OECD Open Government Review

Jordan

Towards a New Partnership with Citizens: Jordan's Decentralisation Reform

HIGHLIGHTS

2017

PRELIMINARY VERSION

OECD
BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

King Abdullah II speaks during the opening of the first ordinary session of 18th Parliament in Amman, November 7, 2016.

WHAT DOES THE OECD STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT ANALYSE?

In the context of its efforts to bring policies and public services closer to citizens, the Government of Jordan asked the OECD to provide an analysis of the ongoing **decentralisation reform from the perspective of the principles and practices of open government**. In addition to providing analysis of the context, the policy areas covered in the OECD assessment include:

- Improving centre-of-government (CoG) capacity to steer and lead decentralisation reform and its implementation.
- Strengthening analytical and evaluation capacity for better policy-making and service delivery.
- Enhancing transparency, accountability and citizen participation through a more open government approach across all levels of Jordan's public administration.

The OECD defines Open Government as *"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"*

Open Government policies are a means to improve the quality of a country's democratic life in order to better meet the needs of its people. They yield a great variety of benefits to businesses and citizens as well as to implementing governments.

Key examples include:

- Increasing trust in government
- Ensuring better policy outcomes
- Enhancing policy efficiency and effectiveness
- Strengthening policy and regulatory compliance
- Promoting inclusive socio-economic development
- Fostering innovation

Angel Gurria,Secretary-General of OECD and **Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan**.

The launch event: **Minister Fakhoury, DSG Kiviniemi**, Ambassadors of France and Germany to Jordan

Jordan

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS HIGHLIGHTS BROCHURE?

This Highlights brochure presents key facts and the preliminary findings and recommendations of the *"OECD Strategic Assessment of the Decentralisation Reform and Open Government in Jordan"*. The Assessment includes the following Chapters:

1. **The context of the decentralisation reform and open government in Jordan** provides an introduction to the historical, political, administrative and socio-economic environment placing the decentralisation reform process in the broader context of the democratisation and open government agenda in Jordan.

2. **Enhancing the role of the Centre of Government in driving decentralisation reform in Jordan** examines the leadership and co-ordination functions of the main central government actors that guide decentralisation reform.

3. **Enablers for effective public service delivery at the local level** discusses the key issues needed in a decentralised context to ensure the conditions for bringing public policies closer to citizens and businesses adapted to their needs.

4. **The level of openness and participation and the expected impact of decentralisation reform** reviews the context for open government across the different levels of government and discusses the potential of the reform to strengthen open and democratic governance at the level of the governorates and municipalities.

King Abdullah II, 26 January 2005: *"[a]s political development is the gateway to the full participation of all segments of the grassroots and civil society institutions in the various aspects of the development process, I assert here that political development should start at the grassroots level, then move up to decision-making centres, and not vice-versa."*

JORDAN – KEY STATISTICS (latest figures available)

Population	9.5 million (2016)	**GDP per capita**	4,940 USD (2015)
Total Area	89,320 km^2	**Annual GDP growth (2010-2015 average)**	2.64%
System of Government	Monarchy with a parliamentary system	**Labour force participation rate**	Female: 15.8% Male: 66.9%
Administrative organisation	Centralised system, 12 governorates, 100 municipalities	**Life Expectancy at birth**	Female: 75.8 Male: 72.4

Source: 2015 Census conducted by the Department of Statistics (Population data); World Bank data.

Context: The case for a decentralised approach to development

Jordan's political and administrative system is characterised by a high degree of centralisation. For decades, the national planning and development process has been directed by the central government. With the approval of the 2015 Decentralisation Law and Municipality Law, the government has undertaken a first important step towards promoting a more bottom-up approach to the identification of service needs and policy priorities, based on the role of the new elected councils in the municipalities and governorates.

JORDAN'S MAIN FEATURES:

- **Stable political climate,** backed by financial and technical support from the international community, in a region that is characterised by recurring political, economic and security turmoil. Through its memberships in regional alliances (e.g. Arab League, Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Organisation of Islamic Co-operation) and international bodies (i.e. MENA-OECD Initiative, Open Government Partnership), Jordan is solidly anchored in the global debate on good governance.

- **Economic growth** rates of 4% to 8% in the 2000s and the classification as "upper-middle income country" since 2012. However, growth rates slowed down to 2.6% between 2010-15 and GDP per capita declined by -0.6% on average during the same period.

- **Positive results in the democratisation agenda** as the first Arab country to pass an Access to Information Law in 2007 and to join the Open Government Partnership in 2011. Amendments to the Constitution in 2011 led to the creation of the Independent Election Commission and a Constitutional Court. Preceding the 2016 parliamentary elections, the adoption of the 2015 Election Law led the ground for a fairer representation of citizens and the 2015 Political Parties Law intends to encourage the creation of political parties. Jordan is a signatory to various international conventions including the ICCPR[1], the CRC[2], UNCAC[3], and the ACHR[4].

- **Significant improvements in human development** over the last decades. Between the 1980s and 2014, life expectancy at birth increased by 7.8 years, mean years of schooling increased by 6.8 years and Gross National Income per capita rose by 24.1%. A well educated population and low levels of illiteracy are key assets.

- **Adoption of Jordan Vision 2025, the country's ten-year strategy,** which seeks to promote decentralisation and advocates for the implementation of **key open government principles** including participation, transparency and accountability. The vision places citizens at the heart of the reform process.

1. International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
2. Convention on the Rights of the Child
3. United Nations Anti-Corruption Convention
4. Arab Charter on Human Rights

MAIN SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

- **Host of the second largest number of refugees per capita in the world**. Jordan's proximity to the military conflicts in Syria and Iraq has resulted in a large influx of refugees (689,053 registered with UNHCR in 2015) which has put additional pressures on available economic opportunities and access to public services (i.e. housing).

- **High vulnerability of the economy to external economic shocks** given the dependence on international grants, relatively weak private sector activity and high import levels due to adverse geographical characteristics (i.e. water, energy, food). High unemployment and low economic participation rates affect all groups in society but in particular women (i.e. only 16% of women participate in the labour market) and youth.

- **The short lifespan of governments and parliaments** has threatened the continuity and sustainability of government initiatives. Strong tribal affiliations continue to be a major determinant of political life and sustain the role of the parliament as a service provider rather than policy shaper or oversight body of government action. A bloated public sector (i.e. public salaries and pension obligations account for 27% of annual government expenditures) leaves limited fiscal space for investments.

- **High centralisation of political power and administrative organisation** in policy planning and service delivery. The need to improve administrative capacities and self-generated resources at the governorate and municipality level has resulted in dissatisfaction with the performance of sub-national government. Jordan is characterised by large regional (economic) disparities, and poverty remains a national challenge in among both the rural (16.8%) and urban (13.9%) population (2010).

- **Implementation of the national commitments on open, transparent, participatory and accountable governance** has been hampered by the absence of institutionalised forms of CSO/citizen engagement across all levels of government, shortcomings in the integrity system and the legacy of traditional norms. This has hindered equal opportunities for all segments of society, including women and youth, to fully participate in all spheres of public life.

DECENTRALISATION: THE WAY FORWARD

The 2015 Decentralisation Law and Municipality Law reflect the commitment of the Government of Jordan to move towards a culture of popular participation at the sub-national levels of government and were inspired by King Abdullah II's vision of a political development process that starts at the grassroots level. However, a number of key challenges remain to be addressed:

- **Build on the current momentum for decentralisation reform to start a national debate on the final governance architecture of the state**. Engage with relevant stakeholders to discuss the different models of decentralisation (decon-centration, delegation, devolution, etc.), as well as the legal and institutional changes needed to achieve them; and identify the best that fits Jordan's future development plans.

- **Elaborate a clear road map for the implementation of the 2015 Decentralisation Law and Municipality Law and relevant by-laws** featuring short-term milestones prior to the local elections, medium- and long-term objectives and effective follow-up mechanisms to ensure successful implementation.

- **Enhance co-ordination across all levels of government in the national planning and development process and assign clear mandates to all sub-national entities** at the governorate and municipal levels, including for the elected councils, to allow for a bottom-up approach to the identification of service needs and policy priorities.

- **Revise the rules and regulations that hamper the emergence of a culture of open and participatory policy-making** across all levels of government, strengthen public institutions and **align policies and actual practices** with the principles of openness, transparency, accountability and citizen participation.

- **Create a community of reform champions among public officials and non-governmental stakeholders** to improve the government-orchestrated character of the reform, raising awareness, providing training opportunities and institutionalising a partnership approach between local public officials, CSOs and citizens. This will help ensure citizens can become active drivers of the national planning and development process.

- **Reconcile increasing expectations among Civil Society Organisations and citizens to play a more active role** in shaping political planning and development with the future tools and mechanisms at their disposal and not yet foreseen in details in the laws.

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

The endorsement of the Decentralisation Law and Municipality Law by parliament in 2015 marks a milestone in translating King Abdullah II's vision into practice. Through the elected governorate and local councils, the laws introduce an unprecedented opportunity for public participation in national and local development.

The Centre of Government (CoG) has a critical role to play in co-ordinating the implementation of the 2015 Decentralisation and the Municipality Laws across different ministries and levels of government and in communicating the reform in a way that citizens can understand. CSOs and citizens, in close collaboration with all sub-national entities, will play a key role in ensuring that the reforms advance in line with the objective stressed in Jordan Vision 2025, which is to become a more efficient, effective and responsive state and to empower citizens in the decision-making process at the local level.

DEFINING FEATURES

- Jordan is a unitary state based on a high degree of political, administrative and financial centralisation with a two-tier system of sub-national government (i.e. governorates and municipalities).

  – The 12 governorates are headed by a governor who is appointed by the King through the Ministry of Interior (MoI) who acts, together with the deconcentrated directorates of line ministries, as an extension of the central government. Governorates are administrative units directly attached to the MoI.

  – The 100 municipalities have a legal personality with financial and administrative autonomy and are organised along four sub-categories that correspond to their size. The municipalities are supervised by the Ministry of Municipality Affairs (MoMA) except for GAM and Aqaba Special Economic Zone.

- The central level provides all basic services including water, electricity, gas, sewerage, primary education, healthcare, among others. The municipalities have traditionally played a limited role in the day-to-day provision of public services due to limited political power and the lack of budgetary resources. In the elaboration of Governorate Development Plans, local stakeholders including public authorities, local CSOs and community members have, so far, played a marginal role in raising local needs and shaping policy outcomes.

- The governorates vary in size, population (2.4 million in Amman compared to less than 90.000 in Tafilah, 2012), density (highly populated in the North-West and major governorates and urban areas of Amman, Zarqa and Irbid compared to rural regions, such as Badia, Ma'an governorate, etc.) and economic weight (poverty rates vary between 11.4% in Amman and 26.6% in Ma'an, 2014).

- The decentralisation reform is linked to Jordan Vision 2025, which holds that decentralisation should contribute to fighting unemployment and poverty, ensure quality public services and encourage local economic development based on strong popular participation. The decentralisation reform enjoys high-level political support for the reform process and is supported by various donors.

- The Government of Jordan (GoJ) is pursuing a gradual approach in which the creation of elected governorate and local councils should eventually go along with a significant transfer of administrative, political and financial competencies to lower tiers of government.

CENTRE OF GOVERNMENT (COG)

OECD member countries' experience show that three elements are crucial for effective and efficient CoG-led implementation of national reforms:

- In order for the implementation of a national reform to be successful and sustainable in the long term, the centre of government needs to have the necessary institutional mechanisms, human and financial resources, and established procedures for monitoring and evaluation.

- The CoG institutions must provide strong leadership and possess vision-setting capacities to lead the whole-of-government toward the achievement of common cross-cutting policy objectives.

- CoG institutions must have the ability to co-ordinate all relevant stakeholders and provide the necessary incentives for them to collaborate both horizontally and vertically.

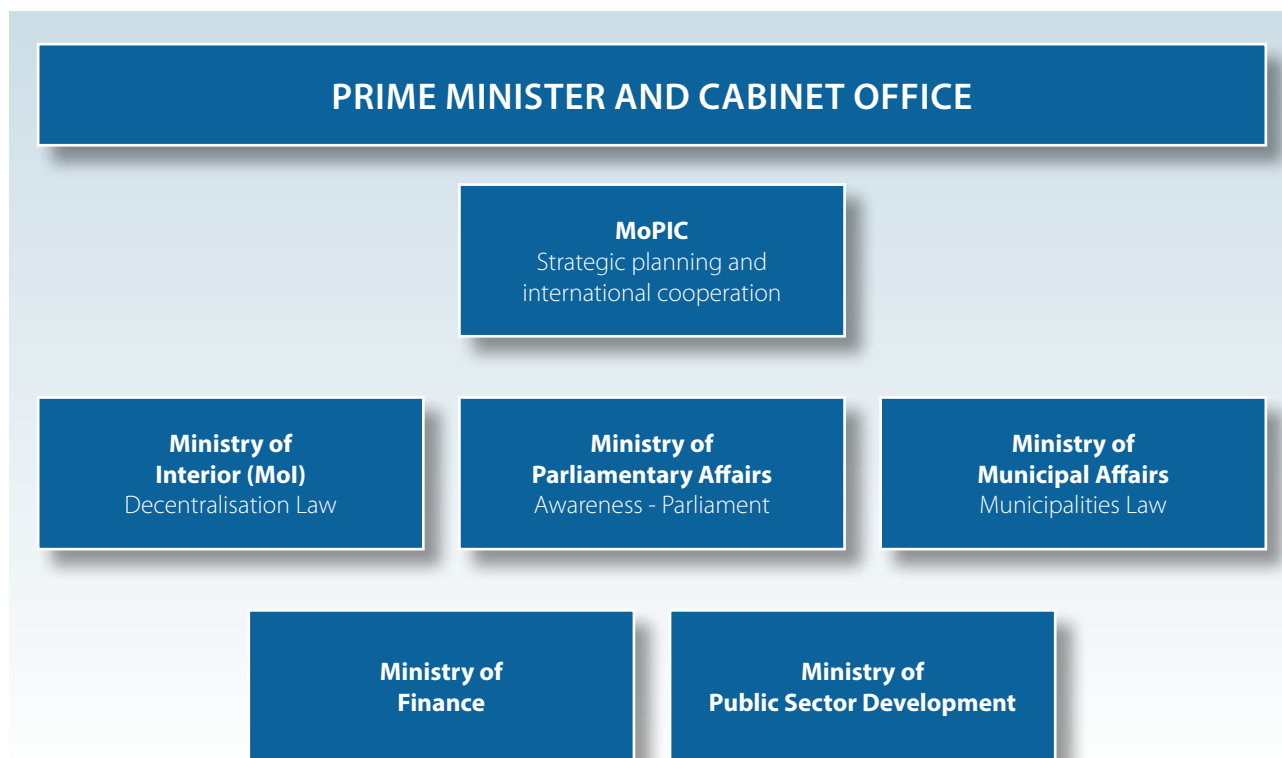### HOW THE OECD DEFINES CENTRE OF GOVERNMENT

The OECD defines the Centre of Government (CoG) as the institutions that provide direct support and advice to the head of government and the Council of Ministers. In general, the CoG has three core roles:

1) **Supporting quality decision making by the head of government;**

2) **Policy co-ordination across government;** and

3) **Monitoring of the implementation of government policy.**

JORDAN'S CURRENT COG ARRANGEMENTS

- A National Committee for the Decentralisation Reform was set up to co-ordinate the implementation process. It includes:

  – **Ministry of Interior**: Represents the central level in governorates and implements the 2015 Decentralisation Law and relevant by-laws.

  – **Ministry of Municipality Affairs**: Provides oversight and support to municipalities and joint service councils; supervises the municipalities' financial affairs and implements the 2015 Municipality Law and relevant by-laws.

  – **Ministry of Planning and International Co-operation**: Formulates, co-ordinates and monitors/evaluates government strategies (e.g. Jordan Vision 2025, EDP, National Action Plan for the OGP); elaborates the governorate developments plans.

  – **Ministry of Public Sector Development**: Co-ordinates the Government's strategy and management of its public sector, in particular on service delivery improvement, institutional streamlining, Human Resource Management and Program Management.

  – **Ministry of Finance**: Co-ordinates the budgetary cycle for the central government budget; fairly limited role in the reform process so far.

  – **Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs**: Interfaces between the Executive and the Legislative Branch and in charge of relations with citizens, media organisations and CSOs; raises awareness for the 2015 Decentralisation Law and Municipality Law.

- The Executive Committee is charged with the implementation of both laws and preparing for the governorate and municipal elections in 2017. It is chaired by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Interior and Ministry for Municipal Affairs and includes the MoPIC, MoPSD, MoF, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, MoPPA, and the Director General of the Budget Department in addition to directors of departments at the MoI and MoMA.

PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET OFFICE

MoPIC
Strategic planning and international cooperation

Ministry of Interior (MoI)
Decentralisation Law

Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs
Awareness - Parliament

Ministry of Municipal Affairs
Municipalities Law

Ministry of Finance

Ministry of Public Sector Development

Source: OECD from background report

KEY CHALLENGES

- With the creation of elected local councils and the transformation of municipal councils into indirectly elected bodies, the Municipality Law has the potential of broadening popular participation in the development process. However, in the absence of political and financial autonomy, the role of municipalities remains limited. Moreover, previous experience suggests that there is a gap between the responsibilities assigned in the laws and the functions exercised in practice (i.e. delivery of public services).

- The heavy focus of the 2015 Decentralization Law and Municipality Law on electoral procedures gives great importance to the relevant by-laws to clarify mandates, competencies and procedures for the role of governorates and municipalities in policymaking and service delivery. The relation between the elected councils at the local, municipal and governorate levels and between the elected councils and other sub-national entities (e.g. Executive Council at governorate level) should be clarified.

- The new legal framework may create unclear lines of responsibility and accountability, for instance in light of the double mandate of the Governor (as representative of the central level as well as head of the elected governorate council); the opportunity to appoint 15% of the elected governorate council members and other forms of central level dominance in local affairs (e.g. role of the Executive Council).

- The interaction between the ministries involved in the National Committee for the Decentralisation Reform lacks institutionalisation and a strategic dimension. In particular, the Ministry of Finance has been, so far, involved to a limited degree in the reform process.

- With the new laws, governorate and municipalities will actively contribute to the design and implementation of Governorate Development Plans and hence will be required to closely collaborate with MoPIC, while officially reporting to MoI and MoMA. This will require increasing efforts among MoPIC, MoMA and MoI to ensure coherence in strategic planning and development.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Prepare an implementation road map** to set out short-, medium- and long-term objectives along the reform process and submit an annual progress report to the parliament based on clear deadlines and performance indicators.

- **Clarify the roles and responsibilities at the national, governorate and municipal levels** in the delivery of public services and competencies in the national planning and development process. This list should be published and made widely accessible to citizens ahead of the forthcoming local elections (through the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs).

- **Develop a clear communication strategy** to explain the decentralisation reform through public seminars and a national dissemination campaign. The National Dialogue launched by the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs together with the Jordan NGOs coalition is a first initiative that could be replicated.

- **Publish guides and materials on the Decentralisation and Municipalities Laws** to provide information on their implications and effects at the national, governorate and local levels. These guides will be an important working tool for public servants and employees at the national, governorate and local levels to ensure a common understanding of the implications and the expected outcomes of this reform.

- **Develop a centralised monitoring mechanism** to evaluate and make adjustments during and after implementation of the decentralisation programme. This should be coupled with the establishment of an effective data management system to provide information to and from the central government and help monitor the activities and used funds at local levels.

- **Parliament should play a greater role in the follow-up of the implementation of the reform**. The government could consider submitting an annual decentralisation report to the parliament to inform MPs about the progress made in implementing the reform.

- Dedicate the necessary human and financial resources and strengthen and **reinforce co-operation, co-ordination and communication among the CoG institutions** and with the rest of the public administration.

- **Promote a more integrated approach between MoI and MoMA to ensure a "sub-national dimension" to be wholly integrated into the implementation strategy** and the future road map and ensure that all entities are working towards achieving a joint vision. **Both ministries could work more closely with MoPIC**, responsible for integrating all strands of national development strategy into the Biannual Development Programme, as well as the Ministry of Finance.

Enablers for effective and efficient public service delivery at the local level

In Jordan, line ministries deliver public services through deconcentrated units (directorates) at the governorate level. To ensure the objective of the decentralisation reform to promote a bottom-up approach, four key elements should be taken into consideration: 1) greater use of Local Development Units for a more effective local development, 2) bottom-up and participatory strategic planning; 3) a co-ordinated inter-institutional dialogue between the central, the governorate and the municipal levels; and 4) well-prepared employees to implement the reforms.

DEFINING FEATURES

- **Local Development Units (LDUs)** were introduced in 2002 to promote socio-economic development in the municipalities (MDLUs) and governorates (GLDUs) across the country. In this context, the main role of the LDUs at the governorate and municipal levels are to enhance local development, act as a general secretariat and interface with community stakeholders, civil society organizations and the private sector.

- The new institutional setup introduced by the 2015 Laws expands the role of the Local Development Units. They act as a secretariat of the governor, manager and elected councils, they are asked to develop proposals for co-ordinated policies, and they are called to be a cornerstone of governorate and municipal public administrations.

- Jordan has a lower degree of decentralisation in revenues than in expenditures. Municipal own resources represent only around 22% of the total local revenue, approximately 11% of which is collected through local taxes. As a result, Jordan's municipalities exhibit a high dependence

on transfers from the central government, which has generated vertical fiscal imbalances.

- **With the new legal framework, the national planning and development process is expected to be driven by a bottom-up approach** through which local elected councils collaborate with CSOs, citizens and other relevant non-governmental stakeholders. Such an approach will identify local needs before they are submitted to the municipal and governorate level, and thereby help align plans across the different layers of government with the specific realities on the ground.

- Jordan's municipalities have strong but **informal links** with sectoral ministries such as health and education since they do not have competencies assigned on these matters.

- According to the National Civil Bureau in Jordan, over 46% of its employees is located at sub-national level (22% at regional level and 36% at municipal level) and approximately 42% at national level.

SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE

Expenditure	% GDP	% General Government (same expenditure category)	% subnational government
Total expenditure (2013)	2.1%	5.8%	100
Current expenditure	1.4%	–	47.4%
Staff expenditure	1.1%	15.8%	51.2%
Investment	0.7%	12.9%	32.4%

Source: OECD(2016), UCLG country Profile

KEY CHALLENGES

- **LDUs are islands within the governorates (GLDUs) and municipalities (MLDUs)** in the sense that there is very limited interaction between them and other divisions. Only in a few cases have GLDUs participated in the preparation and follow-up of Governorate Development Plans. In the same vein, LDUs in the municipalities play a marginal role in the development aspects of the local community. There is a lack of proper communication channels between Local Developments Units.

- **Co-ordination mechanisms between GLDUs and MLDUs in the same governorate seem to be informal and take place on an irregular basis.** MLDUs provide GLDUs with data but no specific mechanism or common procedures have been adopted to ensure effective data collection to support territorial development.

- **The centralised approach to national planning and development detaches government actions from citizens' needs** and has helped deepen economic disparities and dissatisfaction among local community members. While the new legal framework allows for a more deconcentrated system of service delivery and more active involvement of local non-governmental stakeholders in the development process, **the dominance of the central level in addressing the day-to-day demands of citizens** and the financial dependence of sub-national levels of government may risk slowing down the development of an open and participatory administrative culture at the local level. In this system, the lines of accountability tend to be blurred between sub-national entities and MoI and MoMA.

- **Jordan could improve its institutionalised communication and co-ordination across the different layers of government** in the identification of citizens' needs and in rolling out governorate development plans. As the reform is expected to bring policies and services closer to citizens, it will also require effective and interactive mechanisms of co-ordination between the central level, governorates and municipalities.

- Many of Jordan's governorates and municipalities suffer from **weak institutional capacity.** Strengthening the capability of the civil service in Jordan is a crucial factor in ensuring an efficient and effective public sector that can promote strong, sustainable and inclusive growth.
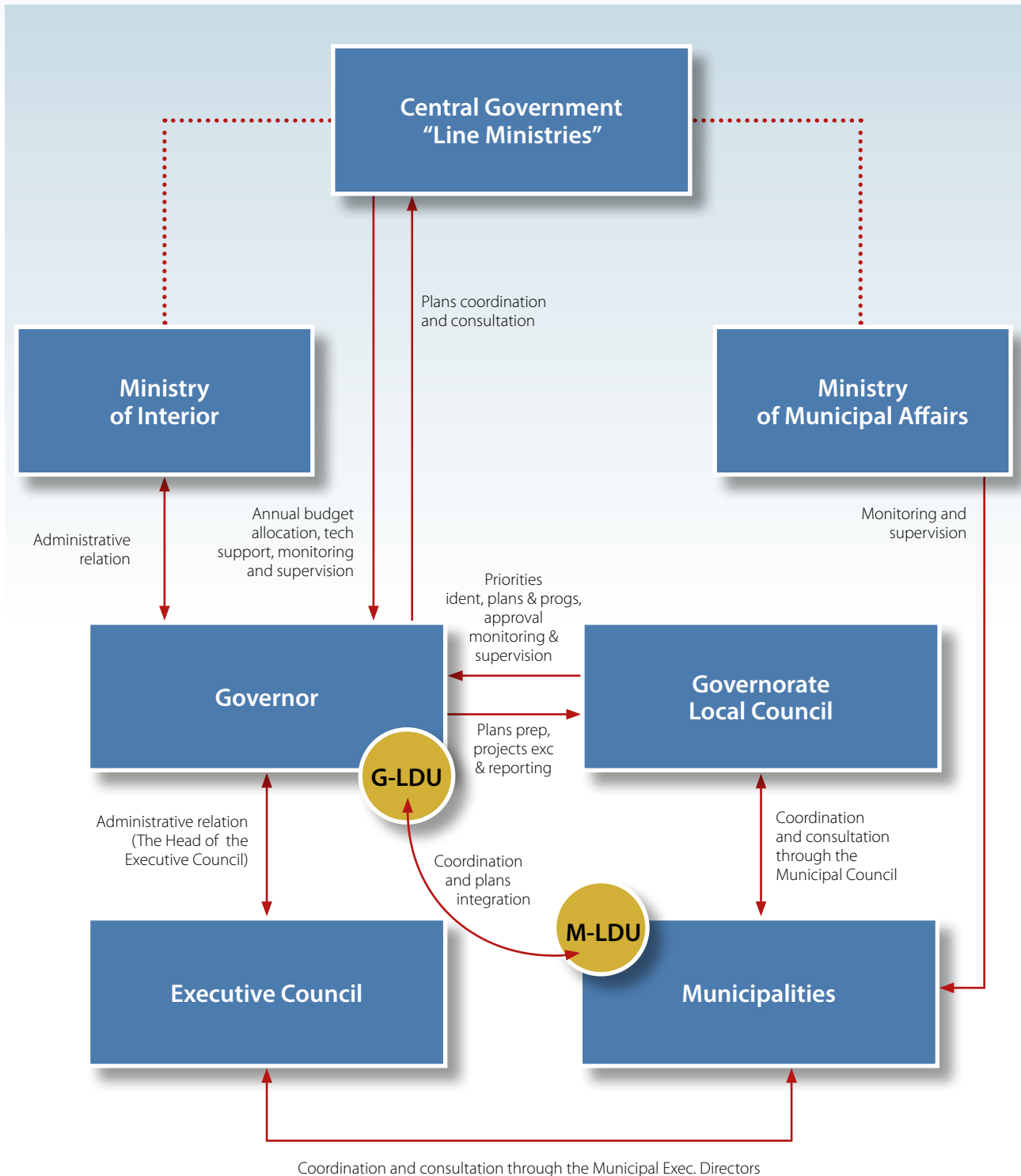
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve Jordan's ability to ensure public service delivery at the local level from a bottom-up perspective, the government should address the current mismatch between municipalities' fiscal capacity and allocation of competences; low levels of co-ordination and co-operation both vertically and horizontally; and a development approach that does not focus enough on local conditions and needs. Specific recommendations include:

- **Enhancing the performance of Local Development Units by clarifying their roles and responsibilities and by reinforcing their contribution to development policies and projects** (e.g. capacities to prepare studies). In addition, there should be a clear line of co-operation between LDUs in municipalities and GLDUs in governorates.

- **Promoting closer collaboration and communication between MoI and MoMA** to ensure that both ministries collaborate to achieve the same objectives in the implementation of the decentralisation reform. A first step could be to establish common procedures for LDUs and GLDUs at the governorate and municipal levels.

- **Reviewing sub-national tax and transfer arrangements**, and considering the possibility of strengthening the fiscal and administrative capacity of municipalities concerning fiscal management and the collection of local taxes.

- **Enhancing the role of MoPIC in the elaboration of the national development programmes** in close partnership with governorates, municipalities and key stakeholders at the sub-national level. Greater efforts could be made to make the Programme available on line and widely spread among the population.

- **In the medium-term, consider creating a specific unit within governorates dedicated to strategic planning.** This unit could count on MoPICs expertise (e.g. peer learning), with operational responsibility to work with governorates and municipalities to implement decentralisation effectively in all governorates of the country.

- **Institutionalising mechanisms for inter-governmental co-ordination of the decentralisation process.** This could include creating an inter-ministerial co-ordination committee with clearer mandates and a road map with short- and medium-term objectives, as well as a co-ordination council between governorates to share experiences, information and strategies to tackle challenges.

● **Reinforcing capacity building and training for civil servants and elected officials at the sub-national level** to ensure that they have the skills and capacities to fulfil their new mandate, in particular with a view to the participation in the planning and development process. This could also include extending 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.

THE PROPOSED DECENTRALISATION'S STRUCTURE

Central Government "Line Ministries"

Ministry of Interior

Ministry of Municipal Affairs

Plans coordination and consultation

Annual budget allocation, tech support, monitoring and supervision

Administrative relation

Monitoring and supervision

Priorities ident, plans & progs, approval monitoring & supervision

Governor

G-LDU

Governorate Local Council

Plans prep, projects exc & reporting

Administrative relation (The Head of the Executive Council)

Coordination and plans integration

Coordination and consultation through the Municipal Council

M-LDU

Executive Council

Municipalities

Coordination and consultation through the Municipal Exec. Directors

The level of openness and participation: The expected impact of decentralisation reform

The 2015 Decentralisation Law and Municipality Law are giving impetus to enhancing local democratic governance and bear the potential of strengthening popular participation in the national planning and development process. The creation of elected councils has raised hopes to encourage citizen-driven initiatives and foster greater transparency and accountability. With local authorities being closer to citizens' needs, the reform is ultimately expected to result in a more responsive delivery of public services and more balanced development across the country. However, challenges to the emergence of a new administrative culture of open and participatory governance exist and should be tackled decisively.
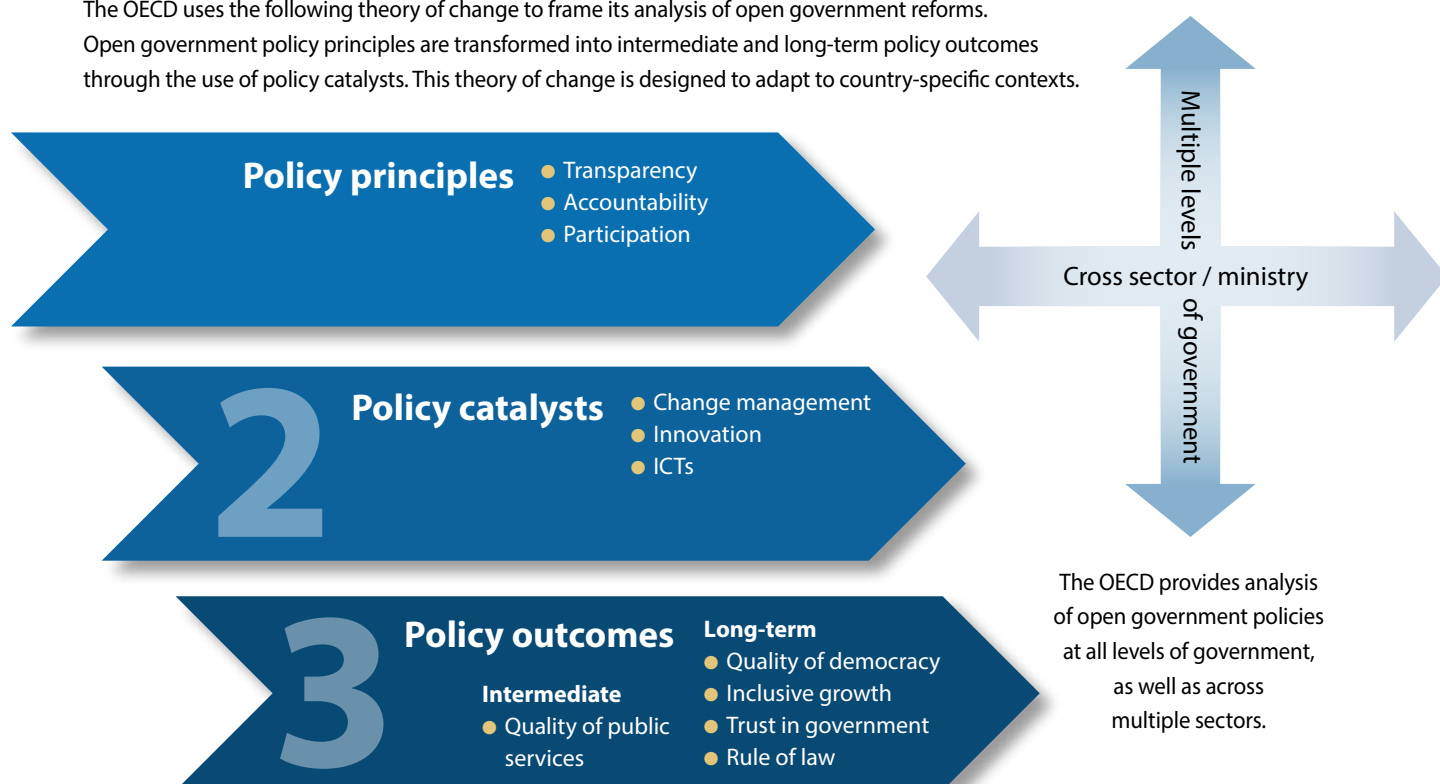
HOW THE OECD DEFINES OPEN GOVERNMENT

The OECD defines Open Government as:

"a culture of governance based on innovative and sustainable public policies and practices inspired by the principles of transparency, accountability, and participation that fosters democracy and inclusive growth"

OECD OPEN GOVERNMENT FRAMEWORK

The OECD uses the following theory of change to frame its analysis of open government reforms. Open government policy principles are transformed into intermediate and long-term policy outcomes through the use of policy catalysts. This theory of change is designed to adapt to country-specific contexts.

Policy principles
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Participation

2 Policy catalysts
- Change management
- Innovation
- ICTs

3 Policy outcomes

Long-term
- Quality of democracy
- Inclusive growth
- Trust in government
- Rule of law

Intermediate
- Quality of public services

Multiple levels of government

Cross sector / ministry

The OECD provides analysis of open government policies at all levels of government, as well as across multiple sectors.

DEFINING FEATURES

- Led by King Abdullah II in the context of complex regional and domestic political, economic and security challenges, **Jordan has been engaged in a gradual democratisation process for more than a decade**. Notably, Jordan held parliamentary elections on 20 September 2016 under a reformed Election Law.

- **The objective of increasing popular participation in the decision-making and national planning and development proces**s, based on a bottom-up approach to the identification of policy priorities and service needs, **is the guiding theme of the decentralisation reform** as reflected in various Speeches from the Throne and Jordan's Third National Action Plan for the OGP.

- **Jordan Vision 2025 and other key policy documents** (i.e. 2012 National Integrity Charter, OGP National Action Plan 2016-18) **seek to advance key open government principles** including citizen participation, transparency and accountability within government institutions, the private sector and civil society. Good practices exist in areas such as budget transparency and participation

(e.g. a Citizen Budget), a web-based complaint mechanism and the obligation to publish draft legislation online for feedback, which has been in place since 2013.

- **The creation of elected governorate and local councils** provides, in principle, a **new momentum to strengthen local democracy in its various forms** (i.e. representative, deliberative and direct forms of citizen engagement). Local elections are scheduled to take place in August 2017 and have raised hopes to result in more tailored reflection of local needs in the national planning process. Quota for women (10% in governorate councils; 25% in municipal councils) provide a chance to narrow the gender gap; however, the minimum age of 25 years to run for governorate councils risks undermining the fair representation of youth interests.

- **A National Dialogue**, led by the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, was initiated in January 2017 to raise awareness for the new legal frameworks and its implications for the future interaction between local authorities and community members.

KEY CHALLENGES

- **The legal framework is not wholly conducive to open and participatory government**. For example, the access to information provisions suffer from conflicting legislation and the absence of a requirement for proactive disclosure.

- In the absence of a structured dialogue between the government and NGOs, **the impact of public consultation activities and the participation of CSOs and citizens have suffered from a fragmented approach** with limited feedback mechanisms. Some recent developments have **limited the operational freedom of potential partners for open government**, including with regards to media organizations.

- **Challenges to the integrity system** are seen in the lack of transparency (e.g. parliamentary grants allocated to sub-national level). The **role of tribal affiliations in political life, a limited oversight function exercised by parliament and** overlapping mandates of oversight agencies have resulted in an increasing perception among citizens that corruption has worsened.

- **CSO activity is often rooted within the tribal system and has a long tradition of providing charity and welfare services**. Royal NGOs (RONGOs) and Government NGOs (GONGOs) benefit from the financial support and operational freedom granted by the authorities, whereas independent CSOs can face bureaucratic obstacles (e.g. registration hurdles, foreign funding considerations, etc.).

- **The disenchantment of large parts of the population from politics** is reflected in low and highly divergent turnout (e.g. 83% in Southern Badia district vs. 23.5% in Amman, 2016 parliamentary elections) and a lack of awareness of governmental and parliamentary work, in particular among youth.

Presentation of preliminary findings at the meeting of the Network of CSOs for Open Government at the Local Level in Jordan, 21 November 2016, Amman.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Include sub-national government entities and local CSOs in the formulation and implementation of open government commitments** (e.g. OGP National Action Plan) to foster the emergence of a new culture of open and participatory governance at sub-national level. Independent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, supported by local media outlets and independent state institutions, can help create a community of open government practitioners among government officials, civil servants, CSOs and citizens.

- **Consider amending legislation impeding access to information** (i.e. address obstacles to its use in practice; ensure operational freedom of media/journalists) and clarify guidelines to strengthen citizen participation (i.e. duration of public consultation exercises, application of manuals such as the "Participatory Approach to Strategic Planning in the Public Sector", 2014) and accountability

mechanisms (i.e. foster a genuine culture of control and oversight and decentralised control mechanisms by educating grassroots against the hazards of corruption).

- **Provide adequate resources to the elected governorate and local councils and relevant sub-bodies** (e.g. local society committee in governorate council) to represent the interests of and engage local community members and **clearly define their mandate** vis-à-vis other entities tasked to collaborate with non-governmental stakeholders (e.g. LDU directorate in charge of liaising with CSOs and citizens). Local authorities, both elected and appointed, should have access to trainings to implement a participatory approach.

- **Support initiatives to enhance the participation of vulnerable segments in society, including women and youth**, 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 (mentorship programmes, local youth councils, civic component in school curricula).

- **Formalise and institutionalise CSO and citizen participation in the identification of local needs to overcome variable approaches**. Such participation guidelines should be based on a set of common standards that guarantee inclusion and diversity, for instance by using e-participation/m-government channels and tools or the creation of local citizens/advisory councils. Direct-democratic elements such as petitions or participatory budgeting schemes can complement representative and deliberative approaches. Good practices for partnership approaches between CSOs/citizens and local government could be highlighted through the National Honors Program.

- **Reinforce activities to raise awareness for the implications of the new legal framework and organise support programmes for participatory planning** to generate grassroots support and ensure that local authorities and non-governmental stakeholders are proficient in preparing local needs assessments. The Network of Civil Society Organisations for Open Government at the Local Level in Jordan could be upgraded to act as a link between government and other local CSOs in that regard.

OECD public governance and territorial development directorate – areas of work

The OECD Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate helps countries implement strategic, evidence-based and innovative policies to strengthen public governance and improve citizens' trust in government. The areas of work addressed in the OECD Strategic Assessment of Jordan build upon the Directorate's daily work. This work involves carrying out policy analysis and peer reviews, facilitating policy committees and networks, and developing recommendations, instruments and principles.

Open government and citizen participation

Through the OECD Open Government Project, the OECD helps countries design and implement open government policies, in collaboration with citizens, civil society organisations and the private sector. To disseminate the importance of incorporating the principles of transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in public sector reforms around the world, it has further created Regional Networks on Open and Innovative Government in the Middle East and North Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America that gather open government champions to discuss common challenges and identify and disseminate good practices.
www.oecd.org/gov/open-government.htm

Public governance for inclusive growth

In many countries inequality is growing as the benefits of economic growth go to the richest members of society. Inclusive Growth is all about changing the rules so that more people can contribute to and benefit from economic growth. OECD policy-making for inclusive growth aligns voice, design, delivery and accountability for joined-up outcomes. On 28 October 2015, ministers and cabinet-level officials from OECD countries and beyond met in Helsinki, Finland to help determine how we can shape the policy cycle to deliver growth and achieve greater equality in socio-economic outcomes.
www.oecd.org/gov/inclusive-growth-and-public-governance.htm

Centre-of-government

Moving away from the traditional role of serving the executive from an administrative perspective, centres of government are now playing a more active role in policy development. OECD work on centres of government explores how governments can adapt the institutions

at the Centre in order to play this expanded and more outward-looking role. As part of its work on centres of government, the OECD convenes the **Network of Senior Officials from Centres of Government** in annual meetings.
www.oecd.org/gov/cog.htm

Monitoring and evaluation

In the quest for inclusive outcomes, governments are increasingly making use of monitoring and evaluation systems to maximise the use of scarce resources and ensure that the results achieved reflect the intended outcomes. Recently, the OECD convened a **symposium on public sector performance.**
www.oecd.org/gov/budgeting/seniorbudgetofficialsnetwork onperformanceandresults.htm

Budgeting and public expenditure

The **Working Party of Senior Budget Officials (SBO)** undertakes country reviews of budgeting systems. The objectives are to provide a comprehensive overview of the budget process in the country under examination, to evaluate national experiences in light of international best practice and to provide specific policy recommendations, and to offer other countries an opportunity to comment on specific budgeting issues in the country under examination ("peer review").
www.oecd.org/gov/budgeting/seniorbudgetofficialsnetwork onperformanceandresults.htm

Human resource management

Public administrations need the right people, in the right places, at the right time, and with the right skills if they want to meet today's challenges. The OECD's work on strategic workforce management, including reviews of

human resource management in government, highlights governments' efforts to promote strategic workforce planning.
www.oecd.org/gov/pem/

Multi-level governance

Sub-national governments provide substantial public services and they are close to the citizen. Therefore, effective multi-level governance plays an important role in delivering inclusive growth outcomes. The OECD publishes territorial reviews at the national, regional and metropolitan levels and promotes good practices in the area of multi-level governance of public investment.
www.oecd.org/gov/regional-policy/multi-levelgovernance.htm

Regional development

Regional development helps governments foster competitive dynamic regions to achieve their economic, social and environmental objectives.
www.oecd.org/gov/regional-policy/

Regulatory policy

Better regulation helps governments achieve their policy objectives through the use of regulations, laws and other regulatory instruments.
www.oecd.org/gov/regulatory-policy/

Digital government

Digital government explores how governments can best use information and communication technologies and government data – including open government data – to embrace good government principles and achieve policy goals.
www.oecd.org/gov/public-innovation/

Integrity and Anti-corruption

Integrity is essential for building strong institutions resistant to corruption. The OECD developed a set of recommendations to enhance integrity and prevent corruption in the public sector and to ensure a strategic use of public procurement. The OECD carries out reviews on public sector integrity and public procurement to help policy makers improve policies, adopt good practices and implement established principles and standards.
www.oecd.org/gov/ethics/

ADDITIONAL AREAS OF WORK

Government at a Glance, now in its fourth edition, includes a dashboard of key indicators to help analyse international comparisons of public sector performance.
www.oecd.org/gov/govataglance.htm

Public sector innovation – governments are finding new ways of operating and responding to public needs in a globalised and networked world characterised by rising citizen expectations and financial constraints. These efforts are supported through the OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation.
www.oecd.org/governance/observatory-public-sectorinnovation/

Gender – empowering and encouraging women to participate in the public sphere is essential to ensure a balanced perspective on policy making and is associated with improvements in social outcomes.
www.oecd.org/gov/women-in-government.htm

Justice – the OECD work on justice services aims at supporting improved citizen access to justice by strengthening citizen focus of justice services.
www.oecd.org/gov/oecd-expert-roundtable-equal-accessto-justice.htm