



SUCCESS STORY

Aqaba Old Town Residents Transform their Neighborhood

Residents' clean-up effort rewarded with new economic opportunities



ACED Program

Old Town residents worked with partners to remove trash and debris, clean the streets, and paint walls – increasing local pride.



Adham and his family renovated their retail space to open a scooter sales and repair shop after the neighborhood clean-up project.

"We owned this space for some time but we couldn't use it for a business because this location was full of trash. After the neighborhood clean-up project, we saw that our neighbors were also renovating and opening businesses. The project really changed this neighborhood – it's cleaner and better for business."

Adham, scooter shop assistant in his family's new business.

Several new retail businesses have recently opened in Aqaba's Old Town neighborhood, including a scooter sales and repair shop. Last year, this business would have been impossible to run here due to the properties' decrepit conditions and the surrounding debris. However, due to the commendable efforts of local residents to clean up their neighborhood, led by the Old Town Neighborhood Enhancement Team (NET), Old Town is beginning to see positive results with concrete economic improvements.

The Neighborhood Development Activity of USAID's Aqaba Community and Economic Development (ACED) Program works to empower Aqaba residents to participate in decision-making in their community. A key component of community mobilization efforts is the formation of NETs, which ensure active participation by a broad range of citizens, identify neighborhood prioritized projects, and oversee the implementation of those projects working with residents and other partners, such as local government.

In August 2008, Old Town residents selected members of their first NET. Through consultation with the residents, the NET prioritized their needs and identified projects that could best utilize existing resources to resolve them. An urgent problem that the residents agreed on was Old Town's poor environmental and health situation, including decrepit and unused buildings, excessive debris, poor waste collection, and inadequate water systems. Led by the NET, the residents took action and organized a massive clean-up campaign to remove trash and repaint unsightly buildings. The NET also secured partnerships with the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority's directorate of municipal services, a private sanitation company, and the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, and Education to support their efforts.

The residents' hard work to transform their neighborhood has had a significant impact on the conditions in Old Town. It has helped to facilitate economic activity, as retail operations will generate employment and help to raise the property value. More importantly, it has demonstrated to Old Town residents the power they have to improve their own lives when they are organized and work together.