

Training, Advocacy, & Network Development in Kuwait, a Retrospective

Partners for Democratic Change is implementing the *Support for Training, Advocacy, and Network Development* (STAND) organizational capacity building program in the Gulf region. Through training, grant funding, and other technical assistance, Partners supported our local partner in Kuwait, [en.v](#), as they mentored a group of nascent civil society organizations (CSOs) during 2013 and 2014. These “NGO Trainees” developed a variety of community projects with seed funding received through three small grant phases titled *Bedaya*, *Injaz*, and *Ta’awun*.



Strategic partnerships with local civil society organizations, government, and the private sector contribute to en.v’s mission of promoting “social responsibility and environmental sustainability in the Arab world,” through social development and environmental programs. Participation in STAND allowed en.v to build a reputation as a civil society leader and capacity building expert in Kuwait, and to create a series of online [training videos and materials](#) based on the STAND curriculum. The materials were designed to be relevant to the Kuwaiti context and will serve as a resource for many CSOs. During the final year of STAND, en.v will mentor six new organizations and award small grants to three.

NGO Trainee Success Stories

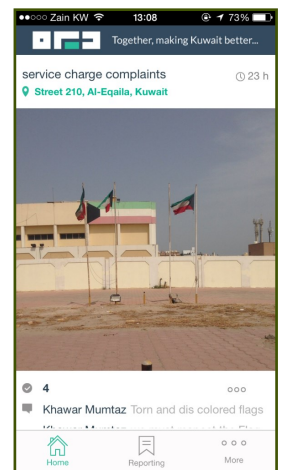
Deera was a small grant recipient throughout all three phases of the STAND program. Their project to develop an iOS (Apple) cell phone application to promote civic engagement and good governance in Kuwait was very successful. The app was created to provide a convenient and an accurate way to report public works issues, and then rate the response of the government agency addressing problems. By capitalizing on existing technologies in smart phones, such as GPS and cameras, the app has been used to share, then facilitate follow-up on a variety of grievances, for instance potholes and trash. Through the app, Deera also sought to bring about a structural change to the government’s paper-based reporting system for such matters.



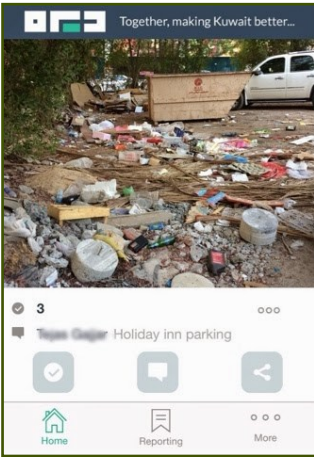
At end of 2013, Deera launched the iOS app then turned its attention to the apps’ use in the public sector and to promoting the government’s acceptance of the platform. Using contacts developed through STAND, the organization’s president and founder, Haytham Al Hawaj, began to establish relationships with various ministries who might be open to accepting the information being generated, collaborating on data collection, and ultimately fixing problems.

The app received exceptional support and interest from the public, government, and local media. By the middle of 2014, Deera launched an Android version and added features, including a “before and after” function, which enabled users to view the issues reported and pictures of the solutions. As one blogger put it, “If there was an award for best local app of the year this would have to be it.” Amongst the successes were the following:

- 4,500 downloads
- 3,897 registered users
- 1,450 reports filed
- 942 reports closed
- 4,056 views of the promotional video on [YouTube](#) and Facebook
- 4,455 [Instagram followers](#)
- 58 government entities working with Deera



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Initially, the government was skeptical of Deera and did not have a favorable view of non-profit organizations, however, once Deera positioned itself as a group seeking to help, government cooperation increased. Public recognition of government efforts helped to further open communication channels, and the popularity and positive reception of the app played a key role in helping the government embrace its usefulness. Deera went on to build an app specifically for government workers, which allows them to automatically report when they have fixed an issue.

Before participating in STAND, Deera's primary presence was a simple website. In addition to achieving more effective and collaborative operational practices, the increase in their local capacity is tremendous; their email blasts now reach 20,000 residents. Although the grant period is over, Deera will continue to grow this project as it grows as an organization. Haytham Al Hawaj was featured in the [Kuwait Times](#) and recognized by the United Nations, at the UN Habitat's Celebration of World Cities Day, for his pioneering role in improving the quality of life in Kuwaiti communities. Deera has greatly exceeded its project goals.

K'S PATH is dedicated to the protection of animals and their natural habitat. As both a sanctuary and adoption center, K'S PATH operates the only open door shelter in Kuwait and cares for a number of animals, including more than a dozen species. During the first phase of the program, *Bedaya*, K'S PATH digitized their internal systems and tools, which allowed for better animal care, improved record keeping, and streamlined adoption processes.



After ensuring their organizational infrastructure was more securely in place, K'S PATH set out to develop an animal welfare curriculum for primary and secondary school children. These resources would be particularly helpful because information on Kuwait's biodiversity and the country's problems with the humane treatment of animals is insufficient. It is also difficult to obtain high quality environmental educational materials about local geographic context. During STAND's second phase, *Injaz*, the curriculum came to fruition. K'S PATH [Environment and Humane Animal Education Syllabus](#) was developed to support the mitigation, and gradual reversing, of environmental apathy, habitat destruction, and animal abuse in Kuwait, and aimed to provide the tools individuals needed to make a meaningful difference in their communities.



Through STAND, K'S PATH was able to work with Dr. Bahia Diefenbach, renowned educator on the humane treatment of animals. She helped lay the foundation of their education department and introduced books from the American Welfare Institute (AWI). AWI granted K'S PATH the printing rights to the PDF versions of two books, which K'S PATH will translate into Arabic. The curriculum was complemented with video links, photographs, and bio-profiles about the shelter animals.

For the third and final phase of STAND, *Ta'awun*, K'S PATH created substantive, factual information and case studies that enhanced the implementation of the Educational

Roadshow, their interactive school presentations, and incorporated the two AWI books into pre-kindergarten presentations. Additionally, K'S PATH engaged schools in follow-up experiential activities to reinforce learning. Several schools participated in beach clean-ups to protect fragile marine habitats; volunteered to care for animals at the shelter; organized and conducted awareness drives or campaigns on animal welfare or environmental protection; and raised donations, such as food and toys.

K'S PATH developed contacts at 30 educational institutions, ultimately conducting 30 sessions at 12 public and private universities and nurseries, reaching 2,706 students and 200 educators. Although their participation in STAND is over, K'S PATH will continue to build on their achievements, including launching an online campaign to promote the Educational Roadshow. They too have exceeded their project goals and operate more effectively and collaboratively as a direct result of STAND.