

## 9. What is the legal status of RTOs?

RTOs are legally covered according to Article 122 of Decree-Law no. 118/1977, which states the following: "The engineering unit in the Union shall be in charge of certain tasks on behalf of the Municipalities' members including: assisting in approval of applications for construction permits, preparing any required technical studies and consultations, preparing the specifications of the supplies, works and services, and developing plans".

However, due to the complicated bureaucratic and time consuming recruitment process of permanent staff, RTOs stand today as a legal and official consultation unit within the UoM.

“*Out of the 3 RTOs established in 2007, two were adopted by the Unions of Municipalities and are still functioning to-date under the mandate of the UoMs of Bint Jbeil and Jabal Amel.*”

## 10. Who trains and mentors RTOs?

UN-Habitat is directly involved in developing the technical, administrative and communication skills and capacities of the RTO teams. This is done through formal and informal training workshops and working sessions. However, the learning experience gained through the daily direct involvement with Municipalities has proved to be informative and effective.

## 11. What are the main training topics provided to RTOs?

The main topics include:

### Planning

- Project prioritization
- Project assessment (*topographic survey, drawings, calculation & design, specifications and BOQ*)
- Proposal writing

### Management

- Archiving & filing
- Community mobilization
- Communication skills
- Coordination and reporting

### Technical

- GIS (*overview, adding layers, editing & digitizing, projection & transformation, 3D analyst*)
- 3D Max Program
- Operation maintenance

## 12. What coordination mechanisms exist between RTOs and the local public actors/service providers?

On the local level, and depending on the type of interventions, RTOs have a direct coordination and working relationship with public actors, such as the Water Establishment offices and the SDCs of the MoSA. Such coordination ensures the complementarity of roles and inputs of different local entities and avoids overlapping.

## 13. What is the financial feasibility of RTOs?

UN-Habitat has conducted a cost analysis exercise to identify the financial feasibility of RTOs. Findings show that Unions and their member Municipalities spend considerable amounts annually to acquire technical assistance and to develop technical dossiers and bidding documents related to infrastructure projects. For a medium-size Union which comprises 15 member Municipalities, the yearly contributions on technical support are around 150,000\$, while the annual cost for an RTO is nearly 100,000\$.

## 14. What is the advantage and added value of working through RTOs?

RTOs are local official structures that are strongly connected to various actors on the level of communities, local authorities, public service providers, international and national organizations, and are capable of planning different interventions related to various sectors. Furthermore, RTOs enhance data management within the Unions, support Municipalities technically, enhance cost efficiency for the Unions, facilitate international donor interventions, guide Unions to move from emergency response to recovery and planning, strengthen community integration and municipal engagement, empower Unions through offering qualified experts, enhance decision making, and encourages the potential of strategic planning.

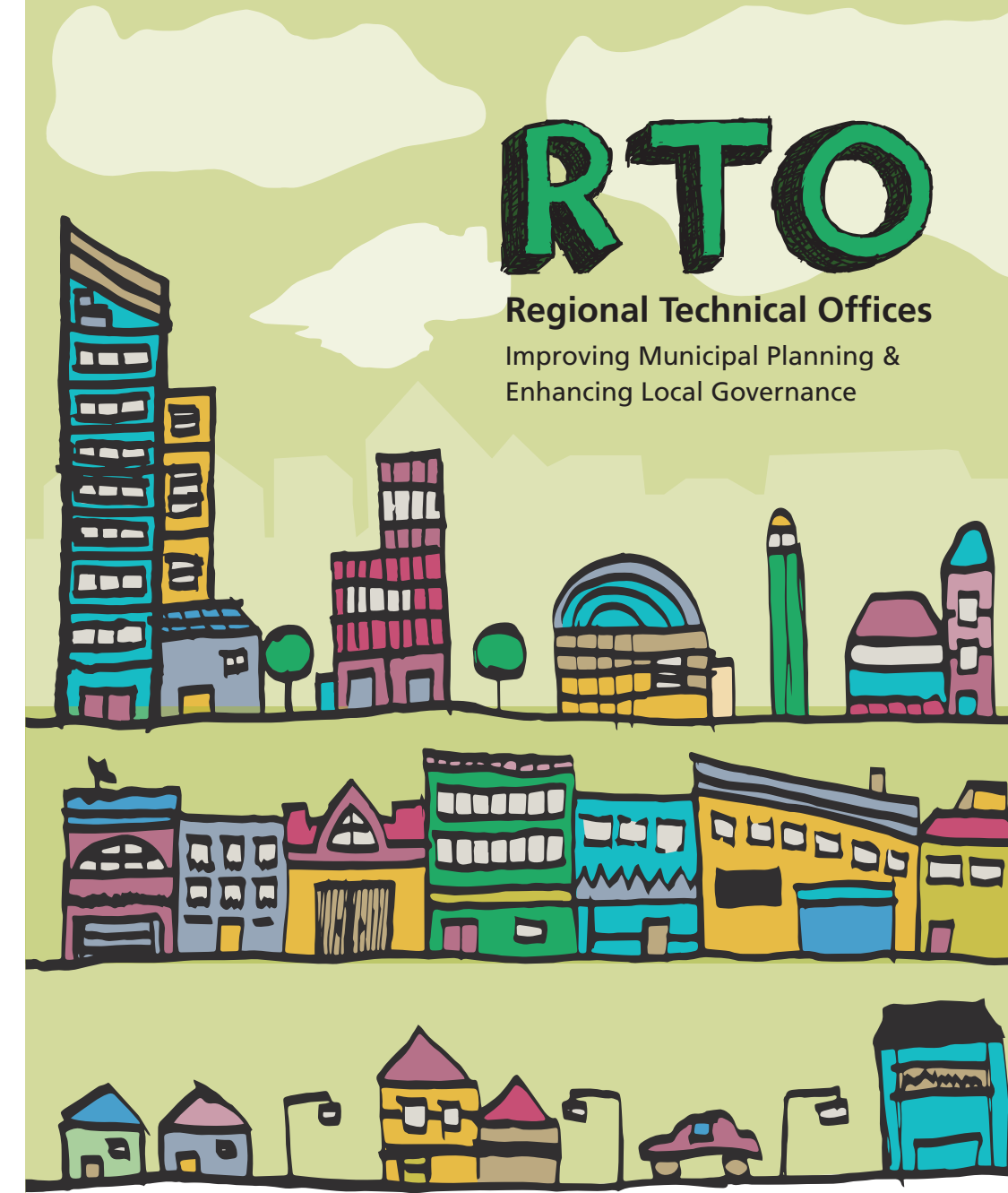
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# RTO

## Regional Technical Offices

Improving Municipal Planning &  
Enhancing Local Governance



**UN HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

## 1. What is a Regional Technical Office (RTO)?

The RTO is a unit performing under the mandate of the Union of Municipalities (UoM), and comprises motivated local experts and technical persons. It aims at mobilizing public and civil local actors to collectively address local needs based on available resources. The RTO is a tool that aims to strengthen local governance, enhance service delivery, and mainstream planned interventions.

## 2. How are RTOs established?

Until now, RTOs are being established as part of UN-Habitat projects' implementation strategy/approach at the regional level. The establishment process of an RTO normally requires 1 month and involves the following steps:

**1** Negotiate with the concerned UoM on the establishment of the RTO.

### Output:

- "Official decision" on RTO establishment endorsed by the Union's council.
- An Agreement of Cooperation (AoC) is signed between UN-Habitat and the concerned UoM.

**2** Agree with the UoM on the required expertise and the number of persons to be recruited. Develop ToRs and conduct interviews.

### Output:

- The RTO team is recruited and is included within the UoM.

**3** The Union secures appropriate office space for the RTO, while UN-Habitat secures the needed equipment.

### Output:

- Sufficient office space is secured and properly equipped for the RTO operations.

**4** Orientation sessions to the RTO team are conducted by UN-Habitat.

### Output:

- RTO team is ready to operate.

## 3. How is RTO staff recruited?

UN-Habitat develops relevant ToRs, which are posted on "bulletin boards" in the offices of the UoM and/or in other concerned Municipalities. Interviews with the candidates are conducted by UN-Habitat in order to avoid social and political pressure on the UoM during the recruitment process. A list of recommended candidates is then proposed to the UoM for final approval.

## 4. What is the structure of the RTO team?

The RTO team's structure varies from one Union to another, based on the needs, types of activities to be implemented, and the staff which already exists in the UoM. RTOs consist of an average of 4 to 5 persons of different professional backgrounds. This may include civil engineers, architects, surveying engineers, field monitors, IT or GIS operators, and admin support staff. In certain circumstances when other tasks are requested from the Union, the RTO may hire additional expertise on full or part time basis such as social workers, legal advisors, etc.

## 5. Where are RTOs housed?

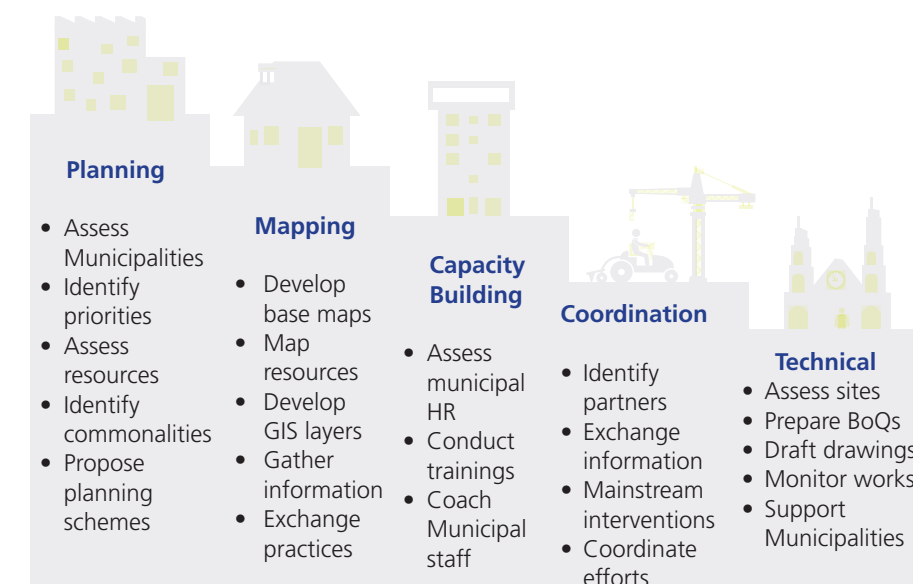
Ideally, RTOs should be housed within UoM offices. This enables the Head of the Union to closely work with, guide and supervise the team on a daily basis.

## 6. What are the main tasks/functions of RTOs?

The RTO scope of work is broad encompassing a range of activities based on the UoM mandate such as:

- Enhancing local authorities and actors participation towards better decision-making and local stability;
- Promoting technically-sound and cost effective solutions for the construction, upgrading, and rehabilitation of community facilities and urban services at all sectoral levels;
- Supporting municipalities and UoMs in prioritizing and identifying problems and accordingly planning sound interventions;
- Raising awareness of municipal and UoMs employees on good governance, administration, community participation, in addition to implementation and maintenance of infrastructure and urban services;
- Establishing solid networks between municipalities and key local public and civil society actors such as the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) Social Development Centers (SDC), Water Establishment Regional Offices, public schools and health centers, Community Based Organizations (CBO), private sector, local committees, etc.

Those activities are being achieved through a wide variety of tasks that are categorized as follows:



## 7. Who covers the RTOs expenses?

UN-Habitat mainly covers the expenses of the RTOs established as part of its projects' activities and budgets. This is done through an agreement of cooperation signed between the two parties. While UN-Habitat normally covers staff salaries, Unions mainly cover RTOs running and operating costs (office space, electricity, water, communication, cleaning, stationery, etc.).

## 8. How are RTOs managed and administered?

RTOs are promoted as an integral unit within the Unions, and therefore UN-Habitat urges Unions to take full management responsibilities of RTOs while providing technical support and coaching. A director is nominated by the RTO team members to be in charge of planning and supervising the team. Thus the technical offices abide by the working hours assigned as per the UoMs and follow their administrative, financial, and HR rules and regulations.