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REPUBLIC OF LEBANON
MINISTRY OF
INTERIOR AND
MUNICIPALITIES



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STANDARD OPERATING MANUAL FOR REGIONAL TECHNICAL OFFICES



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List of Acronyms

AoC	Agreement of Cooperation
BoQ	Bill of Quantities
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
DGLAC	Directorate General of Local Administrations and Councils
DGUP	Directorate General of Urban Planning
EDL	Electricité du Liban
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
GIS	Geographic Information System
HR	Human Resources
IDP	Individual Development Objective
IT	Information Technology
JD	Job Description
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoET	Ministry of Economy and Trade
MoEW	Ministry of Energy and Water
MoIM	Ministry of Interior and Municipalities
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health

MoPWT	Ministry of Public Works and Transport
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MoT	Ministry of Telecommunications
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OKR	Objective and Key Result
OMSAR	Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform
RTO	Regional Technical Office
SDC	Social Development Centre
SOM	Standard Operating Manual
SWM	Solid Waste Management
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UoM	Union of Municipalities



Introduction: Objective, Scope, and Audience of the SOM

This Standard Operating Manual (SOM) presents the key functions, processes, and procedures related to the status and day-to-day work of Regional Technical Offices (RTOs) in Lebanon. The objective of the SOM is to provide a unified framework for the establishment and further development of the RTOs in Lebanon based on good governance standards and the legal and regulatory provisions in force.

The SOM is part of a larger toolkit comprising also a Capacity Development Strategy and an Exit Strategy, all of which aim to ensure that existing RTOs and future ones have optimal institutional capacity, and that local authorities hosting them can sustain and develop them.

This toolkit serves to:

- Support the replicability and sustainability of the RTO model in the long term, especially since the responsibility for RTOs is to be gradually handed over from development partners to the concerned local authorities;
- Lay the groundwork for the institutionalisation of the RTOs as a full-fledged municipal unit working organically within the local authority and in communion with its social and institutional environments;
- Provide processes, procedures, tools, and templates that ensure the sustainability, efficiency, effectiveness of RTOs;
- Streamline, unify, and standardise the RTO's ways of working;
- Emphasise internal transparency and accountability within local authorities.

The objective of the SOM is to provide a unified framework for the establishment and further development of the RTOs in Lebanon based on good governance standards and the legal and regulatory provisions in force.

The SOM is divided into six sections, each comprising several sub-sections. The first section provides a definition of the RTO, its mission and vision, a detailed scope of work, an overview of the tasks and duties that the RTO can undertake in the various municipal sectors, and a brief explanation of the added value of establishing RTO. This section presents the legal grounds supporting the establishment of RTOs and also elaborates the untapped potential of developing RTO structures based on the Lebanese legal and regulatory framework.

The second section positions the RTOs within the municipal bureaucracy and presents the different municipal structures that the RTO can be embedded in, depending on the existing administrative configuration and what is deemed feasible by the elected municipal officials. In annex, this section is complemented by indicative terms of reference (ToRs) for the most common RTO roles.

The third section is a step-by-step guide to set up an RTO. It presents different scenarios, procedure checklists, and assesses the pros and cons of each scenario. It also mentions the financial, administrative, material/physical, and technology-related resources needed to establish an RTO.

The fourth section addresses the issues of reporting lines, supervision, and delegation of work between the head of the local authority, the municipal staff, and the RTO. In annex, this section is complemented by work plan and timesheet templates.

The fifth section details coordination processes between the RTO and its many interlocutors (central government authorities, deconcentrated authorities, other local authorities, civil society organisations, development partners and donors, private sector). Fundraising and donor relations support and proposal development are a crucial part of this function. This section represents the dynamic aspect of the previous sections and provides guidelines for external engagement with these interlocutors.

The sixth and final section is dedicated to performance management. It provides a varied menu of tools and methods that the local authority can leverage to manage the performance of the RTO as well as of its staff members. This section draws on leading evidence-driven research on performance management. The intent is to optimise collaboration and team dynamics,

nurture a culture of feedback and continuous improvement, and enhance levels of accountability. In annex, this section is complemented with a variety of performance management templates.

Audience.– This SOM is intended for several beneficiaries. The prime beneficiaries are elected municipal officials (mayors, heads of unions, council members) who either wish to establish an RTO in the local authority which they represent, or have already an RTO in place and wish to institutionalise it. The responsibility for adapting and endorsing the SOM is primarily entrusted to the concerned local authority council. Similarly, the RTO is also a prime beneficiary of this SOM since both the municipal officials and the RTO team are responsible for putting it into practice.

Other beneficiaries include the Directorate General of Local Administrations and Councils (DGLAC) at the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM), which is responsible for endorsing the SOM, promoting the RTO model, and making the toolkit available to local authorities.

Civil society organisations and development partners play a supportive role in this regard. Their support consists in creating awareness about the RTO model, the present toolkit, and encouraging their municipal partners to engage on that path for their own benefit.

Recommended Use.– This SOM is meant to be used as a standard reference manual regulating the work of RTOs. However, due to its generic nature, the local authority is to adapt some of its sections to fit its institutional context, particularly Section II (RTO structure) and Section VI (performance management). Alternatively, the SOM can be endorsed as is while a follow-up decision would specify which parts apply, which ones do not, and how specific sections were adapted to fit the needs of the local authority. For example, the local authority is to mention, under Section II, what structure will be adopted for the RTO and how it will dovetail with the rest of the municipal administration, and, under Section VI, which performance management tools and methods will be primarily used among the many proposed here. Finally, Section III is meant to be directly implemented, depending on the applicable scenario.



I. What is the RTO?

The Regional Technical Office (RTO) is a technical unit performing under the mandate of a municipality or Union of Municipalities (UoM) (henceforth referred to as “local authorities”). The RTO provides technical expertise and specialised know-how to support public service planning and provision. It also helps mobilising public officials and local community actors to jointly identify and address local needs based on a strategic vision. Through this, the RTO aims at strengthening local governance, enhancing service delivery, and activating the strategic planning function of local authorities.

The RTO is hosted by a local authority and comprises a team of technical and social experts who are generally hired from the same area in which the local authority operates. The RTO’s membership and work are deeply rooted in the area in which it operates, thereby contributing to increased ownership and buy-in of both municipal officials and local community actors throughout the process of developing municipal policies and projects.

RTOs were first established by UN-Habitat in 2007 to empower UoMs in developing effective emergency responses and strategic planning

civil society actors, international organisations) and have played a major role in planning different interventions related to several sectors. RTOs have

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