Socio-Economic challenges and governance transformation in the Arab world

Implementing Agenda 2030: Economic Governance and National Development Planning in the Arab Region

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Objectives

- Overview of governance and service provision in the Arab world
- Challenges for national planning and Agenda 2030
- Proposed considerations in moving ahead
Governance and service provision in the Arab world
Since independence, the Arab world has seen growth of state and services.
MENA citizens expect state services, but outcomes fall short.
Citizens view as state failure and lack of accountability

How would you evaluate the performance of the current government in improving basic health services?

How difficult or easy it is to obtain access to the concerned official to file a complaint when you feel your rights have been violated?
and in some cases, concerns regarding a sense of entitlement

Student Level Analyses: Students’ Concern for and Parents’ Attention to Education in MENA

Full model: Citizen, Rentier, Gender, Age, Computer, Internet, Own Room, # Books at Home, Mother's Ed, Father’s Ed; Dependent Variables: Questions from TIMSS Surveys
Increasing challenges in the Arab world

- Young men and women in the MENA region face the highest youth unemployment levels in the world and express lower levels of trust in government than their parents (OECD, 2017).

- Civil war in Syria has killed about 500,000 people, displaced half the population - one-third of them outside the country - and pushed more than two-thirds of Syrians into poverty (World Bank, 2017).

- The conflict in Yemen has touched every aspect of Yemenis’ lives, limited their access to food, water, and health care, and forced millions of children out of school. So far, more than 15 percent of Yemenis have been displaced or have fled the country (World Bank, 2017).

- Violence in Libya has displaced one tenth of its 6 million people internally, and about 125,000 externally (World Bank, 2017).
Challenges for national planning and Agenda 2030
Low trust, weakened states and growing demands

- Low (and declining) trust and strength of state institutions and actors
- Both state and non-state actors and institutions influence processes and outcomes
- Local-level factors affect implementation and outcomes of reforms
- Governance experienced differently given community, and to a lesser extent, individual factors
- Different stresses across the region: conflict affected, oil-‘endangered’
The Cycle of Performance*

- Citizen Engagement
- Formal and Informal Mechanisms
- Citizen Trust in the State
- Political, Social and Administrative Institutions
- Accountability: Formal and Informal; Internal and External
- Emphasis on Incentives
- State Performance
- Service Delivery Performance

Wealth/class a key factor:
Poorer citizens are more likely to report using wasṭa (akṭef) to receive better medical treatment (Tunisia 2015)
Village-level differences in how citizens seek solutions

People living in different villages have vastly different likelihoods of meeting to solve problems, even when controlling for demographics.

*Malawi 2016*
Learning from local success
Drivers of change: mechanisms and inspiration – discerning the difference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management systems</th>
<th>Community Engagement</th>
<th>Collaborative decision-making &amp; transparency</th>
<th>Autonomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• School Improvement Plan + District Development Plan (Jordan)</td>
<td>• Education Council Chief + community questionnaires (Jordan)</td>
<td>• Education Council (Jordan)</td>
<td>• School grants (Jordan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Health accreditation systems (Jordan)</td>
<td>• Direct parental involvement in schools (Palestine)</td>
<td>• Relations and coordination with school district (Palestine)</td>
<td>• Freedom in organization of teachers and school environment (Palestine)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Concours Qualite (Morocco)</td>
<td>• Collaboration with important local social institutions (Jordan)</td>
<td>• Coordination with provinces and regional MOH officials (Morocco)</td>
<td>• Formalization of health management procedures (Jordan)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Common words used by citizens and providers: trust (between provider and citizens, and between provider and Ministry), building partnerships, formalizing avenues for citizens to share their voice, transparency, ownership, strong leadership, internal motivation, common vision…
Considerations moving forward
Empower communities and local leaders to find ‘best fit’ solutions

Reforms should aim at inspiring trust and empowering citizens, service providers, and local officials to act.

► Recognize and address bottlenecks and state weakness, and build on non-state strengths, where available.

► Develop institutions that regulate, but innovate

► Give local actors space to devise and engage in piloting possible solutions.

► Close the feedback loop, engage citizens and partners among the civil society organizations and in the private sector to strengthen policy development, needs prioritization, resource allocation and policy implementation
Gather, and use, local level information

- Systematically collect information on governance and services, focusing on experience.

- Gather from users and non-users, on state and non-state provision and engagement.

- Use for benchmarking service delivery and local governance performance, and disseminating information on performance to provide a rigorous basis for citizen, government and leader action.
Strengthen trust and efficacy

Any form of improvements observable by citizens to gain and retain trust and make the cycle of performance virtuous.

- Foster ‘quick successes’
- Identify and publicize local success, use for inspiration
- Hold public awareness campaigns on citizen rights and service delivery standards, and follow through
- Conduct solutions-focused public meetings to address, for example, absenteeism and material shortages in service delivery and encourage innovative solutions
- Demand a response to citizen feedback
Conclusions

- Arab world faces a range of challenges: conflict-affected, oil-challenged
- Low trust and weak state institutions characterize Arab world, to varied degrees
- Planning might benefit from
  - Recognizing and building on state and non-state actors and institutions
  - Build institutions that foster and reward creative solutions
  - Gather and use local information on state and non-state governance and service provision
  - Highlight local success as inspiration, and recognize not all lessons transfer
  - Build trust, in part by emphasizing 'quick wins' along with sustained, long term institutional development
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