

On the 17th of April 2019, the IGC co-hosted a workshop with the Greater Amman Municipality. The workshop explored opportunities for first step reforms in the areas of: (i) options to enhance the use of data in urban policymaking and (ii) options to improve the calculation, issuance and collection of development levies. Each theme was the subject of a half-day workshop – recognising that the performance of theme (i) is closely related to the performance of theme (ii).

The workshop brought together approximately 40 participants across several government departments – such as the Comprehensive Planning, Zoning, GIS, Finance, Transport, and Statistics departments, among others – as well as speakers from the IGC network. The aim was to provide a forum for discussion on how to commence reforms using evidence from international research and cross-country experience.

In this context, at the start of the first half day workshop on data, several representatives from GAM presented on their departments' data collection efforts and any opportunities for improvement. These presentations highlighted fundamental challenges in the areas of data sharing and departmental coordination. Dr. Nick Tsivanidis, Professor of Economics at the University of California Berkeley, then gave a presentation emphasising the value of data in driving urban policy decisions and he showcased a variety of new data sources that he has used in his own research and that can be applied to traditional urban policy questions such as housing and transport. Sebastian Kriticos, Economist at the IGC Cities that Work initiative, then focused on the barriers to leveraging data in Amman and practical next steps that the city could take to improve data sharing. These ideas framed subsequent group discussions where GAM policymakers identified key next step reforms to be: (i) improving frameworks for departmental data sharing, (ii) undertaking a data inventory, (iii) empowering the urban observatory, and (iv) fostering collaborations with external partners.

The second half day workshop focused on the subject of development levies and Amman's compensation charge. Representatives of the planning department presented on the different use cases in which the compensation charge is applied and the challenges that they face in issuing and collecting these charges in each case. Astrid Haas, Manager of the IGC Cities that Work initiative then responded with a presentation that focused on clarifying the definitions and best practices for different land financing tools. This presentation highlighted that the challenges of the compensation charge owe largely to the lack of simplicity and transparency around the charge's calculation and where its revenues are spent. In the group discussions, stakeholders identified: (i) terminology clarification, (ii) public communication, and (iii) increasing the use of exactions as key next step reforms.