



Chapter 2 : Governance Assessments and Governance Indicators in the Arab Region

2.1 Introduction

Multiple reviews of MDG achievements have highlighted governance as a missing link in the achievement and sustainability of MDG results. As international attention is focused on the outcomes from Rio+20, and the discussion of the post-2015 framework, questions are raised about the role governance would have in new international commitments, and, accordingly, how advances in governance may be measured and for what purposes. On the national level, the improved supply of and demand for high quality data on governance could result in improved social accountability -- with the active engagement of multiple stakeholder groups. Active collaboration between policy-makers, national institutions, citizens and civil society in indicator definition and data collection processes could be a more powerful catalyst for long term improvements in democratic practice than measurement of results alone.

The attempts to translate complex concepts of governance into numbers that can be measured over time and across countries have intensified since the late 1990s. Global indices that rank countries performance on various aspects of governance and democracy, such as Worldwide Governance Indicators of the World Bank, Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International, USAID-funded Freedom in the World Index, are often used to determine development assistance decisions by the donors. While such global rankings and indicators play important role in invigorating the discussions about the state of governance, they are often criticized for a variety of conceptual and methodological limitations. The concept of governance is suffering from lack of theoretical grounding. The quality of data collection differs dramatically among countries in the samples, raising questions about appropriateness of comparisons. Moreover, starting points among countries with the same ranking are very different. Consequently, simplified ranking cannot capture the evolution of a specific country, or demonstrate its commitment to reform. The measures are often based on surveys of expert perceptions, which do not necessarily reflect the experiences of population at large, especially the marginalised groups. Some governments in developing countries regard the indicators as biased and not relevant to understanding the reality in their countries. Furthermore, they do not allow for disaggregation beyond the national level, and do not capture in-country regional variations. So the results of such global comparison measurements cannot be used for policy reforms on national level. In addition to these technical issues, externally driven assessments raise issues of legitimacy and national ownership, as they are often conducted by international experts, and are not part of broader sustained efforts to tackle the underlying problems.

Recognizing the limitations of global measurements and acknowledging the importance of local targets and measures on democratic governance, a number of international organizations and bilateral donors, including UNDP, have been advocating for and promoting country-led governance assessments .



Such assessment could serve many purposes. It can enhance a country's capacity to evaluate measure and monitor progress towards democratic governance today and in the future. An assessment makes it easier to understand the quality of governance. With better understanding comes more effective action to improve the practice of democratic governance. An assessment can, for example, help to identify institutions and practices that perpetuate unfair and sub-standard provision of services to marginalized and vulnerable groups. The process also can provide opportunities for the poor to voice their concerns .

UNDP's Global Programme on Governance Assessments

The UNDP has been advocating for and supporting implementation of country-led governance assessments through its Global Programme on Governance Assessments since 2004. The programme is coordinated by the Oslo Governance Center. The UNDP approach to governance assessments is built on in-depth institutional and context analysis, and is driven by the strategic principles of national ownership, capacity development, and alignment to national processes. Key activities of the Global Programme include strengthening national ownership through multi-stakeholder engagement, supporting countries in defining and selecting indicators that are country-contextualized, pro-poor and gender sensitive, assisting in the development of national databases on democratic governance, and promoting the uptake and use of governance indicators in policy making. In October 2011, it organised the Oslo Governance Forum ⁹, which brought together more than 270 policy makers, experts and practitioners. One of the outcomes of the Forum was the adoption of the "Oslo Principles on Democratic Governance Assessments" ¹⁰. As a regional follow up, in November 2011, the Africa Forum on Civil Society and Governance Assessments showcased innovation and leadership in Africa in using assessments and technology to promote social accountability on the continent. The consultation in the context of the Arab Governance Week was envisioned as a second regional follow up.

Producing data is just one in a series of steps in the process of conducting a governance assessment. It is often the least problematic. For assessments to have an impact on governance performance, the data need to be used by key stakeholders able to influence policies. The road to policy influence varies with the kind of actors who lead the assessment. Where the assessment is led by actors external to the government, activities such as lobbying, advocacy and outreach become important in strengthening the uptake of data in policy process. Such assessments can serve as critical social accountability and transparency mechanisms for governance performance and citizen voice. Country-specific and disaggregated indicators allow targeting specific institutions and practices that have to be changed.

⁹ <http://gaportal.org/events/detail/the-oslo-governance-forum-democratic-governance-assessments-for-social-accountability-oslo-2011>

¹⁰ <http://www.oslogovernanceforum.org/images/stories/PDFs/oslo-principles.pdf>



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Governance assessments can be initiated by the service-providing institution, like the Ministry of Health, by a semi-independent institution, like a Governance Performance Administration or Information and Decision Support Center, or by civil society organizations or by a combination of these institutions. Civil society should be actively involved at both the national and local level and during all stages of design, implementation, data collection and analysis. By doing so, the governance assessments can strengthen both the supply and demand side of good governance and build the capacities of civil society organizations to enter into a constructive dialogue with government at various levels .

2.2 Governance Data ¹¹

The lack of accurate, timely and relevant governance data affects the ability of citizens to hold their governments accountable and hinders efforts of national government and other stakeholders to ensure good performance management and to measure progress in governance. In most Arab countries, the institutional framework for producing and disseminating traditional statistics is weak. Institutional arrangements that establish independence of statistical offices are lacking, and data-collection activities are monopolized by the state because non-governmental actors are not allowed to collect data. For political reasons, the methodology for data collection by national statistical offices is often constructed in a manner that does not allow for data to be disaggregated below the level of large regions. Thus, regional disparities are hidden. Statistical offices can suffer from inability to attract the most qualified human resources, so the quality of traditional statistical products varies. In addition, the skills for interpreting and communicating results, and explaining to the users the limitations of the data, are traditionally weak in the Arab region. Furthermore, the lack of creativity in developing new statistical products that satisfy the needs of politicians, media, business community, and civil society is making statistical offices more and more irrelevant to the public sphere. Consequently, official statistics on traditional economic and social data, such as unemployment, inflation, and minorities, is not always perceived as credible. While indicators on socio-economic situation of the population are regularly collected by the National Statistics Offices, governance data is not considered to be part of their responsibilities. The work of Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, featured in Case-Study box 2.1 is an example that could be considered for replication by other statistical offices in the region .

¹¹This section draws on presentations and discussions in sessions “7a: Challenges and Opportunities for Governance Data”, “8a: Critical analysis of regional and national efforts in producing comparative data on governance” and “10a: Accountability in public budgets and expenditures”, as well as background paper “Production and utilization of governance data in the Arab region” by Dr. Magued Osman, Cairo University, commissioned by UNDP.



Case-study 2.1 Governance Surveys of Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

Over the last decade, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) has developed methodologies and tools for measuring governance through a number of local, national and regional projects, and established a separate governance statistical unit. In 2010 a governance survey aimed to assess perceptions and first-hand experiences of citizens on various issues related to governance, with a particular focus on corruption indicators. The civil servant module included questions on budget administration, personnel management, decision-making process and reporting of corruption. The household module covered questions related to actual experiences with public services (mainly health, education and judicial), and experiences of corruption in PA institutions. The survey outputs were produced in two separate descriptive reports, widely distributed, and uploaded on the website of PCBS, with raw data available upon request. Bilateral consultations were also held with selected Ministries and service providers to discuss survey results and identify strategies to improve performance on governance.

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Significantly, data critical for understanding how the State is governed are typically not made available to the public. Such data includes revenues from exploring natural resources, budget allocations, salaries of governmental employees, and distribution of public and private investments by geographical location. Furthermore, data that can be used to measure inequalities in access to opportunities are not even collected, or, when collected, also not made available. Such data includes political representation, income distribution, and access to credit by social groups (gender, ethnic groups, tribal affiliation, residence and income groups). This lack of transparency in governance data protects politicians and government employees from being accountable to their citizens, builds mistrust that can, and has in several countries already, turn to justifiable frustration.

The collection and dissemination of governance data in the Arab region is complicated by the lack of freedom of information legislation. Restrictive laws, policies and institutional arrangements further confound access to information. While there have been initiatives in the region aiming to regulate access to information, some of these initiatives have quite restrictive provisions. For example, Jordan enacted a “Free Flow of Information Act” in 2007, but some of its provisions actually make access to information more difficult. More recently, Tunisia adopted a Decree-Law on Freedom of Information in 2011, and published the circular regulating its implementation on 3 May 2012, on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day. But some important issues, such as protection of whistleblowers, were left out of the law, and there is not independent oversight mechanism provided to properly implement the Decree.

In Morocco, the new Constitution adopted in July 2011 includes a provision guaranteeing access to public information.



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In the Arab region, there have been multiple initiatives to enhance the use of ITCs in maintaining and facilitating information flows between government departments. For example in Egypt, the Ministry of Local Development has set up “RABET” - an electronic information management system to improve planning and policy making at the local level in Egypt. It connects all local administrative units from villages to governorates to the Ministry, systematically collecting data on a wide range of socio- economic and governance indicators to share it with decision-makers on all levels. In the future, the data would also be accessible to the citizens, so they can use it to monitor the situation on the ground.

Other examples from Egypt include Egypt Information Portal and the Egyptian Government Portal. While these portals do aim to provide access to information to the citizens, their interface is not very use-friendly, the registration requirements are cumbersome, and a lot of information can only be requested on-line, and yet has to be collected in person. The portals also carry blanket disclaimers about the validity of information. The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics is solely responsible for production of information according to the current legislation in Egypt. Meanwhile, successive governments since the revolution have issued several Law drafts that promote restrictions on freedom of information, and put the final word in the hands of the security services to determine what is available and what is obscured. Such restrictive governmental drafts have emerged despite the presence of a legislative draft prepared by non-governmental organizations in line with international standards. If the NGO’s draft were adopted, it could be classified among the world top five laws promoting the free flow of information.

In Yemen, in June 2012, the Parliament approved the Access to Information Law, making Yemen the second country in the region to pass such legislation. This step was a result of several years of advocacy work by civil society organizations in the country. The Economic Media Centre was at the forefront of advocacy work, forming a team of advocates, including lawyers, human rights activists and journalists, holding seminars inside government agencies to educate employees about the law’s implications, and sending regular text messages to parliamentarians on the subject. General information campaigns to raise awareness among the public were also organized. The next steps will involve developing a procedure to uphold the right of access to information outlined in the law and implementing the law’s provisions in all institutions and government bodies.

The ability of citizens and CSOs to access information about public budgets and expenditures and to monitor and influence processes related to the allocation and management of public resources is essential for building safeguards against corruption. It is also critical for ensuring that public resources are allocated equitably. This requires a paradigm shift in the society, from a culture of secrecy to one of transparency, which entails a fundamental change in the mindsets of politicians and bureaucrats and recognition from citizens that information is their right.



A case-study of an in-depth analysis of municipal budgets carried out in Jordan revealed that the budgets of the municipalities come mostly from the central government, thus encouraging accountability towards the central government rather than the residents of municipality. The inter-governmental transfers system does not take into account indicators of poverty and unemployment; rather, it tends to reinforce existing socio-economic inequalities. Despite highly centralized governance system in Jordan, municipal authorities have the legal authority to collect a relatively significant number of taxes and fees, yet these taxes and fees are all too often not collected. At the same time, citizen's lack structured mechanisms to access information on financial budgets of municipalities or to hold them accountable.

In Sudan, the Ministry of Finance and National Economy, experimented with participatory approaches to budgeting. Civil society organizations, research institutions, political parties, civil servants and representatives of the private sector were involved in budget preparation at the level of the local government unit, the governorates or al-Wilayat, the Wilayah legislative councils and the central government. When stakeholders from different areas of society work together on budgeting and expenditures concerning strategy, programs and priorities, they increase the possibility that the needs of different groups would be equally addressed. In 2013, the Government of Sudan plans to increase and further institutionalize the open participation of all stakeholders to share ideas on budgeting and budget management with local authorities.

The role of non-state actors in collecting and producing data on governance is also extremely important. Studies conducted by independent research organizations and universities and indicators of governance constructed by civil society organizations generate independent debate about the quality of governance, key problems and proposed solutions, and contribute to an informed dialogue with governmental actors. Such assessments also represent a paradigm shift, demonstrating that the citizens have the right and responsibility to rate state performance on all governance levels. Strengthened political commitment to evidence-based policy making on behalf of the governments, demonstrated by creating enabling environment for public accessibility of basic governance-related data, is necessary to enable such initiative to contribute to improved governance in the region.

There are several initiatives aimed to produce indicators of governance by Arab experts based on international standards and tailored to the Arab Region. Those initiatives include: the Arab Human Development reports, produced with UNDP support; Arab Democracy Barometer and Arab Democracy Index work, led by the Arab Reform Initiative; State of Local Democracy in the Arab World, produced by International IDEA; and Arab Opinion Index, produced by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS). Three case-studies of such assessments are presented below. Regional efforts to construct governance indices are relatively new and critical discussions of methodologies for collection and analysis of data are needed to sharpen the tools and to ensure policy impact of the results. Positive trends demonstrated by various international and regional assessments by a number of countries on the eve of the Arab Spring attest to the need to focus more closely on inequalities within countries.



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Case-study 2.2 Local Democracy Assessment in the Arab Region

IDEA carried out research on the State of Local Democracy (SoLD) in the Arab World in four Arab countries (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Yemen) on the eve of the uprisings. (The report was produced in late 2010). In each country, four municipalities were selected for in-depth research, taking into account diversity of geographic and developmental conditions. SoLD methodology assesses the level and quality of local democracy in two main measures: by focusing on representative democracy (elections, political parties and elected officials) and participatory democracy (popular participation, civil society and non-governmental organizations, and consensus-based policymaking); and by examining the institutions of representative and participatory democracy and the processes and practices involved in the implementation of local democracy on the ground. Assessment process is driven by municipal officers, administrators, NGOs and civil leaders - all at the local levels. The questionnaire encourages users to engage in systematic analyses of positions of power in local democratic institutions and practices, to focus on the most significant problems in each area and to make recommendations for improvements.

The assessment aims to answer the following questions:

- What are the elements of democracy that are currently excellent, satisfactory or failing?
- How effective have previous reform efforts been and what lessons could be learned from the past?
- What actions can be undertaken by city/local authorities and other stakeholders to develop and sustain more democratic governance?

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Case-study 2.3 Arab Democracy Index

The Arab Reform Initiative is a network of independent Arab research and policy institutes. Since 2008, it has produced three reports on the Arab Democracy Index to provide a regular Arab evaluation of change in the region. Data collection for the fourth report is underway. The Index allows a numerical reading of 40 different indicators chosen to reflect the democratic pulse of the Arab region based on the prevailing democracy paradigm. The Index uses two kinds of indicators: those that measure the means of democratic transition (such as legislation), and those that measure the practices of democratic transition (such as elections). The indicators are also divided among four principles or values: those that measure the strength of public institutions (e.g. the separation of powers or the accountability of government); those that gauge respect for rights and freedoms (e.g. the freedom of political parties or ability to organize demonstrations and protests); those that measure the reach of the rule of law in the political regime (for example, the independence of the judiciary or the prevalence of arbitrary detention); and finally those that measure equality and social justice (e.g. gender equality, illiteracy rates among men and women, and the proportion of male and female university graduates).

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Case-study 2.4 Jordan Reform Watch

The Jordan Reform Watch project was launched in 2012 to translate the process of reform into simple numbers that could be updated on monthly basis and monitored over time. It focuses on three indicators: anti-corruption and transparency (performance of anti-corruption commissions; performance of the parliament; performance of the government; law and legislations); political reform (civic liberties; women in reform; political participation; role of civil society; performance of the parliament); and economic and social policies (right to education; right to healthcare; right to work; right to suitable living conditions; right to benefit from science and culture; role of civil society; role of the parliament; role of the government). The value for each sub-indicator is agreed upon in a consensual manner at a meeting of experts with different backgrounds based on the research about on-going political and economic processes.

Mohammed Hussainy, Director of Identity Center, Jordan

2.3 Local Governance and Assessments ^{12 - 13}

Due to their mostly rentier economies and centralized character of the State, most, if not all, Arab countries missed out on the wave of decentralization that took place in many low and middle income countries during the last few decades of the 20th century. In the Arab region, local government is usually not seen as a separate sphere of government, and therefore is not well defined (and protected) in the constitution or in related legislation. Local governments thus operate isolated from the other spheres of government dealing with “left over” social services that are deemed too insignificant for concern from the line ministries. For most regimes, the institution of local government has been, and remains in some cases, more an instrument for central government to exercise control over its citizens than to stimulate and facilitate development.

¹² This section draws on presentations and discussions in sessions “9a: Country-cases of Local-level Assessments” and “10c: Citizen/community-led monitoring of public service”, as well as the background paper “Challenges and opportunities for improving Social Accountability at the local level in the Arab region; how can local governance assessments contribute?” by Paul Van Hoof, IDASA, commissioned by UNDP.

¹³ A useful source for practitioners designing a tailored local governance assessment, is A Users’ Guide to Local Governance Assessments, which compiles existing knowledge on decentralization and local governance measurement and provides a platform for understanding and navigating the array of assessment tools that exist. <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/democratic-governance/oslo-governance-center/governance-assessments/a-users-guide-to-measuring-local-governance-/LG%20Guide.pdf>



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The first (and sometimes only) step in the direction of decentralization in the region is the institution of an elected local council. These elected councils, whose main function is to monitor the delivery of services provided by deconcentrated ¹⁴ units of line ministries, have no legislative power and very limited implementing capacities. Therefore, in the Arab region the term 'local government' actually refers to a 'hybrid' model of an elected council together with a purely appointed set of executive officials. Local governments have no fiscal autonomy because their authority and capacity to claim local taxes and user charges for services are quite limited. Therefore, they depend completely on mostly earmarked grants from central government - which may not even reach the municipalities. Thus, the upward accountability structures are reinforced and the autonomy of these local authorities is further limited. The lack of authority to make political decisions independent of central government leaves them unable to respond adequately to demands from citizens, even for the limited functions they have and the services they are obliged and expected to provide, because they remain under strong control of the national ministries and are guided by national policies rather than local priorities.

As a result, local governments seem to operate in isolation, disconnected from their citizens. Basic economic, social and statistical data relevant for the proper management of the municipality or district are either not collected or, if collected, not made available to the public, further hampering efficiency and accountability. In addition, there are hardly any communication and consultation mechanisms between local governments and their citizens. Public meetings are rarely organized, there are no consultation structures or partnerships with civil society, and complaint mechanisms for citizens do not exist. At the same time, given its direct impact on the everyday lives of individuals, the local level plays a key role in democratic reform processes, contributing significantly to achieving further progress towards the consolidation and promotion of democracy at other levels of governance.

Governance assessments can be the first form of constructive dialogue between the state and its citizens. The process of assessment empowers citizens as they get used to the idea that they can ask critical questions and begin to hold service providers accountable by providing feedback on their performance. Assessment could also contribute to a mind shift among service providers and decision-makers: while paid by the state, they are actually working for and accountable to the public. This section presents the five case studies of local governance assessments, presented during the 2 sessions of the Arab Governance Week, and draws some common themes from the discussions that followed the presentations. Each case-study illustrates how such process could be carried out, and what outcomes could be expected, while the two detailed case-studies presented in the text boxes also elaborate on the methodology.

¹⁴ The term "deconcentration" is used in the literature on local governance to describe administrative decentralization, when administrative responsibility for specified functions is assigned to the units at lower level of government, without delegating decision-making authority. Although based on local level, these units are accountable directly to the central level, and do not have local accountability.



Case-study 2.5 Assessment Toolkit for Promoting Integrity, Transparency and Accountability in Palestinian Local Government Units (LGUs)

The Assessment Toolkit was developed through a joint project of UNDP and the Ministry of Local Government to help identify bottlenecks in the LGUs' performance, and to develop interventions to improve their tasks and functions, and to effectively address the needs of the citizens. It is a diagnostic tool that identifies the strengths and weaknesses of each municipality in six main areas of municipal performance: Administrative Regulations and Human Resources, Council (chair/mayor and members), Finance, Engineering & Planning, Supplies & Procurement and Community Participation. This toolkit aims at measuring the the quality of performance of the LGU, its relationships with citizens, the availability of procedures and mechanisms to strengthen integrity, and the degree of compliance by the LGO with prevailing laws and regulations.

Data collection methodology includes questionnaires targeting the municipality and its employees (weight 35%), focus group discussions of municipal officials and of citizens and civil society organizations (weight 20%), revision and verification of public documents and records (weight 20%), interviews (weight 10%), and a questionnaire for citizens and public audience (weight 15%). The toolkit allows for both quantitative and qualitative analysis of LGU performance. Each question carries a range of responses with a value from 0 to 10. The data is then entered into an excel sheet to facilitate understanding of the results for any reviewer of the performance of the piloted municipality. In addition, a qualitative analysis report is usually attached to the quantitative findings to assist the reviewer in understanding the municipality's strengths and weaknesses, and developing an intervention 'reform' plan for each weakness. Thus, the toolkit is useful for objectively measuring the performance of LGUs and presenting it in a manner that is both accessible and unbiased. This unbiased presentation of performance results is particularly valuable for strengthening democratic values and fighting corruption in a politically and socially sensitive environment where political loyalties are dictated by other factors.

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Case-study 2.6 Local Governance Assessment in Egypt

Local Governance Assessment in Egypt is a UNDP-supported project piloted in El-Fayoum Governorate by the Social Contract Center (SCC), affiliated with the Information and Decision Support Center in the Cabinet of Ministers and Local Development Observatory. The Observatory itself is affiliated with the Ministry of Local Development. The Assessment is based on a generic governance assessment framework for Egypt developed in consultation with representatives of sectoral ministries and civil society organisations. It focuses on the following local services areas: water and sanitation; health, education; electricity; transport and roads; and solid waste management. The indicators for each service area are constructed around the following dimensions of governance: accountability; participation; transparency; rule of law; control of corruption; responsiveness; equity; efficiency; and effectiveness.

Data collection for the assessment is carried out through a household survey, covering 6400 respondents (using multistage stratified random sampling) and incorporating interviews with key informants (civil servants, civil society leaders, local academia etc.). To ensure sustainability of the assessment process in the future, local Information Centres of the Ministry of Local Development were used for carrying out the household surveys under the supervision of SSC and LDO. Once the initial reports based on the research finding were drafted, validations workshops were organised on local, governorate and national levels. The objective of these workshops was to start the dialogue process about the assessment findings and discuss the strategies for improving local governance.

The Social Contract Center also undertook a participatory evaluation of the government's comprehensive community development program implemented in 151 poor rural villages in Egypt. The evaluation focused on introducing a citizen community evaluation scheme through providing communities with the tools and skills to assess public services. A more intensive, advanced program of training and evaluation was further piloted in 8 villages. The concept of the project was to empower citizens to evaluate services through very simple scientific methods, and to shift their attitude from passive consumers of services to active participants or partners. The major problem of this approach, however, was that it created numerous expectations on the side of the service users that could not be fulfilled.

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Khaled Abdelhalim, Local Development Observatory, Egypt



In Morocco, the National Observatory on Human Development (NOHD) was established to ensure that policy decisions are backed by research evidence. NOHD's mission is to follow up and to evaluate the Human Development policies. The Observatory began by monitoring the implementation of human development programmes at the local level, and then proceeded to design a monitoring framework for local governance. This assessment process aimed to diagnose which aspects of the local governance system may need to be strengthened to improve human development results. The methodology framework adopted by NODH focused on the local level as both an implementation base for services delivery and as an essential territorial base to implement human development policies and to combat poverty. The analysis on the local scale required checking the inter-relations between local, regional and national levels. Special focus was made on assessing core principles of governance criteria - participation, transparency, equality, and the coherence of diverse human development and poverty policies implemented on local level. This study piloted an innovative research approach on local levels and tested a set of qualitative indicators related to local inter-sectorial coherence of the national programs.

Services delivered at the local level, by the local government units and local departments of central ministries are the key areas where the state and citizens interact. Basic public services in the areas of health, education, water, sanitation are essential to citizen well-being and of particular importance to poor and disadvantaged social groups. As a result, many social accountability initiatives focus on improving the quality and accessibility of these services through citizen participation in processes of decision-making and oversight.

In Tunisia, the Tunisian Active Network for Social Accountability has piloted a Participatory Budgeting initiative at the municipal level in Sayada municipality. It has started when some newly-elected mayors realized they could improve their public image by engaging citizens in difficult decisions about resources through public meetings involving communities and government representatives. They have created mechanisms for citizens and the civil society and government to discuss budget constraints together and make trade-offs and optimize the use of scarce public resources. Such participatory budgeting approaches help to allocate scarce resources to those citizens who needed them most, and to push the decentralization agenda forward. The process of participatory budgeting educates the citizens about their rights to access information, to voice their opinion, to vote for public policy priorities, and to hold decision makers accountable for allocation of government budget. At the same time it informs the citizens about the limitations in terms of resources and capacities of the local governments.

The Gaza Office of the Coalition for Accountability and Integrity/AMAN carried out a national campaign to enhance the role of the citizens and media in examining how public resources are spent, focusing specifically on the use of public cars by civil servants for private purposes. A public awareness campaign, including meetings, information billboards, radio and television episodes, was organized to encourage citizens to report vehicles misuse. More than 500 notifications from citizens about government vehicles used outside official working hours were received. As a result of the campaign, a set of policies by the Cabinet to pool cars from certain job categories and identify their uses within the Council of Ministers was introduced. Overall, the collaboration with the Ministry of Transportation was successful, although there were challenges due to a lack of understanding and willingness by some of the officials. The public was also empowered: the



Every month, they compared their data with the existing government data. This mechanism proved to be an efficient and effective tool to hold government accountable.

The common theme from these examples is the focus on facilitating a dialogue between various stakeholders on both the supply and demand side of governance, and to identify solutions that can be implemented collectively at the local level. Citizens contribute to the assessment process by providing their opinions about the quality of service delivery and governance on the local level and learning about the limitations faced by the local governments. Understanding that local government has limited resources and authority and an increased insight in the actual decision-making process about the use of these limited resources might help citizens to become more realistic in their expectations about what their government is currently able to provide. At the same time, expectations of the citizens involved in the social accountability process at the grass-roots level need to be managed carefully, as many problems and shortcoming cannot be addressed at the local level, due to lack of powers and capacities of local authorities to deal with specific issues related to service delivery that are to be addressed at the higher – district or national levels.

By measuring the actual performance of both elected and centrally appointed government institutions at local levels in various critical aspects of governance (like accountability, transparency, participation, equity, etc.), these assessments identify the shortcomings in the present mechanisms of service delivery. Additionally, they shed light on the local political economy dynamics that explain why services are not up to standard and why the present delivery mechanisms are functioning inadequately. By establishing the relationship between the quality of governance and the quality of service delivery, such assessments can underline the systemic failures that need to be addressed, thus triggering a debate at various levels and fora in society about the need to strengthen democratic governance structures at the local level. In order for increase the policy impact of such assessments, it is necessary to have them institutionalized and engage in dialogue and collaboration with different levels of government, i.e. from central level (ministries) to local level (municipalities).

2.4 Inclusion of women and youth in the governance processes and assessments ¹⁵

Women across the Arab world played, and continue to play, a remarkable role in the transitions of their respective countries. Although there is a common tendency to discuss and analyze what has become known as the “Arab Spring” as a monolithic phenomenon, women’s experience, of each of the “Arab Spring” countries, has been distinct, particularly since each country has undergone change in its own way. Consequently, the occurring transformation defies generalization. Nevertheless, the theme for women’s involvement in the uprisings across the transitioning countries is the same: a demand for justice and gender equality. Women who participated in the transitions did not only call for the change in the oppressive regimes; they also sought greater empowerment and gender equality in all spheres: political, economic and social.

¹⁵ This section draws on presentations and discussions in sessions “11a: Focus on Gender” and “12c: Generating youth-sensitive governance data”.



Regardless of the ongoing fluidity of the situation, a rare opportunity now presents itself for the advancement of greater, women's real political participation in decision-making. This current historic period of transformation also offers significant opportunities for the promotion of gender equality principles within the constitution. Different political processes, including constitutional reform, are now taking place in several countries. In addition, there is a real potential for a dynamic exchange of lessons and experiences gained in countries with similar contexts. To respond to the demands of both women and men, it is critical to promote the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment principles within state institutions, structures and practices; one of the most important entry points for this effort is constitutional reform.

Women and men often have different needs and interests in many areas of governance, and their experiences with institutions vary. Differences also apply by age groups among both genders. In addition, poor people and rural dwellers experience service provision differently from affluent city dwellers. These differences are important when assessing governance to ensure that the voices of marginalised groups are included in the assessment process. Systematic analysis of government institutions and policies needs to be carried out to ensure that the needs of women and youth are properly reflected. To identify differences in perspectives and access to services by women and men and boys and girls, assessment methodologies have to be inclusive and use gender sensitive indicators. Such analysis has to be carried out with direct participation of women and youth people. This could allow tracking the differing impacts of governance reforms on women and men and ascertain whether interventions are positively or negatively affecting one group more than the other.

Gender Sensitive Indicators

According to UNDP's Measuring democratic governance- a framework for selecting pro poor and gender sensitive indicators, indicators can be considered to be inclusive and gender-sensitive if they are:

- Gender specific, such as the number of seats reserved in parliament for women;
- Implicitly gendered, such as maternal mortality or ratio of sexual harassment cases reported vs. prosecuted;
- Chosen separately by men and women and indicate differences in priorities or preferences;
- Disaggregated by sex, and age.

Disaggregated indicators can reveal inequalities between men and women in relation to poverty, public service access, education, employment or participation in governance and decision-making. However, without gender sensitive indicators, the underlying sources of inequalities would not be revealed, and would not be framed as part of policy discussions or reforms proposals.

Analysis of policies from the perspective of particular needs of women allows addressing inequalities in a targeted manner. The process of budget allocation has the potential to either worsen inequalities, or contribute to creating more equitable policies and achieving development goals .



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Gender Responsive Budgeting is the process to ensure that government planning, programming and budgeting contributes to the advancement of gender equality and the fulfillment of women's rights. In Egypt, UNWOMEN has provided extensive support for developing Gender Responsive Social Budgeting Strategy for Education, Health, Water, Manpower, Food Security and Social Security sectors. It was piloted in 27 governorates in partnership with Ministry of Finance, the National Council for Women, Academic institutes, and UN Women. A gender analysis of the national budget, the National Development Plan (2007-2012), and other government policies related to budget were carried out. Media seminars and civil society workshops were organized to raise awareness about gender-responsive budgeting. Training activities and an Arabic e-learning platform were launched to build capacity of MOF employees working on the processes of planning, reviewing and execution national budget. Consequently, gender-responsive budget methodology was institutionalized by the Ministry of Finance.

Focusing the analysis on the local level, and specifically on service delivery, is particularly important from the gender perspective. The delivery of services is especially important for women because their primary gender roles as mothers, housekeepers and caregivers are more dependent on basic services such as health care, water supply, sanitation and education for children than are men's roles. Basic governance services such as political and electoral services, justice and police services and civil registration are also strategically important for women in the pursuit of gender equality and the realization of their human rights. The MDG indicators show that governments are currently failing in their obligations to ensure that services are delivered effectively, particularly to women.

A useful methodology for analyzing how women experience services on local level is the community-based scorecards approach, which is a hybrid of techniques of social audit, community monitoring and citizen report cards. In Albania, UN WOMEN Albania has supported the process of Women Focused Community Based Scorecards. Approximately 2,000 people, 91% of whom were female, took part in 110 meetings and opened forums in 7 targeted regions. The process included community-based performance evaluation, dialogue meeting between community and providers, development of input tracking scorecards, self-evaluation by service providers. Upon completion of the process, scorecards were adopted by service providers as part of their monitoring systems. This exercise allowed the identification of the core challenges that local women face, and created a new culture in which women were empowered to interact regularly with community leaders and local authorities interact regularly.

Another example of UN WOMEN's support to the analysis of women's experiences with service delivery was drawn from the work with the Ministry of Justice in Morocco. A service user survey was carried out in the context of UN Women support to the Ministry of Justice and Freedom in Morocco to improve the quality of services of local family courts in line with the new Family Code. The survey was targeting service users to assess the quality of access to family court services, identify barriers and obstacles, and formulate solutions. It followed legal service users through all stages – from the reception and registration of requests to the notification and implementation of judgments. It tested accessibility, speed of file processing, and the quality and consistency of services provided.



This was the first time that a service user-satisfaction survey had been implemented by a service provider in Morocco. It established a baseline against which service-user satisfaction will be evaluated periodically. The methodology of the survey was also replicated to conduct a study of national-level justice services.

In patriarchal societies, opportunities for young people to influence governance processes are typically limited. Young people have different, and frequently unrecognized, needs in terms of the services provided on local level. At the same time, the youth are increasingly looking for innovative ways to hold the state accountable and to engage in constructive dialogue about policies that directly affect their lives. At the same time, the Arab region has witnessed increased youth participation in political affairs since events unfolded in early 2011. Youth of all ages and backgrounds have been taking to the streets with demands that their voices be heard. In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, a plethora of youth initiatives are coming to life, in the shape of civil society organizations, volunteer initiatives and to some extent new political parties. Through these activities, youth are continuously demanding a greater say in the political developments of their countries and the region as a whole. As such, the role of Arab youth cannot be relegated to the periphery or confined to street protests that -on occasion - result in violence. Rather youth engagement should be central to all discussions and transformative change efforts.

Entry Points for Youth Political Participation

UNDP's Enhancing Youth Political Participation throughout the Electoral Cycle: A Good Practice Guide ¹⁶ offers an overview of entry points for the inclusion of young people in political and electoral processes and compiles good practice examples of mechanisms for civic and political empowerment of young people. It argues that a youth-friendly legal framework is crucial in enabling youth political participation.

Measures such as introducing youth and women's quotas in electoral laws, aligning the minimum voting age and the minimum age of eligibility to run for office, as well as addressing other legal barriers to youth participation, such as simplifying the process of registering youth-led participation, could create enabling legal environment. Mechanisms for their civic and political participation provide them with opportunity to learn the principles of governance from direct experience, and also allow policy makers to incorporate perspectives of young people in policy decisions and to tap into the creative energy of youth in designing policy solutions. Formal participation channels, such as school student councils, town youth councils, national youth councils and regional youth platform, need to be actively supported by the state. Incubators for innovative youth-led initiatives, such as Social Innovation Camps in Armenia, should be encouraged. Formal avenues for communication and advocacy with elected representatives should also be opened for young people, through such mechanisms as shadow youth councils and parliaments, dialogues with legislators, training and internship schemes. During elections, youth should also be included in electoral management body advisory boards, as poll station workers and election observers. At the same time, policy makers should also explore the channels of informal engagement with young people through consultations that give young people an opportunity to generate their own data about governance processes and conduct youth-focused analysis of policies.

¹⁶ http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/electoral_systemsandprocesses/enhancing-youth-political-participation-throughout-the-electoral/



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The UNV Regional Project “Arab Youth for Volunteering for Better Future” places special emphasis on civic education. The best approach is through learning by doing, by creating spaces and opportunities for young people to participate through schools and universities, community-based and voluntary organizations, youth wings of political parties, using online platforms etc. Volunteering has proven to be an effective means to this end, as it strengthens and facilitates the constructive participation of youth, through encouraging both formal and informal participation. Engaging youth as volunteers contributes to the process of peace and development through harnessing their boundless energy, creativity, and knowledge towards the effective provision of services and the development of new and innovative ways for improving their communities. Volunteerism can serve as a way in which girls and young women can socialize and escape the structures of traditions that confined them to their homes.

In Yemen, with support of UNDP, a Yemeni Youth Observatory was established as a non-partisan inclusive and sustainable public oversight organization working to mainstream the interests of youth in policy development. It aims to study and assess the needs and aspirations of the youth, to strengthen the role of youth in the field of policy analysis and to create a strong public opinion in support of youth issues. CARE Egypt, has been working on local level to empower the youth to participate in decision making on service provision. Activities have included raising awareness with local youth leaders on concepts of the social contract between the citizens and the state, and trainings on practices to engage with local officials, getting involved in community consultation and the monitoring of local budgets.

Center for Intercultural Dialogue in Macedonia aims to address youth participation in a systematic manner. Formal systems of support to young people in Macedonia include three elements - (1) mechanisms for involving young people in the governance systems, through structured dialogue between authorities and youth-led decision making; (2) support to youth-led initiatives and projects by both informal and formal youth CSOs; (3) professional youth work offered through youth centers. Young people should be encouraged to define the end results of any type of youth-focused interventions, thus taking ownership and responsibility for their work. Barriers to participation, including language and cultural divides, asymmetric information, formal attitudes, should be removed to ensure active participation of all young people. Process should be based on non-formal learning principles ensuring accessible learning and encouraging questions, thereby empowering the exchange and creation of ideas and approaches.

UNDP Armenia has supported Social Innovation Camp model, providing a forum that unifies people, ideas and digital tools to create innovative web-based solutions to social challenges. The Camps engage with youth organizations working on social issues through an intensive phase of online outreach and participatory workshops. This approach generates many perspectives on social challenges and new ideas on how to address the issues identified. At the final event, ideas are accelerated through the developmental process with software and an accompanying business model often produced within 48 hours. The process injects energy into the projects and creates a collaborative space for “techies”, government and youth to co-create. Each event produces 6 projects conceived, designed and implemented by youth volunteers. Examples of the projects emerging from the events in 2011 and 2012 include a citizen journalism website, a web-based platform for monitoring pre-school education in Yerevan and the digitization of the Armenian National Blood Registry (currently a paper-based system).



Analysis of government institutions and policies carried out the perspective of women and young people and whenever possible, with their direct participation in the process, has the potential to identify systemic mechanisms of exclusion, and come up with recommendations for more inclusive policies. Assessments are part of a political process, not just a technical exercise, so it is important to understand the broader political and cultural context, in which changes in attitudes towards women and youth could be properly targeted. Results of assessments focused on the perspectives of traditionally excluded groups can become important tools for evidence based advocacy and policy making to ensure greater equality in the society.

2.5 Corruption ¹⁷

Anti-corruption activities are identified as one of the key priorities in the region, both by citizens demanding change and by governments trying to respond to those demands. To provide targeted technical support for this process, UNDP has launched the regional project on Anti-Corruption and Integrity in Arab Countries (ACIAC), which currently offers a unique platform that promotes targeted and participatory policy reforms and collective action against corruption across the region. Expert consultations in the region, carried out by ACIAC, have emphasized the need to sharpen the focus on social accountability linking national anti-corruption agenda more closely to the aspirations and expectations of the peoples. Policy initiatives to combat corruption have to be based on solid research evidence. Therefore, assessments measuring the extent of corruption and the way it affects political institutions and service delivery need to be prioritized.

The Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) was adopted at the third session of the Conference of States Parties (CoSP) in 2009. As a result, countries will be increasingly required to closely examine the progress of their implementation efforts and take more concrete steps in the fight against corruption. The Review Mechanism is an intergovernmental process whose overall goal is to assist States Parties in the implementation of the Convention. It is expected to promote and facilitate the provision of technical assistance by enabling States Parties to identify and substantiate specific needs in this regard. It is also expected to provide the CoSP with information on successes, good practices and challenges related to UNCAC implementation, thus promoting a more sustainable knowledge exchange among States Parties.

Each review phase is composed of two review cycles of five years. The first cycle will review chapters III (Criminalization and law enforcement) and IV (International cooperation), and the second cycle will review chapters II (Preventive measures) and V (Asset recovery). Each cycle includes four annual rounds with one fourth of the States Parties selected, by the drawing of lots, to be reviewed during each round. The review process starts with a self-assessment exercise conducted by each country, using the comprehensive UNCAC Self-Assessment Checklist (Checklist). Afterwards, the self-assessment report is analyzed by two other States Parties, which are also selected by drawing of lots. The reviewing States Parties may request additional information through dialogue with the State under review and possibly direct means of information gathering such as a country visit or joint meeting as agreed.

¹⁷ This section draws on presentations and discussions in sessions “12a: Measuring Corruption”.



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The findings of the process are then developed into a country review report, based on a blueprint to ensure consistency, and submitted to the CoSP. The executive summary of this report is made public.

The Review Mechanism is therefore the formal mechanism and the internationally agreed framework of minimum requirements for assessing UNCAC implementation. Indeed, the Review Mechanism sets out a number of obligatory steps that States Parties are required to undertake in this regard, but also opens the door for willing countries to engage in more elaborate and inclusive assessment exercises, should they wish to increase the usefulness and reliability of the assessment exercise as a whole.

Jordan and Morocco have officially completed their reviews and published their executive summaries. Many other Arab countries, including Algeria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Yemen, have participated in reviewing other countries. Iraq, Kuwait, and UAE are in the final stages of their first review, and Djibouti, Tunisia, Qatar are preparing to start theirs. However, the involvement of non-governmental actors in these reviews has so far been very limited. Instead, separate non-governmental initiatives were launched in various countries including Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and the occupied Palestinian territory.

The Palestinian National Authority, although not formally required to do so, has committed itself to active participation in the UNCAC self-assessment exercise. Rasha Amarneh, Director of Legal Department at the Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission, occupied Palestine talked about the experience of completing the self-assessments process in 2011, using a participatory approach, and involving both CSOs and the private sector. The results of the evaluation revealed good levels of implementation of the mandatory UNCAC provisions, but limited implementation of non-mandatory provisions. The exercise helped the PACC identify gaps and reform needs and technical assistance requirements in a more effective manner.

With the establishment of the UNCAC Review Mechanism and the increasing awareness in the Arab region on the importance of assessments as a cornerstone for evidence-based anticorruption reforms, the demand for cooperation in the area of integrity and anti-corruption assessments is expected to increase significantly. However measurements of corruption are not straightforward. Corruption has no universally-agreed upon definition. Even UNCAC has a list of corrupt practices, rather than a definition. That list includes different disciplines, is multi-dimensional, and covers different aspects in the public and private domains. Corruption practices take on different forms, including bribes, embezzlement, misuse of authority, and nepotism. The majority of the recognised indicators of corruption, such as the well-known Corruption Perceptions Index developed by Transparency International, are based on perceptions. However, in recent years, there has been some of progress in approaches to measuring the incidence of corruption, from describing the channels through which it operates and in testing potential policy interventions to combat corruption.



Measuring Corruption

Users Guide to Measuring Corruption¹⁸, produced jointly by Global Integrity and UNDP, provides a comprehensive overview of global cross-country indices of corruption and a selection of tools that could be used to assess corruption on national and sub-national levels. While measurement tools have multiplied in the recent years, despite similar-sounding titles, they often measure very different things. The measurement tools tend to cluster around 2 types: measures of the existence and quality of institutions, rules and procedures (the “inputs” of governance and anti-corruption measures); and measures of the outcomes of those inputs – the reduction of the levels of corruption in the country. Surveys that look at citizen’s experience with bribery and corruption, and interviews with respondents that explore public service delivery and trust in government come closest to directly measuring corruption outcomes. However they do not tell what is causing a problem nor point to potential solutions. The measures of inputs have the advantage of providing clear, straightforward information about the existence and strength of laws, regulations and policies, thus pointing to potential solutions. So a well-designed corruption assessment process needs to combine both types of measures. Transparent and efficient performance of public administration is essential for the success of anti-corruption efforts¹⁹.

Specific examples of measuring corruption in the region, included the work of the Social Contract Center in Egypt has experimented with measuring corruption on local level in education, health, water and sanitation sectors. The assessment combined several different kinds of indicators: direct indicators, including citizens’ perception on corruption prevalence in the sectors, and their actual experienced facing corruption and indirect indicators, such as availability of information, accessibility of Information when requested, and the effectiveness of accountability measures. Another example came from the work of the World Health Organization, which has developed a methodology to assess corruption in pharmaceutical sector. The results of the assessment suggest that more work needs to be done on drafting laws to sanction the unethical practices of the private sector, as well as increasing the bottom-up approach for the ethical use and marketing of medicines.

It was argued that the independence of anti-corruption commissions is of critical importance for their ability to have impact and build their reputations with the public, local institutions and international agencies. UNCAC review mechanism can be seen as a comprehensive assessment of governance issues, and can promote national dialogue and develop national anti-corruption plans and strategies, but the role of civil society organizations in this process needs significant improvements.

¹⁸ <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/anti-corruption/a-users-guide-to-measuring-corruption/>

¹⁹ UNDP’s Users’ Guide for Measuring Public Administration Performance, which provides a review of multiplicity of tools and methods focusing on civil service management, public financial management, government policy making; leadership and service delivery, is another useful reference for designing corruption assessment: <http://www.gaportal.org/sites/default/files/Measuring%20Publica%20administration.pdf>



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In measuring corruption emphasis should be made on looking at integrity systems and mechanisms to improve them, rather than only focusing on shortcoming and failures. Civil society organizations play a crucial role in conducting such independent assessments.

2.6 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and governance assessments ²⁰

The use of a diverse array of ICTs—from YouTube videos to mobile phones—as a means of disseminating information, documenting events, and mobilizing mass public movements has been cited as one of the most notable phenomena of the Arab Spring. It has informed a spirited debate among activists from Morocco to Yemen about using modern communications channels to hold public institutions accountable to institute open, transparent, and just governance in the Arab World. Many key activists in the movements in Tunisia and Egypt had long histories of engagement in ICT for dissidence and activism, and credited these tools as powerful aides in crucial mobilization efforts. Since 2011, numerous initiatives have sought to integrate ICT components into their programs as a means of expanding their audiences, improving internal organizational transparency, and offering more participatory mechanisms of engagement to key stakeholders. The regional flowering of ICT projects for good governance represent a number of parallel trends: increased and increasing digital literacy, improved connectivity via mobile network and Internet, the disproportionately large demographic ‘youth bulge’ of those under the age of 35, and the historic absence of alternate public forums for free discourse.

To draw the lessons from the experiences of projects using good governance data and ICTs across the Arab world to generate, collect and disseminate data related to good governance, UNDP has commissioned a research paper ²¹, which identified the following trends common for such initiatives:

- There is a consistent lack of coordination between offline and online activity;
- The majority of initiatives using ICT have weak partnerships with local and national government, although mid-level civil servants are seen as most likely allies;
- While ICT projects tend to demonstrate over-reliance on social media, collaboration with traditional media outlets that remain powerful tools for shaping public opinion, informing citizenry and promoting engagement, is essential for success;
- There is a significant competition among ICT initiatives that could fracture reform efforts and reduce impact.

²⁰ This section draws on presentations and discussion during session “11c: ICT and governance assessments”, as well as background paper “Assessment of ICTs for Governance in the Arab Region”, by Nizar Ghanem and Katherine Maher, commissioned by UNDP

²¹ Ibid; 27 initiatives were mapped by the research, and in-depth interviews conducted with 10 of them.



Case-study 2.8 MORSIMETER, Egypt morsimeter.com

MorsiMeter was conceived of and launched the same day President Mohamed Morsi was announced as having won Egypt's first freely contested presidential elections. MorsiMeter is an online scorecard ranking the performance of President Mohamed Morsi against his campaign promises by assessing the state of campaign promises in the first 100 days in administration. It strives to represent Morsi's record in an unbiased fashion to inform average voters. Media reports are collected via social media, traditional media, and shared directly with MorsiMeter by the President's political aides, opposition politicians, and journalists. Within 24 hours of the launch, the site had gained an audience of more than 20,000 followers on Facebook, and was receiving attention online from mainstream media publications. MorsiMeter –and the data it has generated—has been featured extensively in the Egyptian press, radio, and private satellite media channels, and in dozens of international publications and media outlets. Although it did not intend to cultivate relationships with government institutions and representatives of the opposition parties, the office of President Morsi reached out to MorsiMeter to engage it in the reporting process. Supporters and opponents of the President shared information on a daily basis, acting as funnels for information gathering on the president's performance. The website currently has 2,000,000 unique website visitors (total).

Amr Sobhy, Morsimeter Founder, Egypt

Case-study 2.9: OPENGOV OpenGov.tn, Tunisia

OpenGov.tn is the online presence for OpenGovTN, a comprehensive online and offline program advocating for the institutionalization of open government and transparency as a policy priority in Tunisia. OpenGovTN is an informal collective of interested citizens, formed in the aftermath of the 2011 Tunisian revolution to consolidate gains in institutional transparency and accountability. Although OpenGovTN uses ICT in many of their projects, it is primarily an offline campaign designed to influence policymakers and public opinion for the advancement of institutional transparency, with an online messaging and coordination component. These campaigns have addressed the demand for Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation, advocacy for institutional open data, and transparency in the Constitutional Assembly. Its current campaigns also include efforts to institutionalize open data on the country's national budget.

Malek Guetat, OpenGov, Tunisia

The field of ICT for good governance data remains immature, but offers tremendous growth potential in the Arab world, due to a variety of demographic and socio-economic factors. ICTs expand political and social space through creating alternate forums for discourse that exist in parallel to often-restrictive physical and media spaces. They offer the opportunity for direct communications among communities. In contexts in which governance is weak, this direct communication enables citizens to perform a number of actions that may support and facilitate improved formal governance, or publicly recognize inadequate or weak governance outcomes. At the same time, traditional media outlets are still powerful tools for shaping public opinion, informing citizenry, and promoting engagement.



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They should be treated with care, and actively solicited by ICT-supported projects for their ability to reach and influence large swaths of the population. Linkages between ICT initiatives and government structures are likely critical to initiating meaningful systematic change. ICTs are tools and cannot be seen as the solution by themselves. Without social movements and a broad spectrum of social coalitions providing backup support, their impact will be minimal. Technical platforms are not a substitute to politics; they are only means to enhancing its sound delivery and impact on national politics.

2.7 Overall conclusions and specific recommendations for each set of actors

The sweeping wave of popular discontent that toppled longstanding autocratic leaders in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen has brought to the forefront the need for transformational change in state-society relations, moving away from rentier economies towards developmental states accountable to their citizens. These changes have a profound effect on the institutional setup, the governance relations between state and society, and the number and the nature of development stakeholders in a country. Governance Assessments have tremendous potential to contribute to understanding this changed landscape. Furthermore, they can generate a solid evidence-base for national dialogue processes and formulating reform policies.

Local governance assessments, focusing on the level at which state and citizens interact, can contribute to regenerating the legitimacy of government and to enhancing the efficiency and efficacy of service delivery. If such assessments are done in a highly participatory manner, they could empower citizens by informing them about their human rights and establish an initial, but very critical, means of communication between citizens and their government at local level. By involving ordinary citizens, the government shows that it respects and values the opinions of citizens, thus fostering democratic values and principles at grassroots level. Particular attention should also be paid to involving women and youth, and reflecting their unique perspectives in the assessment processes.

Governance assessments cannot effectively be discussed in isolation without focusing on creating a more enabling environment in which governance data could be produced and assessment processes carried out. Based on discussions in the various sessions, a set of broad recommendations related to creating enabling environment for evidence-based policy making and using assessments to strengthen governance on national, regional and local levels for each set of actors is proposed below.

For the State

- The state should ensure that freedom of information acts are adopted, based on the understanding that the citizens have the right to public information and the government has the duty to provide it. It should also include provisions ensuring the right of non-governmental actors to collect and disseminate socio-economic and governance data. Such acts should be followed up by implementation strategies, with sets of incentives and effective penalty-reward approach. Investments should be made in building capacity of state institutions, implementing information management systems, adequately keeping records, and progressively digitizing and archiving existing information.



- National strategies on statistics should be developed, enabling countries in the Arab region to build reliable statistical systems that produce objective data, disaggregated, whenever possible, by gender, ethnicity and tribal affiliation (when applicable), income level, and geographical location. Access to statistical data sets and information about data collection methodologies, not only summary reports and statistics, should also be opened up. National Statistical Offices should also include modules on governance data into regular household surveys.
- The state should have strategies aimed to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations and to develop proactive strategies of engaging civil society actors in the formulation and evaluation of government policies.
- Local governments also should actively reach out to civil society organizations and citizens at large to engage them in dialogue about planning and implementing local services, with particular focus on involving women and youth. Service Charters could be developed by the service providers at local level in dialogue with the citizens, as a form of a contract about the level of services that could be realistically delivered, with mechanisms to collect feedback from the citizens, evaluating actual performance against the charters.
- Citizen's participation in local budgeting process should also be actively encouraged and institutionalized, including specific mechanisms for ensuring participation of women and young people. This would contribute to creating a culture of public administration in which citizens are empowered to hold local authorities accountable for the services they provide.
- Evidence-based policy making should become a cornerstone principle of public administration. Governance assessments, as means to collect objective feedback on the performance of civil servants, open up dialogue among all stakeholders and identify systemic shortcomings in governance systems, should be actively promoted by the government. Sectoral governance assessments should be launched to identify specific gaps, and proposed solutions, rather than simply flagging up problems.
- Efforts should be made to conduct policy analysis and planning with a specific focus on inclusion, taking into account separate needs and aspiration of marginalized groups in the society. Partnerships with youth and women organizations for policy planning, analysis, and implementation should be actively sought out by relevant Ministries and departments.
- Independence of state institutions ensuring horizontal accountability, such as Audit Institutions and Anti-Corruption Commissions, has to be ensured. UNCAC Self-Assessment tool should be used to promote national dialogue on anti-corruption measures and develop national anti-corruption plans and strategies, with active participation of civil society organizations.
- Governments on all levels should use ICTs more actively to reach out to citizens, not only as a one way communication, but as a platform for dialogue and for harnessing creative energy citizens. Service providers, both on national and local levels, should also explore collaboration with ICT-based initiatives as means for improving efficiency and transparency of services provided.



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For the Civil Society

- Civil society organizations need to play a more active role in advocating for new laws on access to information, fostering an understanding in the society that public information is the right of every citizen. They should also develop grass-roots campaigns to help communities seek and obtain information in the areas of environment, education, health, public spending, economic and financial activities and public funds management in order to put pressure on government to become more transparent; raising awareness of the citizens about their rights in holding government accountable, particularly on local level. Civil society organizations should be raising awareness also among civil servants and parliamentarians on the necessity and benefits of access to information, and communicating to them the idea that access to information does not pose threats to national security.
- CSOs should work to strengthen their capacity to collect and analyze data in a professional way, carrying out independent assessments of governance, using objective indicators. They should work more closely with the media, partnering to deliver their messages to the general public in the most accessible format.
- Civil society actors should play a more active role in monitoring public works and community-development projects on local level, using methodologies such as governance assessments, budget analysis, community consultations, collect objective data about situation on the local level and initiate critical debates about the quality of services.
- CSOs should play a stronger role in leading independent efforts to assess governance, looking specifically at accountability and integrity mechanisms, identifying bottlenecks and using evidence to advocate for specific reforms.
- Coordination among CSOs focusing on similar issues needs to be improved, to foster complementarity instead of competition.

For the media

- Media organizations should strive to raise the standards of reporting on governance issues, generating debates about governance and accountability drawing on independent studies and objective indicators. Working with research organizations and statistical offices to deliver crucial information in easy to understand format to the general public.
- Media should cooperate with civil society organizations and authorities in conducting participatory assessments of governance, both on national and local levels, and communicating results of such assessments in simple and understandable manner.
- When reporting on governance issues, rather than focusing reporting solely on problems, such as corruption, focus should be given to existing positive potential, such as integrity systems and



For international organizations

- International organizations should contribute more actively to capacity building of state institutions, CSOs and media, improving the ways they deal with information and data, understand and operationalize concepts and principles of governance. Specific emphasis should be placed on advocacy and awareness raising about internationally agreed upon standards and mechanisms, related to governance, as international treaties and conventions, and involving civil society organizations into the processes of assessing their implementation in countries (such as, for example, UNCAC review mechanism).
- International organizations are especially well-positioned for facilitating knowledge exchange between countries in the region, and connecting to those outside the region, as well as identifying best-practices in measuring governance from other countries, and providing support for tailoring it to particular country-context.