Examination of the Role of Civil Society in Adopting International Standard Commitments:
A Landscape Analysis of MENA Region and Gulf Countries in Comparison with International Best Practices

Humphrey School Capstone Report

The Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs
The University of Minnesota

Authors:
Colin Wolff
Matthew Byrd
Noran Aly
Tenzin Nyima

PA 8081 Capstone Workshop

Advisor: Prof. Mary Curtin, Diplomat in Residence/Global Policy Area Head
Section: Examining the Role of Local Communities and Civil Society in Implementation of International Commitments by Middle East Governments with IRI.

Spring 2022

Created for:
International Republican Institute (IRI)
Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the IRI team in Washington DC for their professionalism and support during our capstone work in the USA. Their support not only made work easier, but also created a positive and rewarding work environment. In particular, the authors would like to thank: Professor Mary Curtin, our advisor for our capstone work, for her guidance in the report’s preparations and sharing key subject-matter information and knowledge about the civil society organizations and international commitments. The authors also want to acknowledge Rima Kawas who dedicated her time and energy to answering our questions during the course of our research.
# Table of Content

1. Abbreviations 4  
2. Executive Summary 5  
3. Introduction 6  
4. Methodology 7  
5. Landscape Analysis 10  
  5.1. MENA Region 10  
    5.1.1. Algeria 10  
    5.1.2. Egypt 11  
    5.1.3. Lebanon 12  
    5.1.4. Jordan 13  
    5.1.5. Morocco 14  
    5.1.6. Tunisia 17  
  5.2. Gulf Countries 20  
    5.2.1. Saudi Arabia 22  
    5.2.2. Oman 23  
    5.2.3. Bahrain 23  
    5.2.4. Kuwait 24  
    5.2.5. Qatar 26  
    5.2.6. Iraq 27  
    5.2.7. UAE 28  
6. Successful Case Studies 31  
  6.1. Albania 31  
  6.2. Brazil 32  
  6.3. Indonesia 35  
  6.4. Mexico 38  
  6.5. Nigeria 43  
7. Conclusion 46  
  7.1 Lessons Learned 46  
  7.2 Recommendations 47  
8. References 50
1. Abbreviations

**OGP:** Open Government Partnership  
**MENA:** Middle East and North Africa  
**CSO:** Civil Society Organizations  
**NGO:** Non Governmental Organizations  
**OECD:** Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development  
**ODIN:** Open Data Inventory  
**SDGs:** Sustainable Development Goals  
**UN:** United Nations  
**US:** United States  
**IMF:** International Monetary Fund  
**ICT:** Information Communication Technology  
**Gulf:** Includes countries of Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.
2. Executive Summary

This report offers an integrated examination of the role of civil society organizations in influencing governments to adopt international commitments. The study was commissioned by the University of Minnesota and International Republican Institute (IRI) as part of an effort to promote the spread of democratic practices in the MENA and Gulf countries Regions. Under the principles of sustainable development, open government partnerships, climate change, data openness and transparency, public service provision and infrastructure development, the graduate consultants were asked to identify and evaluate the level of adoption and commitments to these international standard commitments, as well as involvement in international partnerships, by countries in both regions compared to best practices of civil society organizations that managed to influence the public policy making process to implement these standards.

The results of this evaluative research are intended to be used as the basis for the IRI next strategy to empower CSOs in influencing their governments to adopt the above-mentioned strategy. Based on what we have found, expanding the CSOs’ penetration and power serves as an influential tool that would not only facilitate embedding the international commitments into the national strategy of the region but also practically applying it, or rather, contribute to projectizing it by directing aid to developing countries towards specific projects that follows the international standards commitments. In our landscape analyses we found that the governments of the MENA region have made a number of commitments across all five areas. Though there is a great deal of variation among the nations, we found some noticeable trends; for instance, we found a dearth of governance commitments and little follow-through in any regard to climate change. We were also able to find recurring themes in our case studies.

Across each study, we found that CSOs play a potentially critical role in augmenting government’s ability in implementing commitments and following through with reform. Our main recommendations are as follows: CSO involvement in reform should be encouraged and supported because of their catalyzing effect on government action, CSOs may operate in dangerous environments and support should be examined on a case-by-case basis, there are many opportunities for CSO success in the MENA, especially in areas that have received tacit government support but where implementation has been slow to materialize.
3. Introduction

Civil society organizations (CSO), according to the UN definition, are any non-profit, voluntary citizens’ groups which are organized on a local, national or international level. Their point of strength relies profoundly on being task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, to perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizens’ concerns to Governments, monitor policies, and encourage political participation at the community level. In the last decades, many international organizations have been cooperating with CSOs, mainly in the global south, whose mandates align with the goals and principles of the international standard commitments through a variety of initiatives. Nearly a decade ago, citizens across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Gulf regions engaged in or witnessed a series of enormous political and economic shifts, the effects of which are still being felt today due to unprecedented levels of repression in several countries in both regions. This report focuses on diagnosing the current civic space where civil society practitioners as advocates and forces for change are working on a range of international standards.

In keeping with this global humanitarian standardization trajectory, the International Republican Institute (IRI) is a global non-profit organization that works in partnership with governments and civil society organizations. In this report conducted on IRI’s behalf, we examine the international commitments made by states in the MENA region, with a further focus on those made by Arab states in the Persian Gulf region. We focused on a core of six different types of commitments: service delivery, open data, infrastructure, anti-corruption, transparency, and climate change. We also conducted case studies on five Open Government Partnership (OGP) member states with a focus on CSO involvement in implementing commitments in one of the core areas.

The rest of our report will proceed in five sections. Section 4 gives an overview of our research methodology for both the landscape analysis and the case studies, and will include descriptions of our assumptions and the limitations of our methodology. Section 5 begins the landscape analysis portion of the report, with subsection 5.1 examining the larger MENA region and subsection 5.2 examining Gulf region states specifically. Section 6 contains five case studies on CSO participation in OGP member states: Albania, Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico and Nigeria. Section 7 applies the lessons learned from CSO activities in the case studies to trends identified in the MENA landscape analysis, and concludes with recommendations for IRI’s future endeavors in this region.
4. Methodology

In this report, researched and written during January-May 2022, we mainly depended on secondary data resources from a variety of credible channels such as World Bank, IMF, UNDP, and countries’ official websites to analyze the landscape of commitment and implementation of international standards in MENA and Gulf countries along with the advocacy role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in influencing institutions and policies to adopt it. We also critically explored and investigated the successful CSO practices for influencing their governments and institutions to commit and implement international commitments to derive key lessons learned to guide future IRI work in the MENA and Gulf countries regions. We used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data to analyze government responses to committing and implementing international standards in each country of the above-mentioned regions; however, due to the lack of up-to-date- available quantitative data on aspects related to international standards adoption in those countries, we mainly relied on qualitative data.

Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, and other countries in the MENA region are economically varied. Some, like Egypt and Morocco are resource-scarce, while others operate under oil-rich economies, as mentioned above. The landscape analysis for the MENA region was severely impacted by the Arab Spring in the early 2010s which paved the way for pro-democracy transitions in some countries. In contrast, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar and UAE present an interesting case for doing a landscape analysis of international commitment implementation as they play a vital role in the economic, political, and wealth of the Middle East and the world, besides being oil-rich countries.

In our analysis, we assessed the degree of commitment of each country in five international commitment areas in a matrix figure. These commitments are service delivery, infrastructure, anti-corruption, open data and transparency, and climate change. We categorized the degree of commitment into 4 categories; which are “Implemented” (100%), “Implementing”, “Committed” (i.e. promised to adopt it but not necessarily implementing it), and “Not Committed” (0%) where each category demonstrates to what extent a country is committing and complying with a given international commitment. Accordingly, these categories indicate the following commitment scale: “implemented” indicates the country has fully implemented/achieved that commitment, “implementing” indicates the country has promised and is progressing toward implementing that commitment, “committed” indicates the country has promised to adopt this commitment but is not showing any progress, and “not committed” indicates the country has neither promised nor taken any action towards that commitment. Additionally, we assume that countries we did not find any published data
for would be considered as Not Committed (0%), as the fact that countries have not highlighted their achievement towards commitment goals suggests either no commitment or no progress toward implementation.

As shown in table 1, in our diagnosis to identify the level of commitment of each country with respect to each international commitment, we depended on some published quantitative measures. For the service delivery commitment, we utilized the Human Development Index, Life Expectancy rate, Internet Coverage rate, GNI per capita and any educational and public health spendings data because they reflect the government's efforts to facilitate public service delivery to its citizens. Similarly, in the infrastructure commitment, we analyzed economic and logistical infrastructure spendings because it indicates the government's endeavors towards developing its infrastructure. For anti-corruption indicators, we used the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), while we used Climate Watch’s Climate Risk Index for the climate change commitment. Additionally, we selected both Open Data Inventory index (ODIN) and Open Budget Survey’s Transparency score to assess Open Data Access and Transparency commitment. As shown in table 1 below, we have chosen these indicators as they serve as proxies for their related international commitments under the assumption that there is a correlation between each commitment and its relevant index/indicator. For instance, a higher public spendings in logistical infrastructure indicates more compliance with the public service and infrastructure commitment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International Commitment</th>
<th>Relevant Indicator</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Service</td>
<td>Human Development Index, Life Expectancy rate, Internet Coverage rate, Educational and Public Health spendings data etc.</td>
<td>Reflect the government’s efforts to facilitate public service delivery to its citizens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Economic &amp; Logistical Infrastructure Spendings</td>
<td>A proxy indicates government’s endeavors towards developing its infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Access &amp; Transparency</td>
<td>Open Data Inventory index (ODIN) and Open Budget Survey’s Transparency score</td>
<td>Directly assess Open Data Access and Transparency commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Corruption</td>
<td>Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)</td>
<td>A proxy correlated w/ the level of corruption; indicates the level of anti-corruption commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Change</td>
<td>Climate Watch’s Climate Risk Index</td>
<td>A proxy correlated w/ climate change; indicates compliance with climate change commitment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Diagnosis was based on some published quantitative measures*
Moreover, in identifying the degree to which each country is committed to an international commitment we depended on observatory screening and analysis to the published information and data. For instance, when we categorized a country as having implemented the data access and transparency commitment, this means that we observed published news and articles claiming the country’s promises to fulfill this commitment along with finding the country’s governmental website and its data access by its citizens. We made sure that this website includes the necessary data that highlights the government’s implementation of national projects and socio-economic data. However, for some international commitments in that sense, we may take its findings with scrutiny, such as public spending indicators. In other words, we cannot accurately decide the actual degree of commitment; whether Implementing (i.e. still in the progress phase or Implemented (i.e. 100% Fully Committed). Hence, we arbitrarily decided to assess it as “Implementing” to keep up with our data credibility and validity as possible. Another limitation we faced in conducting our study is that much of the data are referenced from available credible online resources, such as UN, OGP, ONID, through the years 2016-2018. So, data presented for other years might make comparisons across countries misleading. The time limit for this project was another big constraint, where at the researcher level the study’s limitations began with the novice understanding of the CSOs, the international commitments and the dynamic relationship between both of them.

Our learning process was in the form of a steep learning curve in trying to obtain a solid grasp of the international standards adoption process in a very short time. This led us to narrow our research to focus on examining the international commitments landscapes and reconciling it with best practices discussed later, while coming up with lessons learned and recommended actionable plans for the IRI. In this regard, we tried to develop this report in a replicable format to be utilized for IRI’s future work. However, we noted that our international commitment matrix graph tracks only commitments made that are publicly published as many of these commitments seem to have relatively little progress. Additionally, this chart lacks some of the desired nuance of capturing the actual progress in regards to each commitment due to the difficulty of creating a standardized index for commitment progress, especially that these countries have different baselines with respect to each commitment.
5. Landscape Analysis

a. MENA Region

International Governance Commitments: Country Snapshots for Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Tunisia, and Morocco

Sitting at the crossroads of Asia, Africa, and Europe, the MENA region is widely recognized for its outsized importance in world affairs. Despite this, the region suffers from high levels of war and civil strife. Compounding these impediments towards governance reform is the presence of a plethora of authoritarian regimes that do little in combating corruption or increasing transparency. Though many viewed the uprisings of the Arab Spring as potential openings for deep and widespread reform, much of this promise has not been borne out. Economically, the region is hamstrung by low productivity and an overreliance on the global hydrocarbon trade.

While there are still a number of challenges that prevent the adoption of international governance commitments, quite a few have been made by some MENA countries. While the region is often treated as a monolith, a great deal of distinction can be found within the nations that make up the MENA. Lebanon, for example, is widely considered more democratic than its peers but the nation has made relatively few commitments in recent years. Egypt, an authoritarian nation, is a partner in numerous commitments, but few relating to improved governance outside of those focused on improving the national economy. More such paradoxes and surprises can be found throughout the region and the nations discussed in our analysis.

In the MENA landscape analysis that follows, our team has chosen six of the core nations in the region to conduct a background study on international commitments made. We’ve broken down their commitments across categories (i.e., service delivery, infrastructure, transparency) and have aligned them appropriately. For each nation we’ve provided a ‘snapshot’ of commitments made and a brief description of each.

Algeria

Algeria has made few, if any, credible commitments towards improving governance, though it has made a handful of others, especially environmental ones. Challenges to making governance commitments include persistent authoritarianism. The nation is purportedly presidential, and it holds Parliamentary elections, but a small cabal is known to hold real sway. The nation is also reliant on hydrocarbon production and invests little in fostering an open economy, nor has it made real strides towards societal reform. Algeria is generally viewed as being highly corrupt.

Climate Change:
Algeria has made several commitments in support of Sustainable Development Goals, mostly focused on ocean conservation, including:

- Bolstering ocean-related education through bolstering the educational system in order to support conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of oceans.
- Decreasing the impacts of continued ocean acidification through reducing energy consumption by 9% by 2030 via more focus on the usage of liquified natural gas and solar energy while improving public transportation.
- Increasing funding of research into sustainable fisheries management and other related aquaculture, including strengthening partnerships with other nations and nongovernmental organizations. (Progress Report four years overdue.)
- Supporting volunteer programs to clean up beaches – by 2019 this program has registered over 250,000 students in schools across Algeria.

Egypt

A notoriously authoritarian nation, Egypt has made some international governance commitments, but these have mostly been made in the context of improving the nation’s economy. Challenges that may impede Egypt’s willingness to commit to reforms include its authoritarian government and a persistent, high level of corruption.

Infrastructure/Service Delivery:

Egypt enjoys a robust relationship with the World Bank which has over 200 active projects in the nation. A recent report detailing progress on reform commitments made through 2019 listed these key findings:

- Success in implementing reforms that have cut poverty, increased growth and narrowed budget deficits and have laid groundwork for more extensive reforms.
- Some progress in improving governance, opportunities for private sector job creation and the support of greater social inclusion. The World Bank states that Egypt has hit 77 percent of target indicators which have helped the nation climb 10 ranks in their ‘ease of doing business’ scheme – from 131 in 2016 to 140 in 2018.

A 2021 International Monetary Fund Article IV Consultation regarding Egypt had the following to say:

- Egypt has committed to greater structural reform including agenda items that support more inclusive and sustainable private sector-led growth.
- It has made a number of commitments in improving the business environment to include improving digital infrastructure, further integrating into global trade, and deepening financial markets.

Climate Change:
Egypt has committed to several Sustainable Development Goals including:

- Increasing reliance on renewable energy, namely wind. (Progress report nine years overdue)
- Officially launched its sustainable development plan, Egypt Vision 2030 in 2016 in support of Sustainable Development Goals. (Progress report five years overdue)
- Fostering communication channels between scientists and communities to support teaching of sustainable practices. This commitment entails reform for science curricula, empowering women as educational leaders for a greener future and improving training programs for science teachers. (Progress report two years overdue)

Lebanon

Lebanon has a noteworthy dearth of international commitments regarding governance. Potential challenges to making commitments involve a volatile political system prone to civil strife and a huge influx of refugees that now make up more than 20% of the nation’s population. The nation is noteworthy in perceptions surrounding corruption. While the World Bank currently has a number of partner projects in Lebanon, reports regarding progress and reforms are mostly focused on challenges rather than progress.

Climate Change:
Lebanon has a notable dearth of partnerships related to Sustainable Development Goals but has been involved in a few, including:

- Protecting marine biodiversity, mostly through protection of certain sea turtles and related nesting sites by outlawing fishing that targets the sea turtle population and illegal construction, along with broader strategies that include building more robust waste removal infrastructure along beaches and encouraging green detergents. (Four years overdue)
- Joining the Mediterranean Water Knowledge Platform which is focused on providing a “common basis for the development of national water information systems,” requiring Lebanon to facilitate information sharing and data management regarding water infrastructure. (Six years overdue)

Infrastructure/Service Delivery
Despite a lack of partnerships, Lebanon has made a number of commitments surrounding Sustainable Development Goals, enumerated in a nationally self-submitted report that covers each goal. Some highlights from the report include:

- Strengthening poverty-alleviation subsidies.
• Adopting the First National Youth Policy for Lebanon aimed at meeting the needs of the younger population which includes strengthening health options and social services.
• Establishing a Women’s Affairs Division in order to further gender equality
• Supporting several civil society organizations such as Oum El Nour that focuses on prisoner rights.
• Creating a 10-year water plan to improve sustainable water usage and wastewater treatment
• Entering into a number of multilateral agreements regarding the reduction of ozone-depleting substances. In support of this goal the government provides financial assistance to industry.
• Through loans and partnerships with international organizations, committing to encouraging “green financing” and employment in sectors that develop sustainable energy.

Jordan

Jordan has a robust portfolio of international commitments under its belt, including those that relate to Sustainable Development Goals along with a variety of policies informed by its Open Government Partnership agreements. In the context of the Arab world and the MENA region, Jordan ranks highly in terms of democratic openness, freedom, and corruption metrics.

Open Government Partnership: Open Data/Transparency/Anti-Corruption

Jordan has been an active member in the Open Government Partnership since it began participation in 2012. It has since committed to several action plans, the most recent one covering the years 2021-2025. Some highlights from the plan are:

• “Improve governance among CSOs and protect them from the risk of being exploited in money laundering and terrorist financing Actions” – The government has highlighted the importance of government partnering with CSOs and strengthening them in order to implement reform. Their protection is critical to ensuring a democratic transition.
• “Enhancing community engagement in the decision-making processes through electronic tools” – This commitment goes hand-in-hand with Jordan’s commitment in following through with SDGs along similar lines. The king of Jordan believes that strengthening technology offerings will allow for more transparency in government.
• “Adoption of gender mainstreaming policies in the public sector” – Via the Prime Minister Letter 21/11/27223 distributed to ministries the government of Jordan has committed to championing a greater role for women in political decision-making processes and in political life.
Climate Change:
Jordan has commitment to the following Sustainable Development Goal Partnerships:
- Jordan has acceded to the Climate and Clean Air Coalition which focuses on reducing worldwide carbon emissions. (Progress report eight years overdue).
- Jordan has joined the Mediterranean Water Knowledge Platform, the goal of which is to develop sustainable usage of the Mediterranean via bolstering information sharing and data management of water usage infrastructure. (Progress report six years overdue)

Service Delivery/Infrastructure:
Jordan has, along with Lebanon, submitted a national plan that addresses a great deal of the Sustainable Development Goals. Highlights of the plan include:
- Empowering youth through strengthening education opportunities and providing funding for youth centers, hostels, and sports facilities. The nation, importantly, seeks to bolster training programs for teachers and encourage the acquisition of vocational skills.
- Sustained commitment to anti-poverty programs that have, thus far, aided in reducing poverty in the nation substantially since 1992. Jordan is committed to reforming mechanisms of targeted cash assistance, streamlining those programs.
- Continuing support for institutions of higher education.
- Continuing support for gender equality measures, including the encouragement of women in political life (this has been previously supported via mandatory quotas in Parliament and in Municipal councils).

Morocco
Participatory democracy, transparency, and anti-corruption, as well as the aim of adopting new government models designed to meet citizens' needs have been the primary values that Morocco has embarked on. Prior to becoming a member of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2018, Morocco held its first direct elections for regional councils. Morocco has made significant commitments to OGP principles.

Service Delivery:
In 2018, Morocco became the 76th country to join the Open Government Partnership (OGP). Since 2018 the Moroccan state government along with civil society groups have co-created many action plans.
- The latest is the Morocco Action Plan 2021-2023. One of the proposed challenges included in the action plan include Improving Child Protective Services from abuse, violence, exploitation, and negligence.
With over 189 member countries, the World Bank is a unique global partnership premised on five institutions working for sustainable solutions that reduce poverty and build shared prosperity in developing countries.

- Morocco’s Ministry of education launched the 2015-2030 Education Sector Vision to improve the education sector’s overall performance. To support the country’s objective, the World Bank supported a program titled Morocco Education Support Program which promotes a shift away from resource-drive to results-driven governance principles, to promote learning in the classroom.

The OECD - Deauville Partnership, launched in 2011 by the G8 in response to the historic changes in several countries in the MENA region, worked in the framework of technical support in strengthening transparency, accountability, and infrastructure. The Deauville Partnership set up the Mena Transition Fund to support the countries in transition and to formulate policies and implement reforms.

- The OECD - Deauville Partnership set up the Youth in Public Life: Towards open and inclusive youth engagement which outlines pathways for governments to promote the participation of young men and women in decision-making and mainstream youth considerations in public policies and strategies.

Open Data:
Open Government Partnership (OGP)

- As part of the Morocco Action Plan 2021-2023, the Training Portal for NGOs project aims to provide access to simplified training content for those interested in creating and managing NGOs as more than 200,000 NGOs in Morocco experience challenges in accessing programs for capacity building in both general and specific fields.

OECD - Deauville Partnership

- The goal of the Improving Connectivity in the Maghreb project is to streamline the chains of international trade among the Maghreb countries and with their major trading partners, to increase cooperation among border management agencies, to strengthen capacities in economic governance, and to build effective and transparent tax systems.

Infrastructure:
World Bank
• The Financial and Digital Inclusion Development Policy Finance (DPF) program approved by the World Bank, seeks to improve financial inclusion and access to more competitive digital infrastructure and services for businesses and individuals. It also aims to spur private sector growth through access to finance for startups and youth-led enterprises.

Anti-Corruption:
Open Government Partnership (OGP)

• Active from March 2018 to November 2019, the Integrity Portal is a commitment which seeks to familiarize the public with the achievements and national actions developed in terms of integrity, and highlight the efforts made by the various stakeholders working on integrity and anti-corruption.

OECD - Deauville Partnership

• The Supporting Open Government and Anti-corruption Reforms project aims at improving governance by promoting open policy making in Morocco.

UNDP and the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) is a partnership that aims to fight global poverty and support sustainable socio-economic development in developing countries while at the same time strengthening Korea’s friendly relations with them.

• In 2019, UNDP and KOICA launched the Anti-corruption and Integrity Reforms to enable stakeholders to develop and implement required laws in line with international standards; institutionalize corruption prevention in priority government sectors; and mobilize knowledge and capacities to contribute to the achievement of SDG 16.

The Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force, better known as MENAFATF, was established by agreement between the governments of its members and is not based on an international treaty. It sets its own work, regulations, rules and procedures, and co-operates with other international treaties.

• In February 2021, Morocco made a high-level political commitment to work with the FATF and MENAFATF one of which focused on Global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog.

Transparency:
Open Government Partnership (OGP)

- Morocco ranks rather high in the open budget index in the MENA region. In order to further progress in the area of budget transparency and to better communicate with citizens, Morocco set the commitment of Strengthening Budget Transparency as part of its 2021 Action Plan Cycle.

OECD - Deauville Partnership

- The Project Towards inclusive and open governments: Promoting women's participation in parliaments and policy-making support the efforts of MENA countries in transition in fostering inclusive growth and good governance by leveraging open government policies and mainstreaming gender perspectives in parliamentary operations to maximize women's integration in public life and policy-making process.
- The overall objectives include: Making legislatures transparent, equitable and gender-sensitive and; Empowering (potential) women parliamentarians and strengthening their capacity and skills at the national and local levels and; Improving public consultation capacity of parliaments and women’s CSOs in law-making processes.

Climate Change:

United Nations

- 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference COP 26 to the UNFCCC, hosted in the United Kingdom from 31 October 2021 to 12 November 2021 was a summit to bring parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- Morocco has committed to Goal 13, ‘Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts’ from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

Tunisia

A standing successful example of democratic transition resulting from the Arab Spring, Tunisia – though not entirely out of the woods – has yet to reestablish its economy, provide socioeconomic support to its discontented youth, and provide counter insurgence from terrorism. A member of the OGP since 2014, Tunisia has committed to several areas of focus and multiple commitments—the latest one from Tunisia’s 2021-2023 Action Plan.

Tunisia has been a central nexus point for economic relations between the Middle East and regions of North Africa. With different funds from the European Union and reform
agreements from other state entities, Tunisia has served as a catalyst for further economic partnerships in the Middle East.

**Service Delivery:**
**OECD - Deauville Partnership**

- **Supporting the Design and Implementation of Economic and Social Reforms for Inclusive Growth in Tunisia through Capacity Building in Statistics, Monitoring and Evaluation** is a project led by the OECD in which the objective is to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of the GoT’s Strategic Development Plan 2016-2020 (SDP) and future structural reforms and policies by strengthening its capacity in statistics, impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation.

- The **Youth in Public Life: Towards open and inclusive youth engagement** project has contributed to advancing Tunisia’s reform process towards the active and inclusive engagement of young men and women in public life in three different objectives.

A member of the **Open Government Partnership (OGP)** since 2014, Tunisia is currently in the stage of its fourth Action Plan. Since joining, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia have made over 129 commitments.

- With many commitments in the 2021-2023 National Action Plan, a notable one is **Public participation**. The objective is to prepare public data that can be shared in an open format, thus facilitating their dissemination and the development of new mechanisms to strengthen public participation in the elaboration of public policies, the monitoring of their implementation and their evaluation.

**Open Data:**
**Open Government Partnership (OGP)**

- The fourth area of focus for Tunisia is **Enhancing the quality of administrative services and digitizing them**. One of the commitments in this area is to develop a range of online administrative services at the sectoral level, beginning in May 2021 and ending in December 2023.

**Infrastructure:**
Operating as the biggest multilateral financial institution in the world and one of the largest providers of climate finance, the **European Investment Bank (EIB)** serves for the
finance of the European Union. With many project implementations, Tunisia has several commitments made.

- With the financial support of EIB and the European Union, the National Water Distribution Utility (SONEDE) and Tunisia committed to secure the drinking water supply in Greater Tunis, including the capital, Tunis - which is also the capital of the Tunis governorate - and the three governorates of Ben Arous, Manouba, and Ariana.

To demonstrate diversity in Tunisia's trade partners with the rest of Africa, the country signed the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement in 2018 and it officially joined the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in 2019. These agreements will allow the country to expand its trade partners and tap into unexploited opportunities.

Anti-corruption:
Open Government Partnership (OGP)

- In its 2021-2023 Action Plan for the OGP, Open government at the local level is the third area of focus. This focus consists of two commitments: Entrenching OGP principles at the local level, and Supporting financial transparency at the local level.
- This area of focus is to establish new democratic relationships based on engagement and the progressive joint construction of strong, effective, responsible, and transparent local institutions.

Transparency:
OECD - Deauville Partnership

- The objective of the project Operationalizing Public Private Partnerships (PPP) is to support the Government in operationalizing the new PPP law and implementation decrees in a manner which will promote transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of public spending, as well as other policy objectives.
- The project Enhancing Domestic Resource Mobilisation through Effective Tax System Design and Improved Transparency and International Cooperation aims at assisting Tunisia to mobilize domestic resources to foster sustainable economic growth and income redistribution by improving the design of taxation policies and improving international cooperation.
Towards inclusive and open governments: Promoting women's participation in parliaments and policy-making supports the efforts of MENA countries in transition in fostering inclusive growth and good governance by leveraging open government policies and mainstreaming gender perspectives in parliamentary operations to maximize women's integration in public life and in the policy-making process.

b. Gulf Countries

A General Assessment of International Commitment Implementation

As noted in the introduction, the countries in the Persian Gulf differ significantly from those in the MENA region in terms of governance and commitments to international initiatives. The following graph depicts the commitment levels of countries in the Persian Gulf that we examined - Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Iraq and the United Arab Emirates - across the five issues areas we have been discussing throughout our report. These countries, with the exception of Iraq, are distinct from other countries in the MENA region due to their relative homogeneity; they are all authoritarian monarchies, members of the GCC, oil exporters, and tend to have a higher level of wealth. However, their commitment to international initiatives and charters have tended to vary in accordance with their interests.
The above graph indicates the commitment and implementation status of countries in the Gulf region in each of the five commitment areas. While most of the countries listed have made significant progress in areas such as Service Delivery and Infrastructure, progress in Open Data and Transparency, Anti-Corruption, and Climate Change is sorely lacking.

The issue of Climate Change in particular has seen relatively little progress, despite all of the listed countries’ ratification of the Paris Climate Agreement and their recent participation in COP26. While the UAE has made tangible progress towards their goals, the rest of Gulf nations have set more modest targets with lengthier completion timelines. Open Data and Transparency, generally, are other areas in which serious commitments are lacking. While nearly all countries have committed to the IMF Standards for Data Dissemination, none have made progress toward the creation of a national data strategy, nor have they adopted the Open Data Charter (ODC) or have sought to participate in OGP initiatives for Open Data.

Saudi Arabia
Service Delivery - *Implemented*

- Saudi Arabia is currently ranked 40th on the United Nations Development Programme’s Human Development Index, with an index score of 0.854. With a life expectancy of 75.1 years, internet coverage for 93.3% of its population, and a GNI per capita of $47,495, Saudi Arabia has excelled in fulfilling its commitments for service delivery.

Open Data and Transparency - *Committed*

- Saudi Arabia is currently ranked 99th in the world on Open Data Watch’s Open Data Inventory index (ODIN), with an ODIN score of 48. While Saudi Arabia is a subscriber to the IMF’s Standards for Data Dissemination (GDDS), it has not committed to a national data strategy, has not adopted the Open Data Charter (ODC), and is not a participant in OGP’s open data initiatives.
- Saudi Arabia ranked 99th out of 117 countries in a 2019 survey by the Open Budget Survey, with a transparency score of 18.

Infrastructure - *Implemented*


Anti-Corruption - *Implementing*

- Saudi Arabia is a signatory to the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), and has worked closely with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime by providing $10 million in funding for a global operational network of anti-corruption law enforcement authorities. According to Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), Saudi Arabia is ranked 52nd of 180 countries, with a CPI score of 53, putting Saudi Arabia solidly in the middle of the pack worldwide in terms of how corrupt its public sector is perceived to be.

Climate Change - *Committed*

- Saudi Arabia is ranked 111 of 180 countries in Climate Watch’s Climate Risk Index, with a score of 100.33. Despite Saudi Arabia’s high level of vulnerability to climate change, its recently announced target of zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2060 during COP26 are extremely disappointing.
Oman

**Service Delivery - Implementing**

- Oman is currently ranked 60th on the United Nations Development Programme’s Human Development Index, with an index score of 0.813. With a life expectancy of 77.9 years, internet coverage for 80.2% of its population, and a GNI per capita of $25,944, Oman has made significant progress in developing its service delivery capacity, but still has some progress to make in completing its service delivery commitments.

**Open Data and Transparency - Implementing**

- Oman is currently ranked 11th in the world on ODIN, with an ODIN score of 78. While Oman is a subscriber to the IMF’s GDDS, it has not committed to a national data strategy, has not adopted the ODC, and is not a participant in the OGP’s open data initiative. Despite Oman not committing to these initiatives, they should be commended for their progress in promoting open data access.
- We could not find any relevant information on Oman’s commitments to government or budgetary transparency.

**Infrastructure - Implemented**

- In 2020, Oman announced its Vision 2040, which aims to achieve economic diversification away from oil reliance by developing Oman’s economy. Other core pillars of the Vision 2040 plan include investment in educational, economic and logistical infrastructure for heightened sustainability.

**Anti-Corruption - Implementing**

- Oman acceded to the UNCAC in 2013, and has made some progress toward achievement of the convention’s goals. Oman’s CPI rank is 49th of 180, with a score of 54.

**Climate Change - Committed**

- Oman is ranked 26th of 180 countries in Climate Watch’s Climate Risk Index, with a score of 41.17. While Oman is generally grouped with other GCC countries in its outlook on oil and gas exports, it has set a much more encouraging target for reaching zero emissions by 2030.

Bahrain

**Service Delivery - Implemented**

- Bahrain is currently ranked 42nd on the United Nations Development Programme’s Human Development Index, with an index score of 0.852. With a life expectancy of 77.3 years, internet coverage for 98.6% of its population, and a
GNI per capita of $42,522, Bahrain has excelled in fulfilling its commitments for service delivery.

Open Data and Transparency - *Implementing*

- Bahrain is currently ranked 55th in the world on ODIN, with an ODIN score of 61. While Bahrain is a subscriber to the IMF’s GDDS, it has not committed to a national data strategy, has not adopted the ODC, and is not a participant in OGP’s open data initiatives.
- We could not find any relevant information on Bahrain's commitments to government or budgetary transparency.

Infrastructure - *Implemented*

- Bahrain has also announced a national development plan, called Vision 2030, which aims to achieve long-term goals for economic diversification, social and human investments, and the development of high-quality infrastructure, utilities and public transportation.

Anti-Corruption - *Committed*

- Bahrain ratified the UNCAC in February 2010. However, it has dragged its feet in setting up comprehensive frameworks for the implementation of parts of the convention, largely due to a lack of political will. Bahrain is currently ranked 78th of 180 by Transparency International's CPI, with a score of 42.

Climate Change - *Committed*

- Bahrain is ranked 178th of 180 countries in Climate Watch’s Climate Risk Index, with a score of 170.83. Bahrain still has yet to set a target year for reaching zero emissions, and has yet to make any progress towards the development of renewable energy sources.

Kuwait

Service Delivery - *Implemented*

- Kuwait is ranked 64th globally based on the UN Human Development Index, with an index score of 0.806. With a life expectancy rate of 75.5 years, internet coverage for 99.6% of its population, and a 99% literate population. Kuwait has implemented a number of ICT development initiatives since 2000 for delivering public services to its citizens. In 2014, the UN e-government readiness report ranked Kuwait’s e-government program in 49th place globally. Kuwait’s Government Online Services Portal (KGOSP) was officially launched in 2015 to facilitate public service delivery to its citizens, residents and visitors. Kuwait has
also risen 11 places to 61st in the world according to the “Global Information Technology Report 2016” by the World Economic Forum.

Open Data Access & Transparency - Implementing
- According to the Open Data Inventory database website (ODIN), Kuwait is currently ranked as 106th in the world, with an ODIN score of 47. Respectively, Kuwait is ranked 48th and 46th in data openness and data coverage. Although Kuwait is committed to the IMF’s Enhanced General Data Dissemination System (e-GDDS), it has not committed to a national data strategy, and did not subscribe to the Open Government Partnership (OGP)’s open data initiative. We could not find any relevant information on Kuwait’s commitments to or implementations of government or budgetary data transparency. Also, the Kuwaiti government has established innovative monitoring platforms that act as an open data source paving the way for creating more government transparency and accountability towards its citizens and also other interrelated entities essential for establishing an informed decision-making mechanism, which also demonstrates the government’s efforts towards fulfilling the open data access and transparency commitments.

Infrastructure - Implemented
- The government’s development plan (2015-2020) focused on economic reform and implementation of several long-stalled mega projects such as improvements to current infrastructure, establishing newly planned cities, and building new refineries. Additionally, e-services have been adopted by government entities along with public healthcare organizations, demonstrating how Kuwait has managed to create innovative infrastructure that enhances public services for its citizens through automation. The Kuwaiti government website includes a section for implemented infrastructure projects comprising a summarized dashboard for each project. Because Kuwait’s infrastructure sector is a leading economic sector and a cornerstone of its national agenda, we deduced that Kuwait is utilizing all its resources to comply with international standards.

Anti-Corruption - Implementing
- Kuwait enacted a stand-alone Anti-Corruption law modeled on the UN Convention Against Anti-Corruption as a UNCAC member. Kuwait is currently ranked as 73rd globally in the Corruption Perceived Index (CPI) with a score of 43 out of 100, which reflects the high level of corruption in the country. Kuwait is still working towards adopting integrated anti-corruption mechanisms through its
Kuwait Integrity and Anti-Corruption Strategy (KIACS) to achieve a higher degree of commitment and compliance with the United Nations Convention against Corruption which is also necessary to achieve the New Kuwait Vision 2035.

Climate Change - Not Committed

- The Climate Watch Data website illustrates that Kuwait is ranked 162nd globally with a Climate Risk Index Score of 152. Due to the country’s tough climate characteristics in terms of high CO2 emissions, heavy reliance on unsustainable energy resources and complexity of its socio-political circumstances, Kuwait is struggling to combat climate change. Despite the significant number of heat-related deaths due to climate change, Kuwait remains among the highest per capita polluter countries with a low per capita renewable internal freshwater availability. Based on the data we observed, Kuwait seems to be working on adopting measures to mitigate the severe impacts of climate change on its citizens from higher temperatures, lack of rainfall, sea level rise, lack of water resources and the increasing severity of dust storms, but the nation has not taken real actions to eliminate its contribution to climate change.

Qatar

Service Delivery - Implementing

- Qatar is ranked 45th among 189 countries based on the UN Human Development Index, with an index score of 0.848, a life expectancy rate of 80.2 years, and internet coverage for 99.7% of its population. Qatar provides health care and medical services for free to all residents through its government programs. The national budget also includes funding recreational and cultural clubs and facilities for youth as part of its extensive “youth welfare” campaign. In regards to education, the government offers it for free to citizens between the ages of 6 and 16. Qatar has been spending generously on education, having one of the highest per-pupil expenditures in the world. Its system has expanded rapidly with the aim of establishing Qatar as a major regional research hub.

Open Data and Transparency - Implementing

- The Open Data Inventory database website shows that Qatar is currently ranked as 114th in the world, with an ODIN score of 45. Specifically, Qatar is ranked 44th and 47th in data openness and data coverage, respectively. Qatar is part of the IMF’s Enhanced General Data Dissemination System e-GDDS, but it has not committed to a national data strategy or the Open Data Chart (ODC), and the Open Government Partnership (OGP)’s open data initiative. Qatar has made
uneven progress in promoting open data. According to the International Budget website, Qatar has a budget transparency score of 1 out of 100 which indicates that Qatar is unlikely to publish public budgets.

**Infrastructure - Implemented**

- Qatar’s infrastructure and transportation sector has been a key focus of spending, focusing on projects such as expanding its international airport, completing several road and highways projects such as the Doha Metro and the Lusail Light Rail transit project. This country has a high level of infrastructure development capacity. According to Global Infrastructure Hub, Qatar has recently achieved a score of 81.6 on a scale from 0 to 100. Such reforms have also made doing business easier in Qatar, attracting considerable foreign investment. To increase the efficiency of its infrastructure investment, the Qatari government is looking forward to establishing a national infrastructure agency and developing national infrastructure plans. Our findings suggest that Qatar has the funding and intention to continue developing its infrastructure to comply with international standards because We did not find any information that may indicate any reluctance.

**Anti-Corruption - Implemented**

- Qatar is currently ranked as 31st globally in the corruption perceived index (CPI) with a score of 63/100. Corruption in Qatar is relatively low and is among the lowest in the Gulf countries. Despite this high rating, patronage networks and clientelism are institutionalized, especially in the public service procurement. This can be attributed to three main cultural factors: protection of the ruling family from corruption allegations, the existence of influential middlemen, called ‘wasta,’ and the practice of gift-giving in the business sector of Qatar. However, as a UNCAC member, the Qatari government is attempting to streamline its regulations regarding business practices to have a more liberalized economy and increase its strength and viability.

**Climate change - Committed**

- Despite the positive promises from Qatar to mitigate climate change in its National 2030 strategy, Qatar still has still not made any actual action towards the UN climate commitments. Indeed, the Climate Watch Data website shows that Qatar is ranked as 180th globally with a Climate Risk Index Score of 173.67. Qatar is still considering reducing its dependence on fossil fuels, aiming to maintain its rapid domestic expansion along with ensuring the harmony between its economic growth, social development, and environmental protection.
Iraq

Service Delivery - Committed

- Iraq is currently ranked 123rd on the United Nations Development Programme’s Human Development Index, with an index score of 0.674. With a life expectancy of 70.6 years, internet coverage for 49.4% of its population, and a GNI per capita of $10,801, Iraq still has quite a bit of work to do in order to fulfill its service delivery commitments. However, it is important to note that in the case of Iraq, the last 20 years of conflict have greatly hampered the country’s administrative and infrastructural capacities for service delivery.

Open Data and Transparency - Committed

- Iraq is currently ranked 97th in the world on ODIN, with an ODIN score of 48. While Iraq is a subscriber to the IMF’s GDDS, it has not committed to a national data strategy, has not adopted the ODC, and is not a participant in OGP, currently ranked 99th’s open data initiatives.
- Iraq ranked 105 out of 117 countries in a 2019 survey by the Open Budget Survey, with a transparency score of 9.

Infrastructure - Not Committed

- January 2019, Iraq announced its national development plan, Vision 2030, with a focus on promoting sustainable development, empowering the Iraqi people, economic diversification and environmental sustainability.

Anti-Corruption - Committed

- Iraq acceded to the UNCAC in March 2008. However, Iraq’s judicial system is generally perceived as extremely corrupt, causing many citizens to turn to tribal bodies for adjudication of conflicts. This is reflected in Iraq’s CPI ranking, currently 160th of 180, with a score of 21. After nearly two decades of conflict and civil unrest, it is unsurprising that Iraq is currently performing the worst of all the listed countries, and has the most work to do in terms of re-establishing trust in its national administration and bureaucracy.

Climate Change - Committed

- Iraq is ranked 157th of 180 countries in Climate Watch’s Climate risk Index, with a score of 143.16. Iraq’s economy remains highly dependent on oil exports, and the Iraqi government has not announced a target year for reaching zero emissions. Iraq has, however, recognized the need to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, and plans to begin work to diversify its economy away from reliance on fossil fuel exports.
UAE

Service Delivery - *Implemented*
- UAE is ranked 31st among 189 countries based on the UN Human Development Index, with an index score of 0.89. It has a life expectancy rate of 78 years, expected years of schooling of 14.3 years, and internet coverage for 98.5% of its population. In fact, The UAE Government's services are accessible through online and offline channels, are accessible from anywhere and include transactional, informational, commercial and social services. The government designed this system to be dynamic and personalized by simply electronically uploading and signing the documents. This is by changing based on the daily usage of services to reflect the citizen users behavior and preferences. These services are also accessible to people of determination to foster its inclusivity.

Open Data and Transparency - *Implemented*
- Open Data Inventory database website shows that UAE is currently ranked as 16th in the world, with an ODIN score of 75. Specifically, UAE is ranked 86th and 61st in data openness and data coverage, respectively. This score indicates that UAE fulfills many of the ODIN coverage/openness criteria but that still more efforts are needed to foster conditions needed to raise the score to a desirable level of national data transparency.

Infrastructure - *Implemented*
- According to the global competitiveness report, the UAE rank in infrastructure development in 2019 was first in the mobile phone subscriptions indicator, second in electricity access, mobile-broadband subscriptions, mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions, and ICT adoption pillar indicators, fourth in the fiber internet subscriptions indicator, seventh in the quality of roads infrastructure and in the efficiency of air transport services indicators, and 12th in the infrastructure pillar. These high rankings are due to the president’s investments in a large number of developmental, strategic and service projects that accounted for around 6 billion dollars.

Anti-Corruption - *Not Committed*
- With a CPI rank of 24, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) currently has no comprehensive anti-corruption legislation. However, there are specific anti-corruption and bribery articles included directly and indirectly in a number of federal and local laws as an attempt to comply with its UNCAC membership.

Climate change - *Implementing*
As for climate change, the Climate Watch Data website illustrates that the UAE is ranked 165th globally with a Climate Risk Index Score of 156. In accordance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC), the UAE is a non-Annex 1 country and not obligated to reduce its emissions. The UAE, however, has chosen to implement actions to slash its carbon emissions, including monitoring and tracking GHG emissions and assessing policies related to them. Despite its large renewable energy development projects, the UAE’s emissions are expected to increase to 2030 due to a continued expansion of fossil fuel-based sources of electricity. Hence, the Climate Change Tracker rated the United Arab Emirates’ policies and actions as “Insufficient,” indicating that the United Arab Emirates’ policies and action in 2030 need substantial improvements to be consistent with the Paris Agreement’s 1.5°C temperature limit.
6. Case Studies

The following case studies examine a number of countries in other parts of the world that have successfully undertaken governance commitments and have seen the successful participation of CSOs in working toward specific commitments, and can prove useful in thinking about similar goals in the MENA and Gulf regions. For each case study, we highlight one or two areas of commitments that are most relevant to this project.

6.1. Albania

Government Transparency and Civil Society

Background

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Albania came under communist rule and was reconstituted as the People’s Republic of Albania, led by Enver Hoxha. Over his 44-year reign, Hoxha transformed Albania from a poverty-stricken country into a modern, industrialized country by maintaining strict government control over the economy and civil society (Cavendish 2010). He was succeeded in 1985 by Ramiz Alia, who took extensive measures to increase the level of democracy and government openness in the country; including the implementation of elections and by promoting genuine competition for candidates. Alia further pushed for the reduction of nepotism in the nation’s cultural, scientific and educational institutions. Moreover, he sought to reduce unemployment rates through the development of Albania’s extractive industries, and also decreased poverty by providing supplementary stimulus packages to citizens in need (Ash 2011).

As many nation-states officially moved on from the Cold War in 1991, Albania endeavored to forge reintegrative socioeconomic partnerships with Europe and develop close political relations with the United States and its allies (Bishku 2013). Albania has made great strides in embracing global partnership, with long and successful experience in eliminating extreme poverty, reducing risks of social exclusion, ensuring a high standard of basic universal education and promoting gender equality and equal empowerment. Additionally, Albania is on track to meet its Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, and is currently negotiating its accession to the European Union. However, Albania’s transition from communism into a fully-fledged democracy continues. While it has established core democratic institutions, its political and governmental systems remain characterized by fragility and a high level of politicization of governance structures.
CSO Involvement:

Since the fall of Communism in 1991 and the establishment of democratic rule, Albania has experienced many of the growing pains felt by emerging democracies including widespread corruption. Despite these issues, Albania has shown iterative progress in the realm of good governance. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit’s annual reporting on governance, Albania has steadily improved on its relative democracy index score in the last 20 years while it has also sought closer ties with Western Europe and the United States. Furthermore, Albania has promised to make good on international commitments via Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiatives, among others. Though follow-through on these commitments has been inconsistent, substantial progress has been made in a few key areas, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have been instrumental in some of these successes.

One particular area of success in Albania’s governance commitments involves the online publishing of local government initiatives and legislation. Its origin can be traced back to overall open government promises involving the increase in governmental transparency. This commitment is emblematic of Albania’s steady movement towards more open and responsive government, and has been a great boon to overall transparency, citizen participation, and general access to the inner workings of government. At the behest of an Albanian CSO, the Center for Public Information Issues (INFOCIP), the government committed to publish local legislation in 2016. Though already legally mandated by the Albanian government, the implementation of the commitment was spotty at best with more than 50 percent of local governments regularly failing to respond to information requests by the CSO MJAF! (“Enough!” in Albanian). One significant barrier to municipal reporting was the lack of local government websites. In 2016, as part of the OGP initiative, INFOCIP pledged to provide portal access to smaller municipalities that did not run websites.

By 2020, the commitment has seen resounding success. Compared to less than 20 percent of municipalities reporting local legislation in 2016, in 2020, that number climbed to 67 percent just after Albania’s commitment. In 2020 a full 100 percent of local governments published legislation online via their own websites or via the INFOCIP portal. The successful implementation of this commitment was met with positive results from Albanian citizens. In the pre-commitment era, users accessing local legislation were estimated to be in the few hundreds of thousands. By 2018, that number jumped to 1.5 million - or about 50 percent of the Albanian population. This specific case highlights the importance of CSO involvement in helping shape good governance initiatives. In this case, INFOCIP proved instrumental in both pushing for the commitment from the outset while providing critical infrastructure required for success. INFOCIP also provides ongoing support to the project in the form of help desk
assistance for users and officials. The rapid and successful implementation of this commitment further underscores the importance of both government and CSO cooperation. It would have likely would not have been successful without support from both.

Conclusion

Albania’s transition from dictatorship to democracy has been rocky, but significant progress has been made on a number of fronts. This case study highlights one specific commitment the government has made in improving democracy - improving citizen access to local legislative laws and initiatives. While there has been substantial progress on this front, success would not have been possible without substantial CSO buy-in. In this case, Albanian CSOs - with domestic and international funding - were able to provide substantial technological infrastructure to the Albanian government. It should further be noted that, initially, lackluster progress was made. Only after CSOs were made aware of Albania’s international commitments, were CSOs vocal in pressing for this reform - highlighting the importance of government-CSO cooperation.

6.2. Brazil

Civil Society’s Impact on Crime

Background

Since 1985 and the election of Tancredo Neves, and later inauguration of his vice-presidential candidate, Jose Sarney, as president, Brazil has emerged from persistent dictatorship to become one of South America’s most vibrant democracies. Though plagued by many of the familiar issues that hamper emerging democracies—corruption, crime, and inequality, to name a few—Brazil’s democracy has remained relatively stable since the ouster of the military regime in the 80’s. The nation’s economy continues to grow by leaps and bounds, despite a precipitous fall-off in 2008. Despite surface stability, however, dogged corruption, along with a flow of illicit money into the political system, is a key constant in Brazilian politics. If the much-publicized ‘Operation Car Wash’ (a broad-based investigation into money laundering and corruption) is any indication, the nation is continually taking steps to combat its ills. Though the political fallout and ultimate success of corruption-fighting campaigns such as Car Wash are still in question, there is little doubt that Brazil is taking steps towards reform (Estrada 2021). In all, while success has been mixed, Brazil ranks 38th in intentional homicides, according to open government metrics determined by the World Justice Project, placing it roughly in line with its South American neighbors and just ahead of emerging East
European democracies such as Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovenia (World Justice Project).

**Brazil’s Troubling Crime Rates**

Perhaps a characteristic of emerging, free market democracies is not just higher incidences of corruption, but also of crime. Brazil may be especially noteworthy in this regard. Though data varies, depending on year and metrics analyzed, Brazil consistently ranks high across-the-board in terms of crime rates, including the attention-grabbing intentional homicide rate. In 2017, Brazil’s homicide rate per 100,000 people came in at ~30 people, a lower rate than neighbors like Venezuela or Central American nations like El Salvador and Honduras, but marginally higher than South America as a whole, which registered an average rate of ~24 per 100,000 (UNODC). Together with its worrisome homicide statistics is Brazil's rate of femicide which was measured as among the top five nations in the world in 2015, at 4.8 homicides per 100,000 (OGP). These alarming crime rates have not gone unnoticed internationally.

Currently, the US State Department issues warnings to US travelers to Brazil, citing high violent crime rates (State Department of State). Importantly, the most recent Brazilian administrations have taken aim at crime and have focused parts of their agendas on combating it. In 2015, Brazil’s then-president Dilma Rousseff drafted legislation to impose harsher penalties on femicide and other gender-related crimes (OGP). Brazil’s current president, Jair Bolsonaro, benefitted from his tough-on-crime stance which helped him win the 2019 presidential elections (O’Hanlon 2021).

Crime in Brazil is a headline-grabbing topic, one replete with startling statistics and lofty rhetoric, but deeper analysis reveals a nuanced portrait of noteworthy successes and setbacks. The high rate of killings by police, drug trafficking, and pugilistic presidential decrees mask fundamental progress – and sometimes failure - at the community level. Perhaps surprisingly, is the emerging importance of civil society and citizen involvement in community policing, criminal interdiction and prevention. Though just one part of Brazil’s crime-fighting strategy, the involvement of civil society may prove to be a critical, underappreciated element.

**Ephemeral Success In Fighting Crime: Government Policies**

Though there are a plethora of statistics that point to Brazil’s troubling relationship with criminal activity, far less attention has been devoted to the country’s successes. Notably, between 2017 and 2018, homicides fell precipitously by over 13 percent nationally. In some states, such as Sao Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul, rates fell more precipitously still, by upwards of 20 percent (Muggah and Giannini). Sao Paulo’s reduction is
especially notable. In 2001, the murder rate per 100,000 was ~33. In 2018, that number had fallen to just above 6. The metropolitan area saw a fall from ~49 to ~6. Sao Paulo is not alone in seeing success in Brazil’s fight against crime and homicide. The state of Pernambuco saw a drop in homicide rate of 33 percent between 2007 and 2015, a rate that has sadly reversed since the death of the state’s anti-crime governor. Rio De Janeiro, perhaps Brazil’s most notorious crime hotspot, has seen periodic crime reductions – including a 66 percent drop between 2009 and 2015 (Muggah and Giannini 2019).

When analyzing the reasons for such sharp declines in violence, one finds a patchwork of public initiatives. Taken as a whole, it is likely that no one initiative is to thank for stark declines in crime rates, but the confluence of many. Importantly, studies suggest that increased intelligence sharing between civil and military police and improved training for law enforcement contribute to crime prevention. Such police-oriented reforms are no doubt integral to combating crime, but they can often bring controversy and even propel injustices. Pacification police units (UPPs) deployed in low-income areas of Rio De Janeiro likely brought down crime rates for a time, but the program was considered unpopular and its effectiveness waned as crime began to spike in 2016 until the disbandment of the units in 2019 (Muggah and Giannini 2019).

**Potential Comprehensive Progress: Civil Society Participation - CONSEGs, and Youth Outreach**

Though initiatives such as the deployment of UPPs are no doubt important in tackling crime in Brazil, research suggests that citizen-oriented developments may have been critical in lowering rates, as well. One such development is the rise of community policing in Brazil, which represents a shift towards thinking of citizens as the recipients of public security as a service rather than thinking of them as objects of police control. In lockstep with community policing, another promising citizen-oriented development is the rise of civil society partnerships with local law enforcement. Civil society participation in combating crime can take a variety of forms; neighborhood watches and citizen councils are two such manifestations. A more formalized approach can be seen through the proliferation of CONSEGs, crime prevention councils that bring together civil society organizations and citizen researchers in academia in dialogue with public safety personnel. These citizen panels were established in Sao Paulo just before the decline in homicide rates in the early 2000’s and remained active throughout the decline (Leeds 2013). Though it is difficult to directly attribute the drop in crime rates to any one measure, evidence suggests that the implementation of CONSEGs may have played a critical role. A medium for the pluralization and growing participatory nature of crime prevention, CONSEGs provide a way for citizens to bring their concerns and complaints directly to public security officials who, themselves, acknowledge the necessity of broad
citizen participation in tackling violent crime in Sao Paulo (Haubrich and Wehrhahn 2019). It is worth noting that while the rise of CONSEG councils should likely be viewed as a positive force for crime prevention, it is unlikely that such citizen participation would be successful without buy-in from local security forces.

Another bright spot in crime prevention is the proliferation of civil society organizations which focus on youth outreach, specifically regarding education and employment opportunities. Indeed, in one of the few statistical surveys conducted on the quantitative drivers of the drop in crime in Sao Paulo in the 2000s, researchers found that key factors such as increased school attendance and greater employment among youth have statistical significance in lowering crime rates (Justus, Cerqueira, Kahn, and Moreira 2018). Some youth-centered civil society initiatives include entra21, New Employment Opportunities, and EquipYouth – all aimed at youth engagement (IYF). While statistical analysis points towards the importance of youth outreach, perhaps too little attention has focused on this point regarding crime prevention, and few systemic analyses have been conducted on program effectiveness, even as homicide rates in Brazil among young men are, overall, especially high (World Bank 2006).

**CSO involvement:**

Crime in Brazil is a topic of national concern. The nation has suffered from extremely high rates of homicide, particularly, for decades. There has been a plethora of government initiatives aimed at tackling criminal activity and the issue is at the heart of the current president’s agenda. While it is likely that some of these programs have proved effective at reducing violent crime, evidence also suggests that civil society could play a critical role in the future. Increasing civic participation through panels such as CONSEGs and increasing youth outreach are two particularly promising areas deserving of further exploration. While these are potentially powerful tools to combat crime, it should be noted the dearth of public funding for civil society in Brazil, in general, constrains this type of programming. Coupled with the rise of populist, right-wing political movements in the country, there are many in Brazilian civil society who feel less free to pursue their aims than they once were (Civicus 2019). While president Bolsonaro’s rhetoric about crime emphasizes the use of force and violence by security forces while undercutting the role of civic participation, evidence suggests that more participatory, constructive initiatives should likely be central to any nationwide crime reduction strategy.

**6.3. Indonesia**

*The KPK and Role of CSOs in Combating Corruption*
Background

The transition of state executive power from President Soekarno, to then-army-commander Lieutenant General Soeharto in March 1966 embarked Indonesia’s economy on a transition from the Guided Democracy Era (1957-1966) to the New Order Era (1966-1998). President Soeharto’s centralized, militarized, and authoritarian New Order regime shifted the economic institution to one characterized by outward-looking strategies, open-door policies, capitalism, and a development-focused agenda (Wihardja 2015). Through numerous policy and legislative changes, Indonesia experienced substantial growth and speedy socio-economic development enabling the country to grow from a ‘Low-Income’ economy to ‘Lower Middle-Income’ economy (2015). The ‘Asian economic miracle’, praised by many, eventually crumbled due to prolonged structural and institutional issues which then ignited the Asian economic crisis (1997-1998), resulting not only in a temporary loss of macroeconomic control but the ultimate collapse of Soeharto’s 32-year regime, otherwise known as a “twin crises” phenomena (Hill and Shiraishi 2007).

A year after President Soeharto’s resignation in 1998, the relationships between local and central authority and between customary and official institutions drastically changed across Indonesia (Warren 2005). The political legislation adopted at that time, currently situated as the Reform Era (1998-present), signaled major changes in the authority vested in representative bodies and resulted in a less hierarchical relationship between central, provincial, district, subdistrict, and village-level government, as well as a new path of legitimacy to centrifugal processes (2005). The efforts to foster a liberal market economy by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) at the time of the Asian economic crisis, pierced through the armor of entrenched ruling politico-bureaucratic elites and their interests of business conglomerates nurtured within systems of statism and patronage (Robison and Rosser 1998).

The KPK

One of the core commitments President Habibie, Soeharto’s successor, agreed to after accepting the IMF bailout package was to mount a fight against corruption, money politics, and patronage (Suwana 2020). In 2002, the passing of Law No. 30/2002 established the (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi/Corruption Eradication Commission KPK) as an independent state institution and empowered it to freely carry out the fight against corruption without serious interference from any party including the government (Syahuri et al., 2022). Ministers, governors, mayors, members of parliament, judges, senior bureaucrats, senior police officials, senior prosecutors, ambassadors, and other prominent figures have been prosecuted and jailed by KPK since its establishment in
2002. (Umam and Head 2020). The KPK is able to accomplish these remarkable measures by following four important mandates: coordination and supervision of authorized anti-graft agencies; the examination, investigation, and prosecution of corrupt activities; the prevention of future corruption; and finally, the monitoring of state officials and government programs (Umam et al., 2020). The KPK is empowered with considerable authority to implement its mandates, including wiretapping and foreclosing assets without court permission; requiring banks and other agencies to provide confidential data on financial transactions; investigating elite state officials without prior consent of the president; and taking over corruption cases from the police and prosecutors (Umam et al., 2020).

The commission’s track record at attacking corruption since 2003 has been impressive. For example, Indonesia’s rating by Transparency International, an international non-governmental organization based in Berlin, Germany which annually rates countries on corruption in their public sectors, improved its performances from 1.9 in 2003 to 34 in 2014 (Giacomo 2015). But as Carol Giacomo, writer for the New York Times states, the commission has made many enemies and has often had to withstand attempts by entrenched and vested interests to weaken or dismantle it (2015). This build-up of animosity over the years, mainly between the KPK and the Indonesian National Police (POLRI), exploded when Bambang Widjojanto, former Deputy Chairman of the KPK was arrested on 23 January 2015 by the Police Criminal Investigation Agency on the charge of engineering false information while serving as a lawyer in the 2010 presidential election—and on the following day of the arrest—the current President of Indonesia Joko Widodo, announced Budi Gunawan as his nominee for national police chief for which the KPK had identified Mr. Budi as a suspect in a multimillion-dollar bribery investigation (BBC News 2015; Giacomo 2015; Suwana 2020).

The 2015 arrest of Bambang Widjojanto severely hampered the framework and operations of the KPK but this was not the first attempt by political cartels such as the POLRI to disband the institution as previous notable attempts have occurred and documented, all of which the civil society actors, KPK’s biggest supporter since its inception, had challenged and continues to challenge the predatory interest of Parliament in dissolving the KPK (Widojoko 2017). Civil society is defined as “the arena of the polity where self-organizing groups, movements, and individuals, relatively autonomous from the state, attempt to articulate values, create associations and solidarities and advance their interests” (Mietzner 2012, p. 217). The following paragraph provides five key examples on the integral roles that civil society organizations (CSOs) had and continue to play for the KPK.
First, large riots and student protests [civil society] on the streets of Jakarta in 1998 triggered the end of Soeharto’s 32-year authoritarian regime, thus ending the New Order Era. Afterwards, the passing of Law No. 30/2002 could not have been accomplished without CSOs as it organized public consultations with legal experts and practitioners to establish the KPK (Widojoko 2017). Second, in 2008, having grown to more than 700 employees, the KPK proposed to the Parliament that it expand to a new building, which the Parliament denied. This led to a grassroots-led campaign “Saweran KPK” (donation for KPK) in 2012 organized by civil society which, after an accumulation of protests and public pressure, led the Parliament to agree to adopt the proposal for KPK in 2013 (2017). Third, the arrest of Bambang Widjojanto, as previously stated, initiated the Save KPK movement led by CSOs and activists through the hashtag #SaveKPK2015 on Facebook and Twitter (digital activism) to organize support for social and political change for the KPK (Suwana 2020). Fourth, the haze from agricultural fires across Sumatra caused by unfettered forest clearing and peatland draining, had enabled the KPK with the support from CSOs to strategically investigate the forestry sector in 2014, revealing that Indonesia had lost an estimated $6.5-8.9USD billion in potential state revenue from taxes and levies from unreported timber sales between 2003 and 2014 (Putra and Toumbourou 2016). And the fifth and final example, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), in regard to the recently launched U.S. Strategy on Countering Corruption as part of a key Biden-Harris Administration priority, launched a new five-year $9.9USD million project to not only help the Government of Indonesia address corruption by empowering local CSOs to tackle systemic corruption vulnerabilities, but also strengthen the KPK to promote accountability, transparency, and confront corruption (USAID Office of Press Relations 2022).

**CSO involvement:**

The fall of Soeharto’s ruthless authoritarian 32-year regime in 1998 followed a sequence of drastic legislation related to the model of neoliberal market economy like so many other neighboring Southeast Asian countries. One of the primary targets or goals was establishing an anti-corruption commission to which the KPK came to fruition. With almost a 100% succession rate, the KPK set the example to other nation-states of its efficient framework and power to reduce corruption. However, the institution over the years has created animosity with the political cartels like the POLRI as well as vested interests thus hampering the KPK. CSOs have always supported the KPK in serving international commitments related to good governance and without the role and support of CSOs, the KPK would have been systematically broken down long ago.
6.4. Mexico

The CSOs Role in Promoting Human Rights as an International Commitment

Background

Vicente Fox Presidency (First Non One-Party Rule)

Mexico is an ideal country to study the role of civil society organizations and the government’s adoption and implementation of international standards. Additionally, the lessons afforded by Mexico can probably be generalized to other democracies and semi-democracies and with similar civil societies and human rights landscapes, including Persian Gulf countries. In 2000, Mexico elected its first opposition leader Vicente Fox, a decisive turning point in the country's presidential history, making a transition to a democratic political system after seven decades of one-party rule. The new regime made progress towards addressing one aspect of strengthening their democracy in expanding the civic space by pursuing a course of openness and transparency; paving the way for international scrutiny of its human rights practices, and allowing for the public to access information held by government agencies. However, little progress has been made in other areas, as Mexico has yet to radically and effectively address the human rights abuses in parallel with its move toward promoting openness and transparency. Specifically, as argued by Human Rights Watch (HRW), accountability for past abuses and reforms of the judicial system needs to be focused first to end ongoing abuses. Despite that, President Fox’s human rights agenda helped to advance the democratic transition in promoting Openness, Transparency, Accountability and Law Enforcement.

Importantly, during Fox’s tenure, Mexico became a more civically engaged state where civil society organizations (CSOs) had high proximity to political leaders and hence can voice local communities’ issues and needs. The Mexican Congress passed a "transparency law" which was mainly conceived by diverse civil society actors. Such a preliminary positive step uncovered millions of secret documents from government archives that were released for a retroactive disclosure by giving journalists, investigators, and ordinary citizens access to government information, including extensive documentation of past human rights violations that had been hidden for years. These CSOs played a key role in facilitating the provision of information channels, providing avenues for local citizens to voice their concerns, and articulate their needs and advocate for human rights. However, the progress achieved towards promoting transparency was still limited within the executive branch, and had not yet been matched in the other branches of government. Also, it did not pass throughout autonomous state institutions, including the National Human Rights Commission. Until
his last year of presidency, the transparency law did not even cover political parties which mobilize large amounts of public funding to shape the country's electoral and legislative processes (Baumun & Sanden, 2018).

**Presidency of Andrés Manuel López Obrador**

With the election of Andrés Manuel López Obrador in the 2018 presidential elections, the human rights situation in Mexico has become worse. His administration has not only failed to improve the country’s dismal human rights record, it has undone many of the hard-fought gains made before him. At the end of February 2019, the congress approved a constitutional reform that legalizes the participation of the armed forces in public security, which was previously prohibited. However, the campaign promotion “seguridad sin guerra” (security without war) on social media platforms as #seguridadesinguerra from a CSO pressured the armed forces by creating term limits in public security work and emphasized the need to strengthen civilian police (Arellano, 2019). By then, Mexico became one of the most deadly regions for human rights defenders. Between 2018 and 2019, these killings were frequently documented in Mexico by CIVICUS Monitor. Civil society activists have spent decades safeguarding indigenous territories in Mexico. Despite this, after intense dialogue between the civil society organizations and the government, Mexico became the 11th country to ratify the Escazú Agreement in November 2021. This is the first regional treaty to explicitly link human rights protection and environmental governance in Latin America and the Caribbean. As a result, CSOs have taken advocacy actions to urge governments to act and make commitments on climate and environmental justice as a human right.

**CSOs Involvement**

The number of civil society organizations (CSOs) has skyrocketed from a handful in the 1980s to thousands today. The first Mexican rights groups appeared in the 1980s, largely as a reaction to the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, when a lethargic government response spurred citizens to organize autonomously (Monsivais, 1987). Specifically, local human rights organizations (LHROs) play a key role in voicing and channeling diverse needs of Mexican society through informing public opinion and social movements. Moreover, LHROs have been the most significant actors of the rights revolution in Mexico. Those LHROs form part of a broader transnational advocacy network that include both governmental and nongovernmental international organizations (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). For instance, world public opinion and international organizations (IOs) influence the domestic human rights community in Mexico.
There are some 27,000 registered nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Mexico today (Sedesol, 2014). Studies identified 50 locally based, legally registered rights groups in Mexico City alone and a further 27 in the provincial town of San Cristobal de las Casas, which is a positive environment for civil society organizing (Ron et al., 2014). The key activities that these LHROs perform might be grouped into four trajectories:

1. Research and documentation (through interviewing victims about abuses, centralizing information in databases, researching domestic and international rights law);
2. Gathering information on (public education, media campaigns to publicize rights abuses);
3. Imposing pressures on the government (litigation, legislative lobbying, pressuring prosecutors, directly persuading abusers to change behavior);
4. Mobilization (petition drives, organizing public protests, consumer boycotts, calls to action).

These four areas emphasize the role of domestic civil society in promoting rights compliance, data transparency and accountability, and enforcing the rule of law as international commitments. They play an important role in supporting these international reforms through spearheading citizen monitoring and they back community policing (Duce and Perez Perdomo 2003). This also was achieved with a significant international prodding from private foundations and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which have identified justice and police reform as interlocking priorities (Frey 2015; USAID 2014). The CSOs also significantly took part in aligning with the Goal 16 of SDGs as well as participating in setting up the National Action Plans of the Open Government Partnership.

**Adopted Open Government Partnerships (OGPs) Commitments**

During Fox and Obrador presidencies, Mexico enrolled in the OGP in 2011 and became one of its eight founding members, with several interactions in its Open Government exercises, resulting in its published fourth National Action Plan (NAP) 2019-2022 to date. The OGP operates in Mexico through a Tripartite Technical Secretariat (STT). This is considered to be the space through which the decision making is made by three parts: Executive branch (SFP); guarantor organ (INAI); and the Core Group of Civil Society (NOSC- in Spanish) as members of the steering committee. The Civil Society Core Group has been working for more than five years with the Federal Government resulting in an established process of co-creation and dialogue conditions with the government and other related stakeholders in creating its NAPs integratively (articulo, 2017).

Positively, these NAPs exhibit the Mexican government’s adoption of international commitments including key issues related to human rights, scoping it as a multifaceted
civic goal that comprises the interplay of open data, transparency, and accountability. In its last published NAP, Mexico laid out a total of 13 commitments across seven issue areas, with nine human rights-related commitments:

- Adopting open and accountable expenditure in social government programs.
- Allowing for citizen participation for sustainable rural development.
- Guaranteeing the right to education through quality and transparent information.
- Maintaining youth sexual and reproductive rights.
- Manifesting transparency to foster labor inclusion.
- Establishing transparency to monitor public trusts.
- Creating an open and unique public security information platform.
- Establishing transparency to strengthen woods, water and fishing management.
- Establishing transparency of arms’ flow and control.

The innovative feature of this action plan is that it passed through five roadmap stages to be undertaken in a timely manner, depending on the co-creation tables with intense participation of civic actors.

**Adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

CSOs are considered to be the active key drivers of adopting sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Mexico. They have a significant political involvement serving as autonomous institutions to promote independent non-governmental authority. Although they have certain skills and networks of active societal engagement and public influence, they still require strengthening to improve their institutional capacity and expand into more of Mexico’s municipalities. Mexico has implemented numerous initiatives and commitments, based on a long-term vision, to align with the SDGs. Importantly, the initiatives were centered around open data access through the creation of committees to coordinate research on indicators that track progress on the 2030 Agenda implementation at the national level; mapping global indicators to identify Mexico’s domestic track; monitoring the implementation of the SDGs at the legislative level; and adopting SDGs alignment follow-up mechanisms both at the federal level (national level) and in some municipalities (sub-national level) (Voluntary National Review, 2018).

International cooperation has a role in fostering this role of CSOs in Mexico. One successful example shows this clearly. In 2015-2018, the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), had worked on the *Initiativa para el Fortalecimiento de la Sociedad Civil* Initiative for the Strengthening of Civil Society (IFOSC) to build the institutional, technical and strategic capacities of Mexican CSOs,
on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Once strengthened, these organizations are intended to pro-actively participate in the realization of Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development “peace, justice and strong institutions.” This initiative aims to strengthen civil society organizations, prioritizing three fields of activity:

- Technical cooperation to strengthen the institutional capacity of civil society organizations.
- Support for the pro-active participation of Mexico’s civil society organizations in the development of a national strategy for realizing Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda.
- Funding for projects by civil society organizations targeting SDG 16.

The success of many CSOs' activities was mainly dependent on active citizen collaboration and input from the public, including reporting information on rights abuses, the need for legal representation, and the time and energy to protest. Therefore, there is an urgent need that the NGOs' roles should also involve providing public education to access an adequate citizen's market supply of credible human rights information to hold governments accountable for failing to comply with rights treaties.

6.5. Nigeria

Combating Corruption in Extractive Industries

Background

Nigeria holds an important position, both in Africa and in global affairs. It is Africa’s most populous country and largest economy; it is also the seventh most populous in the world and the 26th largest economy. Due to its wealth in population and in natural resources, Nigeria has the potential to become a significant player in the world economy. However, its potential has largely been hamstrung due to endemic corruption and mismanagement of public finances. Since gaining independence in 1960, the Nigerian government estimates that over $500 billion has been lost to corruption, and points to this as a primary reason for the country’s lack of adequate infrastructure for healthcare, education and transportation.

OGP Commitments - Anti-Corruption

After being sworn into office in 2015, President Muhammadu Buhari made anti-corruption a cornerstone of his tenure and pledged to strengthen anti-corruption reforms. To this end Nigeria joined the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2016, and established a National Steering Committee (NSC) through OGP which consisted of
42 members with equal representation from government and non-governmental actors. The NSC is responsible for coordinating with OGP to develop a National Action Plan (NAP), which establishes the Nigerian government’s international commitments on key issues. In its 2019-2022 NAP, Nigeria laid out a total of 16 commitments across seven issue areas, with three anti-corruption commitments:

- To establish a public register of beneficial owners of corporate entities;
- To strengthen Nigeria’s asset recovery legislation including non-conviction based confiscation powers and the implementation of unexplained wealth orders;
- To take appropriate actions to implement the National Anti-Corruption Strategy.

Despite enacting numerous reforms, corruption remains a salient issue for Nigeria. The Pandora Papers, published in October 2021, revealed over $350 million in London properties purchased by 137 wealthy and influential Nigerians. Meanwhile, Nigeria’s score across multiple corruption and civil society indices has decreased - indicating a lack of enforcement behind new reforms and stonewalling of Civil Society Organizations in their attempts to monitor and influence the government to follow through on its commitments.

However, issues in enforcement and implementation of new reforms should not overshadow the real and very significant progress Nigeria has made since becoming a member of OGP. In many ways, Nigeria has demonstrated a commitment to change which sets an example for its fellow states in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, which has traditionally been the worst-performing for anti-corruption efforts. Nigeria has made great strides in implementing transparency-building reforms alongside Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) for:

- Extractive Sector Transparency;
- Procurement Monitoring and Open Data

**The Companies and Allied Matters Act of 2020**

As part of its 2017-2019 NAP, Nigeria committed to heightened transparency in its extractive sectors, particularly in its oil and mining sectors. While both of these sectors have been lucrative, the Nigerian government and its people have received very little of the profits and the development which it might engender. The commitment is as follows:

*Nigeria’s extractive industry has failed to deliver development and improve the well being of the vast majority of her citizens. The wide spread opacity in the industry has allowed corruption to thrive, thus, deepening issues of underassessment, underpayment and under-remittance/non-remittance of revenues due to government, thereby limiting what the government can deliver to improve the lives of citizens. A backlog of remedial actions to improve accountability across financial, processes and production has not been*
prioritized or implementation has been too slow leading to further leakage and loss in citizens’ confidence.

Following this commitment, the Nigerian government passed the **Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020** (CAMA). CAMA made it mandatory for firms to disclose persons with significant control of companies, and created a public register of beneficial owners to enhance corporate accountability and transparency. CAMA was one of the first such laws to be enacted in the Sub-Saharan region, and has since served as an example for other OGP members for similar legislation. Key stakeholders in the legislation process included government ministries and agencies, as well as private sector representatives and CSOs. While implementation at the sub-national and community levels continues to be an issue, CSOs have remained integral in their advocacy for and monitoring of firms' compliance with CAMA, as detailed in the examples below.

**CSO Involvement**

The **Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Center** (CISLAC), a Nigerian partner of Transparency International, has focused on legislative advocacy and on monitoring Nigeria’s progress towards the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. In so doing, it has continually warned the Nigerian government that the lack of stricter enforcement for anti-corruption legislation may result in Nigeria failing to meet the 2030 SDGs. As a partner of Transparency International, CISLAC is also responsible for monitoring and reporting on corruption indicators. In this capacity, CISLAC has expressed alarm regarding Nigeria’s slipping position on Transparency International’s corruption index.

**Publish What You Pay Nigeria** (PWYP) advocates for greater transparency and accountability for firms working in Nigeria's extractive industries sector. To achieve this goal, PWYP publishes reports on the impact of extractive industries on workers, the general standard of living, and the environment. Most recently, PWYP has published two reports - “Oil and Gas and the Quality of Life in Nigeria” in 2020, and “Voices From the Mines: The Mining Activities of Ebonyi State, Nigeria” in 2021. Both reports decry the working conditions for laborers in the mining and oil sectors; painting a picture of corruption, abuse, health and environmental hazards. Reports such as these continue to shed light on the exploitative practices of firms in extractive industries, and advocate for better conditions and stricter enforcement of corruption laws such as CAMA.

The **Private and Public Development Centre** (PPDC) has focused on monitoring and reporting on the Nigerian government to increase transparency and accountability, and regularly ranks Nigerian state governments on their compliance with OGP commitments. To do this, PPDC has made use of Nigeria’s Freedom of Information Act since 2004 to obtain data on procurement and contracting. To increase accessibility for
Nigerian citizens, PPDC created a public database called Budeshi which monitors government projects, procurement and contracts and has used this data to advocate for better healthcare, infrastructure, education and water access. PPDC has also recognized the importance of ethical behavior to good governance, and to that end has established the Homevida initiative to boost young scriptwriters and filmmakers in Nigeria to influence Nigerian media by promoting integrity and ethics issues.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Lessons Learned

The MENA region as a whole, including the Gulf states, is notorious for antidemocratic governance, persistent and widespread corruption, suppression of human rights, regional conflict and weak economies or ones bolstered primarily by the oil trade. In light of this, it was not surprising to us that there was little information we could find regarding governance commitments made. While it was heartening to find some nations committed to better governance, our overall sense is that the nations of the MENA region are not aggressively pursuing the improvement of governance, at least in partnership with outside actors. While this may be the case, we were struck by the potentially vital role CSOs may play in holding governments accountable for commitments made, potentially even goading them into action.

Our team’s examination of the nations for our case studies revealed the important role CSOs may play in improving the overall governance picture in different nations. Albania, importantly, shed light on how CSOs can play a vital role in providing infrastructure (in this case, digital platforms) and expertise to shore up, enhance, and complement government capabilities. While the government of Albania had committed themselves to improving transparency of government decision-making at the local level, it is almost certain that follow-through would have been much more sluggish without CSO involvement. It should be noted in Albania’s case, CSOs received foreign support for their activities. Brazil’s case was similar to Albania’s, in that CSOs likely play an important role in furthering government aims - in this case, in crime reduction. Unfortunately, the cause-and-effect picture for Brazil is murkier given the enormity and broad scope of the crime problem in the nation. Still, our research was able to uncover that CSOs likely have played an important role in reducing crime in certain areas, and it is likely that they will continue to do so into the future.

In Nigeria and Indonesia, we found that CSOs have played an important role in holding governments accountable to their promises. In Indonesia, CSOs have successfully
advocated for strengthening the KPK while also fighting for the very preservation of the critical anti-corruption organization. In Nigeria, CSOs have ardently advocated for increased transparency from extractive industries in the halls of the nation’s government and through the maintenance of databases and the publication of readily-available reporting. In Mexico, we found a vibrant CSO landscape where these organizations advocate for human rights, mobilize citizenry, and pressure the government for concessions.

In sum, our team concludes that CSOs are a critical piece of any flourishing democracy or nations in transition. They play a crucial role in voicing citizen concerns and embodying civic action outside of the ballot box. A rich civil society landscape ensures that minorities have advocates, that gender rights are being championed, and government is held accountable when needed or even strengthened when appropriate. Because of the sometimes slow-moving, gridlocked nature of democracy, we believe CSOs play a role in providing material support and assistance to governments when funding or legislative support is sluggish. Further, CSOs have the potential to hold government accountable for promises made, to help ensure commitments are not just lip-service paid, like so many government commitments in the MENA region have turned out to be.

**Lessons Learned At-A-Glance**

- **CSOs may play a crucial role in aiding governments make good on commitments by:**
  - Augmenting government capabilities
  - Ensuring commitments are advocated for
  - Bringing public visibility to commitments
  - Establishing an interface between government and citizenry
  - Goading government to make commitments

- **CSOs may need material support from foreign organizations where government support is minimal**

- **CSOs may play a crucial role in helping solve societal issues where little to government action has materialized**

**7.2 Recommendations**

As we turn our eye to the MENA region and consider future government reform, **our chief recommendation is this: CSO formation should be encouraged and existing organizations should receive support.**
Importantly, some nations in the region have come to this very same conclusion. Jordan, notably an OGP partner nation, has outlined its support for CSOs and has recognized their importance in aiding the government in fulfilling its promises. Unfortunately, the outlook for civil society - as it pertains to governance - is much more bleak regionally. Overall, CSO activity is generally impeded by the governments of the MENA region. In some nations, notably in the Gulf, CSOs are limited only to various charitable organizations. Pressure from such groups to encourage reform in these nations would likely be blocked or aggressively curtailed. Therefore, our recommendation comes with a notable caveat; CSOs should not be encouraged where their work could invite government reprisal.

While we believe there is room for government reprisal in many nations of the MENA, specifically when examining governance reform, we believe there are many opportunities for CSO support in the region. Specifically, we’ve found that a great deal of MENA nations - even in the Gulf, have lent some support to environmental concerns. While some nations may be less supportive of moving towards renewable sources of energy, there is evidence that even these nations are at least willing to voice support for broader environmental commitments. Algeria, for example, has pledged to support a number of Sustainable Development Goals ranging from beach clean-up, more efficient water management and fisheries management. Similar commitments can be found throughout the region. The difficulty with these commitments, though, lie in follow-through. We’ve found that these nations are willing to commit to development goals but updates on progress are scarce. We believe a lack of political will and even disorganization or inadequate funding leads to this failure-to-launch.

Where governments are sluggish to engage in follow-through, we believe CSOs can play a crucial role. We have seen in our case studies multiple examples of civil society stepping in to fill gaps where the government is either unwilling or unable. Albania’s experience, for instance, is an especially compelling case where CSOs augmented government capabilities and plugged gaps in an environment with a dearth of digital infrastructure. In this example, CSOs were able to help the government follow-through on commitments made. We believe there are ample opportunities in the MENA region for CSOs to act with similar effectiveness. It should be noted, though, that civil society likely requires outside support in the form of expertise and funding. In the case of Albania, CSOs received outside funding as they set up online help-desks and created web portals for citizens to easily access local government decisions. In this case, the government was open to CSO activity but provided very little material support. In this vein, we believe that lending support for CSOs is critical, especially in the MENA region where government support may be nonexistent or minimal.
The lack of follow-through in the MENA region is especially noticeable in the realms of governance: Anti-corruption, transparency, and open data to name a few examples. While some governments have made real commitments in these areas - notably Qatar, Morocco, and Jordan, we are doubtful of the earnestness of commitments in the region, writ large. In some nations like Saudi Arabia, we believe that CSOs actively engaged in improving governance - especially in ways that encourage greater democratization - may be targets of reprisal. We believe that encouraging CSO activity along governance lines should be approached cautiously. While we have seen a number of commitments from MENA countries, we believe that any attempt to lend support to CSO activity should be examined judiciously. That being said, if any activity is identified that is government-sanctioned, support could be critical in bringing about reform.

Recommendations At-A-Glance:

- CSO involvement in reform should be encouraged and supported because of their catalyzing effect on government action
- CSOs may operate in dangerous environments and support should be examined on a case-by-case basis
- There are many opportunities for CSO success in the MENA region, especially in areas that have received tacit government support but where implementation has been slow to materialize. We recommend that CSOs working in these areas are prioritized for support
8. References

5.1 MENA Region:


https://www.menatransitionfund.org/documents/improving-connectivity-maghreb


https://www.menatransitionfund.org/documents/operationalizing-public-private-partnerships


OECD. (n.d.). The Deauville Partnership and the OECD.


https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/morocco/commitments/MO0037/

Open Government Partnership. (n.d.). *Integrity Portal (M00007).*
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/morocco/commitments/MO0007/

Open Government Partnership. (n.d.). *Strengthening Budget Transparency (M00025).*
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/morocco/commitments/MO0025/

Open Government Partnership. (n.d.). *Training Portal for NGOs (M00041).*
https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/morocco/commitments/MO0041/


United Nations. (n.d.). *UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26).* UN.


5.2 Gulf Countries


Open Data Watch. (n.d.-e). *Saudi Arabia*. Open Data Inventory.  

Open Data Watch. (2020). *Oman Open Data Inventory Profile*. Open Data Inventory.  

Shafi, N. (2021, September 13). *Qatar’s Fight Against Climate Change*. EcoMENA.  
https://www.ecomena.org/qatar-climate-change/


https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/v2030/overview/


https://www.e.gov.kw/sites/KGOArabic/Pages/HomePage.aspx


https://andp.unescwa.org/plans/1200#.%7E:text=Oman%20Vision%202040%20is%20the,social%20and%20developmental%20relations%20nationwide.

https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/


6.1 Albania


Economist Intelligence. (n.d.). Democracy Index 2021: The China Challenge. https://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/eiu-democracy-index-2021.pdf?mkt_tok=NzUzLVJJUS00MzgAAAAGC0i8WUhzyqRi9fa-yWCyiCZ5mAwpy8MLkirO0vix1tW-Mc9rb3wyZ6LxK09FJmfhj7OUk4-5Ag6rGXFUKp_wmBmSyhpY9VPN6Mkpskv9eQUtbKQ


6.2 Brazil


6.3 Indonesia


6.5 Nigeria


