

المعهد العربي لإنماء المدن
Arab Urban Development Inst.

FIFTEENTH ISSUE
MAY, 2026

BY THE ARAB URBAN DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

JOBS AND CITIES

SHAPING INCLUSIVE URBAN ECONOMIES IN ARAB CITIES

THE INTERVIEW
Mayor of Tangier talks about the Provision of Jobs and Economic Potentials in the City

URBAN INSIGHTS
Experts' insights on Jobs and Cities
Toolkits on Jobs and Cities

CITIES IN ACTION
Projects and Initiatives Creating Jobs and Economic Opportunities Across Arab Cities

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FIFTEENTH ISSUE

JOBS AND CITIES
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Front Cover

The Saudi International Handicrafts Week, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Source: MENA Newswire / Heritage Commission

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EDITORIAL

RESHAPING ARAB CITIES INTO TRUE EMPLOYMENT HUBS

By Dr. Ziad Alameddine- Editor in Chief

In many Arab cities, urban planning has been viewed as a zoning instrument for housing delivery, the distribution of essential services, and the extension of basic infrastructure, with little consideration given to job creation in and around those areas. Meanwhile, jobs are largely assumed to follow regional economic policy and investment choices, widening the division between places of residence and access to employment. That division now looks increasingly unrealistic.

Arab cities must not be planned merely as places where people live and travel; they need to be planned as integrated urban systems capable of creating, sustaining, and expanding access to job opportunities. As urbanization continues to grow rapidly alongside increasing job challenges across the region, generating employment opportunities will require an integrated and inclusive approach across the entire urban system to incentivize cities to prepare employees for jobs.

Transforming a city's urban system into an economic engine requires integrating economic development into the urban planning process by shifting from exclusively single-use zoning to mixed-use development while ensuring that job opportunities are accessible. Existing urban master plans often utilize zoning ordinances to separate residential communities from employment centers, increasing commuting costs. Such segregation creates barriers to women and low-income workers, who often have difficulty commuting due to inefficient public transportation systems.

Cities can enhance their local ecosystems through a flexible and multi-use zoning approach, creating opportunities to embed local and micro-enterprise businesses into communities and eliminating barriers to employment. Infrastructure investments must therefore be viewed as an economic development mechanism that facilitates everyday commercial transactions while creating local employment opportunities.

Reshaping Arab cities into true employment hubs will occur through a system of governance that empowers local authorities to lead economic development initiatives within their municipal boundaries. This will enable municipalities to identify the skills required for employment within their communities and form business partnerships with the private sector. When community leaders work with other stakeholders to create a unified vision, cities will evolve into places that offer job opportunities for their residents.

In this context, this issue of Mudununa features an interview with H.E. Mr. Mounir Limouri, Mayor of Tangier, highlighting the city's urban development projects and their tangible impact on residents' quality of life. He discusses the city's approach to linking urban development to job creation, including the role of industrial platforms, port-related economic zones, major-event infrastructure, and efforts to integrate the informal economy while expanding inclusive access to economic opportunities across the city.

Furthermore, Mudununa's "Urban Insights" section explores experts' views on the role of cities in unlocking productivity and job creation. Almud Weitz draws on the World Bank's Cities that Work framework to show that urbanization alone is not enough and that local conditions shape why some cities deliver stronger economic outcomes than others. Judy Baker demonstrates how revitalization of historic centers, underutilized sites, and mixed-use districts can stimulate investment, increase economic activity, and create jobs across construction, services, tourism, and innovation ecosystems. Dr. Haider Al-Baghdadi examines the role of successful urban development projects in stimulating economic activity and expanding sustainable employment opportunities, highlighting the importance of investing in urban infrastructure as a driver of job creation and as a means of enhancing both the economic and social environment.

The issue also introduces a selection of international toolkits that serve as practical guides for local organizations working on employment and economic development. They explain how to better understand local job markets, identify appropriate policy tools, and design strategies that support inclusive growth and decent work. Their goal is to help cities and local actors strengthen economic opportunities, connect people to jobs, and build more productive, inclusive, and resilient communities.

The "Cities in Action" section demonstrates how governance and administrative performance shape the business environment by comparing Riyadh's infrastructure coordination reforms with Upper Egypt's improvements in local service delivery and investment planning. These examples show that predictability, transparency, and capable municipal systems are themselves job-enabling assets.

The section also examines how public transportation and transit-oriented strategies in Amman, Casablanca, and Riyadh can expand labor markets by connecting people more effectively to jobs. These examples show how cities can lessen commuting burdens, increase access for women and lower-income workers, and improve economic integration.

Urban regeneration, as an engine for local economies, can support the recovery of neighborhoods, markets, and waterfronts, reactivate place-based livelihoods, and create new employment pathways. The cases of Beirut, Aleppo, and Tangier demonstrate that cities create jobs not only through significant investments and outward expansion but also by revitalizing urban ecosystems, cultural assets, local businesses, and mixed-use areas where every day economic activity already occurs.

Another key theme is the importance of productive zones and their ability to reshape urban employment geographies. The examples of KAEC, Duqm, and Aqaba demonstrate how ports, special economic zones, and logistics platforms can stimulate investment and job creation.

This section also presents examples from Dubai, Manama, and Ouarzazate, showing how city-level systems can support local supply chains, technical services, long-term workforce development, and future jobs alongside national strategies. It concludes with examples from Salé, Sfax, and Marrakech-Safi demonstrating how cities can safeguard livelihoods and expand access to job opportunities by formalizing markets through improved infrastructure, leveraging digital tools, and creating youth employment ecosystems.

Mudununa concludes with highlights of AUDI's delegation visit to Madrid to assess the city's readiness to host the Arab European Cities Dialogue Forum (AECD) in January 2027. It also covers key milestones from AUDI's participation in the World Urban Forum (WUF13) in Baku, including the publication of The State of Arab Cities Report 2026: Housing, Land and Basic Services as Foundations for Resilient Urbanization. To promote shared goals for urban development, AUDI organized dialogue sessions and held bilateral meetings with international organizations, governments, and academic institutions.

Finally, Mudununa covers the singing of two strategic agreements at WUF13 to advance sustainable urban development and resilience across the region, including one with the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities and another with the Nouakchott Region under the notion of "Participatory Greening of Neighborhoods in Arab Cities.", as well as the meeting between AUDI's Director General and the Dutch Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, to explore opportunities to expand cooperation.

INTERVIEW

MAYOR OF TANGIER
MR. MOUNIR LYMOURI

Share Insights on Provision of Jobs and Economic Potentials in the City

is a Moroccan politician and a businessman in the leather industry, he has contributed to national and Arab professional organizations. He served as president of the Chamber of Traditional Industry in the Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region and was elected mayor of Tangier in 2021. He also leads institutions responsible for local services and facilities, chairs the Moroccan Association of Presidents of Municipal Councils, as well as the Executive Committee member of United Cities and Local Governments of Africa, promoting cooperation and knowledge exchange among African cities.



H.E. Mr. Mounir Lymouri

In this interview, Mudununa newsletter speaks with H.E. Mr. Mounir Limouri, Mayor of Tangier and President of the Moroccan Association of Presidents of Municipal Councils, to explore the city's key urban development initiatives and their impact on residents' quality of life. The discussion also examines Tangier's approach to linking urban development with employment centers, highlighting the role of industrial platforms, port-related economic zones, and major-event infrastructure, as well as efforts to integrate the informal economy and expand access to economic opportunities across the city.

Tangier has transformed from a regional trade city into a global industrial and logistics hub. How does the municipality define its role in job creation, and what is the strategic vision for linking urban development to employment over the next five years?

In recent years, Tangier has undergone significant demographic and economic transformations, emerging as Morocco's second-largest economic hub after Casablanca. While economic development and job creation fall primarily within the mandate of regional authorities under Regulatory Law 111-14, local authorities continue to play an important supporting role. Through their responsibilities, they contribute indirectly to employment generation by creating a favorable urban and service environment, facilitating access to real estate, and ensuring the quality of basic local services. Although indirect, these efforts are

essential to attracting investment, boosting economic activity, and supporting job creation.

Tangier attracts growing foreign investment flows, reinforced by its strategic position and economic dynamism. How do urban development regulations, particularly in real estate, contribute to this attractiveness?

As I mentioned earlier, attracting and promoting foreign investment remains primarily the responsibility of regional councils. However, under Article 87 of Regulatory Law 113-14, municipalities also have authority over the preparation of urban planning documents and the review of development plans. These tools are essential to creating an investment-friendly environment and supporting the infrastructure required for investment.

Updating urban planning frameworks and ensuring the availability of well-organized and accessible real estate are among the most effective ways municipalities can enhance a city's attractiveness to investors. To this end, the Tangier municipality has accelerated building permit procedures and simplified urban planning regulations, reducing processing times and responding more effectively to investors' needs. These efforts strengthen the city's competitiveness and reinforce its position among leading economic hubs.

Tangier Med now supports over 1,500 companies and 145,000+ jobs across six activity zones. How does the city ensure that the economic benefits of the port and its industrial platform reach Tangier's broader urban population, including youth, women, and residents of peripheral neighborhoods?

The equitable distribution of the economic benefits generated by the Tangier Med Port is a complex issue with two main dimensions. First, Tangier Med Port is a national asset that serves all Moroccan citizens, and its benefits should extend to all regions of the Kingdom, not solely to the residents of Tangier.

Second, employment opportunities linked to the port are more closely related to the principle of equity than to the concept of distribution. Access to these opportunities depends on the scientific, technical, and professional qualifications required to ensure the efficient management and operation of this strategic facility.

To support this objective, significant efforts are being directed toward workforce development and human capital training. Achieving this objective requires coordination among multiple actors and stakeholders, particularly the Tangier–Tetouan–Al Hoceima region and vocational training institutions. However, this area falls beyond the direct mandate of the Tangier municipality.

What are the main challenges the municipality faces in aligning urban growth with labor market demands, and what actions are being taken to reduce spatial mismatches between where people live and where jobs are located?

The Tangier municipality is fully aware of the challenges associated with rapid urban growth, particularly the need to strike a balance between residential areas and employment centers. Ensuring efficient mobility between homes and workplaces is essential for improving access to economic opportunities and enhancing quality of life. To address these challenges, a range of practical measures has been implemented.

Many industrial and production facilities now provide transportation services for their employees, while the municipality has invested significantly in upgrading and expanding the public transport network. These improvements aim to increase coverage across all neighborhoods and strengthen connections between residential areas and workplaces.

At the same time, the municipality continues to tackle traffic and mobility challenges, including congestion on key roads. Efforts are underway to widen major roads and introduce advanced traffic management systems, including smart electronic



project for repurposing and rehabilitating the old wholesale fruit and vegetable market in Tangier and transforming it into a regional space for exhibitions and arts
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traffic signals. These initiatives are expected to improve traffic flow, reduce commuting times.

How does the municipality structure its collaboration with the private sector and industrial operators, particularly within Tangier Med Zones, to balance investment attraction with inclusive employment outcomes and decent working conditions?

Although local authorities have limited responsibilities in the area of job creation, the Tangier municipality has sought to contribute through two main approaches.

One approach involves developing partnerships with international cooperation organizations to support initiatives aimed at promoting employment opportunities at the local level within the municipality's mandate.

Another approach focuses on organizing meetings that bring together private sector employers and young people to better identify labor market needs and facilitate connections between job seekers and potential employers. These efforts have helped expand opportunities for young people to access and engage in the city's labor market.

The redevelopment of Tangier's old city port into a mixed-use waterfront is one of the region's most significant urban transformation projects. How is this project expected to generate new economic activity and employment, and what role does the municipality play in guiding this transition?

As part of Tangier's urban development strategy, the old port was transformed into a high quality recreational one, marking a significant change in the role and function of this area within the city. This transformation created new opportunities for service-based economic activities, boosting economic growth and enhancing the area's attractiveness.

The Tangier municipality also played an important role in facilitating investment by streamlining licensing procedures for cafés, restaurants, and other services and entertainment facilities. These efforts contributed to job creation and strengthened the local economy. The project serves as a model of shared responsibility, requiring close coordination among government entities, the private sector, and relevant public institutions.

Tangier is preparing major infrastructure investments for AFCON 2025 and ahead of the 2030 FIFA World Cup. How is the city leveraging these mega-events to create lasting employment opportunities beyond the construction phase, in services, tourism, and the creative economy?

Major events can present both opportunities and challenges. Without efficient and professional management, they may result in infrastructure that exceeds actual needs or generate only temporary and seasonal employment opportunities. This highlights the importance of continuous dialogue and coordination among stakeholders to ensure that these large-scale facilities evolve into integrated projects that support sustainable local development.

Supporting long-term benefits from these facilities requires promoting year-round sports tourism and attracting a greater number of international events. Such efforts help sustain the economic activity generated by these facilities and strengthen their contribution to the city's broader development goals.

Beyond their economic impact, these major projects and events create valuable opportunities to develop a skilled workforce in fields such as event organization,



Ahmed Boukmakh Cultural Center
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Tiran Square after its restoration and rehabilitation.
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hospitality, and sports and entertainment management—sectors with strong growth potential and increasing future demand. It is essential that future generations in Tangier benefit from these opportunities through specialized training and capacity-building programs implemented by the relevant authorities.

What indicators does the municipality rely on to assess the impact of its urban and economic development programs on employment, and what lessons from Tangier's experience could be shared with other Arab cities seeking to strengthen the link between cities and jobs?

Establishing precise indicators to measure impact in this area remains challenging due to Tangier's rapid demographic changes and sustained population growth. As the city has evolved into a major economic hub attracting people from across Morocco, demand for employment opportunities continues to rise year after year.

Addressing these challenges and assessing the outcomes of adopted policies cannot be achieved within a single electoral term. Rather, it requires a long-term vision based on sustained and cumulative efforts that allow for a meaningful evaluation of development interventions over time.

This challenge is further compounded by the ongoing issue of brain drain, as many skilled individuals continue to view emigration as a more attractive option than the opportunities available within the country.



Moulay Ahmed El Wakili Institute of Music and Choreographic Dance
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URBAN INSIGHTS

External Article

CITIES THAT WORK: UNLOCKING MENA'S URBAN POTENTIAL TO UNLEASH PRODUCTIVITY AND JOBS



Almud Weitz

is currently the World Bank's Regional Practice Director for Infrastructure in the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan region based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, covering transport, energy, urban development, resilience and land sectors. She joined the World Bank in 2007 in the water sector in the East Asia and Pacific Region, based in Jakarta. She has since held various positions at the World Bank, including Lead Water Specialist and Transport Manager in both the EAP and the Eastern and Southern Africa region, based in Singapore and Nairobi, respectively. Prior to the World Bank, Ms. Weitz worked at the Asian Development Bank in Manila and Jakarta and with UNDP in New York. She holds an MA in Economics and a postgraduate certificate in Development Studies.

Region at a Crossroads

Countries across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region need to continue adapting to a changing global economy. Many are already actively diversifying, expanding export-orientated goods and services, and embracing digital technologies.

Millions of young people are converging on urban centers to seize these opportunities. Yet the jobs they find are often informal, low-wage, and precarious – when they can find one. A record one in four youth in MENA are unemployed. And fewer than one in five MENA women , often better educated , participate in the formal workforce. This untapped potential represents a significant labor resource, one that firms and cities cannot afford to leave on the sidelines.

Are MENA's cities ready to support this economic transformation? Across the region, cities are becoming the front line of the jobs agenda. Whether they can generate productive, inclusive, and resilient growth will shape economic opportunities for millions of people. A new World Bank report, Cities that Work: Realizing the Jobs Potential of MENA's Cities, looks at the performance of 9000 cities world-wide to examine why some cities are performing better than others and what governments can do to help cities become stronger engines of jobs and growth.

> "Across the region, cities are becoming the front line of the jobs agenda"

When Agglomeration Is Not Enough

A country's enabling infrastructure and skills, regulatory environment and ability to crowd in financial capital are all critical to ensuring more and better jobs. But where this transformation happens also matters. Cities create jobs and raise productivity by concentrating talent, ideas, businesses and markets in one place.

How well a city does this depends in part on its own individual characteristics – and its own performance.

Indeed, our study found 25% of the variation in MENA cities' economic performance is attributable to local factors, not national ones. In other words, how well each city manages to meet the needs of its firms matters.

The analysis also found that some MENA cities perform close or at global best-in-class benchmarks, notably in the GCC countries. Yet many of them are not fully capturing the benefits from bringing together workers and firms; and are generating less economic output per worker than other cities of comparable size. Unsurprisingly, the situation is often particularly challenging for cities in conflict-affected countries.

A Four-Pillar Framework for Action

Four priorities stand out for cities seeking to become stronger engines of jobs and growth.

- **Productive density:** In MENA cities, infrastructure levels frequently fail to match built densities. The result is what the report calls "sterile agglomerations": economic neighborhoods where unreliable electricity, inadequate transport, and poor digital connectivity cancel out the potential benefits of concentration.

MENA countries can no longer assume that urban expansion alone will generate jobs. What matters is whether firms and workers from across a given city can seamlessly interact and access the services they need. Producing at-scale serviced land for firms in well situated and desirable locations , including historic centers , will be critical. Without these foundations, density generates congestion rather than opportunity.

- **Market connectivity:** Many MENA cities have the potential to further capitalize on their connector role at the cross-roads of major EU, Asia and Sub-Saharan African market, by expanding their tradable sectors and export-orientated goods and services. The foundational market infrastructure is already in place: an array of deep seaports , including three of the world's best-performing, three major international air hubs, and extensive inland transport networks.

Yet these assets alone are not sufficient to attract investors. While coastal and border cities perform better than their inland peers, together they can build a more vibrant and complementary ecosystem of cities, weaving together different people and markets through better connected and integrated economic zones, transport systems, housing, and labor markets.

- **Attractiveness to investment and talent:** Larger private firms and foreign-owned enterprises can drive productivity and job growth, with meaningful spillover effects on smaller and informal businesses. Yet MENA has far fewer of these high-productivity firms than comparable regions.

Attracting those firms must be a central urban priority , which requires enhancing urban livability to attract both skilled and lower-wage workers. This is particularly relevant in MENA, where labor mobility between cities remains low. Concrete measures include managing urban heat and air quality, providing affordable – and rental – housing, while safe and reliable public transport and accessible childcare contribute to increasing female labor force participation. Those should be combined with targeted business incentives. Often treated as secondary social concerns, those matters are in fact central to economic competitiveness and productivity.

- **Public-private coalitions:** Tailoring these policy pillars to individual city economic trajectories

requires shifting away from top-down, state-led development toward more collaborative models that leverage private sector expertise, financing, and local market intelligence. While public institutions retain the full spectrum of urban regulatory and service functions in MENA, economic activity is inherently private. Stronger partnerships between governments, investors, and local businesses and communities will be essential to unlocking the next generation of urban jobs.

One Size Does Not Fit All

Large metropolitan areas such as Cairo, Riyadh, and Casablanca face a different set of urban challenges , and opportunities , than small and medium-sized cities. A one-size-fits-all approach to urban development will not work across the region. City-level strategies must therefore be tailored to city type.

For primary cities seeking to deepen economic diversification, the priority is managing congestion in the face of their growing footprint and competing globally for talent and foreign direct investment.

For smaller cities, the agenda centers on service reliability, niche specialization based on local assets (such as tourism, agro-processing, and trade), and digital connectivity to compensate for limited scale. Smaller cities have an opportunity to play a larger economic role if they are well connected to national and regional markets.

Toward More and Better Jobs

MENA's cities hold genuine promise. They are strategically located to connect with major markets, home to young, increasingly educated populations, rich cultural assets, and growing private sectors. MENA's ability to create more and better jobs will increasingly depend on whether its cities can translate these advantages into productive and inclusive economic growth.

The challenge is to create the conditions , the infrastructure, the governance, the labor , in which that promise can be realized. Encouragingly, successful examples are already emerging across the region. Cities that Work: Realizing the Jobs Potential of MENA's Cities offers both the evidence base and the roadmap to help countries build on those experiences and strengthen the role of cities as engines of jobs and opportunity.

External Article

REBUILDING OPPORTUNITY: URBAN REGENERATION FOR JOB CREATION IN MENA CITIES



Judy Baker

Currently serving as faculty at Georgetown University and Advisor to several international organizations, including the World Bank, Cities Alliance and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy's Program in Latin America. With a 33-year tenure at the World Bank, she has held key leadership roles, including Global Lead for urban development and Lead Economist. She has contributed to policy, research, and project management in more than 30 countries, focusing on sustainable urbanization, affordable housing, local governance, and economic development. She has written six books and numerous country and regional reports for the World Bank. She has also been an invited speaker at many international events and serves as a Mentor in the Cities Forum Mentorship Program.

Cities provide enormous opportunities for economic growth and job creation. They attract a wide range of people seeking better opportunities, better living conditions, and new beginnings. The density that brings people together enables productive interactions among firms and workers, drives innovation, and reduces costs. The evidence is clear: more than 80 percent of global GDP is generated in cities.

Cities, however, do not automatically create good jobs. Without local economic development policies, coordinated urban planning, and strong local governance, urbanization can bring congestion, informality, housing shortages, inequality, and unemployment, particularly for youth. To spur economic development and job creation, cities need policies and business regulations that attract the private sector, alongside investments in public infrastructure, transport, basic services, public spaces, and people.

Beyond the attraction of sprawling new developments, industries, and giga projects, urban regeneration holds significant potential for MENA's cities. Fading downtowns, abandoned industrial sites, and neglected land are missed opportunities and can be a drain on a city's economy. Investing in urban regeneration can act as a catalyst, providing new opportunities for generating private sector investment, creating new living spaces, and generating jobs in neglected areas , which in turn support local businesses and unlock further development. Urban

regeneration plays an important role in creating innovation districts, business hubs, mixed-use neighborhoods, and startup ecosystems. Revitalizing historic urban centers can create vibrant cultural and heritage destinations, directly generating demand for workers in tourism.

A few global precedents illustrate the scale of what's possible:

- Battersea Power Station in London transformed a 42-acre former industrial site along the River Thames into a vibrant, mixed-use riverside neighborhood with jobs across retail, hospitality, leisure, and office spaces. The Battersea Academy for Skills and Employment was established to help match local residents and job-seekers with career opportunities.
- The High Line in New York transformed a long-abandoned historic freight rail-line into an elevated linear park and greenway that attracts millions of annual visitors. It has stimulated billions of dollars of adjacent private real-estate investment and significant growth in hospitality, retail, cultural, and office employment in surrounding neighborhoods.

"Urban regeneration is an important tool for job creation in MENA's cities, with many potential benefits"

- The Cheonggyecheon Restoration in Seoul converted a congested elevated highway to uncover and restore a historic stream buried in concrete for decades, creating a pedestrian-friendly public recreation space and cultural hub, as well as an advanced flood control system. Now one of Seoul's top tourist attractions, the project catalyzed a 3.5% increase in the number of active businesses in the corridor, double the rate seen in the rest of downtown Seoul.

These projects had both direct and indirect impacts on job creation: first through employment in construction phases, supplier networks, and service sectors, and eventually through tourism, housing, retail, office, and commercial space. Partnering with universities can help create long-term employment by training skilled workers, attracting research funding, incubating startups, and generating innovation. Increased tax revenues from such economic development can further finance urban development needs across the city, spurring additional growth and opportunity for residents.

MENA is beginning to chart its own course. Examples such as Saudi Arabia's Diriyah Gate, Bahrain's Pearling Trail, and Qatar's Msheireb Downtown Doha have linked physical regeneration to economic diversification, cultural identity, and deliberate workforce development to foster job creation. Diriyah is targeting 180,000 new jobs. A recently launched job creation program partners with universities and national programs to target students and recent graduates, bridging the skills gap and building a well-prepared local workforce for the tourism assets and offerings under development.

Urban regeneration is an important tool for job creation in MENA's cities, with many potential benefits. When anchored in cultural heritage, mixed-use development, and economic diversification, it can generate employment across a wide spectrum of sectors. Beyond direct employment, the economic ripple effects benefit local construction firms, artisan producers, hospitality training programs, and cultural institutions, positioning regenerated districts as economic engines for their broader cities.

Realizing these benefits requires careful planning with a range of stakeholders. Particular attention must be paid to ensuring that urban regeneration is structured to avoid displacement, preserve neighborhood identity, and provide equitable access to services and infrastructure so that the economic gains benefit existing communities, not just new arrivals.

External Article

AL-RASHEED STREET: A MODEL FOR CITY-LED JOB CREATION



Dr. Hayder Al-Baghdadi

An Iraqi academic and structural consultant specializing in civil and structural engineering. He holds bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees from the University of Baghdad and has served as a professor in the Civil Engineering Department since 2002. He has held several academic and administrative roles, including Acting Head of Department and Department Coordinator. His expertise includes the design, review, and analysis of concrete and steel structures, as well as the supervision of major infrastructure and construction projects in Iraq. He has also contributed as a consultant to numerous national and international projects and is a member of professional engineering associations, including the Iraqi Union of Engineers and the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Urban development projects should be evaluated not only by improvements to streets, sidewalks, lighting, and building facades, but also by their ability to generate sustainable economic activity and employment opportunities. Cities are dynamic systems of production, services, culture, and exchange, making investment in urban infrastructure a powerful tool for job creation when approached as both an economic and social endeavor.

Al-Rasheed Street in Baghdad is a notable example of this type of urban intervention. Established in 1910 during the tenure of Ottoman Governor Khalil Pasha and renamed Al-Rashid Street in 1936, it became one of Baghdad's most important commercial and cultural corridors. Throughout its history, the street has functioned not only as a transportation corridor but also as a vibrant urban space that hosts markets, shops, cafés, heritage buildings, and much of the city's social and cultural life. Like many historic centers across Arab cities, Al-Rasheed Street has experienced urban deterioration and economic decline because of neglect, inadequate maintenance, the loss of functionality in some buildings, and the poor quality of public spaces. The rehabilitation of the section between Al-Maidan Square and Al-Rusafi Square therefore represents more than a physical upgrade of part of the street; it is an effort to revive an urban core with deep economic and cultural significance. The project's vision was to restore the historic identity of Al-Rasheed Street, strengthen the image of historic Baghdad, and create a more pedestrian-friendly environment that reconnects residents with the street while linking heritage preservation to local economic activity. This objective extended beyond facade improvements and restoration of buildings to the revitalization of the surrounding urban, social, and economic fabric.

The project included a comprehensive package of urban activities, construction works, and service interventions. Dozens of buildings were rehabilitated, including buildings of high and moderate heritage value, as well as buildings not officially classified as heritage structures., while the historic Al-Zahawi Café building was also fully restored, both internally and externally, in recognition of its architectural significance and cultural place in Baghdad's collective memory. Structural rehabilitation works were carried out on hundreds of columns using techniques tailored to the condition of each element, reflecting the importance of addressing old buildings through accurate technical assessment rather than applying uniform solutions.

The project extended beyond façade improvements and visible enhancements to include the upgrading of infrastructure and services. Works involved the use of large quantities of concrete in the carriageway and arcades, the installation of hundreds of linear meters of drainage channels and sewage pipes, and the construction of several stormwater drains connected to main inspection chambers. Extensive sections of the street and arcades were paved with basalt stone, hundreds of billboards were installed, and various urban landscape elements were upgraded.

These works should be viewed not merely as construction outputs, but as indicators of the extensive employment and economic activity that a single urban project can generate. The implementation phase creates direct job opportunities in design, surveying, inspection, supervision, construction, paving, drainage, lighting, façade works, metal fabrication, carpentry, quality control, and site management. It also supports indirect employment in material supply, transportation, component manufacturing, stone processing, equipment provision, and logistics.

The project's greatest impact, however, lies in its potential to support long-term employment after completion. Improved public spaces, services, safety, and building facades can attract visitors, businesses, and investment, encouraging the return of commercial activities, revitalizing cafes and restaurants, supporting small enterprises, and creating jobs in maintenance, cleaning, security, administration, tourism, and cultural activities.

General field surveys suggest positive trends, with business owners, visitors, and residents reporting improved attractiveness, higher satisfaction levels, expectations of increased commercial activity, and growing interest in cultural, tourism, and service-related activities. At the same time, these findings highlight the importance of ongoing management and operation to ensure that urban rehabilitation translates into lasting employment opportunities.

" When rehabilitation projects are designed to integrate heritage, infrastructure, services, and local investment, they become more than urban development initiatives; they become catalysts for employment generation and the reinforcement of urban identity"

From this perspective, the experience of Al-Rasheed Street offers an important lesson for Arab cities: historic centers require more than physical rehabilitation; they must also be reintegrated into the contemporary urban economy. Infrastructure projects alone do not automatically create vibrant economic activity. The key lies in what follows implementation—how spaces are managed, activities are organized, infrastructure is maintained, and rehabilitation efforts are linked to local employment policies that support small businesses and help restore confidence in the area.

When rehabilitation projects are designed to integrate heritage, infrastructure, services, and local investment, they become more than urban development initiatives; they become tools for generating employment opportunities and strengthening the city's identity. In this sense, the redevelopment of Al-Rasheed Street demonstrates how cities can contribute to job creation when projects evolve from standalone construction efforts into a comprehensive vision that connects place, people, and the local economy.

TOOLKITS ON JOBS AND CITIES

Creating productive, inclusive, and sustainable employment has become one of the most urgent urban challenges in the Arab region. As cities grow and economies evolve, widening spatial mismatches between where people live and where jobs are located, high youth unemployment, low women's labor force participation, the persistence of large informal economies, and unequal access to economic opportunity are deepening urban inequalities. Municipalities and local actors therefore need practical tools and diverse resources to respond through stronger local economic development strategies, improved connectivity between workers and workplaces, inclusive planning for informal and vulnerable workers, and enabling environments that attract investment while ensuring decent employment outcomes.

To facilitate knowledge sharing on this subject, this issue of Mudununa presents a selection of toolkits developed by international organizations that address core dimensions of the relationship between cities and jobs. These resources are designed to help municipalities diagnose local employment challenges, design place-based strategies for job creation, and implement coordinated interventions that link urban planning, mobility, skills development, and governance to expand access to productive and inclusive economic opportunities for all urban residents.

1

Toolkit 1:
Competitive Cities for Jobs and Growth: What, Who, and How

2

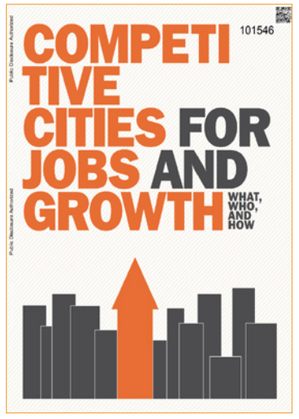
Toolkit 2:
OECD Local Employment and Economic Development (LEED) Programme

3

Toolkit 3:
Inclusive Growth for Cities: A Guide to Diagnose Challenges and Opportunities in Economic Development

4

Toolkit 4:
Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for All, Handbook on Employment Promotion in Development Cooperation



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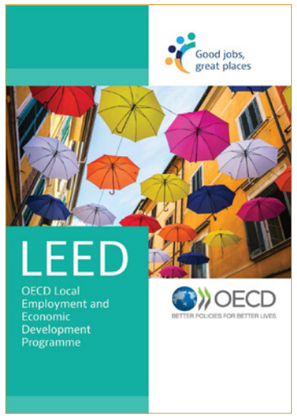
https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/769741468185642990/pdf/101714-REPLACEMENT.pdf

Toolkit 1:
Competitive Cities for Jobs and Growth: What, Who, and How

A practical diagnostic for city leaders working on local economic development, Competitive Cities for Jobs and Growth draws on a comparative analysis of 750 cities worldwide and six in-depth case studies of cities that outperformed their national economies: Buca-ramanga (Colombia), Coimbatore (India), Kigali (Rwanda), Gaziantep (Türkiye), Changsha (China), and Tangier (Morocco). It is a widely used reference for translating evidence on cities, firms, and jobs into operational guidance for secondary and intermediate cities. The toolkit is designed for direct use by city managers and their teams, helping them diagnose local conditions and design interventions around three questions:

- What to act on: four policy levers: (i) institutions and regulations; (ii) infrastructure and land; (iii) skills and innovation; and (iv) enterprise support and finance.
- Who to act with: the "city wedge" maps which actors hold the levers, surfaces coordina-tion gaps, and clarifies where the city has agency versus must broker action.
- How to deliver: practical lessons on strategy, budget alignment, coalitions, and imple-mentation capacity.

Six case studies and an Appendices volume provide data, sector analyses, and institu-tional mapping; for Arab cities, Gaziantep and Tangier are directly comparable.



OECD, ©2023

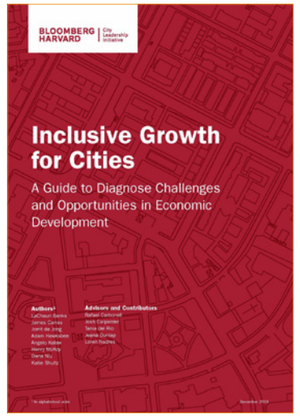
https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/about/programmes/cfe/local-employment-and-economic-development/LEED-Brochure.pdf

Toolkit 2:
OECD Local Employment and Economic Development (LEED) Programme

This OECD programme provides practical guidance to help cities and regions create more and better jobs through stronger local economic development. Rather than treating employment as a national-level issue only, LEED supports place-based solutions that respond to how labour markets function in urban areas, where jobs are located, how people access them, and which groups remain excluded.

The programme focuses on the links between urban development and employment outcomes: the role of local government in shaping productive land use, supporting SMEs and entrepreneurship, improving access to jobs through mobility systems, and aligning skills systems with local demand. It also highlights the importance of coordinated action across institutions, municipalities, economic development agencies, employers, and training providers, so that job strategies move beyond isolated projects and become implementable, citywide programmes.

Structurally, LEED is designed as an applied “how-to” resource for local actors. It combines policy tools, implementation guidance, and peer learning to help cities diagnose local employment challenges and spatial mismatches, set priorities for inclusive job creation, and strengthen delivery mechanisms and partnerships to achieve measurable results over time.



Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative (BHCLI), ©2024

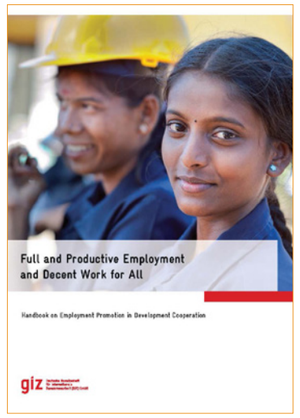
https://cityleadership.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/bhcli-inclusive-growth-for-cities-guide.pdf

Toolkit 3:
Inclusive Growth for Cities: A Guide to Diagnose Challenges and Opportunities in Economic Development

Developed by the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative, this guide equips city leaders and municipal staff with diagnostic tools to translate a commitment to inclusive economic growth into concrete, data-informed action. Rather than prescribing a single model, it enables each city to assess its own conditions and design strategies that fit its unique context.

At its core is a "Five Lenses Framework" that examines whether a local economy is Shared (opportunity distributed across demographics), Accessible (residents can reach capital and infrastructure), Skilled (workforce training matches employer demand), Dynamic (high entrepreneurship and participation), and Connected (cross-sector collaboration between government, businesses, and civil society). Together, these lenses offer a structured diagnostic for identifying where a city's economic ecosystem is inclusive and where targeted interventions are needed.

The guide leads practitioners through three steps: an organizational readiness self-assessment, a data-driven diagnostic with indicators and benchmarking questions across the five lenses, and a framework for setting goals, matching solutions, and tracking progress through public dashboardsmoving teams from diagnosis to implementation.



GIZ / BMZ (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) ©2016

https://www.bmz-digital.global/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Handbook-on-Employment-Promotion-in-Development-Cooperation.pdf

Toolkit 4:
Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for All, Handbook on Employment Promotion in Development Cooperation

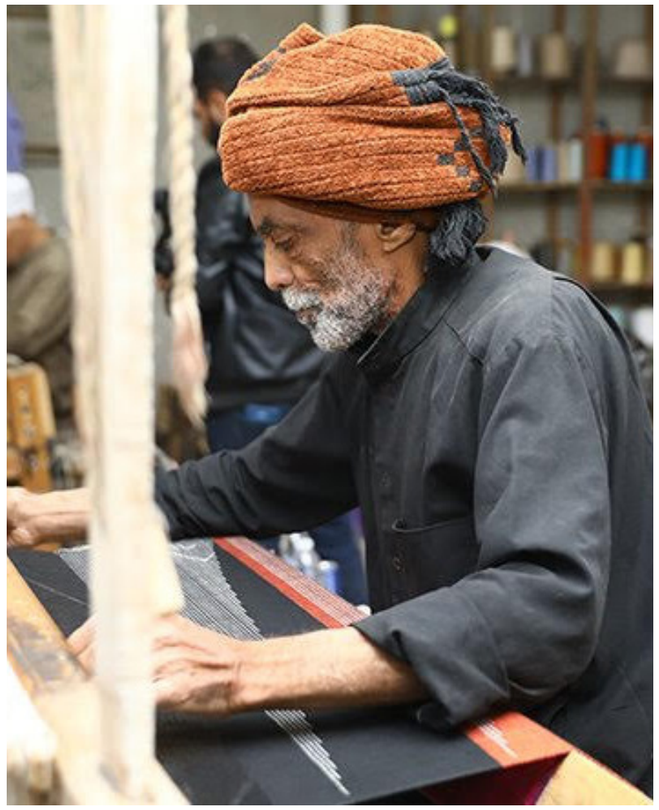
This modular handbook draws on decades of field experience to address a central challenge for cities in the developing world: urban economic growth does not automatically translate into more or better jobs without deliberate, targeted intervention.

The handbook is organized into three sections. The first sets out the empirical foundations, the scale of unemployment and underemployment, how urban labour markets function, and the links between growth, employment, and poverty. The second turns to practice, covering labour market analysis, integrated employment promotion strategies, private-sector development for job creation, public works programmes, and the role of skills and training institutions. The third tackles cross-cutting challenges relevant to Arab cities: informal employment, youth unemployment, gender inequality, migration, green jobs, and employment in contexts of conflict and fragility.

Each module is self-contained, allowing practitioners and policy makers to consult the handbook topic by topic. By combining practical project examples with adaptable analytical tools, it is a useful reference for designing local employment strategies that reflect the realities of urban labour markets across the Arab region.

CITIES IN ACTION

Project 1



Empowering Upper Egypt: Supporting Entrepreneurs and Creating Jobs, Qena, Egypt
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Local governance and the business environment in cities
Cases from Riyadh, and Qena

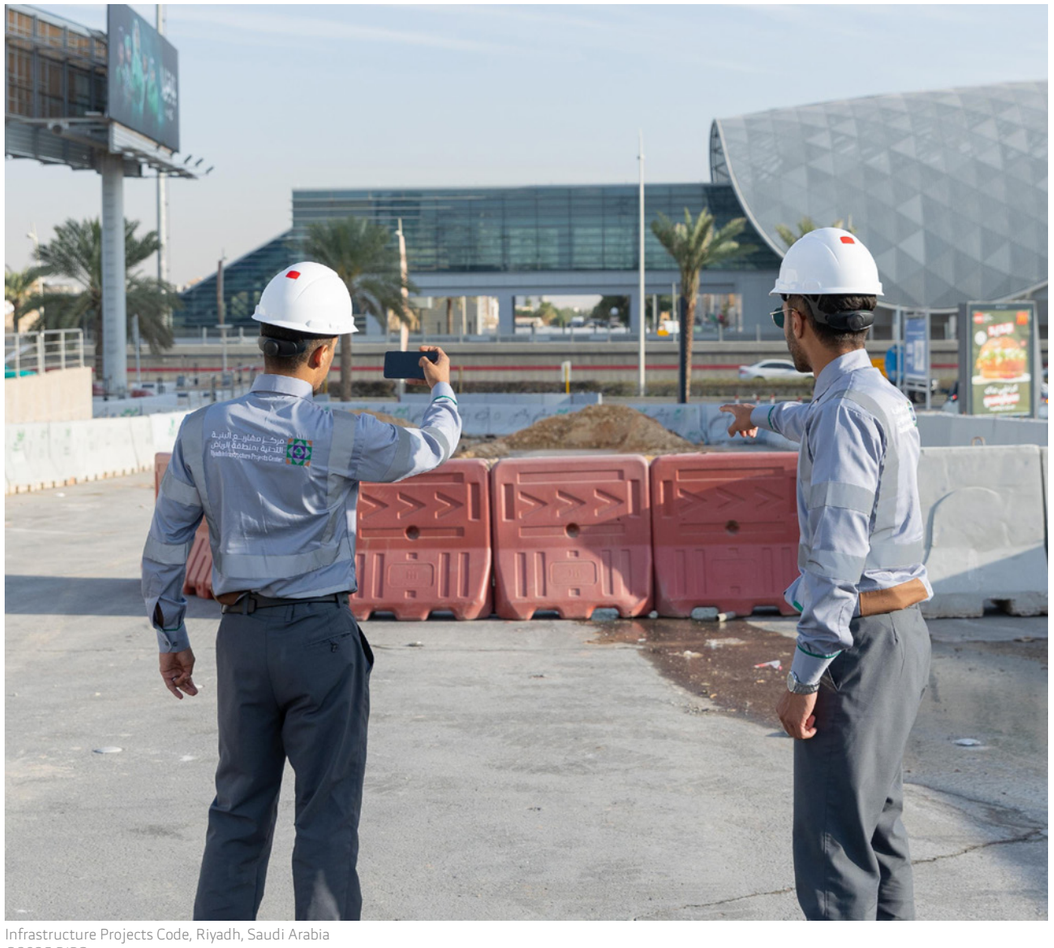
A city's business environment is shaped not only by national laws, but by how well local institutions manage land, infrastructure, permits, and services. Where these functions are fragmented, firms face delays, uncertainty, and higher operating costs; where they work well, cities become more predictable places to invest, build, and create jobs. Riyadh in Saudi Arabia and Qena in Egypt offer two distinct examples from the Arab region of how local governance affects these conditions, whether through stronger coordination of infrastructure delivery or more capable local government systems for service provision and private sector engagement.

Riyadh's rapid development has placed sustained demands on the regulatory and coordination interfaces between service agencies (including water, sewage, energy, telecommunications, and roads) and the developers and contractors operating in the region. Fragmentation across these interfaces affects project delivery costs, urban quality, and the predictability that firms require to plan and invest. The Riyadh Infrastructure Projects Center (RIPC), chaired by the Mayor of the Riyadh Region, was established to improve coordination across agencies and create a clearer interface not only with developers, contractors, and service providers, but also with the wider public. In practice, it serves as a platform for aligning infrastructure works across the city and for improving how those works are planned, sequenced, and communicated.

This has helped create a more coherent operating environment for infrastructure delivery in Riyadh through shared standards, stronger coordination across agencies, better monitoring, and clearer public interfaces. Its GIS-enabled systems support the mapping of works, the identification of conflicts, and more orderly planning and execution, while public-facing channels and guidance make requirements more transparent for firms and residents. RIPC processed more than195,000 permit applications in 2025, and conducted more than 290,000 supervisory visits during project implementation. The entity also reported a reduction in average implementation period from 34 days to 26 days in 2025, even in the face of significantly increasing project numbers, this is largely attributed to improved and effective coordination among various partners and stakeholders.

The Upper Egypt Local Development program, centered around Qena, shows the business environment from a different angle. Here, the issue is less the coordination of large metropolitan infrastructure systems than the day-to-day capacity of local government to provide firms with reliable services, process permits efficiently, and plan investments in ways that respond to local economic needs. For businesses, those local administrative conditions shape how easy it is to start, expand, and operate. In this context, the Upper Egypt Local Development Program (UELDP) promotes local economic development by enabling local businesses to grow while strengthening the capacity of local government to deliver high-quality infrastructure and services.

In Qena, progress has been driven not by a single reform, but by systematic improvements in core local government functions. Investment planning, procurement, asset management, and service delivery have become more structured and performance-oriented. At the same time, local institutions have introduced more formal mechanisms to incorporate private sector feedback into planning decisions. This has anchored a more responsive model of local development, where public investments are better aligned with the needs of firms and local communities.



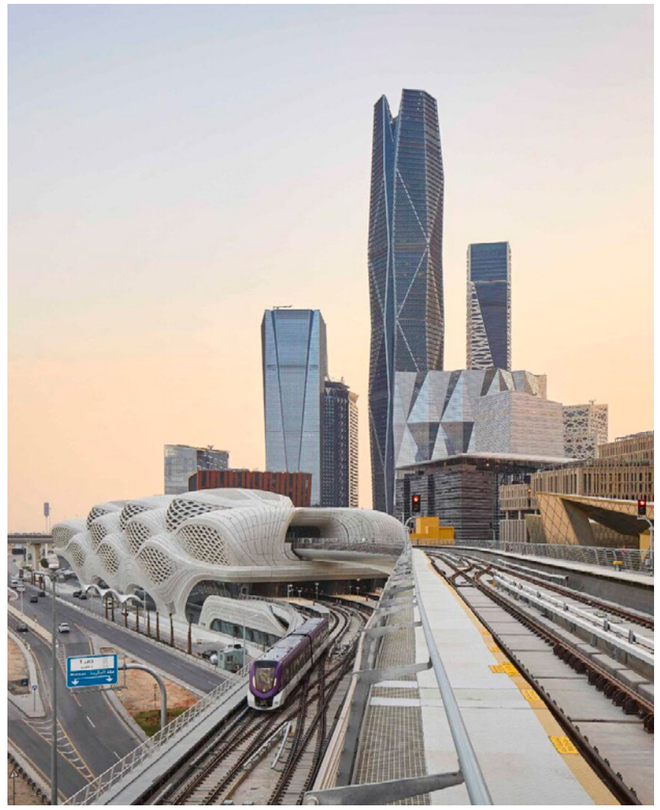
Infrastructure Projects Code, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
©2025 RIPC

These institutional changes are reflected in the everyday experience of businesses. Administrative procedures have become simpler and increasingly digital, including construction permitting, shop licensing, and services provided through One-Stop Shops and Citizen Service Centers. These platforms enable electronic permit issuance and real-time tracking, improving transparency, reducing processing times, and making interactions with government more predictable.

The results are visible not only in individual firm-level interactions but also on a larger scale. Across the UELDP (covering Qena, Sohag, Assiut, and Minya) with a budget of approximately USD 500 million, over 5,130 infrastructure and service projects have been completed, reaching 8.2 million beneficiaries across cities, villages, and rural communities, while improving conditions for more than 79,000 businesses and creating approximately 72,000 jobs.

Riyadh and Qena differ in scale, institutional setting, and reform trajectory, but both show that the business environment in cities is shaped as much by the quality of local governance as by formal regulation. In Riyadh, the issue is the coordination of infrastructure delivery in a rapidly growing metropolitan economy; in Qena, it is the capacity of local government to plan, invest, and provide services in ways that are more responsive to firms and residents. In both cases, stronger institutions, better data, and clearer public interfaces make local economies easier to navigate and more predictable for investment.

Project 2



King Abdullah Financial District Metro Station, riyadh, saudi arabia
©2024 Zaha Hadid Architects

Pathways for Connecting People to Jobs
Cases from Amman, Casablanca, and Riyadh

As cities across the Arab region continue to urbanize, persistent underinvestment in public transport and limited integration with land use planning are driving reliance on private cars. The consequences are increasingly visible: longer commute times, worsening congestion and air pollution, and diminished access to jobs. In Gulf cities, private transport constitutes 91 percent of all travel , while drivers in the UAE spent 35 hours lost in congestion in 2024 .

This model not only places growing strain on the economy but also deepens inequities, restricting access to jobs for women and lower-income groups. In Amman, up to 60% of non-working women consider mobility as a key reason for not seeking work . The experiences of Amman, Casablanca, and Riyadh highlight different efforts to shift course.

In Amman, only 18% of jobs are reachable within 60 minutes by transit and walking . Inequalities are stark: low-income populations of eastern neighborhoods face commutes up to twice as long as those in wealthier areas.

The Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system opened 2021, extended to Zarqa in 2024, improves mobility and accessibility. Travel times from the terminus areas decreased by up to 22%, lowering commuting costs, improving access to jobs for workers, while output increased by 4.4–5% along the corridor .

Similarly in Casablanca, the tramway network launched in 2012 has significantly enhanced connectivity between peripheral areas and the city center, highly needed in the over-4-million-inhabitant metropole. Daily ridership reached about 350,000 passengers per day in 2026.

Women are among the biggest beneficiaries, making up roughly half of all users. Upgrades to streets and public lighting around stations have made neighborhoods safer, greener, and more attractive for both residents, workers, and businesses, especially women.

An ambitious national program in Morocco – in the largest agglomerations including Casablanca – goes beyond the peri urban-center logic to maximize the benefits of mass transit systems. What makes the program compelling is not just the scale, but the strategic precision with which BRT corridors are planned. They are deliberately routed through the most job-dense zones. As an exemple in Agadir, employment density within the proposed BRT catchment area is 74 times higher than the rest of the city. On average, 34% of all employment falls within 800 meters of a station. The consequence for commuters is significant. Average travel times to job hotspots is expected to be cut by 47%.

Under Vision 2030, Riyadh has embarked on a similar journey to connect workers to jobs, with a tweak. While in Morocco brings the urban transport system to the jobs, in Riyadh, the approach is to bring the jobs near the transport corridor with integrated, transit-oriented development.

At the core of this strategy is the Riyadh Metro, a 176-kilometer, six-line network, combined with targeted urban operations, including the flagship King Abdullah Financial District (KAFD). KAFD was designed around its metro access as a high-density, mixed-use district. It integrates residential, commercial, and leisure functions within a compact, walkable environment.

The economic effects are already visible. A clear sign is the increasing demand for real estate near transit nodes. In Al Yarmuk, villa prices jumped by 78% between 2023 and 2025, compared to 22% in surrounding areas, while Tuwaiq and Al Malqa also experienced a rise, although moderate .

The experiences of Amman, Casablanca, and Riyadh illustrate multiple pathways to improving mobility and access to jobs. A consistent lesson emerges: transport investments are critical to expanding labor markets, and alignment with strategic land use necessary to fully unlock their potential. As congestion and accessibility challenges intensify, the cost of inaction will continue to rise. Cities that succeed will be those that position mobility not as a standalone sector, but as a central driver of productivity.



Public transport bus stop in Casablanca, Morocco
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AMMAN BRT, Jordan
©2026 Lama Bou Mjahed

Project 3



Workers restoring a blast-damaged heritage building, Beirut, Lebanon
©2021 The New Arab

Urban Regeneration as an Engine for Jobs and Local Economies
Cases from Beirut, Aleppo, and Tangier

The connection between occupations and urban form is becoming more significant in Arab cities. Cities' land organization, neighborhood restoration, public space connectivity, and repurposing of old or underutilized urban assets all influence employment, alongside industrial policies and large investment packages. When regeneration is connected to housing, mobility, public space, and small enterprises, mixed-use districts, historic markets, creative neighborhoods, and waterfronts can serve as platforms for local economic revival. This implies that urban regeneration for municipalities involves more than just physical improvements. Additionally, it serves as a tool to safeguard livelihoods, draw in investment, and reintroduce locals to economic opportunities.

Beirut's experience following the 2020 port explosion demonstrates how neighborhood recovery can be planned with people and livelihoods in mind. The Beirut Housing Rehabilitation and Cultural and Creative Industries Recovery project, or BERYT, was created to support cultural and creative actors in the districts most impacted by the explosion while also rehabilitating severely damaged residential buildings of heritage importance. UNESCO is involved in the cultural and creative industries component of the

project, which is carried out by UN-Habitat and funded by the Lebanon Financing Facility. Its logic is important for the Jobs and Cities agenda because it treats housing, heritage, and the creative economy as connected urban systems rather than separate sectors. By helping families return to damaged heritage buildings and providing grants to creative and cultural practitioners, BERYT links physical rehabilitation with socio-economic recovery.

This is particularly true in Beirut's ancient neighborhoods, where local services, restaurants, galleries, workshops, tiny studios, and cultural production are all intricately woven into the city's fabric. The effects of destroyed buildings and displaced individuals extend beyond the loss of a place to live; they can upset entire street-level economies. This knowledge is reflected in the project's emphasis on Rmeil, Medawar, and Achrafieh. The UN claims that the project helped restore 12 residential structures in these districts on the city's heritage list, enabling families to relocate while preserving the city's architectural uniqueness. The lesson for urban actors and governments is that, if it preserves local companies, neighborhoods, and cultural networks, post-crisis rehabilitation can turn into a strategy for protecting jobs. Rather than replacing historic neighborhoods with isolated real estate projects, Beirut's case demonstrates the value of restoring the everyday urban ecosystem that supports creative and service-based jobs.

Aleppo's Old Souk shows a similar connection between employment, commerce, and heritage. The souk was a thriving commercial hub of merchants, artisans, porters, wholesalers, and small family enterprises before the war, as well as a historic site. Therefore, its demolition was a serious blow to local livelihoods and to culture. In partnership with UNESCO, the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, the Governorate, Aleppo City Council, and the Syrian Trust for Development, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture began rehabilitating Souk al-Saqatiyya in late 2018 as a pilot project for the larger rehabilitation of Aleppo's central souk.

The importance of this project lies in its practical economic objective: restoring the conditions for commerce to return. According to AKDN, since 2018, it has renovated more than 500 meters of passageways spanning 5,480 square meters, restored eight significant portions of Aleppo's Old Souk, and returned 277 stores to their owners. The restoration of stone facades, domes, and infrastructural networks, including water, power, telecommunications, and sewage, was among the projects, according to further documents. Because markets cannot operate only through façade renovation, these aspects are crucial. For merchants and customers to return, stores must have utilities, accessible passageways, safety, and confidence. In this way, the souk's renovation becomes a form of regional economic infrastructure. It supports the reactivation of trade, protects traditional skills, and helps restore a place-based employment system severely disrupted by conflict.

Tangier's regeneration strategy through port-city transformation is distinct yet complementary. After



Traditional wood carving demonstration, Beirut, Lebanon
©2024 Kuwait Times



Restoration works in historic Souq al-Hibal, Aleppo Syria
©2021 AFP/Getty Images

industrial and freight operations were moved to Tangier Med between 2006 and 2010, the Tangier City Port Redevelopment project transformed the city's former cargo port into a mixed-use waterfront with cruise and yachting amenities. This change made it possible to reestablish the old port as a destination for tourism, recreation, culture, services, and investment, and to reunite the historic city with its waterfront. The project's potential to transform the waterfront from a closed logistical function to a more diverse urban economy is what makes it significant for employment.

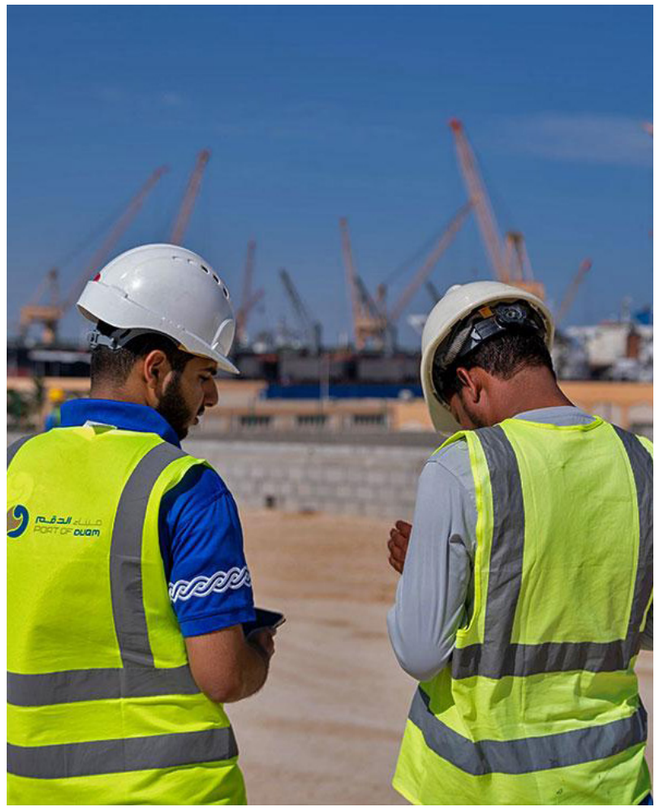
The redevelopment also reflects the broader transformation of Tangier into a regional economic hub. The waterfront project intends to establish Tangier as a cruise and yachting tourism destination by connecting the city and the sea. According to other project details, the reconversion will create a new mixed-use zone rather than a single-purpose port facility by incorporating homes, offices, a conference center, hotels, and a shopping complex. The municipality's challenge is to ensure this change doesn't turn into a remote waterfront community. The degree to which it is connected to the medina, public transportation, local businesses, tourism operators, cultural events, and neighboring neighborhoods determines its employment value. The project has the potential to generate jobs in a variety of industries, including construction, hospitality, maintenance, retail, events, cultural services, and small urban enterprises, if it is administered inclusively.

Together, Beirut, Aleppo, and Tangier show how urban renewal can facilitate job development when it is consistent with the city's economic logic and current identity. Beirut serves as an example of how neighborhood economies and creative livelihoods can be preserved through post-crisis housing renovation. Aleppo demonstrates how rehabilitating old market infrastructure can help employ traders and artisans. Tangier serves as an example of how port rehabilitation can create new avenues for mixed-use urban investment, tourism, and services. The common lesson is obvious: cities generate jobs by carefully revitalizing the metropolitan areas where economic activity currently takes place, in addition to growing outward or drawing big investors. This makes regeneration a key tool for local economic development in Arab municipalities, particularly when it is connected to public access, mixed-use zoning, heritage, and inclusive governance.



Port rehabilitation works as part of urban and economic recovery efforts, Tangier, Morocco
©2024 Facebook

Project 4



Doha, Qatar
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Productive Zones and Urban Employment
Cases from KAEC, Duqm, and Aqaba

The establishment of productive zones is one of the best illustrations of how urban development may directly impact employment. In addition to facilitating domestic trade, ports, special economic zones, industrial platforms, and logistical corridors alter the economic function of cities. When properly designed, they boost exports, draw in investment, generate jobs, and link regional economies to global value chains. The crucial question for Arab cities is whether these zones can serve as catalysts for inclusive urban growth by connecting enterprises, employees, housing, training facilities, and municipal services to a broader economic ecosystem.

King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC), a notable manufacturing and logistics-focused industrial metropolis within Saudi Arabia's diversification program, is located near Rabigh on the Red Sea coast. Commercial services, residential areas, port access, industrial property, and logistical infrastructure are all incorporated into KAEC, an integrated urban-economic framework. Logistics, light manufacturing, consumer goods, medicines, the automotive industry, and ICT are all supported by this Special Economic Zone. It has direct access to King Abdullah Port and KAEC's Industrial Valley and is overseen by the Economic Cities and Special Zones Authority.

KAEC's capacity to integrate city-building and industrial growth is what gives it employment value. KAEC is designed as an economic city where companies, employees, residents, and service providers operate on a common urban platform, rather than in a traditional industrial park. King Abdullah Port creates

jobs in industries and logistics as well as transportation, customs, maintenance, retail, hospitality, construction, and local supply chains, strengthening its position as a gateway between Saudi Arabia, the Red Sea region, and international markets. KAEC is aligned with Saudi Vision 2030, which calls for the use of special economic zones to attract private capital and generate jobs outside traditional industries.

KAEC also highlights a crucial planning issue. Large-scale zones have the potential to attract investors and create jobs. Still, their broader urban influence depends on their connections to housing, transportation, training programs, labor markets, and surrounding neighborhoods. Job creation must be linked to opportunities for SMEs to participate in supply chains, affordable mobility, access for women and youth, and skill development so that KAEC can serve as an inclusive employment platform. Productive zones must integrate into the city's long-term employment landscape rather than functioning as isolated enclaves.

A different type is being developed near Duqm, on the southeast coast of Oman. The 2,000-square-kilometer Special Economic Zone in Duqm was created by Royal Decree in 2011 and unifies residential neighborhoods, dry-dock facilities, industrial property, energy infrastructure, and a deep-water port under a single regulatory authority. It provides a long-term foundation for industrial, energy-related firms, logistics, and the maritime sector in line with Oman's Vision 2040. Its advantageous location on the Arabian Sea, beyond the Strait of Hormuz, puts it in a position to foster economic activity outside the capital and to provide an alternative hub for urban-industrial growth.

Duqm represents an intentional state-led effort to establish a new urban-economic hub in a less developed coastal area. Logistics, port services, ship repair, refinery, green hydrogen, steel, building, and supporting services are among the industries where it can create jobs. But the right order is crucial: housing, public services, workforce development, and livability at the municipal level must all increase concurrently with industrial investment. Investors may be drawn to a special economic zone. Still, a thriving city is necessary to keep residents, foster the development of local talents, and transform temporary construction into stable, long-term jobs.

Aqaba in southern Jordan offers a more varied strategy that combines port operations with tourism, services, and investment attractiveness, whereas KAEC and Duqm concentrate on industrial logistics and manufacturing. Along Jordan's Red Sea coast, the historic city, seaports, and an international airport are all part of the Aqaba Special Economic Zone, which was established in 2001. The Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority oversees this low-tax, duty-free, multi-sector development region that acts as a one-stop shop for employment, training, land, and license.

Aqaba's diverse economy contributes to its employment value. Its Red Sea location, diving resources, and closeness to Petra and Wadi Rum create jobs in hospitality, marine tourism, cultural services, and transportation, while its port facilitates trade and logistics. Aqaba is a purposeful tool for decentralizing economic opportunity away from Amman toward a secondary city in a nation with high youth unemployment, demonstrating that productive zones can integrate tourism, services, logistics, and local enterprise development within a single urban framework.

Together, these three examples demonstrate that, when included in the city rather than viewed as distinct economic islands, productive zones become effective tools for employment generation. KAEC serves as an example of how a national diversification program may incorporate manufacturing, logistics, port access, and urban services into a special economic zone. Duqm demonstrates how industrial investment, combined with workforce, housing, and service planning, can create new economic geographies through state-led zone development. Aqaba serves as an example of how secondary cities may combine tourism, investment facilitation, and logistics to diversify employment. To ensure that significant investments result in inclusive, long-term employment for cities and their citizens, Arab municipalities prioritize strengthening urban connections around productive zones, improving transportation access, enhancing workforce training, promoting affordable housing, fostering local supplier development, and strengthening municipal coordination.



Aqaba Port as a productive waterfront zone supporting tourism, logistics, and local employment. Aqaba, Jordan.
©2024 About2Cruise



Saudi Global Ports operations, Dammam, Saudi Arabia
©2025 Saudi Global Ports



Bahrain FinTech Bay, Manama, Bahrain
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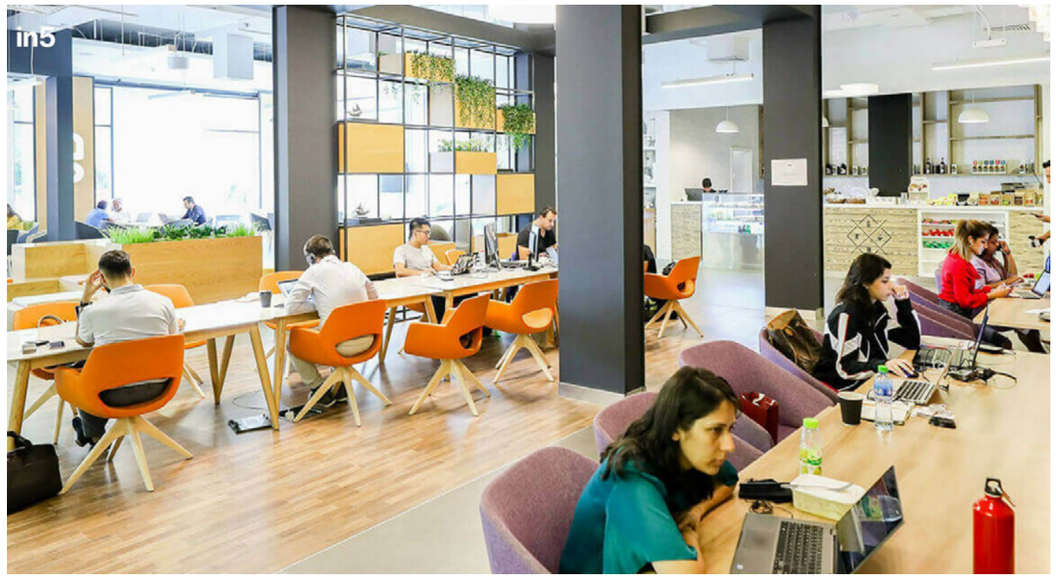
Green and Digital Economies for Future Jobs
Cases from Dubai, Manama, and Ouarzazate

Future job development is becoming increasingly associated with two significant shifts in the economies of Arab cities: digital innovation and the green economy. Fintech hubs, sustainable manufacturing platforms, renewable energy projects, and technology districts are no longer ancillary endeavors. They are starting to play a role in how cities attract investment, foster entrepreneurship, compete for talent, and get their labor markets ready for new types of employment. In terms of the Jobs and Cities theme, these examples demonstrate that future employment will depend not only on national economic policy but also on how cities create ecosystems that integrate businesses, people, infrastructure, regulations, and skills.

One of the best illustrations of how a city can create an ecosystem centered around digital and knowledge-economy jobs is Dubai. Dubai Internet City has grown into a specialized business area for service providers, startups, tech firms, and entrepreneurs. It is crucial for attracting large multinational corporations and for establishing a physical and legal framework that fosters the expansion of digital labor. Similar platforms, such as in5 Innovation Centers, provide workspaces, networking opportunities, access to investors, incubation, and mentoring for entrepreneurs. By giving independent professionals a chance to legitimize their work and gain access to opportunities across Dubai's broader creative, media, technology, and knowledge sectors, GoFreelance offers an additional layer.



in5 innovation centre, Dubai
©2025 Dubai Media City

Because digital employment is no longer restricted to traditional positions within huge corporations, this paradigm is important. Increasingly, freelancers, small creative businesses, digital service providers, product designers, software developers, marketing specialists, data analysts, and entrepreneurs are working in flexible and hybrid labor markets. By combining a concentrated commercial core with startup support and licensing tools, Dubai expands the surface area of employment creation. The city's role is evident in the district's enabling conditions, which include land-use planning that permits business activity, infrastructure that supports high-speed connectivity, transportation links that connect workers to job hubs, and administrative systems that reduce barriers for businesses and independent workers. Other Arab cities need to see digital districts as more than just prominent real estate projects. When they are tied to talent development, flexible regulations, reasonably priced workplaces, and well-connected mobility networks, their true economic impact is shown.

Bahrain FinTech Bay, Manama, Bahrain, offers an alternative yet complementary approach. Manama has focused on creating a dedicated innovation platform for financial technology rather than building a large technology hub. In an industry where cooperation, trust, and compliance are crucial, Bahrain FinTech Bay brings together entrepreneurs, financial institutions, investors, regulators, and innovation initiatives. In addition to software engineers, this opens doors for product managers, risk analysts, compliance experts, UX designers, customer support teams, data specialists, and entrepreneurs involved in digital payments, SME financing, lending, and financial inclusion.

Fintech also has indirect employment value. Digital financial services can help small businesses expand and formalize their operations by providing better access to capital, payments, and business tools. Jobs outside of the fintech industry, particularly in retail, logistics, services, and entrepreneurship, may benefit from this. Fintech hubs are therefore important for larger local economic development in cities. But only when these ecosystems link to opportunities and education throughout the city can they become inclusive. To provide internships, apprenticeships, and paths for youth and underrepresented entrepreneurs, universities, training facilities, accelerators, and public-sector organizations must collaborate. Municipal digital services can also strengthen the local market for innovation by creating demand for secure payments, user-centered platforms, and data-driven service delivery. In this sense, fintech is not only about startups; it is also about building a digitally capable city that creates jobs while improving the quality and accessibility of urban services.

Ouarzazate, Morocco, provides a third path to future employment through the green transition. Morocco's broader clean energy goal now includes the city and its

surroundings, thanks to the Noor Ouarzazate renewable energy complex. Although renewable energy projects are often described as national infrastructure, they also have significant local impacts on jobs. Construction, engineering, installation, operations, maintenance, environmental management, logistics, safety, and technical services are only a few of the phases in which their work is valuable. Clean energy initiatives can develop capabilities that endure beyond the building stage if they are linked to training and local supplier development.

In particular, the wider green jobs value chain is important. Manufacturing, component production, technical services, and clean industries focused on exports are increasingly integrated into Morocco's renewable energy strategy. This means that, in addition to producing energy, towns and regions may leverage green infrastructure to attract new investment and skilled jobs. The green shift is starting to support both industrial production and energy generation, as evidenced by recent efforts to attract renewable energy manufacturing, such as wind-turbine component manufacturing worldwide. Connecting significant renewable energy assets to vocational training, local contractors, maintenance services, and small enterprises that can participate in the supply chain presents an opportunity for Ouarzazate and similar communities.

Local authorities play a key role in linking renewable energy projects to local development through housing, transport, land-use coordination, services, and environmental safeguards. By supporting training partnerships, local procurement, and complementary industries, they can turn these projects from temporary construction booms into lasting platforms for employment, technical skills, and economic diversification.

Dubai, Manama, and Ouarzazate show that future jobs are shaped not only by sectors but also by urban systems that connect space, regulation, skills, firms, and markets. From digital districts and fintech hubs to green infrastructure, these cities illustrate how Arab cities can organize and sustain tomorrow's economies.



Noor Ouarzazate solar plant, Morocco
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Project 6



Market near Bab Jebli Gate, Sfax Medina
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From Informal Work to Inclusive Urban Economies
Lessons from Salé, Sfax, and Marrakech-Safi

In many Arab communities, informal work is a common component of the urban economy. Thousands of households make money from street selling, tiny markets, home-based production, casual services, and youth entrepreneurship, which also keeps areas economically vibrant. However, unmanaged informal labor can strain public funds and public areas, roads, transit, and sanitary systems. Therefore, rather than attempting to abolish informal activity, cities must organize it in ways that protect livelihoods, improve working conditions, and connect small economic factors to larger urban growth. In the framework of the Jobs and Cities theme, inclusive planning means recognizing small company owners and informal workers as part of the city's labor force.

Salé, Morocco, offers a remarkable example of Souk Assalihine, an organized market format designed to transfer and formalize informal street trading while maintaining livelihoods. The Tabriquet neighborhood program was started as a major socioeconomic intervention to enhance local and vendor business conditions. According to the Municipality of Salé, it is a 305 million dirham community-oriented development project aimed at improving living conditions and meeting population needs. Some reports state that the market is over 23 hectares in size and will cost over US$35 million after five years of construction.

The relocation of unofficial companies from congested street settings into a more structured market environment is what gives Souk Assalihine its employment value. With better infrastructure, more

transparent administration, and greater customer access, the initiative enables trading to continue rather than viewing vendors as a problem. Salé's example demonstrates that formalizing informal labor involves more than enforcement; it also entails safeguarding livelihoods through careful planning, involving traders, and investing in market infrastructure.

Sfax, Tunisia, provides another perspective through the renewal and digitization of local market management. As Tunisia's second most important city geographically, economically, and culturally, Sfax has a strong commercial identity linked to industry, agriculture, fishing, and import-export activity. MedCities describes Sfax as a major Mediterranean port city and the "beating heart" of the Tunisian economy, with key activities including phosphate processing, olive oil, fishing, and trade. This makes local markets central not only to daily consumption but also to the visibility of small traders, producers, and food supply chains.

The Municipality of Sfax's online services show how digital tools can improve market governance by making wholesale fruit and vegetable prices more transparent and accessible. This supports price tracking for traders, consumers, and municipal staff, while also improving oversight, reducing information gaps, and increasing the visibility of small traders within municipal management systems.

In Tunisia, this kind of digital support is becoming increasingly important. The World Bank has described Tunisia's digital transformation strategy as a way to modernize the public sector and provide user-centered public services. At the same time, national efforts are supporting e-government and broadband infrastructure. Cities like Sfax can translate these wider reforms into practical tools for local commerce, such as price information systems, trader registration, digital payment options, improved licensing, and better data for municipal planning. These tools are most useful when they reduce administrative barriers rather than create new ones.

The Marrakech-Safi Region in Morocco highlights a third dimension of inclusive urban economies: youth employment and entrepreneurship. In 2019, the World Bank approved the Supporting the Economic Inclusion of Youth Project to improve young people's access to economic opportunities in the region. Through labor-market-informed programs and stronger cooperation between central agencies, local governments, and the private sector, the project seeks to increase youth employability and entrepreneurship. The US$55 million project also includes investments in local companies in promising value chains, support for potential entrepreneurs, and training for young people with lower skill levels.

This case is important because many young people in Arab cities are present in growing urban economies but remain disconnected from formal job pathways. Training alone is not enough if it is not linked to real labor market demand. Entrepreneurship support also requires funding, networks, coaching, market access, and local institutions that help young people move from ideas to income. The Marrakech-Safi project is therefore relevant to the Jobs and Cities agenda because it treats youth employment as an ecosystem issue, connecting skills development, private-sector demand, local development priorities, and entrepreneurial support.

Together, Salé, Sfax, and Marrakech-Safi show that inclusive planning can improve the functioning of the urban economy while protecting vulnerable groups. Salé demonstrates how organized markets can formalize street trading while protecting livelihoods. Sfax shows how market renewal and digital tools can strengthen transparency, municipal management, and small trader visibility. Marrakech-Safi highlights how youth employment initiatives can connect training, entrepreneurship, and local value chains.

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Souk Assalihine before and after, in Salé, Morocco
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Youth learning and vocational training, Marrakech-Safi
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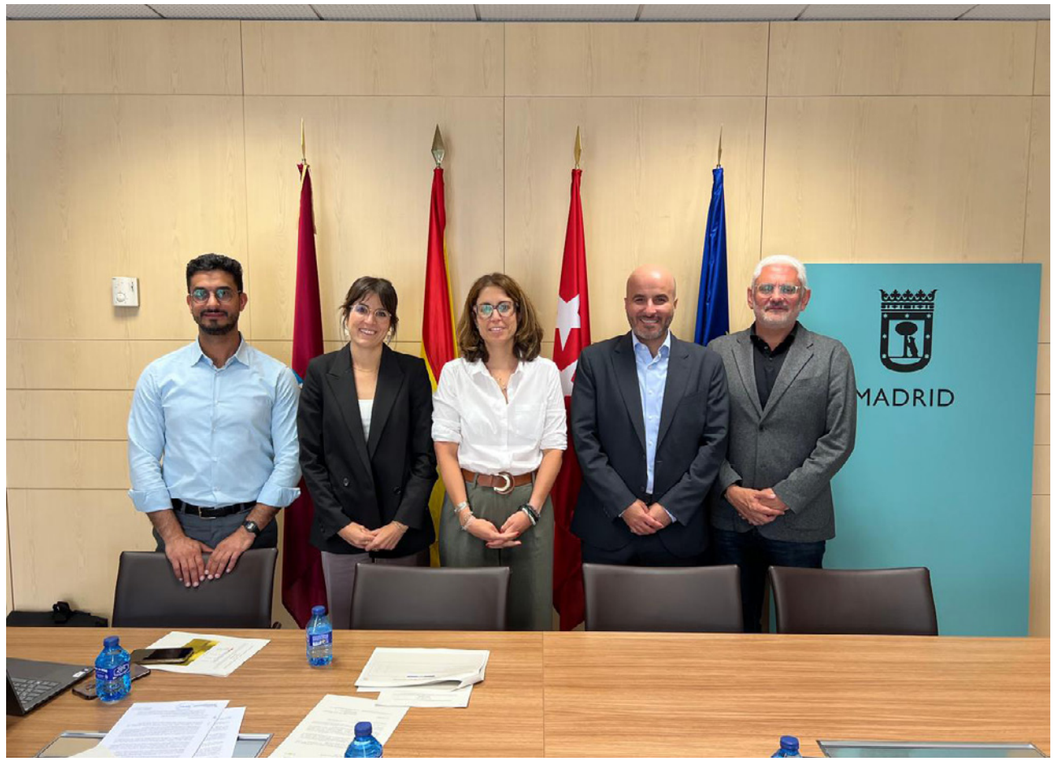
OUR NEWS

Global Presence

AUDI DELEGATION IN MADRID TO ASSESS READINESS FOR HOSTING THE ARAB EUROPEAN CITIES FORUM

A delegation from the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), led by H.E. Dr. Anas Mofarreh Almughairy, AUDI Director General, visited Madrid, Spain, During the visit, he met with Mr. José Luis Herrera, the Mayor of Madrid's Advisor for International Cooperation, to discuss the city's preparations for hosting the Arab-European Cities Dialogue Forum in January 2027.

The visit program also featured a site tour of the Conference Center of Madrid that will host the forum, during which logistical arrangements were discussed for welcoming and accommodating more than 130 mayors and city leaders from Arab and European cities, along with representatives from over 30 international urban organizations.



AUDI Delegation in Madrid to Assess Readiness for Hosting the Arab European Cities Forum
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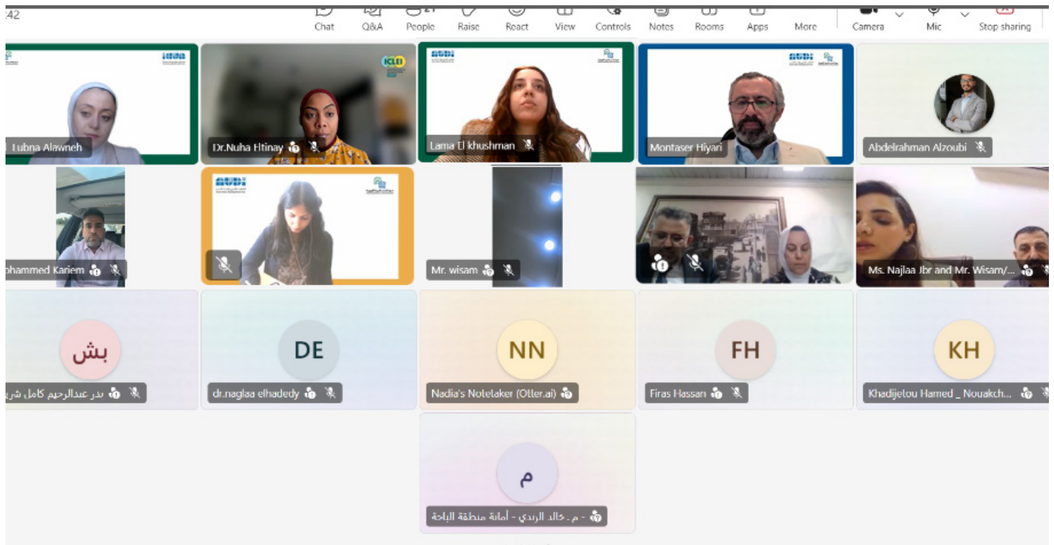
AECD THEMATIC CLUSTERS HOLD MEETINGS WITH PARTICIPATION OF OVER 40 ARAB AND EUROPEAN CITIES

The first meetings of the thematic clusters of the Arab European Cities Dialogue Forum were held in April–May 2026, as part of a series of preparatory sessions organized by the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI) to strengthen cooperation and knowledge exchange between Arab and European cities ahead of the forum set to be held in Madrid, Spain, in January 2027.

These thematic clusters aim to support cities in adopting practical pathways toward a more resilient and sustainable urban future. The meetings brought together more than 40 Arab and European cities, alongside several international organizations working in urban development.

AECD Thematic Clusters:

- Quality of Life and Community Development
- Local Economic Development and Prosperity
- Climate Action and Urban Resilience
- Digital Transformation and Technology



AECD Thematic Clusters Hold Meetings with Participation of Over 40 Arab and European Cities
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AUDI DIRECTOR GENERAL MEETS WITH SECRETARY GENERAL OF UNITED CITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

His Excellency Dr. Anas Mofarreh Almughairy, Director General of the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), met at the Institute's headquarters with Ms. Emilia Sáiz, Secretary-General of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), to discuss areas of mutual interest, including:

- AUDI's participation in the UCLG World Congress, scheduled for June 2026 in Tangier, including the organization of a dialogue session on city diplomacy.
- Encouraging and enhancing the participation of Arab cities in the World Congress and highlighting their active role and contributions to urban development at the international level.
- Confirming UCLG participation in the Ara European Cities Dialogue Forum (AECD), scheduled to be held in Madrid in 2027.
- Coordinating joint participation in the World Urban Forum (WUF13), and working to showcase shared outputs, programs, and initiatives.



AUDI Director General Meets with Secretary General of United Cities and Local Governments
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AUDI EXPLORES URBAN COOPERATION OPPORTUNITIES WITH UN-HABITAT TO STRENGTHEN INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

His Excellency Dr. Anas Al-Mughairi, Director General of the Arab Urban Development Institute, met with representatives of UN-Habitat, including Ms. Taina Christiansen, Country Representative at UN-Habitat, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Ms. Marija de Wijn, Global Coordinator of the Quality-of-Life Initiative at UN-Habitat; and Ms. Najwa Lashin, Program Officer at UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States.

The meeting reviewed AUDI's 2030 Strategy Summary and its key initiatives aimed at advancing urban development across the Arab region. Discussions also addressed the Arab European Cities Dialogue Initiative and explored mechanisms for collaboration with thematic clusters teams to identify city priorities within a participatory framework.

The meeting also discussed the role of the Quality of Life Initiative in supporting Arab cities, coordination for participation in the World Urban Forum in Baku (WUF13), and preparations for a joint coordination meeting between AUDI and the UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States.

Of note, this meeting is part of AUDI's efforts to strengthen international partnerships and expand cooperation in support of Arab cities, enabling them to tackle contemporary urban challenges and enhance their presence in relevant international forums, gatherings and events.



AUDI Explores Urban Cooperation Opportunities with UN-Habitat to Strengthen International Partnerships
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FROM BAKU AT WUF13: AUDI AND UN-HABITAT LAUNCH A REPORT ON URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN ARAB CITIES

The Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), in collaboration with United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat), officially unveiled a landmark report titled "The State of Arab Cities Report 2026: Housing, Land and Basic Services as Foundations for Resilient Urbanization." The report was launched during a dedicated session held as part of the 13th World Urban Forum in Baku, bringing together representatives of international organizations, city mayors, and urban experts to explore strategies for strengthening the resilience of Arab cities and enhancing their capacity to respond to evolving challenges and crises. The report offers a comprehensive regional assessment of how Arab cities are addressing interconnected pressures, including conflict and displacement, climate change, water scarcity, and energy-related challenges.

The session was moderated by Nagwa Lachine, Program Officer at UN-Habitat ROAS, and opened with remarks by H.E. Dr Anas Almughairy, AUDI Director General, who emphasized that the report centers on the



From Baku at WUF13: AUDI and UN-Habitat Launch a Report on Urban Development in Arab Cities
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importance of addressing housing, land, and basic services as interconnected pillars that underpin urban sustainability under public policies. Dr. Almughairy noted that the breakdown of any of these pillars — whether through rising housing costs, inadequate legal protection for land ownership, service interruptions, or mounting pressure on infrastructure — can deepen institutional instability and weaken recovery efforts. H.E. also stressed the growing importance of the housing sector for policymakers, highlighting that the report is being launched at a particularly critical moment for Arab cities.

Mr. Patrick Canagasingham, Director of the Regional Program Division at UN-Habitat delivered a keynote address in which he highlighted the importance of the report and its strong alignment with the theme of the 13th World Urban Forum, "Housing the world: Safe and resilient cities and communities." The session linked the report's findings to ongoing global discussions on recovery from crises, reconstruction efforts, and risk-informed urban development, emphasizing that resilient housing systems and reliable basic services have become essential pillars for advancing stability and sustainable development across the region.

The report's technical presentation was delivered by Dr. Fadi Hamdan, Systemic Risk and Resilience Independent Expert, who reviewed the efforts and initiatives undertaken by cities across the region to expand housing and basic services and allocate land in response to the growing demand for housing. The report provides a qualitative analysis of housing, land, and essential services, while also highlighting the key challenges that continue to hinder the achievement of sustainable urban development.

Mr Khalid Mohammed Alghamlas, Deputy Minister for Urban Planning and Land at the Ministry of Municipalities and Housing, also addressed the session, underscoring the importance of advancing effective solutions to the challenges highlighted in the report.

At the conclusion of the session, Eleonora Serpi, Associate Program Management Officer, Land, Housing and Informal Settlements Section at UN-Habitat delivered a presentation in which she stressed the importance of aligning and integrating urban policies to address housing, land, and basic services as interconnected components within a comprehensive urban development framework.

In their closing remarks, participants reaffirmed the importance of expanding regional cooperation and reinforcing future partnerships in order to support the implementation of the report's recommendations and contribute to advancing sustainable urban development across the region.



From Baku at WUF13: AUDI and UN-Habitat Launch a Report on Urban Development in Arab Cities
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Global Presence

AUDI SIGNS TWO STRATEGIC AGREEMENTS AT WORLD URBAN FORUM

The Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI) concluded its participation in the 13th session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13), organized by UN-Habitat in Baku, Azerbaijan, from 17–22 May 2026. The forum, one of the world's leading platforms on the future of cities and sustainable urban development, brought together more than 30,000 participants from 178 countries.

During its participation, AUDI, represented by its Director General, H.E. Dr. Anas Almughairy, signed two strategic agreements aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and advancing joint efforts in the development of Arab cities.



AUDI Signs Two Strategic Agreements at World Urban Forum
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In the presence of H.E. Dr. Sami Hijjawi, Palestinian Minister of Local Government, the first agreement was signed with the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA), represented by its Executive Director, Eng. Abdallah Anati. The agreement aims to support the preparation and development of project proposals for funding agencies, enhance municipal service delivery, implement specialized training programs, and promote the exchange of institutional and technical expertise.

The second agreement was signed with the Nouakchott Region, represented by its President, H.E. Ms. Fatimetou Abdel Malek, under the framework of the "Participatory Greening of Neighborhoods in Arab Cities" project. The agreement aims to support environmental sustainability, improve quality of life, and enhance urban greening initiatives alongside the development of residential neighborhoods.

AUDI also held three main sessions focused on the most pressing urban priorities in the Arab region. The sessions were titled:



AUDI Signs agreement with the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) at World Urban Forum
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AUDI Signs agreement with Nouakchott Region at World Urban Forum
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- Launching of State of Arab Cities Report 2026: Housing, Land and Basic Services as Foundations for Resilient Urbanization, in collaboration with UN-Habitat.
- From Dialogue to Action: Arab & European Cities Co-creating Inclusive Urban Living
- Transforming Neighborhoods Together: Participatory Greening in Arab Cities

Further, as part of its participation, AUDI launched a report titled "State of Arab Cities Report 2026 (SACR 2026), in collaboration with the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat), with the involvement of several international organizations, city mayors, and urban experts. The report offers a regional assessment of the overlapping challenges facing Arab cities, including conflict and displacement, climate change, water scarcity, and energy-related challenges, highlighting the need to address housing, land, and basic services as interconnected pillars that play a vital role in promoting urban sustainability and strengthening the resilience of cities throughout the region.



AUDI held three main sessions focused on the most pressing urban priorities in the Arab region at World Urban Forum
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AUDI held three main sessions focused on the most pressing urban priorities in the Arab region at World Urban Forum
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In addition, a number of AUDI staff members participated in four specialized dialogue sessions with a selected group of international researchers and experts, addressing key challenges and emerging transformations in sustainable urban development.

On the sidelines of the forum, AUDI also held more than 50 bilateral meetings and discussions with representatives of international organizations, government entities, and research institutions, aiming to explore future cooperation opportunities and expand its network of institutional partnerships.

AUDI's pavilion attracted significant attention, welcoming over 2000 visitors from international and regional organizations, universities, research institutions, and specialized associations worldwide. Visitors were briefed on AUDI's key projects and programs supporting sustainable urban development in Arab cities, as well as its innovative initiatives and solutions addressing urban growth challenges.

This participation reflects AUDI's continued efforts to strengthen its international presence as a leading Arab platform for urban development. It also underscores its vision of building more sustainable and resilient Arab cities through fostering international dialogue, knowledge exchange, and effective partnerships that contribute to a better urban future for the Arab region.

AUDI launched a report titled "State of Arab Cities Report 2026 (SACR 2026), in collaboration with the (UN-Habitat) at World Urban Forum
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Global Presence

AUDI DIRECTOR GENERAL RECEIVES DUTCH AMBASSADOR TO SAUDI ARABIA TO EXPLORE AREAS OF COOPERATION

H.E. Dr. Anas Mofarreh Almughairy, Director General of the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), received H.E. Mr. Hans Peter van der Woude, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Saudi Arabia, at the Institute's headquarters in Riyadh to discuss the growing role of cities in advancing national sustainable development goals.

The meeting underscored the importance of empowering local governments to lead development initiatives and address urban and climate challenges, while recognizing that cities worldwide face shared issues requiring collaborative and innovative solutions.

Both sides explored opportunities to strengthen partnerships between Dutch cities and cities in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries through knowledge exchange and urban innovation.

Discussions also covered enhancing the role of institutions, organizations, and the private sector, expanding cooperation and investment between Dutch and Arab entities, and engaging in strategic initiatives, particularly the Arab European Cities Dialogue Forum (AECD), to advance sustainable, resilient urban development.



AUDI Director General Receives Dutch Ambassador to Saudi Arabia to Explore Areas of Cooperation
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AUDI EXPLORES URBAN COLLABORATION WITH EUROPEAN NETWORK OF LIVING LABS

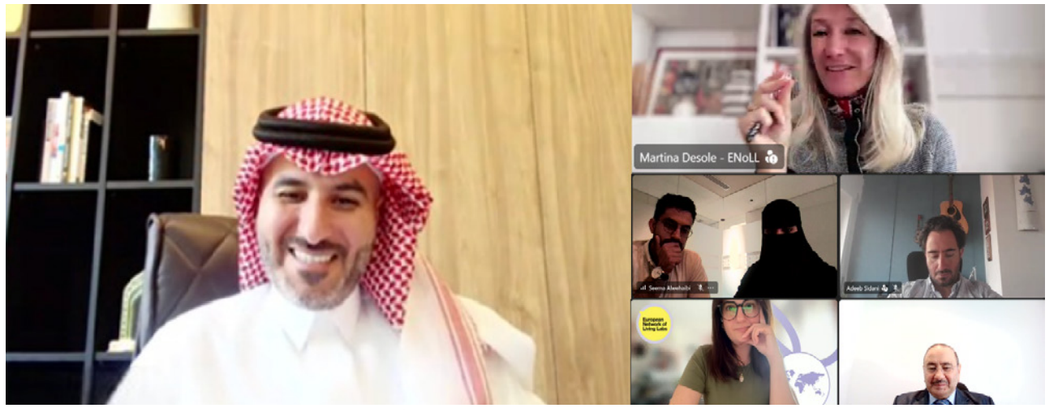
His Excellency Dr. Anas Mofarreh Almughairy, Director General of the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), held a virtual meeting with representatives of the European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL) to explore cooperation opportunities in urban innovation and the application of living lab methodologies. The ENoLL delegation was led by Director Martina Desole and included Chairperson Wim De Kinderen and Head of Network Gabriella Quaranta.

The two sides reviewed ENoLL's experience as a leading international network in living lab methodologies and participatory innovation, highlighting its role in addressing urban challenges, fostering innovation in cities, and supporting its transfer and implementation in the Arab region.

They also discussed strengthening knowledge-sharing networks and thematic groups, as well as benefiting from the capacity-building and training programs offered by the ENoLL Academy. In addition, they considered a proposal to organize a specialized workshop in Riyadh for urban and academic stakeholders and city representatives to introduce the living lab approach and its applications in Arab cities.

The meeting also explored ways to strengthen knowledge-sharing networks and thematic groups, as well as to benefit from the capacity-building and training programs offered by the ENoLL Academy. In addition, the two sides discussed a proposal to hold a tailored workshop in Riyadh targeting urban and academic institutions and city representatives to introduce the living lab methodology and its applications in Arab cities.

The meeting concluded with an agreement to initiate the preparation of a memorandum of understanding based on a structured action plan and joint projects, laying the groundwork for future collaboration in urban innovation, capacity building, and knowledge exchange.



AUDI Explores Urban Collaboration with European Network of Living Labs
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AUDI CONTINUES FOLLOW-UP ON GREEN ACTIVITIES IN ARAB CITIES PROJECT – PARTICIPATORY NEIGHBORHOOD GREENING

A delegation from the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), led by Dr. Ziad Alameddine, Director of Urban Policy Research Program, and including Eng. Nassima Chehboun, Project Manager, conducted a three-day working visit to the Republic of Tunisia to follow up on the implementation of the "Supporting Green Activities in Selected Arab Cities – Participatory Neighborhood Greening" project, funded by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development.

The project seeks to revitalize underutilized spaces within the historic city of Tunis through greening activities, public space enhancements, and improvements to the urban environment while preserving the area's historical and cultural character. These efforts aim to enhance quality of life and promote the concept of participatory neighborhood greening.

The visit began with a field tour of the project site alongside representatives of the Association for Safeguarding Tunis Medina (ASM Tunisia) to review implementation progress and monitor ongoing activities. The delegation also met with officials at the



AUDI Continues Follow-Up on Green Activities in Arab Cities Project – Participatory Neighborhood Greening
©2026 Municipality of Tunis

Tunis Municipality, including representatives from the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs and municipal officials, to assess achievements to date and discuss upcoming phases. Participants highlighted the importance of continued coordination among partner institutions to ensure the project's successful implementation.

The visit concluded with a meeting with ASM Tunisia to review project progress and discuss measures and procedures to ensure its long-term sustainability. Discussions focused on establishing mechanisms for the continued maintenance of project components after implementation, with the aim of preserving its outcomes and maximizing its lasting impact.

The visit was conducted within the framework of the cooperation agreement signed between AUDI and the Tunis Municipality on the sidelines of the 2025 Arab European Cities Dialogue Forum in Riyadh. The agreement forms part of broader efforts to support Arab cities in adopting sustainable urban solutions and strengthening development partnerships.

AUDI Continues Follow-Up on Green Activities in Arab Cities Project – Participatory Neighborhood Greening
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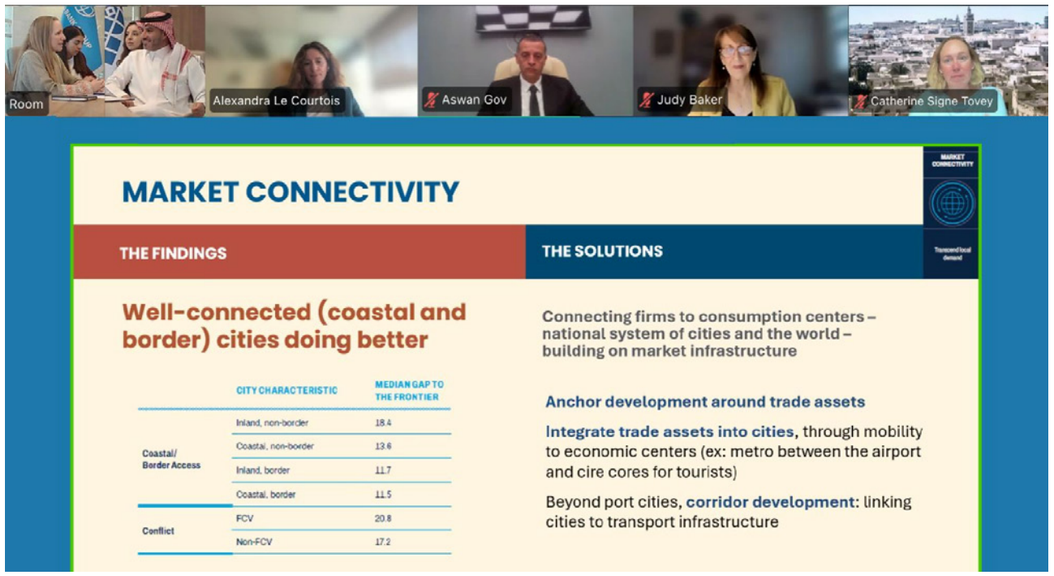
Global Presence

AUDI HOSTS SYMPOSIUM TO LAUNCH WORLD BANK'S CITIES THAT WORK REPORT WITH OVER 75 ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS

The Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), in collaboration with the World Bank Group, hosted a symposium at its headquarters in Riyadh to launch the World Bank report, Cities that Work: Realizing the Jobs Potential of MENA's Cities. The report examines the role of cities in enhancing productivity and generating employment opportunities across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The event brought together more than 75 representatives from Arab cities, international organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, reflecting AUDI's efforts to expand dialogue on the report's findings and its perspectives on the future role of cities in supporting economic growth.

Opening the symposium, His Excellency Dr. Anas Mofarreh Almughairy, AUDI Director, highlighted the report's importance in advancing discussions on urban policies that promote economic growth and reinforce cities as drivers of development and job creation. Representing the World Bank Group, Almod



AUDI Hosts Symposium to Launch World Bank's Cities that Work Report with Over 75 Arab and International Participants
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Weitz, Regional Practice Director for Infrastructure, discussed the context of the report and emphasized the importance of aligning urban policies with job creation across the region.

Alexandra Le Courtois, Senior Urban Specialist at the World Bank Group, presented the report's key findings, outlining indicators and analyses of urban productivity in the Middle East and North Africa. She compared the performance of cities in the region with that of comparable cities worldwide and examined the factors that can improve their economic performance and strengthen their capacity to generate more and better jobs.

The symposium also featured a "Practitioner's Perspective" session with Fadwa Amghouz, Head of Cooperation & Partnership Department at the Regional Center of Investment, Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima region. The session explored practical experiences in local economic development and highlighted the role of cities and urban areas in attracting investment, improving market connectivity, and fostering environments that support growth and employment.

Concluding the program, Catherine Tuvey, the World Bank's Practice Manager for Urban, Resilience and Land, presented the report's main conclusions and outlined its practical recommendations for policymakers in the areas of urban policy, productivity enhancement, and job creation.

The cooperation builds on the ongoing partnership between the Arab Urban Development Institute and the World Bank Group. As part of this collaboration, AUDI published Issue No. 15 of "Mudnunua", titled " JOBS AND CITIES: SHAPING INCLUSIVE URBAN ECONOMIES IN ARAB CITIES", which was launched in conjunction with the release of the World Bank report.



AUDI Hosts Symposium to Launch World Bank's Cities that Work Report with Over 75 Arab and International Participants
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Podcast

'MAYOR TALKS' PODCAST FEATURES RABAT'S MAYOR IN EPISODE 2

The second episode of the "Mayor Talks" podcast features H.E. Mrs. Fatiha El Moudni, Mayor of Rabat, discussing municipal governance in Morocco's capital. The conversation addresses major city challenges such as climate change, water scarcity, and urban growth, alongside efforts to preserve Rabat's historical and cultural heritage.

Mayor El Moudni shares her vision of transforming Rabat into a smart, inclusive, and resilient city, with citizens at the heart of development. Key initiatives include expanding the tramway, introducing electric buses, advancing water recycling, promoting green buildings, and adopting renewable energy solutions.

The episode emphasizes the importance of partnerships with civil society and the private sector, as well as enhancing community engagement through digital platforms and public consultations to meet residents' needs and improve urban quality of life. It also covers strategies to ease traffic, upgrade infrastructure, and protect green spaces, while highlighting Rabat's role as an administrative, diplomatic, and cultural hub. Transparency and accountability in governance are underlined throughout.

Finally, the discussion touches on knowledge exchange with other Arab cities to support a comprehensive vision for Rabat's future. This podcast is part of the Arab Urban Institute's efforts to use modern media to share urban best practices and promote sustainable, efficient development across the region.



'Mayor Talks' Podcast Features Rabat's Mayor in Episode 2
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