Chapter 2. Good governance enablers in the Needs Assessment Process

This chapter analyses how governance structures in Jordan have responded to the drastic transformation brought about by the decentralization reform. It looks into the country's efforts to clarify roles and responsibilities, support co-ordination, strengthen strategic planning and ensure adequate human and financial resources. This chapter also identifies concrete avenues for governance structures to better support stakeholder participation in the needs assessment process, in light of the new Local Administration Law in drafting.

Fostering good governance enablers at the local level in Jordan

The decentralisation reform in Jordan raised public expectations that policies and services would be brought closer to local communities through new channels for stakeholder participation. Indeed, important milestones were achieved following the adoption of the 2015 Municipalities and Decentralization laws, including the 2017 local elections, the establishment of the *Inter-Ministerial* and *Executive Committees*[1] and two successful rounds of the needs assessment cycles. Despite this progress, several challenges remain to continue the process of decentralization, by integrating local stakeholders and ensuring their needs are reflected in the overall planning process.

Notably, Jordan has embarked on an ambitious reform agenda to deconcentrate power to the Local, Municipal and Governorate levels. The 2015 Municipalities (No. 41) and Decentralization (No. 49) Laws established new governance structures for public institutions involved in the decentralization process. These structures consider the preparation and approval of needs lists, which are "tabulated lists of development needs and associated projects generated at local community level, consolidated by municipal and/or administrative authorities and then passed on to Governorate Councils for approval and budget allocation" (Khadim, 2018).

The laws also established elected councils at the Governorate and Municipal level to foster this new participatory and bottom-up approach. Local Development Units at the Municipal (LDUs) and the Governorate level (GDUs) were also mandated to act as the general secretariat at the governorate and municipal level and as the interface with local community stakeholders, civil society and private sector. Together with the Governor and the Mayor, these actors form the public sector architecture of the decentralization reform more broadly (see Figure 2.1).

### Figure 2.1. The Public Sector Architecture of Decentralization
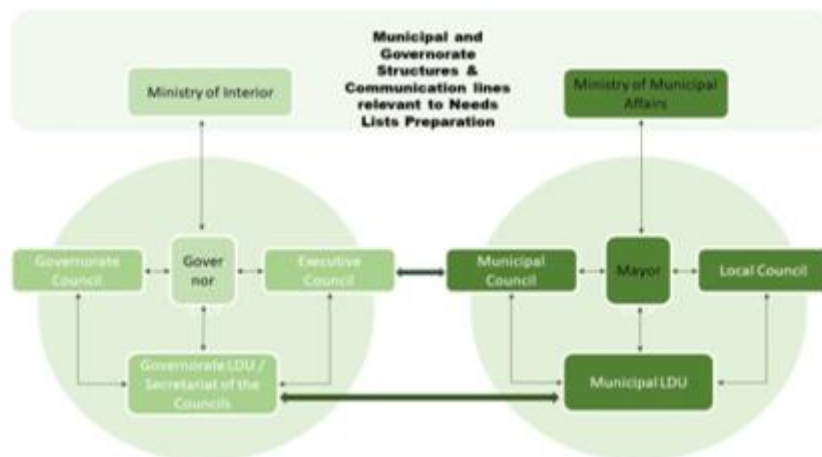
Source: Khadim, M. (2018), Political Economy Analysis of Jordan, developed within the framework of the USAID project Cities Implementing Transparent, Innovative and Effective Solutions (CITIES).

The laws also include a general description of the process to collect needs and build local development plans. At its early stages, consultations are organized by Local Councils to identify a relevant list of needs and potential projects, which is subsequently shared with the respective Municipality. Headed by the Mayor, the Municipal Council, with support from the LDU, filters and reviews the list, develops the municipal needs assessment document and transfers it to the Governorate level. In this third phase, the GDU filters and consolidates the needs manual, which is used by the Executive Council – headed by the Governor -

to draft development plans and propose budgetary allocations. The final needs list is then shared with the Governorate Council who is in charge of the final approval and budget allocation (See Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2. The collection and approval process of needs
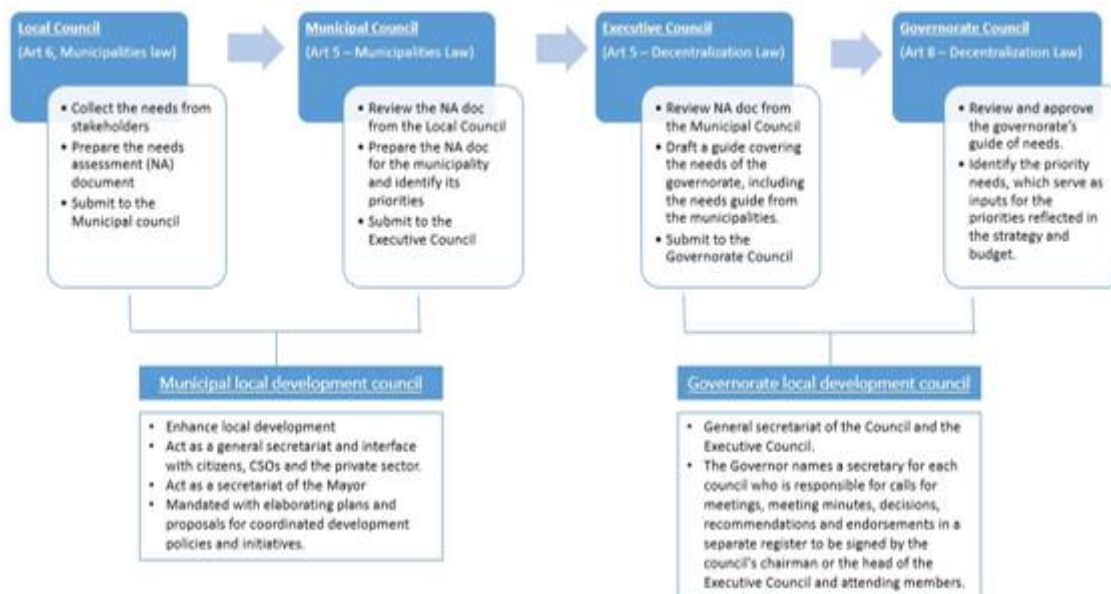
Note: In some Governorates, there is also the contribution of "administrative authorities" in parallel to that of the Municipal Council (Kadhim, 2018).
Source: Author's own work, based on the 2015 Decentralization and Municipalities laws and Kadhim (2018).

As noted in the OECD report "*Towards a New Partnership with Citizens: Jordan's Decentralisation Reform*", however, the laws do not include a major transfer of powers to sub-national levels of government, accountability lines are still blurred and the roles for local non-governmental stakeholders in the needs assessment process remain undefined (OECD, 2017a). In fact, the OECD found that "the articles dedicated to governance structures, functions, funds and multilevel co-ordination barely represent 25% of the tenants within the Decentralization Law (12 articles out of 47) and 41% of the Municipalities Law (32 of 77 articles) respectively". As OECD analysis shows, these issues have remained relevant in the law's current phase of implementation.

Acknowledging that decentralization is a dynamic process - from which the country is still at the early stages of its implementation - a new draft *Local Administration Law* was presented to Parliament in early 2020 following an evaluation of the main legislative, administrative and technical challenges facing decentralization. Resulting from a series of national dialogues in 2019, the new legislation aims to merge the 2015 Decentralization and Municipalities laws. Some of the proposed changes introduced by the new law include the quotas and composition of the Governorate Councils, new powers for Municipal and Governorate actors, as well as updated procedural requirements for sub-national authorities carrying out the needs assessment cycle. The new legislation is expected to enter into force in 2020.

On 9 May 2019, furthermore, Jordanian Prime Minister Omar al-Razzaz announced a third cabinet reshuffle and established the Ministry of Local Administration (MoLA) (previously known as the Ministry of Municipal Affairs) to oversee the activities of Municipal and Governorate Councils. This change granted MoLA a leading role in the decentralization process and the authority to support the work of municipal and local authorities.

Against this backdrop, a focus on good governance enablers is all the more important with recent developments drastically transforming the role of sub-national authorities in the decentralization process. Indeed, pre-existing challenges have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, where capacity and resource gaps, coupled with high levels of citizen distrust, are posing threats to the effectiveness of response and recovery measures.

While progress has been achieved in terms of the implementation of recommendations outlined in the OECD (2017) report in this regard, findings note room for improvement in terms of clarifying roles and responsibilities, fostering an effective strategic planning cycle, strengthening inter-institutional dialogue and ensuring adequate skills and financial resources in local administrations (See Figure 2.3). Indeed, local governments have struggled to adapt to the profound and rapid reorganization of structures resulting from the 2015 laws, citing the lack of or insufficient incentives (70%), financial (70%) and human resources (57%) as the top three bottlenecks to the operational effectiveness of the needs assessment process.

Figure 2.3. Main governance related challenges facing sub-national authorities to engage stakeholders in the needs assessment process
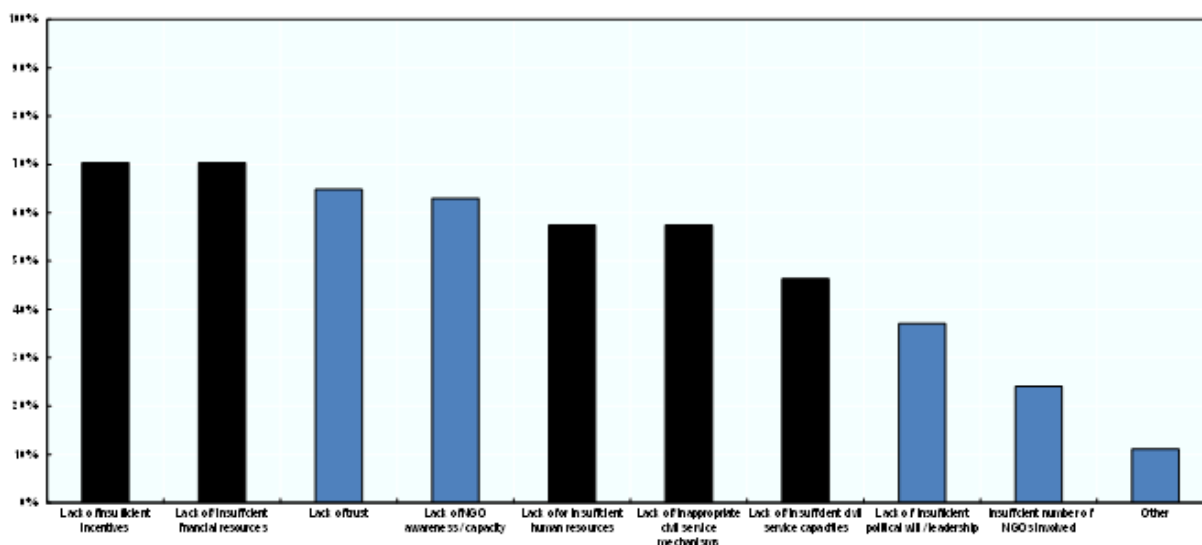
Source: OECD (2019) Questionnaire for sub-national governments: Stakeholder participation in Jordan's needs assessment process.

This chapter will therefore assess the five aforementioned challenges in more detail and identify avenues to contribute toward a more open and participatory needs assessment cycle in Jordan.

Clarifying the overall structure and organization of the Needs Assessment Process

Duplicate and unclear roles and responsibilities, in particular between central and local levels of government, are one of the main challenges in OECD countries implementing decentralization reforms (OECD, 2019a). Lack of clarity can make service provision and policymaking costlier, increase the existence of process bottlenecks and create delays. Unclear and overlapping tasks may also have a negative effect on stakeholder participation, by creating confusion among citizens on which institution is responsible for a specific service and by blurring accountability lines (Allain-Dupré, 2018).

Thus, to make decentralization work, governments should "clarify the responsibilities assigned to different government levels" and ensure that sub-national level functions are codified in significant detail within legal and regulatory frameworks and widely disseminated (OECD, 2019a). Such functions refer to each institutions' roles regarding standards, human resources, financing, service provision, information sharing, engagement, monitoring and evaluation, among others. Regarding the need to clarify roles – and of particular relevance for Jordan – several OECD members, such as Japan and the Netherlands, have engaged in a series of reforms to clarify central and local government competencies (see Box 2.1).


Box 2.1. Unitary states' efforts to clarify roles and responsibilities at the local level

- **Japan (1999):** the country adopted the 1999 decentralisation law, which sought to eliminate opaque central decision-making on local responsibilities and clarified competencies more generally. Subsequent waves of reform have continued to focus on promoting greater municipal autonomy, clear delineation of responsibilities, and proper financing.
- The Netherlands (2012 – 15): The 2012 decentralisation reform aimed to reallocate competencies between the levels of government, in particular by empowering provincial and municipal actors and by establishing a simpler and clearer division of responsibilities, avoiding the overlapping of functions.

Source: OECD (2019), Making Decentralisation Work: A Handbook for Policy-Makers, OECD Multi level Governance Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/g2g9faa7-en.

As a result of the 2017 elections, Jordan is in the process of setting institutional structures to support the bottom-up approach to the collection of needs from local communities. OECD survey data shows that a majority of sub-national governments (80%) have a person, unit or department in charge of stakeholder participation activities in the needs assessment process (see Figure 2.4). These structures often refer to LDUs and GDUs, which are mandated to engage local stakeholders and support Municipal and Governorate Councils with economic development activities and the implementation of new investment projects.
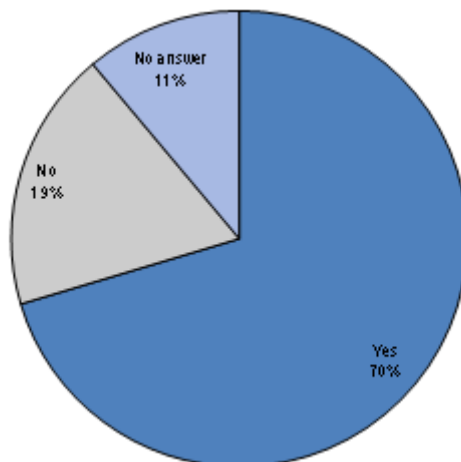
Figure 2.4. Do you have a person, unit or department in charge of stakeholder participation?
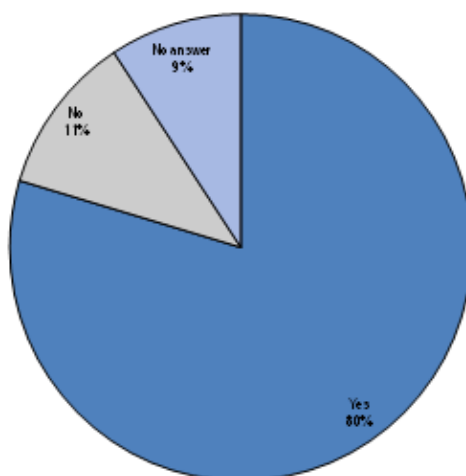
Source: OECD (2019) Questionnaire for sub-national governments: Stakeholder participation in Jordan's needs assessment process.

Guidelines have also been developed with the aim of increasing civil service mechanisms to carry out needs assessment process. In 2017, the Ministry of Local Affairs (MoLA) developed the "Procedures Manual for Preparing Municipal Needs" followed by the "Guide of the strategic and operational plans for the governorate within the decentralization framework" published by the Ministry of Interior in 2018 (see Box 2.2 & Box 2.3). These guidelines have been increasingly disseminated across the 12 Governorates, as a majority of OECD survey respondents (70%) declared to have guidelines or instructions supporting their process of assessing needs (see Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5. Q8. Does your office have guidelines or instructions for staff designed to support the needs assessment process?

Source: OECD (2019) Questionnaire for sub-national governments: Stakeholder participation in Jordan's needs assessment process.

Box 2.2. Procedures Manual for Preparing Municipal Needs in Jordan (2017)

The Procedures Manual for Preparing Municipal Needs and Development Plans is a practical guide tool that enables Municipal and Local Councils to achieve some of the outputs stipulated by the Municipalities Law. Among its objectives, it seeks to establish a methodology aimed to promote community participation in preparing Municipal Development Plans.

In order to facilitate the task of these Councils, the manual includes three milestone phases, each of which meets the output required by the law. It also includes an introductory section as well as a preparatory phase with ex-ante related considerations.

- Phase **I:** refers to the preparation and approval of the Municipal Needs list. This phase includes planning procedures, the management of needs identification sessions with the Local Community and the approval of Municipal Needs.
- Phase II: refers to the preparation and approval of development plans, including budget costs. This phase includes procedures for determining project priorities, procedures to prepare and approve development plans, as well as tools to estimate costs for their inclusion in the Municipal budget.
- Phase III: refers to the follow-up of projects approved in the Municipal Development Plan. This phase included procedures for preparing follow up reports, procedures for sharing the results of work progress with Local Councils and Local Community and management procedures of citizens' complaints.

Source: Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Jordan (2017), Procedures Manual for Preparing Municipal Needs.

Box 2.3. Guide of the strategic and operational plans for the governorate within the decentralization framework in Jordan (2018)

The Ministry of Interior developed this guide to provide technical assistance to governorate and executive councils, and in particular local development units, in the preparation of local development plans and collection of needs. The guide describes the overall process and steps in the preparation of local plans, including:

1. The collection and analysis of information;
2. The formulation of the overall vision of local development;
3. The strategic local development plan of the governorate;
4. The medium-term activities of the plan;
5. The annual operational plan;
6. The implementation of the plan; and
7. The review and evaluation of the plan.

Source: Ministry of Interior (2018), Guide of the strategic and operational plans for the governorate within the decentralization framework, accessed on 14 July 2019.

While Jordan has made progress in setting institutional structures, there is yet room to clarify roles and responsibilities. In fact, OECD interviews noted that the exact roles, responsibilities and activities for GDUs and LDUs are unclear or not fully broken down. Moreover, the organizational charts of both LDUs and GDUs differ significantly across governorates, and the distinction of roles between municipal and governorate units remain blurred. Beyond this lack of vertical alignment, there is also a need to clarify the relationship between members of Executive Councils and Governorate Councils.

OECD interviews also noted that while most Governorates have guidelines, the lack of capacities and resources of LDUs and GDUs impede these actors from carrying out technical tasks (i.e. consultations, cost benefit analysis and evaluation). In some cases, due to this technical barrier, sub-national actors refer to the law as their sole guiding document. Additional analysis has found that "while guides were useful and fairly easy to use by stakeholders, certain sections related to project priority and impact weighing were hard to comprehend or apply…and links to relevant legislation could be improved" (Khalid, 2018). Thus, to increase buy-in and incentives to carry out procedures, in particular more technical tasks (i.e. cost benefit analysis, data sharing), guidelines should be accompanied by capacity building activities to build an understanding of the decentralization process at all levels.

With the introduction of the new local administration law, there is also an opportunity to revamp the support that will be provided by the MoLA to Municipal and Governorate Councils. These new measures could consider codifying specific tasks and sub-tasks within the law, as well as building new guidelines with detailed information on procedures. In particular, the relationship between all actors of the decentralization architecture should be clarified. Indeed, the effective implementation of the new law will require the awareness raising of all sub-national actors on the new tenants contained therein, and the efficient equipment of sub-national authorities for its implementation.

To capture the opportunities to respond to the His Royal Majesty's vision to place citizens at the heart of local decision-making, MoPIC and the MoLA should emphasize strengthening stakeholder participation in the needs assessment process (see Box 2.4 for an OECD template for clarifying responsibilities). Making sure that decentralization lives up to the growing expectations of citizens would also entail defining clear mechanisms for the four stages of the needs assessment process - namely, planning, budgeting, implementation and impact evaluation. In addition to existing guidelines, a centralized information repository with all resources, including a process mapping of the needs assessment process, could further support the alignment of procedures.

Box 2.4. OECD Guideline: Clarifying responsibilities assigned to different government levels

The OECD toolkit includes a checklist template with several elements to consider when assigning roles and responsibilities to central and local level institutions, including elements such as:

Guideline 1. Clarify the responsibilities assigned to different government levels			
Checklist	Yes	Partially	No
Legislative powers of various orders are clearly demarcated by: • Constitution • National legislation • Other (executive orders, agreements) • All of the above?			
For shared functions, is there clarity in the division of powers: • Who sets the policy • Who decides on the standards • Who is responsible for oversight • Who is responsible for financing • Who is responsible for service provision • Who produces the service • Who monitors and evaluates service delivery • How do citizens provide feedback			
For each of the shared functions and sub-functions, are there institutional mechanisms in place for: • Consultation/co-ordination • Burden sharing • Conflict resolution			
Sub-functions within each function are decentralised to a similar extent			
Subnational governments are empowered to pursue integrated approaches to local economic development			
There is a separation of decision making for capital and operating expenditures			
The authority to hire, fire and set terms of reference and day-to-day management/supervision for own employees rests at the same level for each function			
There a separation of decision making among various levels on planning, policy, finance and provision for each function			

Source: OECD (2019), Making Decentralisation Work: A Handbook for Policy-Makers, OECD Multi level Governance Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/g2g9faa7-en.

Ensuring greater multi-level coordination and transfer of information via the Needs Assessment process

The successful take-up of ambitious reforms, such as that of decentralization, requires establishing vertical and horizontal mechanisms and processes of intergovernmental consultation, co-operation and joint decision-making, as well as an open and regular communication (OECD, 2019a).

In this context, the OECD recognizes the role of co-ordination to embed stakeholder participation at the local level. The OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017b) argues that governments should "coordinate, through the necessary institutional mechanisms, open government strategies and initiatives – horizontally and vertically – across all levels of government to ensure that they are aligned with and contribute to all relevant socio-economic objectives". As part of the open state provision (number 10), the Recommendation also recognizes the role of local government in pushing the open government agenda, notably for initiatives to reach all relevant stakeholders.

Most OECD countries have developed both formal and informal co-ordination mechanisms between central and sub-national levels of government. Indeed, platforms for vertical co-ordination have been established in 11 OECD countries (i.e. on matters involving environment, infrastructure, transport, technology and development), and 14 countries mandate national governments to consult sub-national

governments prior to the adoption of new regulation (OECD, 2017c). Other coordination mechanisms typically used include dialogue platforms, partnerships or contracts across levels of government and co-financing arrangements (see Box 2.5).

Box 2.5. Examples of multi-level coordination in OECD countries

1. **The Local Government Commission in New Zealand:**

The Local Government Act created an independent and permanent body on local reform issues in 2002 with the aim of strengthening relationships across levels of government. The Commission includes three members appointed by the Minister of Local Government. Its main task is to decide on the structure of local government and on electoral arrangements for local 78 authorities in New Zealand (11 regional councils and 67 territorial authorities).

2. **Multi-stakeholder Fora in Nordic countries:**

Regular formal meetings held between representatives from central and local government, in particular in associations of local governments (Norway, Finland, Sweden, etc.). SNG associations are consulted on any legislative changes influencing sub-national government and participate in the dialogue and negotiations with the central government.

Source: Local government commission of New Zeland (N.D), The role of the commission, accessed on 9 August 2019, http://www.lgc.govt.nz/the-role-of-the-commission/; OECD (2019), Making Decentralisation Work: A Handbook for Policy-Makers, OECD Multi level Governance Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/g2g9faa7-en.

In Jordan, the government created an Inter-Ministerial Committee and an Executive Committee to promote horizontal coordination in the implementation of the decentralization reform. Both Committees bring together the ministries that play a key role in the decentralisation reform – notably the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of Public Sector Reform and the Ministry of Finance. Vertical coordination between national public entities and Governorate and Municipal Councils, however, is managed by the Ministry of Interior and MoLA respectively.

Based on the country's decentralization priorities defined in the Jordan 2025 vision, notably seven thematic sub-committees emerged from the Inter-Ministerial Committee:

- Subcommittee on the legislation;
- Subcommittee on the institutional, structural and organizational process and manuals;
- Subcommittee on institutional capacity;
- Subcommittee on finances;
- Subcommittee on local development and public services;
- Subcommittee on public awareness; and
- Subcommittee on information technology.

Through these thematic groups, the Inter-Ministerial and Executive Committees have accomplished important milestones. Notably, these Committees have issued by-laws and instructions to implement the Decentralization Law, for instance the By-law of Governorate Councils' Constituencies, which regulates the work of the Governorate Councils, sets procedures for meetings and for its internal elections. The work of the Committees has also supported the setting of financial ceilings for governorate budgets, as well as the needs guide and strategic and operational plans guide for municipalities and governorates.

In addition, discussions within the framework of the *National Dialogue* have served as a space for sub-national authorities to discuss pertinent reforms to the laws. The 2019 National Dialogue, coordinated by the Ministry of Parliamentary and Political Affairs and the Economic and Social Council (ESC), consisted of 43 sessions carried out across the country. Local level stakeholders, together with civil society, engaged in discussions on an umbrella of political reforms – namely, decentralization, elections and political parties – with a particular focus on the structure of Governorate Councils, as well as their mandates and authorities.

While the creation of co-ordination structures at the national level via the Inter-Ministerial Committee, the Executive Committee and the National Dialogue are important steps, there is room to foster the integration of local and municipal actors in a more systematic way. In particular, sub-national co-ordination mechanisms, both horizontal and vertical, have yet to be developed.

Indeed, the crosscutting nature of the needs assessment process, in addition to the new architecture of decentralization, have transformed working relationships between local actors. While Article 3.3 of the decentralization law mandates that the "governor is to co-ordinate between the governorate council and the municipalities and other sub-national stakeholders", there is still a lack of clarity in terms of channels and common procedures for submitting local development proposals, for example (OECD, 2017a).

The lack of procedures or co-ordination mechanisms have exacerbated information gaps between local, municipal and governorate councils in the construction and implementation of needs lists and more broadly. Notably, lack of feedback regarding the final needs considered for the development plan and budget was identified as the main disconnect between the three levels. In fact, data from a CITIES political economy analysis shows that three governorates – Ma'an, Jerash and Madaba – stated that Executive Councils did not inform municipalities about the final 2018 need lists before this was transmitted to the Governorate Council for its approval (CITIES, 2018). Local public officials also noted to the OECD that information is shared on an informal basis and its availability depends to a large extent on personal relationships, which may help explain the information sharing disparities throughout the 12 Governorates.

In addition to instances of low willingness or capacity to share information, process barriers may also act as inhibitors of multi-level co-ordination. Findings from OECD fact-finding missions suggest that there are also coordination challenges between Governorate Councils and Executive Councils, in particular when approving the final list of needs. Administrative barriers, such as process bottlenecks and short time frames to conduct the needs cycle, seem to have a spill over effect of hindering co-ordination opportunities with municipal and local levels.

Building the capacity of Governorate and Executive councils to incorporate inputs from lower levels is also critical to the successful establishment of co-operation mechanisms. Notably, OECD data shows that a significant share of sub-national authorities (41%) did not receive guidance on how to incorporate the needs list developed from lower levels in 2018 (see Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6. Share of sub-national authorities receiving guidance from the national government on incorporating the needs assessments developed from lower levels
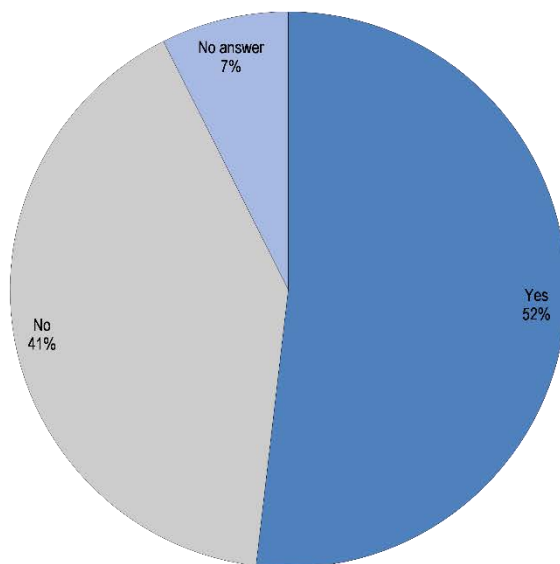
Source: OECD (2019) Questionnaire for sub-national governments: Stakeholder participation in Jordan's needs assessment process.

Against this backdrop, a first step toward establishing co-ordination structures and to more effectively transferring information will entail clarifying procedural requirements. In this regard, Local, Municipal and Governorate Councils could be mandated, for example, to publish their need list documents online. In addition, the Governorate and Executive Councils could be tasked to develop and share a follow-up report detailing the final approved list, budget allocations and the status of implementation of local projects. There is also an opportunity to complement guidelines with concrete standards and planning mechanisms between the three levels, in order to ensure responsiveness to the requirements of the timeframe of the needs assessment budget cycle.

In parallel, the national administration, through the efforts of the Executive Committee and the MoLA, could support the establishment of sub-national co-ordination mechanisms. Such mechanisms could take the form of a local level forum or informal thematic networks to align needs within governorates, share lessons learned and promote cross-fertilization of skills. In some OECD countries, these networks evolve into national associations of subnational governments (see Box 2.6 for the example of COSLA).

Box 2.6. The Convention of Local Scottish Authorities

The Convention of Local Scottish Authorities (also known as COSLA) is a national association made up
Scottish councils. The aim of the association is to promote a forum for discussion and exchange of best
improve local services and strengthen democracy, as well as to provide strategic direction to th
government. The Convention meets four times a year in different venues throughout Scotland.

The convention also conducts the yearly *COSLA Excellence Awards* to disseminate and recognize best
practices on areas such as:

- Innovation in local services;
- Achieving better outcomes at the local level through partnerships;
- Tacking inequalities and improving health; and
- Building strong and sustainable communities.

Source: The Convention of Local Scottish Authorities (N.D), COSLA website, accessed on 5 September 2019, *https://www.cosla.gov.uk/*

Fostering an effective strategic planning cycle in the Needs Assessment process

Strategic planning can also be a key instrument to encourage citizen participation in local decision-making.
It fosters processes that aim to achieve consensus on policies and services and encourages partnerships
to propose, implement and evaluate local projects (United Cities and Local Governments, N.D.). Promoting
stakeholder participation in planning, however, requires local governments to integrate citizens' needs
through the diagnosis, development, management and evaluation stages of the planning cycle.

In addition to the decentralization reform, Jordan has established a comprehensive multi-level strategic
planning framework (see Table 2.1). At the national level, Jordan 2025 sets a ten-year vision to promote
greater socio-economic development. In particular, the strategy acknowledges that active civic
engagement and political participation are central for a democratic culture to emerge at the local level
(OECD, 2017). Under this vision, the Renaissance plan (2019 – 2020) sets a concrete path for the political,
economic and social development of Jordan. To transform these commitments into action, MoPIC leads
and coordinates strategic planning at the central and sub-national level.

Table 2.1. Jordan's strategic planning framework

|	Instruments
National level	• **Jordan 2025:** The 10-year national vision and strategy of Jordan. This document features more than 400 policies and procedures promoting a participatory approach between the government, civil society and businesses. • **Renaissance Plan (2019 – 2020)**: Annual government plan outlining national priorities. The Renaissance plan seeks to achieve progress in terms of the state of law, economic productivity and social development towards the achievement of a "human state".
Governorate level	• **Governorate strategy and executive plan:** Annual plan developed by each of the 12 governorates containing local development projects and budget allocations. • **Governorate needs and priorities manual**

| Municipal level | • **Municipality needs and priorities manual** |
| Local level | • **Needs and priorities list**: collected directly from citizens |

Source: Author's own work.

Strategic planning at the sub-national level follows a bottom-up approach with the aim of encouraging the alignment and coherence of plans at different levels. Notably, each Governorate develops their own annual strategy and executive plan, proposing concrete investment projects with the support of GDUs and the Executive Council. Municipalities feed into this process by submitting their own Municipalities Needs Manual based on the priorities lists developed by Local Councils. In addition, GDUs provide technical support to the Executive Council throughout the strategic planning process by collecting relevant data, analyzing potential avenues for reform and preparing relevant documents for the decision making process. MoPIC and MoLA provide technical support through trainings and manuals to support work in this regard.

While the development of governorate plans has benefited from the iterative learning of two need cycles, some of the key challenges identified by the OECD (2017) remain. Findings from the OECD survey note that the uptake of this participatory process has advanced but is yet uneven, as 28% of respondents consider that stakeholder contributions are not reflected in governorate plans (see Figure 2.7). Against this backdrop, it will be paramount for the Government to ensure that the approved Local Development Plans reflect the needs and concerns from municipalities and local stakeholders. To support this process, GDUs and LDUs should be equipped with technical skills to translate local needs to medium-term strategic planning. The confluence of many actors in local matters makes it critical to align sub-national and national strategies to ensure that all development needs – from large and small communities – are reflected.

Figure 2.7. Share of sub-national representatives noting whether they feel the contributions made by stakeholders are considered in the needs assessment process
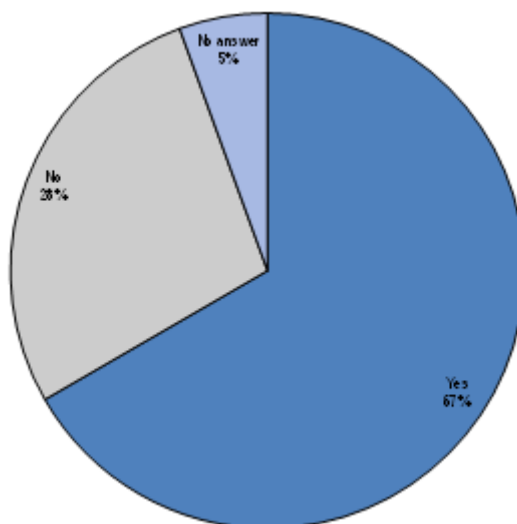
Source: OECD (2019) Questionnaire for sub-national governments: Stakeholder participation in Jordan's needs assessment process.

Beyond the development of plans, efforts could also focus on improving the link between local development projects, their financing and implementation. Fact-finding interviews noted the need for more coordination between Executive and Governorate Councils. Moreover, as the implementation of projects are carried out by a sectoral ministry, the link with Governorate Departments could be further strengthened. Given the

complex nature of this process, GDUs could play an important role in bridging the gap between sectors. The creation of procedures and guidelines for local strategic planning could also be developed to support this complex process and align efforts across governorates. New South Wales, for example, developed a strategic planning toolkit to coordinate action across levels of government (see Box 2.7).

Box 2.7. The Strategic Planning Toolkit of the Government of New South Wales

The Government of New South Wales in Australia developed a toolkit to provide guidance on local plan making and to assist in the implementation of the goals and directions contained within nine Regional Plans, a Metropolis of three cities and the five district plans. The Strategic Planning Toolkit applies to all stages of planning, including policy directions for plan making and mapping standards and requirements.

As new planning strategies transpire, the Strategic Planning Toolkit is updated to serve as the centralized one-stop-shop resource for local councils and planning professionals alike to employ best practice planning across New South Wales.

Source: Government of New South Wales (N.D), Strategic Planning Toolkit, https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Plans-for-your-area/Local-Planning-and-Zoning/Strategic-Planning-Toolkit

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In this regard, the Tanmiah System developed in early 2020 by the Ministry of Interior and UNDP could help local actors promote a more transparent and evidence-driven strategic planning process across the needs cycle. This tool notably seeks to "to integrate government's planning process with project implementation through the automated tracking of goals and related measures while providing a means for public feedback" (UNDP, 2020). The Tanmiah System consists of three main components (Ibid). First, a geographic database with over 400 socio-demographic measures is meant to inform policy decisions in real time. Second, the tool provides a project management dashboard for public officials to track relevant information on an initiative's timeline, completion rate and budgets, Lastly, its public relations management (PRM) system gives citizens the ability to submit service requests, review project proposals and provide online feedback in real time on local investment initiatives. At the time of writing, it is not clear the degree of its utilization across all Governorates in Jordan. However, efforts to support strategic planning could benefit from the ample dissemination and adoption of this tool by all relevant local, municipal and governorate authorities in the framework of the needs assessment process.

There is also room to improve the monitoring and evaluation of local development plans. While GDUs are tasked to deliver evaluation reports through a new tool called "Adat Altanmyah", this process is not active in all Governorates. Public officials noted during validation workshops the lack of screening of local development projects in some Governorates, as well as the ad hoc and informal nature of evaluations. To illustrate, 20 hospitals in the Ma'an governorate were allocated despite this number going beyond the national standards of beds per population. Therefore, MoLA, together with MoPIC, could support the institutionalization of ex ante and ex post evaluation processes and promote the take up of the Adat Altanmyah tool. Promoting evaluation processes would foster greater accountability of government departments to development programmes, inform subsequent needs assessment cycles and showcase results to citizens.

Ultimately building more effective participation mechanisms could help communities articulate a vision for its development and generate a sense of ownership. At the national level, the government could help ensure that local needs are connected to broader strategic planning goals and help identify relevant donor-led development opportunities. At the local level, beyond yearly exercises, consultations should inform mid-term and long-term development strategies and programmes. Overall, the aim of the strategic planning process at the sub-national level should aspire to move from the collection of wish lists to the creation of a

more structured approach to development and strategic planning. Strengthening the capacities and skills of public servants to conduct stakeholder participation activities in the needs assessment process

Strengthening the capacities and skills of public servants to conduct stakeholder participation activities in the needs assessment process

Ensuring adequate levels of human resources and capacities is critical to the work of sub-national governments. Indeed, as decentralization reforms assign news tasks for local authorities to perform, there is increasing emphasis on enhancing uniform capacities across regions. The OECD Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability emphasises the importance of ensuring adequate levels of skills to ensure the transformation of a political vision into concrete services (OECD, 2019b). In that context, the OECD developed a framework that identifies the skills needed by public servants to face the increasing complexity, interconnectedness and openness in the public sector.

According to the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability, one of the four main areas of skills needed are those related to civil servants' work with citizens. As civil servants provide service delivery, directly to and with citizens, fostering their engagement skills is key to implementing policies and reforms effectively (see Box 2.8). Despite the importance of working with citizens, however, OECD evidence finds the lack of knowledge and skills in this area as one of the main challenges faced by public servants (OECD, 2017d).

Thus, the OECD Recommendation summarises 14 principles to foster a value-driven, trusted, capable, responsive and adaptive public service, suggesting governments invest in civil service capabilities by:

- Continuously identifying skills and competencies needed to transform political vision into services that deliver value to society;
- Attracting and retaining employees with the skills and competencies required;
- Recruiting, selecting and promoting candidates through transparent, open and merit based processes;
- Developing the necessary skills and competencies by creating a learning culture and environment in the public service; and
- Assessing, rewarding and recognising performance, talent and initiative.

Box 2.8. Skills needed for citizen engagement and service delivery

The 2017 OECD Report, Skills for a High Performing Civil Service, summarises the skills needed for citizen engagement and service delivery as:

|	
Strategic orientation	Using engagement skills to achieve specific outcomes to inform, for example, better targeted interventions, such as healthier eating habits or smoking reduction.
Professional expertise	Traditional building blocks of service and engagement skills include professionals with expertise in public relations, communications, marketing, consultation, facilitation, service delivery, conflict resolution, community development, outreach, etc.
Innovation capabilities	Innovation skills applied to engagement to expand and redesign civil service mechanisms through, for example, co-creation, prototyping, social media, crowdsourcing, challenge prizes, ethnography, opinion research and data, branding, behavioural insights/nudging, digital service environments and user data analytics.

Source: OECD (2017), Skills for a High Performing Civil Service, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264280724-en. OECD (2019), Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability, OECD, Paris, https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0445.

From an open government perspective, the third provision of the OECD Recommendation of the Council of Open Government urges governments to provide "public officials with the mandate to design and implement successful open government strategies and initiatives, as well as the adequate human, financial and technical resources…" (OECD, 2017b). In fact, a survey of open government reforms in OECD countries found the lack of or insufficient capacity of public human resources as one of the main challenges to implement open government initiatives (OECD, 2016).

Human resource management in Jordan is also one of the main challenges in the needs-assessment process. OECD survey findings identified the lack of or insufficient human resources (57%), existing mechanisms (57%) and capacities (46%) as the key bottlenecks cited by sub-national representatives. Respondents also noted that LDUs and GDUs are lagging in terms of skills to carry out their new functions as a result of the rapid rollout of the decentralization reform. Notably, building capacities at the local level is a common challenge in most OECD countries, as it was encountered for example in the design of infrastructure projects signalled by two thirds of surveyed OECD sub-national authorities (OECD, 2015).

While guidance and trainings are provided, findings suggest a mismatch with current skill gaps, in particular as capacities vary significantly across large and small governorates. As seen in Figure 2.8, a majority of sub-national governments declared that they received trainings (69%) to build stakeholder participation related skills. Even with the existence of these trainings, public officials highlighted during interviews the difficulty of carrying out the needs cycle.

Figure 2.8. Percentage of trainings provided with the express purpose of building capacity to work with stakeholders in the needs assessment process
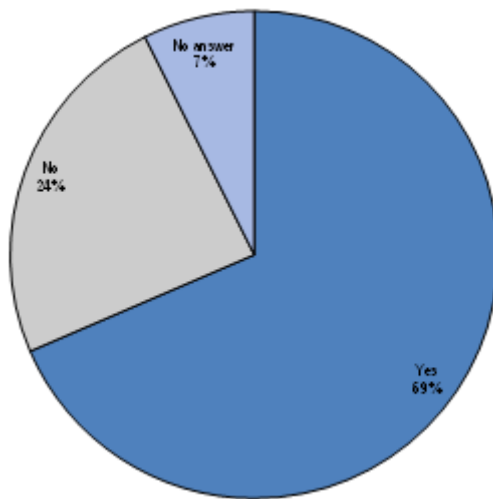
Source: OECD (2019) Questionnaire for sub-national governments: Stakeholder participation in Jordan's needs assessment process.

Despite the provision of trainings by several actors in Jordan, a systemic approach is needed to ensure the coordination, relevance and long-term sustainability of these efforts. According to OECD survey results, local governments received trainings from multiple sources, such as donor organizations (50%), national government ministries (44%) or local/national NGOs (40%) (see Figure 2.9). However, interviews noted that capacity building is mostly conducted on an ad-hoc basis and focuses primarily on technical assistance. Indeed, challenges in Jordan persist as trainings are often dispersed and carried out in isolation without a concrete policy or programme supporting their institutionalization.

Figure 2.9. Main sources of trainings for sub-national level stakeholders in the context of the needs assessment process
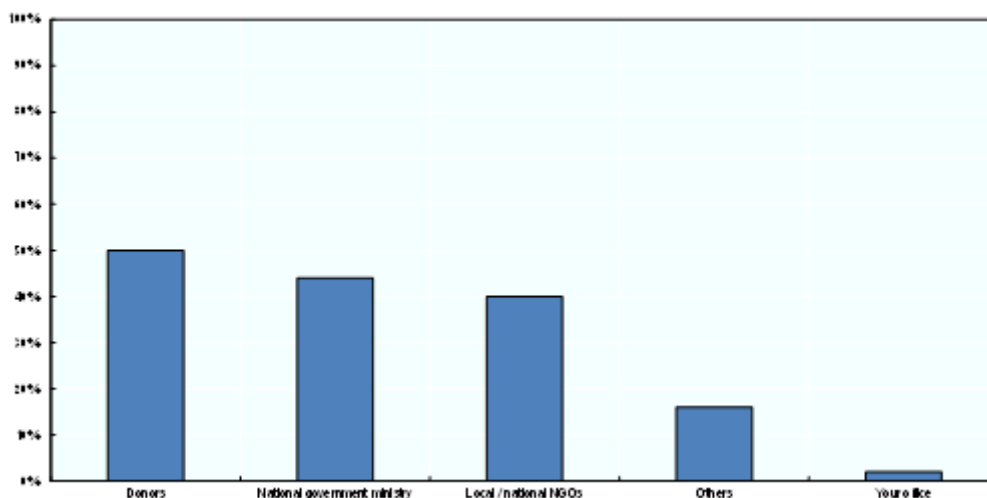
Source: OECD (2019) Questionnaire for sub-national governments: Stakeholder participation in Jordan's needs assessment process.

In light of its role, MoLA could therefore help address these challenges by identifying capacity gaps to better adapt guidance and trainings to the actual needs of different local administrations. Mapping skill gaps across the 12 governorates would allow MoLA to provide relevant and tailored technical trainings (i.e. evaluation, cost benefit analysis, etc.). These trainings could also be translated into institutionalized programs targeting local civil servants, in particular from LDUs and GDUs. Trainings could also focus on building and managing a number of transparency and accountability tools, such as open data portals, citizen budgets, community planning and participatory budgeting. For their effective implementation, the Government of Jordan could consider coordinating with the Institute of Public Administration.

In addition, MoLA could adopt a coordinating role to explore partnerships with other relevant stakeholders (i.e. CSOS, donors) and better assess local capacity needs. Creating a joint catalogue of available options could, for example, foster a more targeted and comprehensive approach for trainings. In addition, the institutionalization of capacity building efforts into programmes or academies (see Box 2.9) could be explored. The goal of Jordan's capacity building efforts should ultimately focus on promoting their reach, relevance and sustainability.

Box 2.9. Public service academies for regions and municipalities

- Chile's Capacity Building Academy for Municipalities and Regions

In 2007, Chile created *the Academia de Capacitation Municipal y Regional SUBDERE* to support the implementation of the country's decentralization reform. The academy provides a set of technical standards for municipalities and regions and supports a broad spectrum of knowledge that can be adapted to different local realities. Within its offer, the academy provides in-person training programmes, expert panels as well as online MOOCs. A key success factor of the academy's programmes relies in the close relationships with members of academia, civil society and donor organizations.

- Maryland Academy for Excellence in Local Governance

In partnership with the Maryland Municipal League, the University of Maryland developed a programme on municipal governance. This programme is voluntary and open to all local officials in Maryland. The academy provides in-person and online classes on Risk Management; Conducting Effective Meetings; Consensus and Team Building; Employment Issues; Ethics; Municipal Budgeting; Implementing the Public Information Act; Structure of Municipal Government and conducting open and participatory meetings.

- The Latvian School of Public Administration (LSPA)

Established in 1993, the LSPA provides high-quality training and consultation services to meet the current and future needs of public servants at both the national and local level. The training and services developed by the LSPA help ensure high quality of public service in Latvia, with specialized courses aimed at Municipalities. The LSPA has designed a training module system that contains around 120 different courses.

Sources: Author's own work based on online content. See http://www.academia.subdere.gov.cl/?page_id=8, https://spp.umd.edu/your-education/executive-development/state-and-local-government/academy-excellence-local-governance and www.vas.gov.lv/en/.

Ensuring the continuity of participation initiatives through dedicated financial resources

Financial resources for sub-national governments need to match the new functions laid out in the decentralization reform in Jordan and the expansion of the roles and responsibilities of local governments. Adequate financing is of particular importance as sub-national authorities become increasingly responsible for the delivery of many crucial services.

Notably, the OECD Open Government Recommendation recognizes the need for governments to provide adequate human and financial resources to implement open government strategies and initiatives successfully (OECD, 2017b). Beyond the absolute amounts allocated to support open government initiatives, countries must ensure that funding sources are clear and consistent (OECD, 2016).

The sources for funding open government initiatives vary across governments. In fact, funding for these initiatives in more than half of OECD countries (52%) comes from a combination of sources (OECD, 2016). Resources may come from a single central body, from the body responsible for its implementation or from external stakeholders. The latter may include, for example, the private sector, donors, multilateral organisations or other organisations such as NGOs or the European Commission.

Securing financial resources remains a key challenge in most OECD countries. OECD data shows that most member countries identify a lack of necessary financial resources as one of the main challenges, both to coordinate (43% of OECD countries) and to implement (49% of OECD countries) open government strategies and initiatives (OECD, 2016).

More broadly, challenges persist with low levels of available funding for local development projects within governorates, and the limited autonomy for governorate budget allocations. The total allocated budget for decentralization for the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 constitutes 3% of the country's annual budget (Kadhim, 2018). Placing this numbers in perspective, the 2019 Governorate Council Budget amounted to 300 million Jordanian Dinars (close to 400 million USD), from which the General Budget Department allocated an expenditure limit to each governorate. On this basis, proposed local development projects were selected by the Executive Council and approved by the Governorate Council. However, Governors can only make decisions on projects of less than JOD 100,000 (around 142,000 USD)[2].

Despite of the new responsibilities granted to municipalities through the 2015 laws, general funding streams in Jordan remain limited for these actors. Municipal budgets (excluding that for the Greater Amman Municipality) are heavily dependent on a transfer allocation system based on a number of socio-economic factors, including population. Overall, mayors have expressed concerns about the lack of predictability in the system, as budget allocations tend to fluctuate significantly across years, in particular with growing strains to the economy. Indicative of this low levels of funding, OECD survey results also found that 70% of sub-national authorities suffer from a lack of or insufficient financial resources to implement decentralization related activities. Low financing levels may have the adverse effect of lowering the capacity and incentive of local development units to carry out needs assessment activities, as well as discouraging participation and thus perpetuating a general sense of distrust from the public.

The same can be said for the lack of dedicated funding for stakeholder participation activities in all three levels of government. In fact, OECD data shows that only 13% of respondents confirmed having a specific budget for the needs assessment process and only 2% have a budget for broader participation activities (see Figure 2.10 & Figure 2.11). Indeed, municipalities struggle to conduct participation activities as they operate on their own resources and limited funding streams allocated by MoLA. Dedicated funding in this regard is all the more important to support the intermediary role of local governments between the public, the governorate council and the national administration. Access to finance should therefore be consistent with the new functional responsibilities of local authorities to collect needs from and engage with local communities.

Figure 2.10. Share of sub-national authorities with a dedicated budget for the needs assessment process
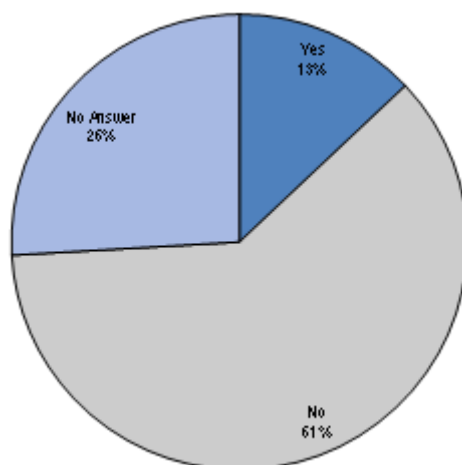
Source: OECD (2019) Questionnaire for sub-national governments: Stakeholder participation in Jordan's needs assessment process.

Figure 2.11. Percentage of sub-national authorities with a dedicated budget for participation initiatives more broadly
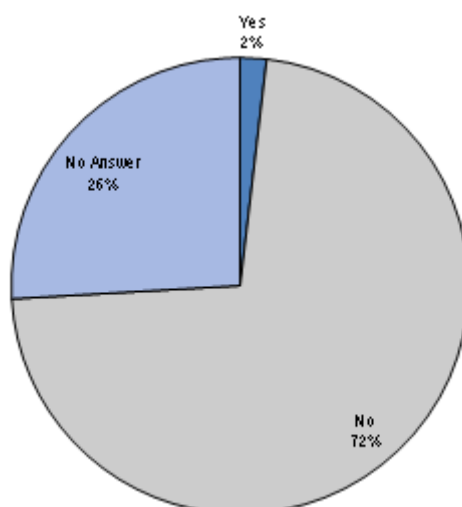
Source: Ibid

Because of this lack of resources, donors play a large role in funding needs assessment meetings. While external funding can make important contributions to participation initiatives, more efforts are needed from all levels of government to ensure the sustainability of participatory activities. Given the challenges in identifying additional funding with the current economic context in Jordan, the Government of Jordan could consider transitioning to a mixed system of funds[3].

The needs assessment process could therefore benefit from establishing a dedicated budget line to provide the necessary resources for participation initiatives and the collection of needs. As the needs assessment process is at the core of the reform, a dedicated-budget line for these activities would strengthen the mandate and capacity of GDUs and LDUs to engage with communities. In addition, having

a dedicated budget line could also renew the incentives of public servants to carry out participation activities.

An initial step to address funding gaps would thus require mapping existing and future financing needs in each Governorate to make the case for investments in local development projects. As each governorate has varying fiscal capacities, needs and abilities to provide local public services, this exercise would allow setting realistic budget limits for each region. This analysis should also identify regional and national priorities, unaddressed needs and results of past local development projects. Engaging in a yearly mapping exercise, including the monitoring and impact evaluation of investments, could significantly increase transparency and make the needs assessment process more informed. This is all the more important to strengthen the link between budgetary allocations and strategic planning between the national and local level.

Recommendations

The 2015 rollout of the decentralization reform drastically changed the tasks and responsibilities of local governments in Jordan. Indeed, sub-national authorities, in particular GDUs and LDUs, faced challenges to hone their new role and underwent a difficult "learning by doing" process, were challenges have been further exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While the iterative nature of the needs assessment cycles has informed improvements in the process, the quest to meet citizens' high expectations on the promise of decentralization continues.

With local governance structures undergoing a rapid transformation, this chapter identified a number of avenues to strengthen governance mechanisms to promote greater stakeholder participation in the needs assessment cycle, including:

- Clarifying responsibilities and accountability lines for each of the three levels of sub-national government to empower GDUs and LDUs;
- Promoting more effective co-ordination and information transfer across levels of government;
- Fostering an effective strategic planning cycle that builds on stakeholder participation initiatives;
- Strengthening civil servant skills to conduct stakeholder participation activities;
- Ensuring long-term sustainability of participation initiatives at the local level through dedicated financial resources.

To this end, the Government of Jordan could consider the following recommendations:

Clarifying the overall structure and organization of the needs assessment process

- Map the needs assessment process and codify the specific roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder involved. Particularly, clearly differentiate tasks of stakeholders in Municipal, Executive and Governorate Councils, as well as for LDUs and GDUs. Such an activity could be accompanied by new visual material that would clarify roles, promote a coherent vision of the decentralization process and flag opportunities for citizens and civil society to participate.
- Clarify functions and sub-tasks regarding the four main stages of the needs assessment process, namely planning, budgeting, implementing and evaluating for each level of government. Mapping every actor's contributions could also identify potential synergies between the final list of priorities, the strategic plan and the governorate budget.
- Disseminate existing guidelines across stakeholders in each of the 12 governorates more effectively. Consider creating a centralized information repository where all guidelines, training calendars and other relevant information can be found.

- Include concrete procedures and instructions in existing guidelines for local development units carrying out engagement related activities. This could include, for example, establishing procedural requirements to standardize activities throughout municipalities and governorates, such as a required quarterly hearings or annual evaluation reports.

Ensuring greater multi-level coordination & transfer of information via the needs assessment process

- Establish procedural requirements to foster multi-level coordination. This could include mandating local, municipal and governorate councils to make publicly available their needs list documents. Sub-national authorities could also develop and publish a follow-up report on the needs assessment, budget allocations and the status of implementation of local projects.
- Include representatives from Local and Municipal Councils in regular meetings between the Governorate and Executive Councils. This would facilitate coordination and strengthen relationships at the governorate level.
- Establish formal sub-national co-ordination mechanisms, such as a yearly forum between local authorities or thematic communities of practice. These networks could bring together local, municipal and governorate representatives to share experiences, lessons learnt and to identify common challenges and opportunities in pushing the decentralization agenda forward. Establishing a formal mechanism for co-operation would also help institutionalize the relationship between the three levels of government.

Fostering an effective strategic planning cycle in the needs assessment process

- Ensure the reflection of local needs into governorate and national development plans. Efforts should focus on strengthening the technical capacity of GDUs and LDUs to support the participatory nature of the process.
- Strengthen the link between the development of plans, their financing and their implementation. The government could also consider formalizing or regularizing the evaluation of plans to support this process further. In this regard, ensuring the adoption of the Adat Altanmyah tool could support evaluation efforts.
- Support the transformation of the strategic planning process at the sub-national from the collection of wish lists to the creation of a more structured approach through innovative forms of stakeholder participation that promote co-creation. The ample dissemination and adoption of the Tanmiah System across local, municipal and governorate entities could be a first step in this regard.

Strengthening the capacities and skills of public servants to conduct stakeholder participation activities in the needs assessment process

- Assess the capacity challenges to better adapt trainings to the needs of local governments through a mapping of skills gaps across the 12 governorates.
- Design and implement a series of technical training modules (i.e. in areas such as evaluation, cost benefit analysis, etc.) to ensure the necessary capacities and skills at the governorate and municipal levels exist to carry out the needs assessment process.
- Provide technical and specialized trainings to GDUs and LDUs, in particular on how to carry out stakeholder participation related initiatives in the context of the needs assessment process. Trainings could also focus on building and managing a number of transparency and accountability tools, such as open data portals, citizen budgets, community planning and participatory budgeting.

- Explore potential partnerships with other stakeholders, such as NGOs and donors, who also provide trainings related to participation at the local level in order to create synergies. These trainings could also be coordinated with the Institute of Public Administration. In close coordination with NGOs, the government could develop a catalogue of existing trainings and disseminate it across the 12 governorates.

Ensuring the continuity of participation initiatives through dedicated financial resources

- Map the present and future financing needs to set realistic budget limits for each governorate based on available funding. This exercise should assess national and regional priorities, local needs and results from previous budgetary allocations to inform future decision-making, to promote a more transparent process and ultimately build citizen trust in the needs assessment process.
- Allocate and standardize a dedicated budget line in each governorate to carry out participation activities, both in the framework of the needs assessment process and beyond.
- Map the existing pool of external sources of funding that could be leveraged to fund opportunities to engage with stakeholders, build capacity to carry out these activities, ensure sectorial studies match with the proposed needs/projects, etc.

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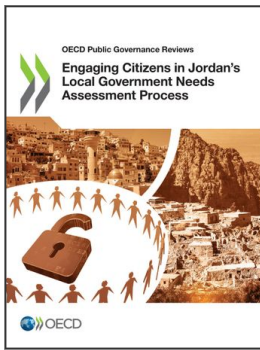United Cities and Local Governments (N.D.), Strategic Urban Planning from a Local Governments'

Perspective, Policy Paper on Strategic Urban Development developed by the Commission on Urban Strategic Planning, https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/EN_525_draftpolicypapermonica2504.pdf

Notes

[1] Inter-Ministerial and Executive Committees bring together the ministries that play a key role in the decentralisation reform, including the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of Public Sector Reform and the Ministry of Finance.

[2] https://platforma-dev.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Mashrek-Decentralisation-in-the-Mashrek-region1-1.pdf

[3] A Mixed system of funds refers to the management of a diverse range of funding streams, including that from donor organizations, national budget allocations, etc.