The overall goal of the Local Government and Infrastructure (LGI) program is to promote an enabling environment for good local governance and provide the basic infrastructure necessary for sustainable improvements in the quality of life of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Awarded in 2010, the program focuses on two main components, infrastructure and local government, with cross-cutting initiatives that positively impact youth, gender, and green activities. Since 2014, LGI has implemented humanitarian assistance in Gaza through a cash-for-work program and distribution of emergency supplies during the most critical periods of the crisis. Overall, more than 660,000 individuals will benefit from LGI.

Infrastructure
Inadequate infrastructure is a leading cause of poor quality of life and negatively impacts the ability of any community or nation to achieve its full potential. The Local Government and Infrastructure (LGI) program bridges the gap by creating sustainable, impactful infrastructure, and fulfilling the priority needs of the communities in which it works. LGI supports Palestinian villages and municipalities to rehabilitate roads and to build or improve community centers, schools, and citizen service centers. These infrastructure projects provide important social benefits and increase quality of life. LGI has created nearly 221,800 days of short-term labor and helped build local capacity.

LGI implements infrastructure projects that have been selected through a participatory, strategic community planning approach at the local level, and mutually reinforcing infrastructure projects are implemented at selected vulnerable locations. LGI’s infrastructure projects span across 130 communities, 77 of which are vulnerable communities. One of LGI’s proudest achievements is the Aqqaba School in the Tubas governorate, which is the first school in the West Bank that complies with “Green Building” standards that include water saving technologies, energy efficient techniques, and modern architectural elements.

Goals
• Enhance the quality of services for Palestinians through infrastructure that is sustainable, fully functional, and adheres to U.S. building standards.

LGI AT A GLANCE
• 17 youth clubs
• 9 community centers
• 35 schools (31 completed, 4 ongoing), of which 11 are in Area C
• 57.8 kilometers of roads
• 20 Youth Local Councils
• 16 voluntarism campaigns in 16 partner LGUs
• 8 SDIP support committees established and supported
• 26 HR systems installed.
• 23 SDIPs, 17 GIS Spatial Data Management and 14 physical plans
• 23 LGUs obtained Coding and numbering of building and streets
• 27 LGUs received Business restructuring
• Increase the capacity of Palestinian contractors and local counterparts in order to further develop the skills of engineers and construction managers.
• Creating skilled and unskilled job opportunities throughout the West Bank.

Accomplishments
• CSCs in 14 municipalities (12 are completed)
• 9,266 short term jobs, 336,355 days of employment
• 455 classrooms were built/renovated benefiting 7,234 learners
• Approximately 494,000 beneficiaries will be reached as a result of the infrastructure projects, half of whom are living in vulnerable communities.

Governance
Local government derives its importance from its proximity to the people as it is the closest government entity to citizens. The Local Government and infrastructure (LGI) program takes a holistic approach to enhancing the local government sector through participatory planning processes, zoning and land use practices, geographical and spatial data management, street and building coding and numbering systems, long-term strategic development investment plans (SDIPs), and the mobilization of local resources by stakeholders.

LGI works with local governments to enhance their ability to serve citizens. To this end, LGI supports local government units as they employ the Excellence in Governance Model. This model focuses on three main functions: leadership, community participation, and service delivery and management; and the related core competencies. LGI has established citizen service centers (CSCs) in 14 municipalities. These municipalities, which service larger populations, are “centers of governance excellence.” CSCs are one-stop shops which provide all municipal services in one place. Citizens report a 68% decrease in the time it takes to receive services. In addition, CSC designs and staff training have promoted a more gender sensitive environment. As a result, more women are accessing services.

Goals
• Integrating international best practices at the local in municipal governance
• Leveraging on current investments in Local Government sector for sustainability.
• Enhancing municipal accountability and fairness in service provision for constituents.

Accomplishments
• The establishment of CSCs constituted a shift in municipalities to focus more on customer service, acknowledge the value of citizens, and become the core component of the municipalities functions.
• An increase in local capacity has garnered greater institutional developments such as enhanced planning
of local resources, procedures, systems, and the increase in best practices for sustainability.

- Awareness among constituents has risen leading to more active, participatory, and informed citizens, especially in marginalized groups.
- Policy formulation has built local momentum through the advocacy of change and solidified civic engagement.
- Municipalities redefined their functions in the community by focusing on future investments, attractiveness, long term strategies, and instilled the idea that their business is to lead community development.
- Establishment of the first Joint Service Council for Planning and Development (4 Bethlehem area municipalities are members).
- Deployment of E-Municipality in four partner LGUs.
- More than 1,300 LGU staff, YLC and community members trained.

Youth Local Councils

The capacity of local government to reach out to citizens and to involve them in identifying priorities, planning, and monitoring builds trust and solidifies the relationship between citizens and government officials. Over the past decade, Global Communities in Palestine has designed interventions to enhance awareness of good governance practices and the important role of the community in local government. Special emphasis has been placed on the role of youth through the Youth Local Councils (YLCs) initiative.

Although Palestinian youth constitute an overwhelming majority of the West Bank and Gaza population (65% are between the ages of 13-38 years old), there had previously been few opportunities for them to engage in community affairs and local governance. In response, Global Communities piloted what was then named the Youth Shadow Local Councils (YSLCs) initiative in 4 communities in 2008, with funding from USAID. After the success of the pilot, Global Communities expanded to an additional 9 communities in 2010 under the USAID-funded Local Democratic Reform (LDR) program. The initiative continues under the USAID-funded Local Government and Infrastructure (LGI) program and has expanded to a total of 20 communities in the West Bank.

The YLC Process

The initiative began as the Youth Shadow Local Councils because the councils, democratically elected bodies made up of 11-15 members aged 15-22, “shadowed” their local government leaders to learn about good governance practices. Each youth council mirrors the elected local government unit (LGU, or municipality) in size and formation. Working in partnership with the municipality, the purpose of the YSLCs has been to sensitize youth to good governance practices and to give them an opportunity to take a leadership role in their community. The YLC initiative has an impact on four levels: 1) individuals are becoming empowered, confident young leaders; 2) youth are viewed as proactive, hardworking, contributing members of society; 3) communities
are building partnerships and implementing initiatives that improve quality of life; and 4) nationally, the YLCs have created a platform for youth networking, hosting national youth summits, informing local governance and youth policy, and creating the next generation of Palestinian leaders. Through constant coaching and mentoring, Global Communities and local partners have supported the youth councils in the following phases:

- Establishing general assemblies in each municipality
- Campaigning and outreach to voters
- Holding democratic elections and forming the council
- Leadership and skills development
- Establishing local partnerships and alliances
- Youth-led local activities

**Youth Leaders**

The YSLC initiative has gone beyond engaging youth in citizen participation activities and increasing awareness of local governance issues. YSLCs, with Global Communities support, empowered youth, helping to create strategic partnerships to improve communities and to provide a networking platform within and among Palestinian communities. In light of the youths’ outstanding accomplishments and their determination, innovation, and independence, it became apparent that YSLCs were no longer “shadowing.” In 2014, the Youth Shadow Local Councils became the Youth Local Councils.

The buy-in and support of the YLC concept by local government units and organizations has been instrumental in the success of the YLCs. Often taking the lead, the YLCs have cooperated with their municipalities, police, fire and rescue, and community-based organizations to respond to the needs of their respective communities.

The YLC initiative has also empowered young Palestinian leaders in the West Bank; many have gone on to receive impressive awards and to take on new positions. YLC presidents have served as acting mayors, acting police chiefs, and acting ministers. Former YLC president Mohammed Taqaqta was one of a handful of youth to receive the prestigious “Volunteer of the Year” award from the Palestinian Prime Minister in 2012. Perhaps most impressive, former YLC member Yaqoub Marouf was elected to his village’s local council.

What began as a youth initiative in Palestine in 2008 – 4 pilot communities with 700 youth – has become a movement. In 2016, after only 8 years, Global Communities can boast that it has supported the establishment of 20 YLCs across the West Bank, with more than 17,000 youth involved. The YLCs have become an integral part of their communities, woven into the tapestry of their societies. YLCs have implemented initiatives/campaigns on the environment, literacy, road safety, fire safety, employment, local tourism, volunteerism, persons with disabilities, emergency responses, and fundraisers for the needy.
Engineering Fellows

The Local Governance and Infrastructure (LGI) program is committed to helping the future generation of engineers gain work experience through on-the-job training as well as temporary employment in the respective field. LGI in cooperation with the Engineering Association - Jerusalem Center seeks to provide fresh engineering graduates with the tools, experience, and resources needed in order to succeed in the highly competitive field of engineering.

**Goal**

- LGI will provide employment opportunities and enhance professional capacity of new Palestinian engineering graduates through the provision of 200 paid internship opportunities over a 5-year period.

**Accomplishments**

- 199 engineering fellows graduated (2011-2015)
- An impressive 63% of 199 graduated engineering fellows received employment upon completion and 2.7% went on to complete and receive scholarships for postgraduate studies.

Gender

The Local Governance and Infrastructure (LGI) program has adopted gender sensitive measures for a multifaceted, inclusive approach that enables a more conscientious, gender-friendly environment throughout communities in the West Bank. The consideration of gender issues occurs in all areas of LGI including governance, infrastructure, and youth.

**Goals**

- Incorporate gender issues in all aspects of the LGI program in order to facilitate the integration of gender sensitive components
- Develop gender awareness through trainings, publications, and capacity building
- Increase gender sensitivity through institutional development that will invoke a more gender responsive atmosphere
- Support female public participation
- Encourage the development of gender neutral publications

**Accomplishments**

- Generated an analysis on Gender Mainstreaming in all LGI projects completed
- Conducted gender training on infrastructure for fellow engineers
- Adoption of the Child Companion and Childcare Guidelines
- Women Role Model Initiative
- Gender Checklist for all infrastructure projects
Green
The Local Governance and Infrastructure (LGI) program strives to build a greener Palestine through the adoption of green practices, awareness campaigns, and youth initiatives. Enabling a green environment in Palestine requires the implementation of green building standards in coordination with the key leaders in environmentally-friendly building.

Goals
• Incorporate green elements in all projects
• Support an increase in public recognition of green practices

Accomplishments
• Formulating a Solid Waste Management Brochure for nation-wide distribution
• Authoring and distributing a green booklet on the 3 R’s: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle which was given to schools throughout the West Bank
• Organizing a national workshop to launch the Palestinian Green Building Guidelines issued by the Palestine Higher Green Building Council
• Using the Green Checklist to monitor all projects to ensure their green and sustainable impact

Humanitarian Assistance
Shortly after the start of the war on Gaza in July 2014, LGI developed and began implementation of its Rapid Response Action Plan (RRAP). The RRAP was developed as a phased approach to ensure that assistance that was delivered was responsive to actual needs on the ground. During Phases 1 and 2, LGI distributed food packages, hygiene kits, bedding sets, and water to more than 28,000 vulnerable and displaced families.

During Phase 3, which was implemented in early 2015, LGI distributed warm blankets, plastic floor mats, reinforced plastic tarpaulin, nylon sheets, duct tape, and plastic rope to provide protection from the winter weather in homes with broken windows and doors, leaking roofs, and open spaces to more than 3,500 vulnerable households.

In the first three phases of the RRAP, LGI provided 170,000 internally displaced and host population beneficiaries provided with basic inputs for survival, specifically: 39,552 liters of water for drinking and hygiene use; 29,985 non-food packages; and 28,668 food packages.

In 2016, LGI began implementation of its Gaza Cash-for-Work (CFW) program, which represents Phases 4 and 5 of the RRAP. The CFW program will is creating more than 1,000 short-term jobs and will benefit more than 6,500 Palestinians in Gaza.