest control, and in certain cases they build their own schools and health clinics. In addition, many provide electricity, water and wastewater management services to their own constituents and communities as well as to surrounding areas.

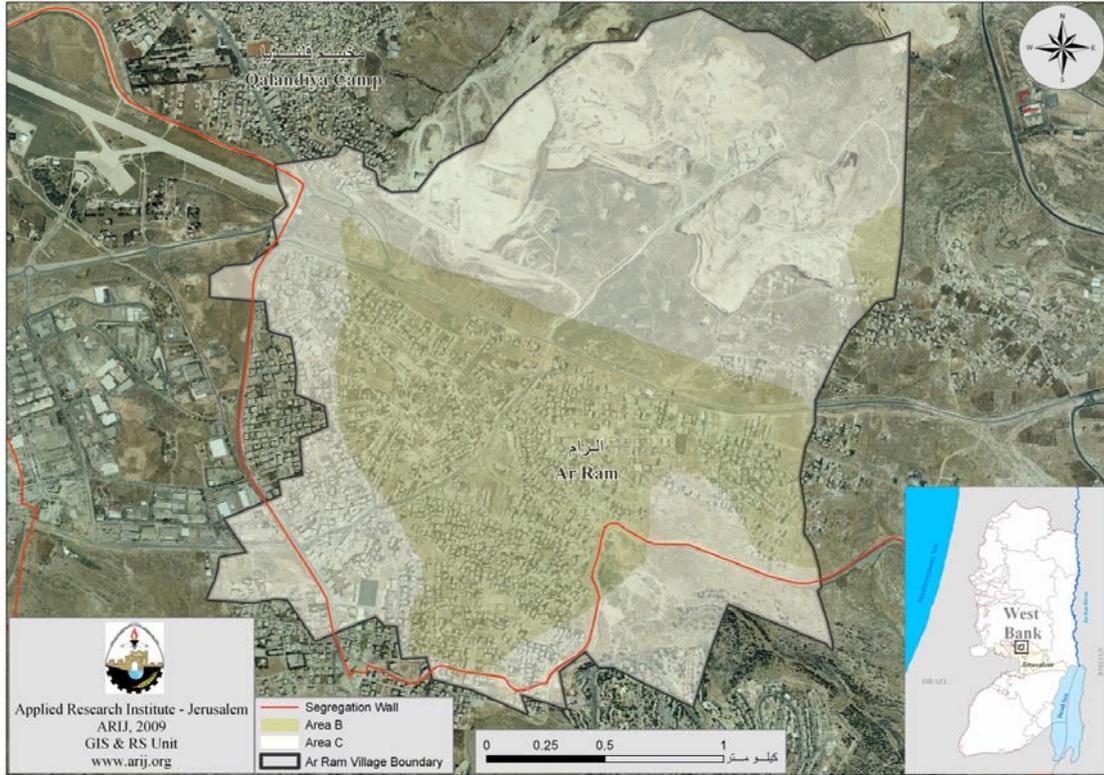
## **3. Al-Ram Locality**

Al-Ram, a Palestinian locality in Jerusalem Governorate, is located approximately seven kilometers north of east Jerusalem. Al-Ram has the very strategic location of being the main doorway between Ramallah, or northern West Bank, and Jerusalem. It is neighbored by the cities of Kafr 'Aqab, Jaba', Hizma, Bayt Hanina, and Qalandyia. It has remains of ancient building, cisterns, walls and quarries. It has the hamlets of Kherbet Erha, Kherbet Addasa, Kherbet Deir Sallam, and Kherbet Ras El Taweel. These contain several archeological sites such as cisterns building foundations, walls and rock-cut wine presses (ARIJ, 2004.)

Al-Ram has unusual circumstances in many cases; Al-Ram's total area is 5930 dunums. However, due to Al-Ram's geographical location, Segregation Wall, and

Israeli land confiscation; Al-Ram now lays at 2211 dunums, or Area B territory, whereas Israel has total control of 3719 dunums, or Area C territory. Area B and C are not clearly divided into two distant areas. Rather they are intertwined together as shown in Map 1 (ARIJ GIS, 2009.) Another unusual case, which will be later explored, is the population of Al-Ram. The real population of Al-Ram is 60,000 (A.M.C, 2009) while the official population is 18,000 (PCBS, 2007.) Even more so, different data exists regarding the services delivered to Al-Ram Households. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) records show that 89.8% of households are connected to public water network, 66.1% are connected to a public wastewater network, and 20.7% are connected to a cesspit (PCBS, 2007.) A.M.C records show that 100% of households are connected to public water network, 51% are connected to a public wastewater network, and 49% are connected to a cesspit. The unusual circumstances regarding population, Segregation Wall, and unreliable data for Al-Ram have hindered A.M.C from effectively delivering services to citizens. More analysis of the significance of such unusual circumstances will be addressed and further explained in this case study.

**MAP 1: The Palestinian City of Al-Ram**



### ***3.1 Segregation Wall Impact***

Initially, it is necessary to explore A.M.C limitations caused by the Israeli Occupation and its Segregation Wall that goes through Al-Ram city, preventing any real progress towards achieving sustainable development in the city.

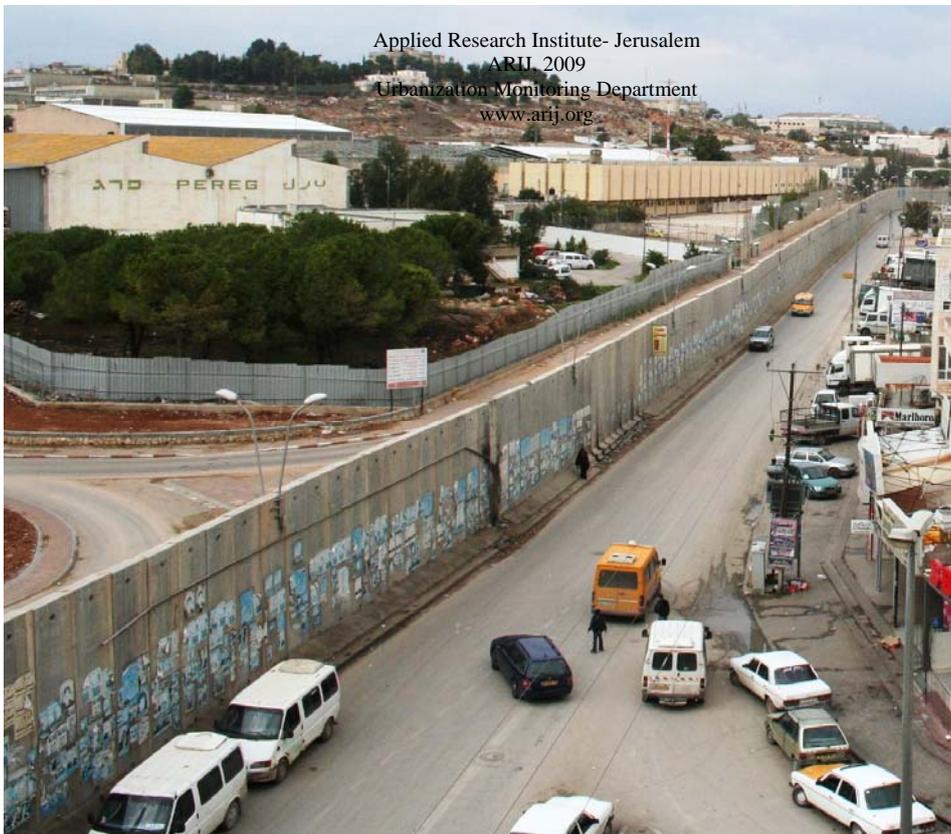
Al-Ram was an integrated part of Jerusalem city until Israeli Occupation Forces constructed the Segregation Wall. The Segregation Wall in Al-Ram runs in the middle of the main Jerusalem-Ramallah road, separating the two sides of the street, destroying a road which is the main pathway linking Jerusalem to northern Palestine, and cutting Palestinians off from each other. The Segregation Wall route runs 1 Km long along the main road of Al-Ram town to reach Qalandyia checkpoint, separating Al-Ram town into two parts, and isolating thousands of Palestinians living on the right side of Al-Ram city (those who live on the Jerusalem side of Al-Ram) from its left one (those who live on the West Bank side of Al-Ram) (ARIJ, 2004).

The Israeli administration assigns IDs to all Palestinians, "blue" for Jerusalem and "green" for the West Bank. Entrance or departure from Al-Ram and other northern Palestinian suburbs are through the Qalandiya military checkpoint or Hizma in southern Ramallah necessitating a green ID. With the closure of all other routes, residents are forced to spend more time en route in order to pass the checkpoints and what has been imposed as a de facto "border crossing" that further isolates Al-Ram. Moreover, in the Al-Ram neighborhood of Mount Samoud there are 300 families who are closed in and forced to use magnetic cards on daily basis in order to enter their homes.

Al-Ram is now essentially nowhere. The Segregation Wall around Al-Ram completely isolated Jerusalem from the West Bank, and destroyed the economy and investments in Al-Ram. Al-Ram's apartments and commercial buildings are rented by outsiders who have established shops and livelihoods in Al-Ram to take advantage of its location between Ramallah and Jerusalem.

Palestinian Jerusalemites who resided in Al-Ram, on the left side of the Segregation Wall, and ran a business had two choices; they either gave up their rights to keep the Jerusalem (Israeli) ID or sold their properties including their business in Al-Ram city and moved out to live and work in Jerusalem to avoid being excluded from the city facilities and services. Traders and business owners from Al-Ram lost their customers from Jerusalem and the nearby villages, who were not be able reach Al-Ram after the Segregation Wall was completed. And as the Segregation Wall around Al-Ram represents the complete isolation of Jerusalem from the West Bank, Jerusalemite residents of Al-Ram found themselves either isolated from Jerusalem city, or forced to leave their houses in Al-Ram in order to have access to educational, health and business facilities provided by the Israeli municipality of Jerusalem. This in return caused a catastrophic economic situation in Al-Ram.

**Picture 1: Segregation Wall in Al-Ram**



#### **4. Al-Ram Municipal Council: Assessment of Performance and Challenges**

In view of all these unusual circumstances, it would be difficult to link ethical challenges with the level of service delivery provided to the citizens of Al-Ram. In any case, it is important, to identify core principles of good governance in a local government or municipality in order to establish a framework or criteria to assess whether authorities are demonstrating and complying with the principles of good governance. Thus, this case study shall attempt to evaluate the performance of the municipal council in relation to good governance practices defined in integrity, transparency, accountability, as well as public participation systems adopted by the council. The following evaluation criteria shall start with Alarm Municipality capability challenges and then highlight the main ethical challenges that also represent

real obstacles in the face of providing better services in the fields of solid waste and wastewater:

#### ***4.1 Municipality Capacity***

Founded in 1996, the current municipal council was elected in 2005, and has fifteen members, two of them are females. A.M.C has fifty staff members, and fifteen shift workers. The departments of A.M.C are: Administration, Legal, Engineering, Financial, Health and Environment, and Public Services.

A.M.C is responsible for solid waste management service, construction and rehabilitation of wastewater network service. As for water service, it is a service provided by Jerusalem Water Undertaking. A.M.C does not play any part in providing water services for its community, thus water services will not be discussed in this case study.

A.M.C is a fragile and inefficient local authority lacking infrastructure, financial and human resources, and executive capabilities. The main reason for this inefficiency is lack of control of A.M.C over its full territory. Accordingly, A.M.C is unable to develop and implement a complete plan for the total infrastructure for the city, including solid waste and sewage projects. The Israeli government still claims the Occupied Territories as “disputed territories” and Israel has total control of Area C representing 59% of the total territories occupied by Israel in 1967.

These limitations which affect most Palestinian localities, affect Al-Ram even more critically. It is difficult to link ethical challenges with the level of service delivery provided to the citizens of Al-Ram. Circumstances complicate the integrity analysis, as it is difficult for example to assess whether A.M.C is neglecting certain neighborhoods due to lack of sovereignty or due to lack of integrity.

## ***4.2 Service Delivery in PPI Targeted Sectors***

### **4.2.1 Wastewater Management Service**

A.M.C provides wastewater management service in Al-Ram. For several reasons, their service delivery is lacking in its efficiency, coverage, resources, and management. Naturally, a major reason for this inefficiency is the Israeli Segregation Wall which practically crippled the city and in-turn its council. The wastewater network was first established in the early 1980s. At present, it covers about 51% of the city. As the city grew and developed there has been several projects to rehabilitate the network and bring it to fully cover the whole city, yet the wastewater network reaches half the city only. There are two employees in A.M.C employed as wastewater network workers.

When any Al-Ram citizen asks for wastewater network installation, they pay installation services fee of 3 Jordanian Dinars per squared meter. This is the only time any citizen pays for the wastewater network, there are no monthly maintenance/collection fees for the network. Besides, when any citizen requests maintenance service, it is done without charging any maintenance expenses.

The wastewater network installation is done according to by-gravity technique, which is more cost-effective and simpler for the A.M.C. By-gravity technique is only feasible for low grounds. Installing wastewater network for high grounds is a more complicated process that A.M.C has no financial funds to carry out. Therefore, A.M.C has to wait for donors' funds to install wastewater network for the other half of the city.

Al-Ram depends on donor's money and projects to do any infrastructure work. However, donors' projects are not designed for a whole city, but part/parts of it. In addition to the lack of sovereignty mentioned earlier, another reason for that is the issue of the real number of Al-Ram population. This represents two problems for A.M.C; while parts of the city are connected to up-to-date network pipes of large diameter, this network is connected to older main network pipes of small diameter. Second problem is Al-Ram is not going to have any actual infrastructure anytime

soon. To put together wastewater network, it requires removing the streets and digging tunnels in the ground, thus Al-Ram can never enjoy a solid sustainable infrastructure, because every wastewater project demolishes whatever infrastructure was in place already.

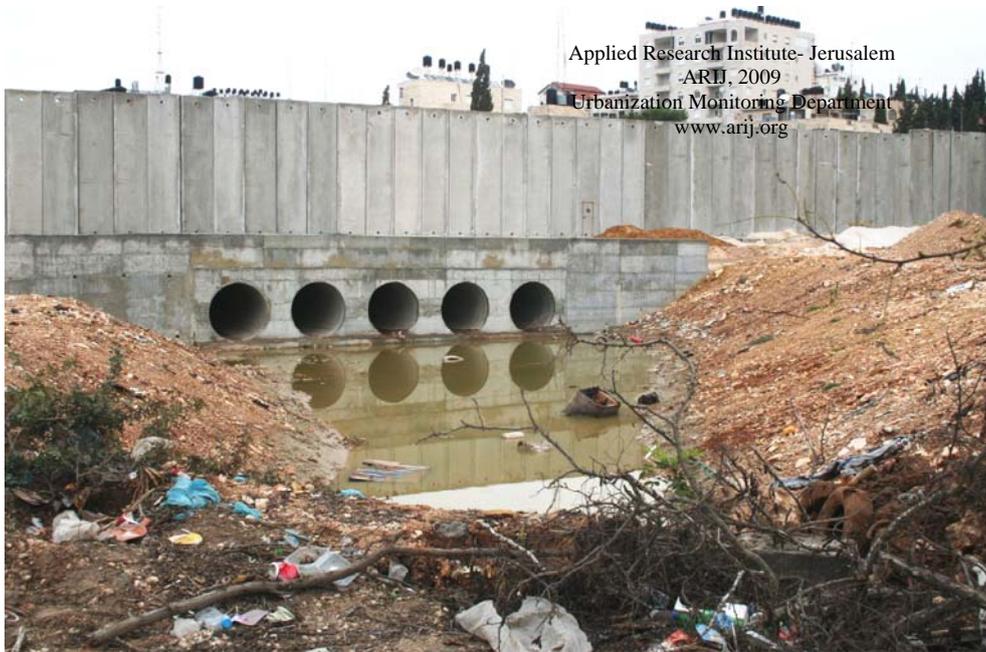
The main wastewater pipeline for Al-Ram is behind the Segregation Wall and out of reach for A.M.C. Any problems in it, like blockage or obstruction, the council has no control over. All it can do is notify Jerusalem Municipality about the problem; however Jerusalem Municipality is not very cooperative with the council (Picture 2).

Many of the households that A.M.C should service, are in Area C, thus the council cannot service. These households are serviced by no one. A.M.C cannot service them and Israel doesn't care about them so they are forgotten and their residences are suffering while no one is listening.

The wastewater network suffers from misuse and abuse from Al-Ram citizens. They drop everything in the wastewater network regardless of its nature; commercial, residential, or hazardous waste. Poultry and meat slaughterhouses dispose of all their waste in the network, causing blockages and flooding at far more frequent rate than necessary which is a serious cost for A.M.C. Almost half of the maintenance and cleaning A.M.C performs, is because of citizens misuse. Moreover, citizens to get of rainwater, dispose of it into the wastewater network causing even more strain on the network. A.M.C has yet to raise awareness of this issue, according to city officials awareness so far has been verbally communicated for certain individuals.

A.M.C in cooperation with other neighboring councils in Jerusalem Governorate tried several times to build a large-scale wastewater treatment plant, to ease the environmental strain, find more sources for already-scarce water, and reuse wastewater for non human-consumption purposes. Nevertheless their attempts were unsuccessful because Israel blocked all of their attempts.

**Picture 2: Wastewater in Al-Ram**



#### **4.2.2 Solid Waste Management Service**

Solid waste management service is provided by A.M.C to its community. Al-Ram generates forty-fifty tons of solid waste daily. There are 215 solid waste containers in Al-Ram divided as follows: fifty containers hold three cups of solid waste, twenty-five containers hold two cups of solid waste, and hundred and forty containers hold one cup of solid waste. The solid waste containers are placed deliberately according to number of households/commercial places, and according to street size. Smaller streets have the smaller containers so that solid waste vehicles are able to drive through the street. This solid waste is collected twice a day by twenty two A.M.C workers. A.M.C has four solid waste vehicles: two compressing vehicles, one solid waste collection vehicle, and one bigger compressing vehicle that transfer the solid waste to Ezariya landfill, 12 km from Al-Ram, and holds twenty-five tons at a time.

Ezariya landfill belongs to Israel. This landfill, used by several localities in Jerusalem governorate, is over its limit and doesn't have the capacity to hold more solid waste.

Moreover, this landfill is 12 km away from Al-Ram. The transferring vehicle holds twenty-five tons per load, and needs to make two trips a day for the land fill, that is 48km per day for the transferring vehicle. The landfill charges 25 NIS per ton of solid waste, meaning that A.M.C pays 625 NIS each time the transferring vehicle unload in the land fill. If the transferring vehicle makes two trips each day, that is a charge of 1,250 NIS daily for A.M.C.

There are several obstacles in the solid waste management service provided by A.M.C. The solid waste vehicles are not enough for the community of Al-Ram, undersized for the amount of solid waste generated each day, which means the vehicles have to make several trips each day, and the vehicles are old and in need of routine maintenance.

Each Al-Ram citizen is supposed to pay 250 NIS per year for solid waste management collection. A.M.C calculated that if every citizen paid their due, collection fees would fully cover all solid waste management expenses. However, collection rate in Al-Ram city is 10%. A.M.C is planning to employ 3 collectors in 2010 to increase this collection rate. There are no recycling or reusing activities in Al-Ram, because of lack of financial means and Israeli prevention of building any recycling plants in Areas B.

### ***4.3 Public Participation: Al-Ram People Citizens or Residents?***

An important element of accountability in local authorities is enhancing public participation for the purpose of reaching the best standards of service delivery. Local authorities should develop suitable communication methods to maintain close links with citizens and organizations in their city. Communication encourages and activates citizens' participation, especially when allowing all social groups to participate on an equal basis. Nonetheless, before tackling public participation in Al-Ram; it is important to understand the complex demographic situation of the city, which does not only hinder public participation and involvement, but also limits A.M.C's sources of revenue.

Many Jerusalemites prefer to take Al-Ram as their place of residence due to its relatively cheaper standards of living to Jerusalem. These, Palestinian Jerusalemites pay same rates of Arnona as Israelis, and their Arnona payments contribute to approximately 50% of Jerusalem Municipality's total budget designated for services. However, Palestinian Jerusalemites receive only 10% of the total budget for service while Israelis residing in Jerusalem receive 4 to 6 times of the budget. Moreover, Palestinian Jerusalemites must provide papers that prove their residency in Jerusalem city when they ask for services or benefits provided by the national Insurance institutes in Jerusalem such as child allowance, maternity benefits and rehabilitation. As such Al-Ram residents pay Arnona without actually benefiting from it (ARIJ, 2004.)

Thus, Palestinian Jerusalemites live in Al-Ram but don't officially declare it as to not lose their Israeli rights and privileges as Jerusalem citizens, this situation has resulted in a fluctuating number of citizens in Al-Ram. According to A.M.C the total population of Al-Ram citizens is 60,000 people (A.M.C, 2009), however; PCBS official number is 18,356 people (PCBS, 2007).

This population dilemma has caused Al-Ram locality, both people and A.M.C a variety of problems. First of all, MOLG depends on the "18,356" figure provided by PCBS, thus MOLG allocates related revenues according to this figure. These revenues which include both the transportation and property tax affect A.M.C's direct revenue dramatically. Moreover, international donors also depend on the official statistics which limits the size of implemented projects, especially those related to waste water infrastructure.

Second and most important in relation to this case study, as mentioned earlier, Al-Ram Jerusalemite citizens pay Arnona to Jerusalem Municipality without benefiting from Jerusalem Municipality services, but they also do not pay any kind of fees to A.M.C in return for the services that they benefit from as residents of Al-Ram. This important reality about the people of Al-Ram is the main obstacle towards their participatory governance of their own city. Actually, many people in Al-Ram consider

themselves as residents instead of citizens. Al-Ram citizens lack the sense of belonging to care about their city, work to improve it, worry about its future, and hold accountable any wrong-doer, making it very difficult to enhance the participatory role of the people.

As for the role of A.M.C in enhancing public participation, it is still a very limited role. According to A.M.C officials, A.M.C used to organize occasional public hearings but the citizens would come only to complain and criticize A.M.C for not providing adequate services while they themselves are not paying their dues towards covering the cost of these services. It is worth mentioning here, that -owing to many political and cultural reasons, - most Palestinian municipalities do suffer from failure to collect their fees, taxes, and the price of utilities. Nonetheless, in relation to A.M.C collection rate reaches 10% only, which is even at minimum compared to other municipalities who reach 60% collection percentage. Naturally, this percentage is a result of the demographic situation of Al-Ram as explained earlier.

A.M.C does not see the citizens as fully entitled to voice their opinions, since they do not pay their dues and since A.M.C is doing its best to provide them with adequate services with its limited resources. Consequently, participatory approaches adopted by A.M.C are in fact limited. A.M.C does not approach people directly through regular public hearings or municipal board members. Indirect communication such as municipal leaflets or website announcement is also quite limited. In fact, up till publishing this case study, A.M.C website is still under construction.

In spite of the lack of proper communication from the side of A.M.C, it is only fair to mention that compared with other localities targeted through the PPI, A.M.C maintained a very positive and helpful attitude. The chairman “Mr. Sarhan Al-Salymeh”, the administrative & financial director “Mr. Munhanned Shaheen” as well as departments’ directors and council members, all took part of PPI activities and helped facilitating for their implementation. In particular, the Mayor attended the focus group meeting organized by ARIJ, and accepted criticism from citizen with an open mind.

### **4.3.1 The Role of Civil Society**

The role of civil society is important in promoting a culture of participation and trust between local authority and the public, as well as enhancing accountability to answer for the use of powers. This role becomes even more important when the municipality or local authority is weak as the civil society can be called upon for interaction and building partnerships with the local authority as well as the people.

In Al-Ram, we have a situation where both the civil society and A.M.C lack the capacity to change the reality of the city. In particular, the role of civil society is limited which was evident through the implementation of PPI activities in the city. The representation of civil society organizations in the PPI focus group in Al-Ram was at a minimum level. In fact, the number of civil society organizations in Al-Ram does not exceed five active organizations. The Segregation Wall made things worse as a number of civil society organizations moved out from Al-Ram to Jerusalem for ease of transportation and access. The positive aspect about Al-Ram civil organizations though, is that they are women related organizations whether in representation or field of work. This women representation was evident in the PPI focus group discussions that were actively led by women as shown in Picture 3:

**Picture 3: PPI focus group discussions actively led by women**



#### ***4.4 Relationship with the Palestinian Ministry of Local Governance***

A.M.C complains of being ignored by both Israeli authorities, and Palestinian authorities. Israeli authorities consider them part of West Bank and under Palestinian authorities' responsibilities and duties, while Palestinian authorities consider them part of still-occupied Jerusalem and offer them no support or help in their struggle which makes Al-Ram right now virtually nowhere. This actually explains why unlike the majority of Palestinian municipalities Al-Ram Municipality's official name is "Al-Ram Municipal Council". This name comes from the Israeli Authorities who consider Jerusalem to be the only municipality within Jerusalem Governorate, whereas, all the other twenty-eight localities in the Governorate including Al-Ram are considered as municipal councils regardless of the number of their population.

Accordingly, Al-Ram suffers from problems not just due to the Segregation Wall, but also due to the "Jerusalem Issue" which is one of the six core "Final Status Negotiation Issues" that are still outstanding in relation to the Palestinian-Israeli

conflict. In regards to our case study Al-Ram situation has complicated the role of A.M.C especially when considering the population dilemma mentioned in the previous sections. A.M.C has taken its case to the MOLG in hopes to change the official population number from 18,000 to 60,000 due to the positive affect on A.M.C's revenues and resources related to such change.

MOLG has not responded to A.M.C pleas, justifying that it depends on official figures published by PCBS which is 18,356 people as stated earlier. When confronting PCBS with this issue, their response was that PCBS depends on actual survey data collected in publishing its figures. However, Palestinian Jerusalemites normally do not take part of PCBS surveys in order not lose their Israeli related privileges.

In any case, this situation has created a kind of confusion between A.M.C and MOLG. In addition A.M.C officials accuse MOLG of being bias in allocating funds to different municipalities, as most funds are directed towards municipalities in the northern part of the West-Bank since most of MOLG officials also come from the northern part. It would be difficult to know for sure whether these accusations are true or not, however; MOLG does have a reputation of being inefficient, unorganized ministry, in addition to employing a number of under-qualified people who are doing nothing more than “reading the newspaper” most of the work-day.

It is worthwhile, therefore, to shed some light on the performance of MOLG. MOLG was established in 1994 for the purpose of developing the transparency and accountability of local governance, upon the establishment of Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Among its responsibilities, MOLG is to monitor and supervise the work of local authorities and make sure these authorities comply with laws and policies issued by MOLG and PNA. MOLG also approves the annual budget for all local authorities, although in fiscal terms, Palestinian local authorities are already fairly decentralized; funds allocation from PNA and MOLG to local authorities account only for 15% of total Palestinian local authorities revenues.

According to interviewed officials from MOLG, the Ministry does not perform adequate oversight activities. After all, MOLG is supposed to play a supervisory and monitoring role for over 517 local authorities which require more financial and human capacities than what is currently available. To ensure proper monitoring, MOLG staff and particularly those working in the Monitoring and Consultation department are supposed to make field visits to all local authorities on regular basis. Currently, the mentioned department has four employees. Naturally, this allows for a maximum of one visit a year for each local authority. According to one interviewed official, some local authorities have not been visited for four years.

The Ministry's officials also emphasized the need to empower its staff. Currently, MOLG employees need special training in regards to public budget analysis. Many workshops are held throughout the year but none of them tackles the issue of public finance management. Furthermore, according to interviewed MOLG officials, the main issue for all public employees in Palestine whether employed by local authorities, ministries, or PNA is lack of motivation, lack of initiative, as well as lack of sense of belonging.

This inefficiency in the performance of MOLG personnel was also concluded by the Palestinian 'State Audit & Control Bureau' in its 2008 evaluation report. The evaluation report includes an assessment of the control system and internal audit of Palestinian ministries, local authorities, civil society organizations, and the President's Office. In addition to internal audit, the evaluation highlights additional issues relevant to the control environment such as job description, organizational hierarchy, staff capacity, and computer systems.

In regards to MOLG, the report revealed the following:

1. There is no proper segregation of duties. In particular, the duties of custody, recording, and authorization for a given asset are not set apart from each other and/or performed by different personnel. The proper checks and balances on roles of various personnel are not respected.

2. No recruitment policy. MOLG does not adopt fair and transparent recruitment process essential for employing qualified staff. The recruitment process is not regulated by an internal document, thus the recruitment process is not subjected to clearly prescribed procedures like publishing vacancies and including general and specific professional requirements.
3. MOLG employees' job titles do not match their fields of education.
4. Lack of regular performance appraisals and provisions for professional development for MOLG workforce.

#### ***4.5 Responsiveness***

From the small sample of Al-Ram citizens interviewed, A.M.C uses an open door policy and its staff members do assist citizens mainly through its investigation unit. A.M.C has an investigation unit for citizens' complains. Citizens may call the unit and complain verbally over the phone, or fill out a designated document to place their claim at this unit. This claim is then conveyed to the appropriate department. In case of wastewater management and solid waste management services, claims are conveyed to the Health and Environment Department to be looked at and dealt with. According A.M.C's officials, all wastewater management and solid waste management services' claims are under control and A.M.C is able to deal with them effectively.

Nonetheless, this method depends on the citizen's initiative rather than A.M.C initiative, which means that A.M.C has to wait for complaints from citizens in order to handle different issues. A.M.C does not implement a systematic way to approach citizens and thus to respond to their needs, even need-assessments are carried out upon calls from different donors; meaning when there are available funds to implement certain projects. Being close to citizens does not happen on its own, local authorities must establish an efficient and transparent administration responsive to the needs and demands of the citizens, engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure local public accountability. Engaging citizens and keeping them reliably and timely informed, involves establishing and maintaining a variety of close links with citizens, like:

- Use of a web-site to publish transparent municipal plans and budgets and timely progress on budget execution and financial reports.
- Direct communication with the public through regular public hearings.
- Municipal leaflets or banners.
- Formal complaints, correspondences, community polling and surveys.

Unfortunately none of such methods are officially adopted by A.M.C. However, and as mentioned earlier, A.M.C officials use open-door policies and welcome all citizens. This attitude of A.M.C Chairman was evident in his manner of speaking and clothing style which revealed both humbleness and willingness to listen, especially in comparison with other local mayors who tend to show a superior attitude. Actually, this might explain the following positive results which were part of an assessment conducted in A.M.C by CHF International during the year 2009:

| <b>Category</b>  | <b>Excellent (%)</b> | <b>Good (%)</b> | <b>Weak (%)</b> |
|--|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Handling complaints and resolving problems   | 5.4%                 | 82.2%           | 12.4%           |
| Clarity in who is responsible for providing the service (no need to review more than one official to get the same service) | 3.8%                 | 79.2%           | 16.9%           |

#### ***4.6 Codes of Ethics: Ethic Infrastructure***

Local authorities must promote the values of sound authority and demonstrate the principles of good governance through their behavior. Effective leadership requires commitment to the ethics and values of public responsibility, and to provision of quality service. Upon asking A.M.C officials about code of ethics, they admitted to hearing of such code but not having one.

In this regard, A.M.C is not unique; the entire Palestinian national and local culture has a significant impact on organizational values both in ministries as well as local authorities. Consequently, employees are practicing their public service role without any source of enthusiasm or pride. The presence of an ethical framework such as code

of ethics, to guide employees rarely exists. Visions and mission statements are sometimes included in official public brochures but are rarely felt by employees.

#### ***4.7 Service Delivery Standards***

The presence of benchmarks (such as service integrity charter) for the delivery of, access to, or quality of essential public services, enhance the responsiveness, and over time motivate improvements in the capabilities of local authorities. In Al-Ram it is difficult to set service delivery standards due to contradicting statistics and lack of data as clarified earlier.

As for A.M.C's assessment of its own service delivery standards, it rarely carries out any filed surveys and questioners to evaluate these standards. Again, the only data available about delivery standards are from a survey carried out by CHF International during 2009. The survey showed satisfaction about the organizational, and executive structure of A.M.C, and the customer service of A.M.C employees. On the other hand, the survey showed lack of satisfaction at the degree A.M.C involves citizens and civil society in decision making and equity aspects. The following table is taken from this survey:

| <b>Category</b>   | <b>Excellent (%)</b> | <b>Good (%)</b> | <b>Weak (%)</b> |
|---|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Staff Council Customer Service  | 11.6%                | 83.7%           | 4.7%            |
| Time period of service delivery (the speed of service delivery)   | 7.7%                 | 84.6%           | 7.7%            |
| Getting proper information and documentation for services from the first time   | 2.3%                 | 71.3%           | 26.4%           |
| Equality in provision of services and problem-solving   | 1.5%                 | 16.9%           | <b>81.5%</b>    |
| The Council consults with citizens or other organizations about the services provided, and the decisions taken in this regard | 1.5%                 | 16.9%           | <b>81.5%</b>    |

As evident in these figures, more than 80% of Al-Ram residents consider the equality of providing services to be low. It is difficult however to explore more the reasons for this high percentage since Al-Ram original citizens represent only 15% of the whole population. Regardless of the reasons, these figures show that the majority of Al-Ram residents feel marginalized which is a serious equality issue that A.M.C must deal with, if it is serious about enhancing its integrity systems.

The second problem revealed in this table, is that the people are not involved in decision making. A.M.C officials have not actually denied, as mentioned earlier in this case study that official communication is at its minimum level between A.M.C and people of Al-Ram. Therefore, it is safe to conclude, that due to the non-existence of proper participatory processes to seek the views of community, that the people of Al-Ram are hardly ever consulted about the quality of services provided to them. As a result, A.M.C alone is responsible for setting the standards of provided services with no monitoring from the people.

#### ***4.8 Transparency and Accountability Systems***

The transparency and accountability systems highlighted here are mainly related to the obligations of A.M.C towards its own people. Ideally speaking, local authorities should undertake a policy to provide their own public with information concerning functions, economic, budget execution reports and financial accounts. Thus, the public are informed about the present and future financial position and activities of their own municipality.

One of the methods to reveal financial documents is using local authorities' official websites. Unfortunately, A.M.C does not have a website yet, though many Palestinian local authorities do have websites. Upon asking local authorities' officials about this issue, their response was that their website is still under construction and it shall be launched soon. Also, A.M.C does not issue annual or semi-annual reports. The only available document is a summary of achievements for a period of four years (not

specifying which four years), that does not reveal any sort of financial data. This all shows that A.M.C is not keen on publishing data, or maybe the Palestinian local authorities in general are yet to be aware of the importance of fiscal transparency. This transparency means that local authorities' annual accounts are to be treated as public documents available by right to the public. However, public financial data is still considered as “confidential” data in Palestine.

Transparency makes local authorities function better by rendering them publicly accountable, hence improving service delivery. Specifically, budget transparency helps strengthen local authorities involved in public services delivery so they function better. As A.M.C does not publish its data, it is difficult for the public to hold them accountable for their spending habits. Then again this spending is supposed to be mainly from the people; and A.M.C claims that it receives only a 10% revenue from its residents. This is in fact another factor that weakens local authorities' accountability towards its people. Palestinian local authorities often use the low collection percentages as a justification for not involving people in budget preparation or even allowing people access to the budget. Actually, many Palestinian citizens hold the perception of “Why should I continue on paying while others are not paying yet still receive the same level of service?” PNA has tried repeatedly to solve this problem, yet with no successful outcomes.

Another important aspect of transparency and accountability is applying a sound procurement policy that insures ethical standards and avoids conflicts of interest. Procurement is an important area of operations because Palestinian municipalities implement community development, and infrastructure projects funded from several donating agencies. Accordingly, major integrity challenges exist in its procurement process.

A.M.C declares that it implements article 34 of Law number (1) for the year 1997, and it does not have a procurement policy that is especially tailored to meet its own needs. Law #1 regarding procurement is too general; it doesn't not consider the size of operations, nature of purchases and number of employees of each local authority.

This available policy mostly includes rules and policies and not many applicable procedures, meaning there are rules but no clear instructions, forms, definitions of roles in regards to the implementation of the set rules. Moreover, many bidding related procedures are not clarified in the law; the procedures do not include the number of bid participants, number of announcements, sole supplier cases, excluding suppliers from the bid, repeating bid procedures, and bid quantities variations. In view of that, all these cases could be implemented according to discretion of each local authority which creates some gaps in the procurement system.

After a small investigation of A.M.C procurement policies, it turns out that A.M.C does not have a separate procurement department to insure segregation of duties, such as approval, receiving and paying. A.M.C's accountant is in fact performing procurement responsibilities. A.M.C does have an internal audit department and an internal auditor. However, A.M.C's accounts are not audited by an external auditor, consequently, internal control practices are minimal.

## **5. Conclusions**

PPI approach develops trust between municipality and community, with solutions that focus on participatory engagement of the community to increase trustworthiness of municipality to improve its performance.

Al-Ram municipal council is yet to develop a serious, thoughtful, and fully engaging participatory approach with its citizens. Al-Ram municipal council is always accessible for any citizen. The chairman of the council, Mr. Al-Salymah, uses open door policy and make sure to attend all workshops for the city, staff and employees readily answers and clarifies any concerns for citizens.

However, it is hard to keep up with sixty thousand people in this traditional way. Al-Ram municipal council lacks a well defined professional strategy to approach its community. For example, Al-Ram municipal council has never done any awareness-raising programs for any pressing issues that effect Al-Ram community, like not dumping slaughterhouses litter in the sewer network.

Al-Ram municipal council does not hold regular meeting with the community, it relays on workshops and events done for different purposes to approach its community. However, no regular meetings are done for the sole purpose of having the council and the community sit down together to engage the community in the running of their municipal council. Moreover, Al-Ram municipal council has no website, does not release its financial statements, and does not maintain records of its information resources.

At the national and political level, there is an increasing need to withstand the policies that aim to drive out Palestinians, who realize the Israeli plans to strengthen Israel's presence inside the city, and the lack of an integrated national program for strengthening the resilience of the people. Al-Ram people really need an emergency program to support their steadfastness of residents and the provision of meeting their minimum needs in order to stop the Israelis from draining the city of its population.

## 6. References

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