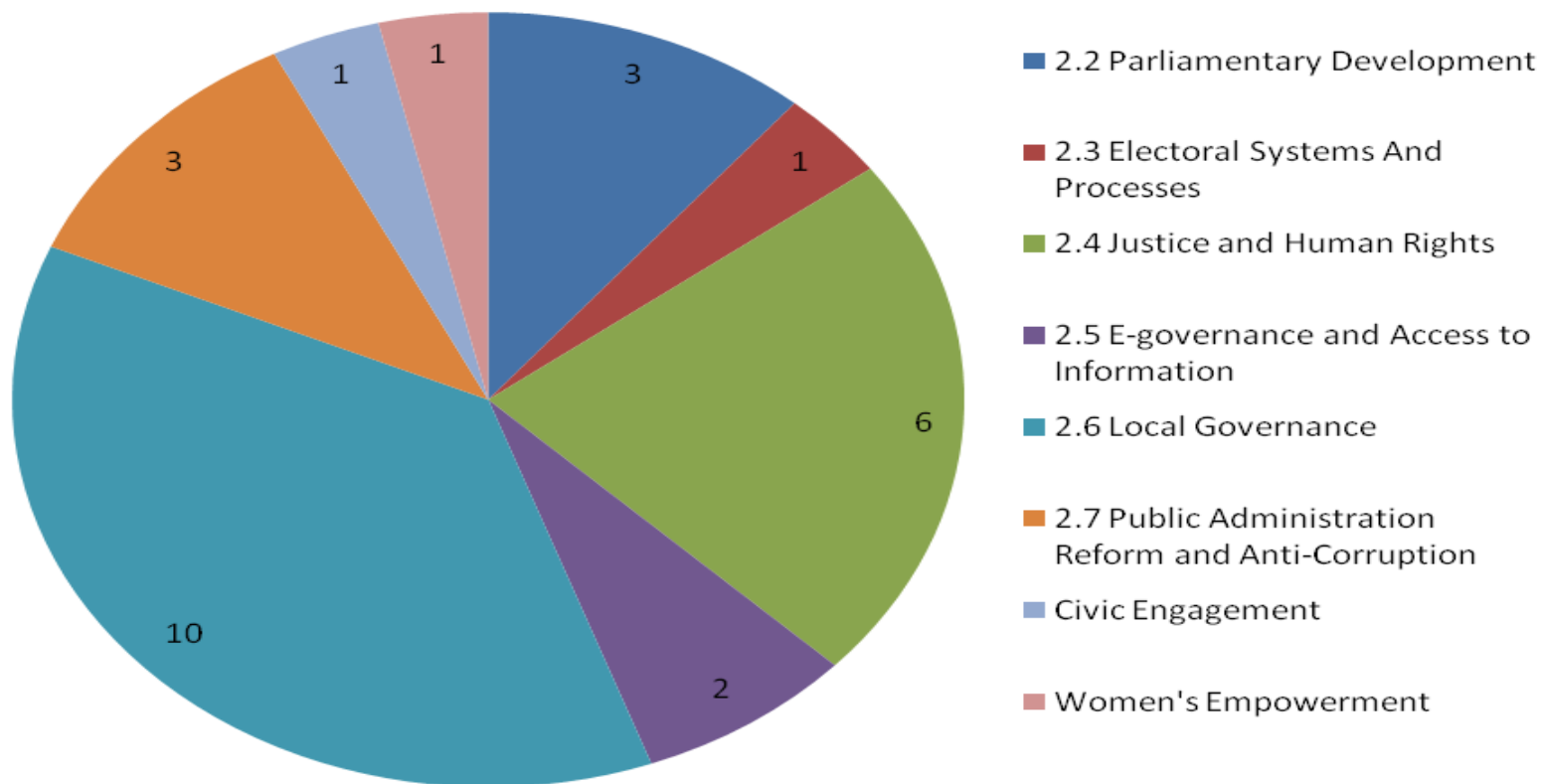


Re-thinking approaches to local governance programming in conflict affected countries in the Arab Region


An exploratory study

Between 2002 and 2009, local governance projects ranked highest among all democratic governance areas of support

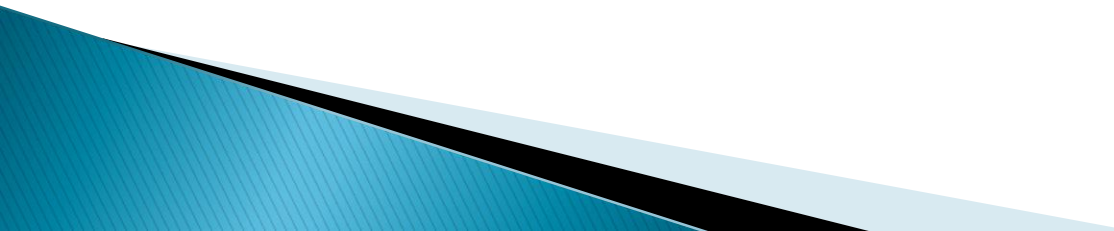
**DGTTF Projects Arab States 2002-2009
By Service Line
Category of Countries: (Post) Conflict**



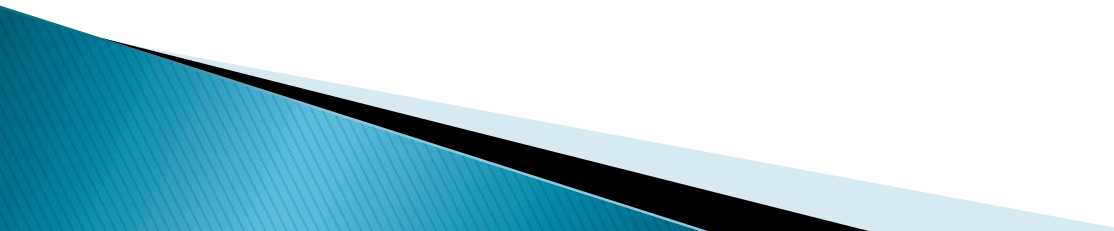
Purpose of this discussion paper:

- a) Identify how current approaches to local governance are affected by and, in turn, affect the broader objectives of state and peace building in the four cases within the Arab region;
 - b) Provoke a critical examination of the approaches to local governance programming in conflict contexts;
 - c) Contribute to the development of an analytical framework to better understand and respond to local governance challenges in conflict-affected context; and
 - d) Offer strategic recommendations for future programming.
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Questions of the study

- ▶ What are the main characteristics and challenges of governance, specifically local governance, in conflict-affected contexts?
 - ▶ Under what conditions do local governance reforms contribute to or undermine broader governance approaches such as state building, peacebuilding, democracy building, and nation building?
 - ▶ What are the main inherent tensions of local governance programming?
 - ▶ What are local governance assistance initiatives telling us and how can these stories be better understood in order to strengthen local governance assistance in conflict-affected contexts?
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Sections of the study

- ▶ Ecology of conflict in the four Arab cases
 - ▶ The various approaches to governance programming
 - ▶ Critical tensions (or dilemmas) and challenges to programming.
 - ▶ Overall recommendations
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The ecology of conflict in the studied cases

- ▶ Iraq
- ▶ Lebanon
- ▶ Palestine
- ▶ Yemen

Different types that are not mutually exclusive: latent conflicts, protracted conflicts and violent conflicts.

Yemen: latent conflict –but in Sa’ada turned to be protracted /violent

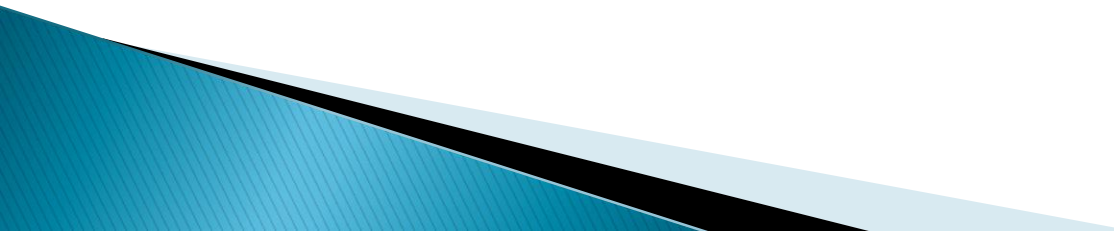
Iraq: sectarian violence provoked in several governorates during 2006–2007

Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen –different types of violent conflicts, there are common elements across them. In all four cases, violent conflict has continued in one form or another since their independence (or in the course to achieve independence, in the case of the Palestine), punctuated by periods of relative stability or latent conflict.


Approaches to Governance in

Conflict Contexts

The four models of relevance to the Arab world are:

- ▶ state-building
 - ▶ nation-building
 - ▶ peace-building
 - ▶ democracy-building
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Overview of Local Governance Programming: Key Features and Observations

- ▶ The implementation of reforms has been slow,
 - ▶ Local governance assistance has largely focused on the technical elements of decentralization
 - ▶ The piece-meal approach to reforms and the lack of a coherent approach
 - ▶ The slow and only recent shift to conflict sensitive local governance programming
 - ▶ Support for broad-based citizen participation has been generally tepid
 - ▶ Gender considerations in programs are consistently weak
 - ▶ The fragility of accountability systems
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(1) slow pace of the implementation of governance, especially local governance, reforms

Palestine: Polarization between Hamas and Fatah

Lebanon: decentralization law was drafted seven years ago and debated in parliament

Yemen: National Decentralization Strategy was not fully endorsed by the president –long debates

(2) Focus on the technical elements of decentralization (as one option for local governance reform);

Technocratic approach: provision of services and infrastructure, drafting of legislation and land planning codes, institutional capacity assessments, and capacity building

Iraq: Needs' assessment –strictly technical.



(3) struggling to produce a coherent governance and especially local governance approach;

Iraq: The law stipulates that local councils at all levels have a responsibility for monitoring and oversight of line ministry services, no enforcement mechanisms are defined. Local councils have no managerial controls over service provision

Palestine: legal framework is a combination of sometimes contradictory codes derived from Ottoman, British, Jordanian and Egyptian Laws

Yemen: Legislation is internally inconsistent and also inconsistent with the constitution

The lines of demarcation of the roles and responsibilities between elected and appointed officials are unclear, and delegated responsibilities to local authorities are not matched by a delegation of resources (nor in the case of Yemen and Lebanon, legal provisions for local revenue generation)

Promising attempts: Yemen: linking LG and elections/parliament

Palestine –linkages with governance national strategy

Iraq –support to constitution drafting, entry points in political dialogue

Lebanon –Scale up recovery reform to poverty reduction –ARTGLOD initiative

(4) Weakly developed 'conflict sensitive' approaches;

Local governance programming is not guided by explicit (or sometimes even implicit) assumptions regarding conflict prevention/or conflict resolution.

Yemen: reference to PRODOC (2003–2009), initial study in 2003, evaluation of 2008. while the conflict started in 2000 and converted to a full-fledged was in the North and a vocal protest movement in the South

Palestine: diagnostic of LG in 2002 and updated in 2009. Split in 2007 between Hamas and Fatah, devastating invasion by Israel of Gaza

CCA of Iraq and Lebanon!

Positive attempts:

Palestine and Lebanon: innovative small-scale initiatives supporting local dialogue. In **Lebanon:** upscaling youth engagement to promote reconciliation.

Yemen: joint exercise on conflict analysis + hiring a conflict advisor and gender and conflict advisor

Iraq: introduced 'crisis management and local governance' -training for civil servants

Palestine: local reconciliation initiative with Inter-peace and Carter Centre and the Arab Thought Forum at the political parties level

(5) support for broad-based citizen participation as a feature of local governance programming

Initiatives to strategically link support to NGOs with support for local councils are not common, and structures to facilitate community participation in local government decisions or ensure citizen access to information, budgets, and decisions of local councils are rare

Iraq: 2004 decentralization law and the Provisional Powers Act enacted in March 2008 –lack reference to inclusion and participatory mechanisms of community groups.

Promising attempt:

Lebanon: the Electoral Law reform –coordinated with CSOs with special focus on the voter education component

(6) Gender lenses of programming

Palestine: 17% of elected local council members in municipal elections in 2005/2006 being women

‘women’s de facto participation in local council decision making is not significant, and there is no explicit strategy, or particular mechanisms in any of the four countries to address gender issues in local governance.’

Yemen: A 2008 evaluation of the Local governance programme points to this shortcoming (UNDP evaluation document, 2008), which the Yemen country office plans to address in the new local governance project.

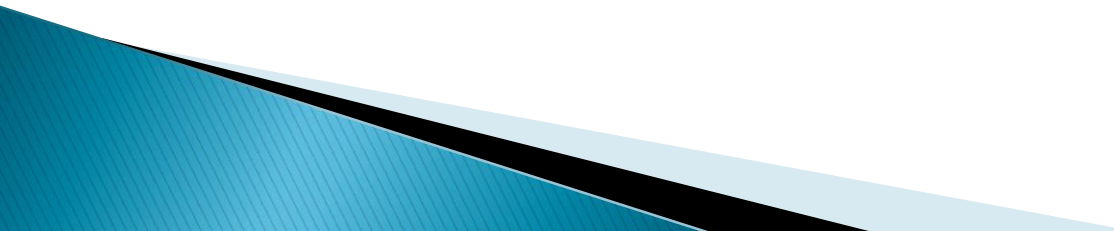
(7) The fragility of the accountability systems in conflict contexts

Palestine: series of polls on perceptions of corruption between 2004–2005 reveals that corruption/integrity was the single important issue in the selection of candidates in the municipal elections in the WB and Gaza.

PAPP's DGTTF project –integrity toolkit for local councils

Iraq: a poll published in 2008 showed that slight majority having no confidence in their local community leaders.

Tension analysis

- (1) local legitimacy versus state legitimacy,
 - (2) technical versus political approach to programming,
 - (3) efficiency versus legitimacy,
 - (4) local governance versus local government.
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The tension between 'local' versus 'national' legitimacy: *"the tribe behaves like a state and the state behaves like a tribe"*

Palestine: tensions between local and central authorities + debate on Fatah and the PA

Lebanon and Iraq: resistance by central ministries to increased decision-making authority at the local level + sectarian tension

Yemen: informal tribal authorities and the regime! + mistrust between the South and Sana'a

The tensions between 'technical' and 'political' approaches to programming:

'local governance programming should not have to adopt a technocratic, piecemeal approach; rather, it has to be based on a participatory national vision and consensus regarding the shape and type of the desired nation-state (and nation-state building process) in each country'.

Problems:

1. **Development approaches** to governance have been reduced to technical ones
2. **At the international development side:** inflexibility of programming timelines and instruments, institutional obstacles, fast rotation of staff and little institutional memory and local knowledge accumulation, competing strategic and programmatic imperatives
3. **Reluctance** to be perceived by central government on challenging or 'sensitive' issues
4. **Gap** between research and programmatic responses
5. Much of the analysis is generated in **English** and by foreign researchers or donors –remains at the macro level, rather than exploring differentiated regional/local dynamics

The tensions between 'Efficiency' and 'Building Legitimacy':

Equitable delivery of basic services is an urgent need in all four cases, although the need varies significantly from one case to the other.

Lebanon: early recovery at the local level after the Israeli war of 2008 took place in close partnership with the municipalities and not parallel to them. A second phase programme can offer lessons as it aims to enhance local government as well as impact on local poverty reduction and job creation –ARTGLOD

Yemen: Social Funds modality to support the delivery of basic services –driven by donor and viewed as a parallel structure to central state

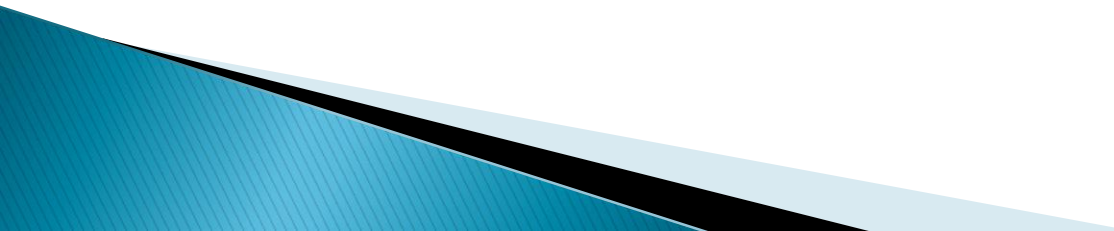
Iraq: the PM disbursed grants –outside the budget and not subject to normal accountability measures to a number of Governors.

UNDP Country Offices: in Lebanon and Iraq –two different programs and two different teams on local governance and local development

The tensions between Local Government and Local Governance:

Shortcomings:

1. “is still vague on **how** participation, voice and accountability can be fully fostered and how external assistance to critical state capacities (especially the police and military as the sole legitimate source of coercive authority) can do more harm than good in the absence of democratic rights and systems for citizens to hold states accountable”
 2. **Community level engagement** in local government varies from one political system to another, civil society leadership and infrastructure is often significantly weakened and fragmented during, or in the aftermath of a conflict

i.e. high level of control exerted by government on civil society in Iraq for decades has resulted in limited local initiatives by community-based groups or the private sector.
 3. Many **civil society organizations** and community groups have narrow political, ethnic, or religious **affiliations and interests**, which may undermine the accountability and watchdog role that they could play at the local level
 4. Governments are often **unwelcoming of civil society initiatives** and prefer to focus on strengthening the capacity and authority of local government officials
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Recommendations

- ▶ Better articulating and **addressing conflict issues**, including, as they impact local governance in very specific ways, in policy dialogue with governments;
- ▶ **Incorporating conflict issues** into local governance programme planning, country strategies and evaluations;
- ▶ Linking **political economy analysis** to programming and supporting targeted policy oriented research;
- ▶ Building **capacity** for local and international development practitioners in political economy and conflict analysis;
- ▶ Supporting regional and cross regional **exchanges** on local governance within conflict affected contexts.

