

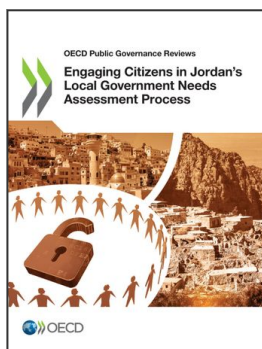
Foreword

Local governments – regional, provincial, and municipal – have a direct impact on people’s daily lives and are essential to building more open and inclusive societies. Not only are local governments often responsible for the delivery of crucial services, but they also play an intermediary role between public and national administrations. Given their proximity to citizens, they are often more present, and have a better understanding of public priorities and of differences in needs. Implementing reforms at the local level may therefore offer the greatest opportunity to transform the relationship between the government and its citizens by providing meaningful and direct opportunities to participate in public life.

Acknowledging these benefits, Jordan has committed to placing citizens at the heart of its ongoing decentralization reform process. Following the enactment of its decentralization laws in 2015, Jordan has embarked on a process to shift development decisions to the governorate, municipal and local levels. This reform has introduced a bottom-up approach to local planning and socio-economic development by ensuring that citizens play a larger role in identifying needs.

While progress has been achieved, the promise of decentralization in Jordan has yet to meet citizens’ expectations. Indeed, the decentralization reform is taking place within – and in response to – challenging circumstances, including the COVID-19 pandemic, stagnant economic growth, and strained service delivery. To this end, leveraging the present momentum for reform with the new draft Local Administration Law will be all the more important to bring local governments closer to citizens.

At the request of the Government of Jordan, this review examines the current governance and stakeholder participation gaps in the needs assessment and development planning process. It is part of the OECD’s broader work with the country on open government, gender equality and youth engagement in the framework of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme. Building on findings and recommendations from the OECD Report “Towards a New Partnership with Citizens: Jordan’s Decentralisation Reform” (2017), it offers recommendations to support the country’s ambitious decentralization reform agenda. Together with the document “Supporting Open Government at the Local Level in Jordan”, this work will help Jordan foster a culture of open government across levels of the administration and engage all stakeholders beyond the usual suspects.



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