Assessment and recommendations

Located at the intersection of three continents and within the Middle East region between the Gulf and the Levant, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is highly exposed to the political, economic and security turmoil which has shaken the region over the past decades. Recently, the influx of the second largest number of refugees per capita from the war-torn areas in Syria and Iraq has added unprecedented pressures on fiscal capacities, economic opportunities and the government’s capacities to deliver quality public services.

Despite these difficult conditions, Jordan has embarked on an ambitious reform process to address the shortcomings of a highly centralised political, administrative and financial system in favour of a new paradigm that political development “should start at the grassroots level, then move up to decision-making centres, and not vice-versa” (King Abdullah II, 2005).

By passing the Decentralisation Law and Municipality Law in late 2015, Jordan has initiated a process to strengthen local governance with a view to redefining the role of CSOs, citizens and other non-governmental stakeholders at subnational level (e.g. governorates, municipalities, districts) in the national development process. Most notably, the creation of elected councils at the governorate and local level which introduces new layers of government has raised high expectations among government officials and CSOs to result in a more active stance of local communities in identifying local development needs and priorities. These efforts resonate with the objectives of Jordan’s broader democratization reform and its membership in the Open Government Partnership (OGP). In early 2017, Jordan approved its third National Action Plan for the OGP after joining the Partnership as the first Arab country in 2011.

However, as the new legal framework does not suggest a major transfer of political, administrative nor fiscal competencies to lower tiers of government, the assessment also emphasises the need for a national dialogue on the future architecture of the state. A clarification of mandates and accountability mechanisms for all actors in the new and complex multi-level governance framework will be critical to foster new partnerships with citizens, allocate development benefits more equally across the Kingdom and improving overall government performance.

At the request of the Government of Jordan, this Strategic Assessment provides an analysis of the ongoing decentralisation reform covering the following three key public governance themes which were, in close collaboration with the Government of Jordan, identified as priorities in the context of the Transition Fund project “Supporting Jordan’s ongoing decentralization efforts by promoting good governance and open government policies and practices with a focus on municipalities”:

- Enhancing the role of the Centre of Government in driving decentralisation reform in Jordan.
- Enabling effective public service delivery at the local level.
Openness and participation in Jordan: The expected impact of decentralisation reform.

The assessment and recommendations provide an overview of the main findings and recommendations based on OECD principles and standards as well as good practices and lessons learned from both OECD member and non-member countries. It aims at supporting the efforts of the Government of Jordan in tackling key barriers to the ongoing reform process and towards a successful implementation of the decentralisation and open government agenda.

The role of the centre of government in driving decentralisation reform in Jordan

The Decentralisation Law and Municipality Law adopted in 2015 reflect the commitment of the Government of Jordan to move towards a culture of popular participation at the subnational layers of government and local democracy. However, for King Abdullah II’s vision of a political development process that starts at the grassroots level, and moves up to higher decision-making centres to fully materialise, a number of key challenges needs to be addressed.

Importantly, the Government of Jordan has a strong political commitment to pursuing decentralisation reform that allows central/local dynamics to evolve, and that takes into consideration the potential instability of the political framework. Jordan is at the first stage of a long path towards decentralisation. The official discourse on decentralisation needs to take into consideration the political, financial and administrative components that such a reform requires. The introduction of the democratic component by including elections at the governorate and local level is an important step that will also bring responsibilities and duties to the Jordanian public administration. The establishment and consolidation of local democratic administrations will also require a profound change in the administrative, working and regulatory culture between government and constituencies.

Sustaining high-level political support is key to ensuring the success of the reform. Nevertheless, the donor attention paid to supporting the decentralisation reform speaks to the political commitment to carry it out. The fact that the leading body is in the Centre of Government also illustrates political support from the top level, and grants authority to request the participation of line ministries and agencies.

Given the importance of making the decentralisation reform happen, and to ensure a long-lasting reform, the government could consider the following recommendations:

The need of clarifying roles, competences and the relevance of the implementation process of the decentralisation reform:

- Clarify roles and responsibilities at the national, governorate and local level. This could include a clearer identification of services to be provided by each level of government, the line ministries’ role, and the opinion of governorates and local governments that share competencies. This would be complemented by a comprehensive list of competency distributions across the different levels. Organisational charts would be published on line in the websites of each administration.
Publish guides and materials on the Decentralisation and Municipalities Laws, their implications and effects at the national, governorate and local level with a focus on the forthcoming elections at the governorate and local level. These guides will be an important working tool for public servants and employees at the national, governorate and local level, and will ensure a common understanding of the implications and expected outcomes of the reform.

Promote a general and comprehensive debate on the new role of governorates, and in particular of the governor, Governorate Council and the Executive Council, especially before the 2017 elections. Clarify the relationship between governors and the Executive Council (and line ministries in Amman), as well their co-ordination role with municipalities.

Once the new elected bodies take up their duties, council members will need support to understand the dynamics of each administration and how to contribute to them. Government of Jordan will need to concentrate on reinforcing the capacities of the members of the newly elected bodies to ensure that the citizens’ expectations on their role and functions will be appropriately met.

A follow-up committee should be created to bring updated and evidence-based information to the Cabinet on a regular basis. Such a committee will also help promote a more integrated approach between the MoI and MoMA to ensure that a “subnational dimension” is fully integrated on the implementation strategy and the road map.

A stronger and more co-ordinated centre of government (CoG)

Consolidate and reinforce the role of Jordan’s centre of government on implementing the decentralisation reform, that the Cabinet Office, MoI and MoMA, MoPIC and MoPPA will play a key role.

Strengthen and reinforce co-operation and co-ordination among the CoG institutions implicated in the decentralisation reform as well as with the rest of the public administration. Crucially, this could contribute to overcoming the existing silo-based approach to service delivery at the local level (as outlined in Chapter 3), while ensuring that policy and spending are better linked and potential overlap and duplication reduced. The GoJ must also ensure effective communication and co-ordination between CoG institutions and collectively with line ministries and citizens by developing a clear communication strategy towards citizens to explain the decentralisation reform through seminars and a dissemination campaign across the country. Some initiatives such as the national dialogue launched by the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs together with the Jordan NGOs coalition is an initiative that could be replicated even prior to the elections.

In so doing, the Decentralisation Committee needs to follow an implementation road map agreed and approved by the Council of Ministers that includes a set of short, medium and long-term objectives, as well as expected outputs and outcomes. These outputs and outcomes should include performance indicators and could be published and disseminated regularly.
• **Develop a centralised monitoring mechanism** to evaluate and make adjustments during and after the implementation of the decentralisation programme.

• **Strengthen capacity to implement decentralisation reform in the structures within the CoG by reinforcing the human and financial resources of the MoI, MoMA and MoSPD** so that they can work closely with governorates and municipalities on designing and implementing decentralisation strategic policy and assessing and monitoring progress, and feed this information into governorate programmes.

• **Reinforce the working relationships between the MoI and MoMA so that all are working to achieve the same strategic decentralisation objectives and to mainstream decentralisation within Jordan 2025.** These ministries could work with MoPIC, which is responsible for integrating all strands of national development strategy, including decentralisation and regional development, inclusive growth, and public administration reform at the subnational levels into the Biannual Development Programme (currently 2016-2018).

• **Parliament should play a greater role in the follow-up of the implementation of the reform.** The Government of Jordan (through the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs) could consider submitting annual decentralisation reports to the Parliament by developing performance indicators on decentralisation and their impact against the objectives of the reform.

**Enablers for an effective and efficient public service delivery at the local level in Jordan**

Jordan has developed an ambitious discourse on decentralisation that does not seem to be fully aligned with the current arrangements on the ground. Several challenges inhibit Jordan’s ability to ensure policymaking and service delivery at the local level from a bottom-up perspective, including: a mismatch between municipal and governorates’ fiscal capacities and allocation of competences; fragmentation and low levels of co-ordination and co-operation both vertically among levels of government and horizontally within the two subnational levels.

For the decentralisation reform to be effective and for subnational governments to be able to deliver public services, Jordan needs to strengthen existing structures and institutional co-ordination mechanisms to ensure effective and efficient administrative management. In this sense, the decentralisation reform is at a delicate stage. On the one hand, newly elected bodies maybe with no previous experience on local politics will start working while, on the other hand, the administrative machinery to support decentralisation needs to be reinforced to comply with the new competences and achieve the established objectives. Decentralisation reform is much more than an objective in itself as it is a mean to get services and policies more adapted to citizens’ and businesses ‘needs and should be gradually implemented and adapted to the country’s reality.”

Successful implementation of the reform also requires clear leadership, a roadmap and a regular follow-up and monitoring performance of the expected outcomes from the central level. In so doing, Jordan needs to reinforce a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder dialogue approach where the central government not only the leading ministries MoI and

MoMA but also line ministries on the ground- co-ordinate with the governorate and the municipal levels so that a constructive dialogue can take place between key stakeholders

In this context, the local development units at the governorate and municipal levels can become key actors. Nevertheless, all of the actors involved in decentralisation, including communities, local governments, the central governments and international donors, should make an effort to learn from experiences to date. The Jordanian central government needs to be aware of the importance of seizing the “momentum” that is conducive to good governance and that supports lower levels of government and civil society as they move forward with the reform. At the same time, governorates and municipalities need to realise that they can take important actions autonomously to improve local governance. While subnational level of government do not have to stand by until the centre moves forward, they nevertheless need to ensure they work with an accurately represent, communities. Donors also need to be aware that decentralisation is a long-term process and requires a great deal of national consensus building. All actors should recognise that they must work together in creative and mutually supportive ways to make local governments more effective.

To address these issues, the Government of Jordan could consider the following recommendations:

**Reinforcing institutional arrangements to deliver effective decentralised governance**

*The framework for service delivery: Local Development Units*

- **Local Development Units, in municipalities and governorates, should be enhanced by more clearly delineating their roles and activities.** In addition to their development and data collection role, they have the potential to play a horizontal co-ordination function as the interface between the technical administration and the elected institutions both in Governorates and Municipalities. This would go hand in hand with a direct line of co-operation between LDUs in municipalities and governorates.

- **Promote a closer relationship between MoI and MoMA on decentralisation matters.** Better communication from the top could then easier be reflected across levels of government. A first step could be to establish common administrative procedures and a common system for data collection for LDUs at the governorate and municipal levels (such a focus could include shared IT tools, etc.).

- **Consider reinforcing capacity in the administrative unit(s) supporting the governor to enable functions to be carried out effectively in governorates, and reinforce interface capacity within governorates to engage effectively with local and central administrations.**

- **Ensure that governorates and municipalities can contribute substantially to national strategy setting and implementation through effective multi-level governance.**

- **Implement an outcomes-based performance monitoring system for decentralisation and subnational management and administration.** This system should be aligned with an integrated centre of government (CoG) monitoring and evaluation system. Budgetary programmes should be aligned at the three levels of government.
An ambitious reform with scarce new resources at the governorate and municipal level

- Adapt and strengthen the financial arrangement of governorates according to their new competencies. It will be essential to build up expertise to deal with budgeting and financial responsibilities, taking into consideration the governorate’s situation regarding: population, area, poverty, geographical situation, and other vital indicators. Hiring professional staff and capacity building should also be considered.

- Governorates could promote and give support to the creation of Joint Council Services for once needs are identified.

- Strengthen the working relationship on decentralisation with the MoF to ensure that performance budgeting is implemented at the subnational level, and that subnational expenditure performance information is fed back into biannual development programme planning.

- Over time, consider creating a specific unit within the governorate that is dedicated to strategic planning. This unit could count on MoPIC’s expertise (and could even include public officials from MoPIC) with operational responsibility to work with governorate and local governments to implement decentralisation in each governorate. This could include managing intergovernmental arrangements (such as contracts, see below) to deliver co-ordinated fiscal resources to subnational governments, and helping to monitor expenditure performance against the achievement of results for regional development, regional disparity reduction and improved outcomes for people in each governorate. The cases of Morocco or Turkey with regional development agencies could serve as inspiration for Jordan.

- Mandate the MoF and MoMA to strengthen municipal government fiscal capacity and administrative capacity for fiscal management and collecting local taxes. Local governments could also raise citizens’ awareness for paying taxes on time so as to deliver better basic public services.

- Improve municipal budgeting and accounting processes.

- Promote accountability through improved management of municipal financial information.

Strategic planning

- Strengthen the partnership between the municipal and district councils, the private sector and international donors in order to enhance the role of municipal and district councils in approving and implementing development projects in local communities. Municipal and district councils should have a key role in the partnership by providing the appropriate environment to stimulate investment, especially regarding the simplification of procedures and the provision of appropriate infrastructure.

- MoPIC could play a greater role in providing support to Governorates and in particular to the GLDUs in the Executive Development Programme 2016-2018 and implementation of governorate strategic plan. Specific training and capacity-building could also be addressed.
Once the strategic unit within the GLDUs created, MoPIC could second qualified staff at the governorate level that would support the strategic unit within the GLDUs.

**Promoting Inter-institutional dialogue**

- **Institutionalise mechanisms for the inter-governmental co-ordination** of the decentralisation process by implementing a more flexible and adapted structure and ensuring that it is fully supported by centre of government structures and line ministries. This could include:
  - Effective **interministerial co-ordination**. National ministers responsible for key policies will need to work together more effectively. There is a large variation in economic conditions and governance capability across the country, and a need to better integrate national policies at the regional level. Vertical co-ordination occurs within a complex governance system. The national government therefore needs to co-ordinate more effectively and in a way that accounts for the diversity and differences in capability across the governorates.
  - Establish a **co-ordination council between governorates** to share experiences, information and tackle challenges. This would also allow governorates to share experiences on decentralisation implementation and strategic planning, together with the designing and implementing of a basic single framework for subnational management that is linked to performance-based management. This co-ordination council could be composed of the CoG at the central level and representatives of each governorate (political, governor and a technical manager).

- **Ensure that the leading role given to governorates in strategic planning through a bottom-up approach effectively integrates the lowest levels of the administration**, as well as civil society and the private sector.

- **Municipalities, and in particular mayors, could also gather in a national association** to promote the role of municipalities in strengthening decentralisation reform and local development.

**Capacity building and human resource management at the subnational level**

- **Identify the specific needs of civil servants at the governorate and local level in the context of the decentralisation reform**, and provide capacity building and training at the subnational level to ensure a well-prepared, competent and efficient civil service.

- **Develop and extend the national Law on Civil Service Reform** and the tasks attributed to the Civil Service Bureau to the governorate and municipal levels.

- **All levels of government should be encouraged to define and plan for the types of workers they will need in order to carry out new responsibilities.** Training should contribute to the formation of new working relationships. In addition to building local capacity, training can be a tool for creating personal networks among various levels of government, regions, or types of government workers. One recommendation, for example, might be to train career civil
servants and local politicians together to insure that they better understand what is expected of them and what they can expect from each other.

- **Create a network of community agents to provide local government with capacity building especially to the LDUs.** A national federation/association of municipalities (once created) may also be involved to connect local experiences and identify good policy practices across municipalities. Councils should involve citizens and non-governmental organisations in the identification of key local assets and economic drivers, which should be taken into account in local development strategies.

- **Greater flexibility in managing the workforce at the local level is required.** Subnational governments need to develop competency-management systems so that they can ensure they have a well-selected, trained and evaluated public workforce.

- This regime should be co-ordinated by key ministries such the Civil Service Bureau (together with the Ministry of the Public Sector), MoI and MoMA.

### Openness and participation in Jordan: The expected impact of decentralisation reform

The validation of the 2015 Decentralisation Law and Municipality Law is a significant step towards reinforcing local governance, and holds the potential of moving forward the open government agenda at the level of governorates, municipalities and districts. With the approval of bylaws regulating the election and function of the governorate councils, work on training programmes for local public officials, and awareness raising activities at the governorate level, the Government of Jordan has initiated a series of urgent measures to translate the new legal framework into practice ahead of the local elections in August 2017.

This chapter discusses the links between the current decentralisation reform process, the open government agenda and the broader democratisation agenda in Jordan. It illustrates the mutual reinforcement mechanisms that exist between the three agendas, which culminate in the King’s vision that “political development should start at the grassroots level, then move up to decision-making centres”. The current reform holds great potential to encourage the emergence of a “culture of governance based on innovative and sustainable policies and practices inspired by the principles of transparency, accountability, and participation that fosters democracy and inclusive growth” at the local level. With the creation of elected councils at the governorate and local level, there is a momentum for a coalition of local public officials and civil society actors to foster representative, deliberative and direct forms of citizen participation. The involvement of local CSOs, citizens and other non-governmental stakeholders in identifying service needs and policy priorities, and the monitoring of government performance, can increase transparency and accountability mechanisms, which have, so far, suffered from severe shortcomings.

However, it must also be noted that many of the detailed procedures and chains of responsibility are still to be defined. Despite a generally positive attitude towards the objectives of the reform process among CSOs and most government officials, some scepticism prevails as to whether the government is indeed serious in allowing for a bottom-up process to planning and development and new forms of citizen participation.
For instance, criticism focuses on the limited attention that has been devoted to increasing popular awareness and grassroots support during the reform process. For some CSOs, the government’s orchestrated approach is perceived as a tool to stimulate “defensive democratisation” (i.e. concessionary democratic reforms to pre-empt more fundamental challenges to the status quo), which is unlikely to vitalise greater citizen participation, transparency and accountability (Identity Center, n.d.).

This chapter points to two critical determinants for the success of the reform. First, it stresses the need to improve the overall context for open and participatory government across the different layers of government (e.g. access to information framework, a review of decisions affecting the freedom of the media and expression, and the operational freedom of civil society). It reflects that a vibrant civil society is critical for increasing popular awareness and grassroots support for the reform, and, as soon as the local councils begin their work, holding representatives to account. Second, the Chapter highlights the need to establish effective tools and mechanisms to strengthen representative, deliberative and direct forms of citizen engagement at subnational level.

In his recent visit to the Ministry of Interior, the Prime Minister stressed the urgency of raising awareness for the law and the future function of the governorate council. The Prime Minister suggested the prospect of organising debates in the governorates regarding the preparation of the state budget to experiment with the interaction between the councils and central government (Watnjo, 2016). Led by the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, a national dialogue to raise awareness for the decentralisation reform was initiated in December 2016, featuring meetings with local authorities and community members in each governorate. The sustainability of these initiatives will be critical for ensuring that the current reform process will be understood as a unique opportunity for citizens to shape development in their region. According to the Ministry of the Interior, the Inter-Ministerial Committee in charge of the reform is currently preparing capacity building programmes for different target groups (e.g. youth, CSOs, private sector).

In pursuing the objective of improving the state-of-play for open government in Jordan, and to lever the decentralisation reform to increase popular participation, transparency and accountability at the subnational level, the Government of Jordan could consider the following recommendations:

**Turning commitments into results: The process towards a culture of open and inclusive governance**

*Jordan’s membership of the Open Government Partnership*

- **Consider formulating a single national open government strategy** to overcome fragmented initiatives and foster a whole-of-government approach across the different levels of government. The strategy should build on a national vision for how open government can contribute to broader policy objectives, such as those identified in Jordan 2025. The evidence for such a strategy should be gathered through a collective process starting at the community level (e.g. local elected councils), before being consolidated in the municipalities and governorates and ultimately at central level. Parliament, civil society, the private sector, independent state institutions, media and academics should be involved in a clear and transparent procedure.
• Upgrade the role of the parliament and the subnational level in the national open government agenda by organising large-scale training programmes for parliamentarians and local authorities, in particular for the elected representatives in local, municipality and governorate councils and relevant directorates in the LDU. Local authorities could become involved in the National Commission, which is tasked with elaborating the country’s National Action Plan for the OGP.

• Foster a culture of monitoring and evaluation to increase transparency and accountability. The creation of an independent reporting mechanism as part of the membership of the OGP to assess the progress in delivering on open government commitments should be encouraged to increase public scrutiny.

Access to information

• Consider revising laws and regulations that may impede the public’s access to information (Protection of the State’s Secrets and Documents Law No. 50, 1971) in line with the objective of the 3rd National Action Plan for the OGP to “strengthen the legislative framework governing access to information.”

• Consider amending the Law of Access to Information to extend its scope to the subnational level. Access to reliable government data and information is a precondition for local media, CSOs and independent state institutions to exercise effective scrutiny over the performance of state institutions at the subnational level in delivering public services and spending decisions.

• Define clear criteria as to what information is considered “classified”, “secret” or “protected by other legislation” to provide guidance for public officials and increase legal certainty for citizens and businesses. Periodic reviews by an independent agency, which could be discussed by Parliament, could provide information on the use of the right in practice, indicate potential violations and support the creation of a community of practice.

• Organise an awareness campaign targeting public officials, Parliament, the media, civil society and citizens with a view to explaining the critical importance that access to reliable information plays in achieving broader policy objectives (e.g. increasing the access to and quality of public services).

Freedom of the media and freedom of expression

• Conduct a review of recent regulations and decisions affecting the freedom of media and freedom of expression in line with the commitment stressed in the Third National Action Plan for the OGP to “strengthen the framework governing the freedom of the media”. Independent investigations and reporting by journalists present important pillars for long-term stability and democratic development in Jordan. The criteria for imposing media bans or restrictions on news content should be clarified and disseminated widely to increase transparency and legal certainty for journalists, CSOs and citizens.

• Foster the emergence of independent local media outlets (e.g. radio programmes, newspapers, online) to stimulate a culture of debate and dialogue at the community level and to increase the diversity of available information channels. Diverse sources of traditional and new media can play a significant role
in promoting active citizenship and increasing the level of transparency among existing and future power holders in the governorates and municipalities.

- **Foster a genuine culture of monitoring and evaluation among all levels of government, as well as governmental and non-governmental bodies**, to ensure that scarce resources are allocated for their intended purpose. In this respect, the role of the legislative and main oversight agencies should be redefined and upgraded with a view to addressing overlapping responsibilities (e.g. co-ordinate work plans, avoid parallel investigations and duplications, and encourage a culture of sharing information among the Anti-Corruption Commission, the National Audit Bureau and the Ombudsman Office) and the lack of capacity.

- **Increase transparency in the allocation of grants by members of parliament at the subnational level.** For instance, a dedicated database could be created following the example of France (http://data.senat.fr/dotation-daction-parlementaire/) to be able to trace back the grants suggested by members of parliament for parliamentary action, beneficiaries and the resources allocated.

- **Strengthen decentralised control mechanisms by seeking partnerships with independent local media and CSOs and educating citizens against the hazards of corruption.**

**Budget transparency**

- **Establish a formal mechanism through which CSOs and citizens can participate in the budget process**, in particular at local level, to tailor the allocation of public expenditure to their needs and priorities. Experiments with participatory budgeting schemes at the subnational level (e.g. Ministry of Municipal Affairs and three pilot municipalities) could be replicated on a bigger scale to foster a sense of participatory policy making in practice, in particular among the disengaged and vulnerable groups in society.

**Legal status and operational freedom of civil society**

- **Request that the Registration Management Council justifies the rejection of an application** by a written statement. This requirement would increase the transparency of the application procedure and increase legal certainty among CSOs to operate legally.

- **Organise a national consultation process about the potential amendments of the 2008 Law No. 51 on Society** to increase awareness among civil society organisations and ensure that all relevant stakeholders can highlight their concerns. Moreover, these amendments should be reconsidered in light of the critical role that CSOs, particularly at municipal and district level, play in providing services to neglected groups in society.

**2016 Election Law**

- **Raise awareness among citizens about the work of Parliament to increase public interest and scrutiny over its activities.**

- **Organise a nationwide awareness campaign to inform citizens about the impact of the bylaws related to the election of the governorate (e.g. Governorate Councils Districting Bylaw) and local councils**, in collaboration
with local stakeholders from media and civil society to encourage all segments of society, including vulnerable groups, to participate in the 2017 local elections. Specific activities should be organised to raise awareness among youth and other groups in society with a lower interest in voting. Initiatives such as Naseej (fabric), which brought together 130 young people from different governorates to enhance youth participation in the 2016 parliamentary elections, illustrate that promising citizen-driven initiatives have been underway in this regard.

Open government in practice: Enhancing current practices across the different levels of government

- **Formalise citizen consultation to overcome ad hoc approaches and open up participation across the different levels of government to new groups and close the feedback loop.**

- **Review the channels and tools used by government entities to inform the public about consultation and engagement opportunities.** Provide clear indications on who will deal with citizen feedback, and create social media accounts while continuing to use traditional mass media. Awareness for existing manuals (e.g. “Participatory Approach to Strategic Planning in the Public Sector”) should be increased so that they become a reference document for public officials.

- **Create mechanisms and institutions to make vulnerable segments of society a partner in the open government agenda and the national development process.** That almost 70% of the population in Jordan is younger than 30 years of age suggests that engaging youth in public life and policy making should be a priority for the government. The examples of Finland and Tunisia illustrate that the OGP National Action Plan can feature youth-related commitments and may, due to the cross-sectorial scope and ambition of the plan and the international scrutiny provided by the OGP, act as an effective lever to turn commitments into actual practice.

- **Reinforce existing mechanisms to collect citizen feedback on the performance of public service delivery and quality,** such as the Central Government Complaints System and the citizen satisfaction survey conducted by the King Abdullah II Centre of Excellence. Support new initiatives, such as the development of an individual Customer Service Charter for each government institution (Ministry of Public Sector Development). More regular use of surveys could help close the feedback loop, which would increase transparency and ultimately the quality of public services. For this purpose, all relevant information from surveys or consultation activities should be made public.

Leverage the decentralisation reform to foster open government and genuine citizen participation at the local level

- **Increase popular awareness and grassroots support for the ongoing decentralisation reform** in line with the current efforts undertaken through the national dialogue (Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs). The role of the Network of Civil Society Organisations for Open Government at the Local Level in Jordan could be upgraded so that its members act as the link between...
government and other local CSOs in raising awareness for the reform and its practical implications for local governance and CSO activity.

- **Apply a context-sensitive approach to fostering a culture of open and participatory government at the local level.** Based on a strategic assessment of the available open government capacities and the maturity of open government practices in the governorates, municipalities and districts, a guide could be created to support local authorities and non-governmental stakeholders to implement open government principles and practices, with a view to fostering inclusion and diversity.

- **Build up effective capacities and tools for use by the directorates responsible for liaising with CSOs and citizens** inside the LDUs and among the elected members of the governorate and local councils. Local public officials, both elected and appointed, should have access to training in order to implement a participatory approach to assessing local needs in collaboration with CSOs and citizens. Existing institutions, such as the National Institute for Training, could produce training modules that link engagement practices to the broader objective of reinforcing mechanisms for greater openness, transparency and accountability.

**Towards a culture of open and democratic local governance in Jordan: Living diverse forms of democracy**

**The 2017 local elections: A test for representative democracy**

- **Foster the equal participation of women in local decision making** through mentoring programmes that link female candidates and women holding office. Such activities could encourage female candidates to run for local or governorate councils, and would ultimately result in more balanced participation of women in local councils.

- **Support initiatives to enhance youth participation in local elections and create institutional mechanisms** through which they can play a constructive role in the identification of needs and priorities in their community. The organisation of school parliaments and similar initiatives can raise awareness of the importance of local elections in Jordan’s democratisation process. Existing infrastructure, such as local youth councils, could be modernised and used more effectively to empower them to apply open government principles and democracy in practice.

**Consultation, active participation and evaluation beyond election day**

- **Foster a culture of civic engagement, volunteering and political participation at the local level** by including a civics component in the school curriculum to teach children about the rights and responsibilities of each citizen, as suggested by Jordan 2025.

- **Formalise the participation of non-governmental stakeholders** (e.g. CSOs, citizens, private sector, academia) in determining development priorities. Depending on the available capacities and characteristics in each municipality (size, geography, demography, etc.), the most appropriate approach may vary between more and less institutionalised forms (e.g. advisory committees for CSOs or specific groups in society vs. survey) and the reliance on traditional (e.g. gatherings with local authorities) and more innovative forms (e.g. online surveys,
use of social media). Neither a one-fits-all solution for each municipality, nor a narrow focus on one particular approach, is likely to encourage non-governmental stakeholders to participate in the national planning and development process.

- **Create a website and social media presence for each municipality and use digital technologies more systematically to inform the local community about its work and opportunities for engagement.** The online presence could feature the organisation chart, a complaint mechanism to allow for a direct response from local authorities, the minutes of meetings from the gatherings of the municipal and district councils, access to relevant administrative documents, and other useful information. The creation of a joint online presence of all municipalities could be considered to encourage the flow of information and good practice across administrative boundaries.

- **Encourage innovative engagement practices at the municipal and governorate level** by establishing a category in the National Honours Program, the creation of which is foreseen by Jordan 2025, to reward Jordanians for their contribution to Jordanian society, for outstanding partnership approaches between CSOs or citizens and local government.

**New partnerships between local authorities and community members**

- **Replicate experiments with participatory budgeting schemes** to involve larger numbers of citizens in the allocation of a share of the municipality or district budget. Citizens should be involved from the beginning of the process (e.g. identification of projects) to create the necessary buy-in and interest.
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