

A Mapping of Government Accountability in the MENA region



SIMSIM
PARTICIPATION
CITOYENNE



Final Report

#Introduction

#Context

#Definitions

#Indicators

#Methodology

#Mapping Results

#User Needs

#Recommendations and User Cases

@Rabat
Dec 2018

INTRODUCTION

This is the final report of a mapping and evaluation study of civil society organizations working on political accountability in the MENA Region, commissioned by SimSim Participation Citoyenne and conducted by happy smala. This report presents the findings of our mapping exercise, the needs identified by CSOs working on accountability, and user case recommendations for the future accountability dashboard.

CONTEXT

Over the past 15 years, accountability has become an important topic in development and civil Society circles. Originally a feature of research on democracy and public administration, accountability gained a broader definition and scope New Public Management (NPM) and good governance discourse. Since the early 2000s, organizations such as OECD and the World Bank have invested heavily in research and programs focusing on accountability as a means of implementing public sector reform, promoting democracy, and battling corruption.¹

7 years after the beginning of the "Arab Spring," a multiplicity of actors operate in the political accountability space in the MENA region, including public institutions, international organizations and civil society. Morocco, and Jordan have implemented constitutional reforms that ostensibly limit royal power in favor of the elected governments, and Tunisia and Egypt have undertaken to write new constitutions, accompanied by new policies to promote transparency and accountability within public institutions.² One of the key challenges to these reforms and policies is the potential for "biomimicry", wherein structures and procedures for accountability are ostensibly in place, but informal or cultural mechanisms within institutions ensure that corrupt or opaque power dynamics continue to operate.³

DEFINITIONS

Accountability and related concepts have multiple definitions and interpretations. This study does not aim to provide singular definitions, but rather operational ones with the goal of aligning them with the desired outcomes and impacts of Civil Society in the region.

For the purposes of this study, we have adopted the United Nations definition of accountability as "the obligation of individuals and organizations to be responsible for all decisions and actions taken and to be responsible for their commitments, without reservation no exception. Accountability includes the achievement of objectives and results in a timely and cost-effective manner, as well as the full implementation and fulfillment of all mandates."

The World Bank Accountability Framework⁴, first developed in the context of essential service provision to the poor, identifies three actors: client/citizen, politician/policy maker, and service provider. In order to gain access to or improve services, citizens have two "routes of accountability", by holding either the service provider or the politician accountable. The "short route" holds the service providers directly accountable through performance monitoring or, in the case that citizens have a degree of choice, by frequenting a competing service provider. The

¹ Jayal 2008 <http://www.gsdc.org/docs/open/innovations-in-accountability/ia3.pdf>

² Integrity 2013 <https://www.aman-palestine.org/data/itemfiles/f4792496d188a649cc1a68bbf9750495.pdf>

³ Halloran 2015

<http://www.transparency-initiative.org/archive/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Strengthening-Accountability-Ecosystems.pdf>

⁴ World Bank 2009 <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/5986>

“long route” directs efforts to politicians, forcing them to change policies that govern service provision, or to change service providers. This framework was further developed

Social Accountability: The World Bank defines social accountability as *“An approach toward building accountability that relies on civic engagement, i.e., in which it is ordinary citizens and/or civil society organizations that participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability.* In a public sector context, social accountability refers to a broad range of actions and mechanisms that citizens, communities, independent media and civil society organizations can use to hold public officials and public servants accountable. These include, among others, participatory budgeting, public expenditure tracking, monitoring of public service delivery, investigative journalism, public commissions and citizen advisory boards. These citizen-driven accountability measures complement and reinforce conventional mechanisms of accountability such as political checks and balances, accounting and auditing systems, administrative rules and legal procedures.”⁵

Vertical Accountability: formal mechanisms of accountability between citizen and state, primarily through elections and referendums.

Horizontal Accountability: Internal mechanisms within governments and institutions, which can include mechanisms such as formal separation of powers on a macro-level, and information sharing mechanisms or arbiters such as ombudsmen at the meso-to-micro-level.

Preventative Accountability: “the reframing of actions once deemed acceptable, albeit unfortunate, as unacceptable acts of wrongdoing for which public authorities will henceforth be held legally, socially and/or politically accountable’. This reframing generally constitutes the reframing of illegal but previously socially acceptable practices such as corruption or abuse of force by government or security actors.”⁶

Rude accountability: ‘The informal mechanisms widely deployed by citizens to claim public service and sanction service failures, characterized by a lack of official rules or formal basis and a reliance on the power of social norms and rules to influence and sanction official performance’.⁷

Open Government: Open Government is an approach that focuses on ensuring accountability through open citizen access to government data. It can be classified as a form of social accountability, with the caveat that access to data is only as effective as citizen’s ability to interpret it and leverage it in concert with other mechanisms to affect change. One of the key drivers of the open government approach is the Open Government Partnership, a global multi-stakeholder initiative that provides funding and support to governments that voluntarily adhere to its criteria for open data and transparency.⁸

Transparency: Transparency can be understood in three ways:

- + A public value adopted by a society to battle corruption directly linked to accountability
- + A synonym for open decision-making within government and civil society organizations linked to confidentiality and access to information

⁵ Malena 2004

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/327691468779445304/pdf/310420PAPER0So1ity0SDP0Civic0no1076.pdf>

⁶ Bonner 2009 Media as Social Accountability: The Case of Police Violence in Argentina

⁷ Hossain 2009 <https://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Wp319.pdf>

⁸ Halloran 2015

<http://www.transparency-initiative.org/archive/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Strengthening-Accountability-Ecosystems.pdf>

- + A complex tool for good program governance created in parallel with responsibility, efficacy and efficiency.

INDICATORS

A number of indices and ranking systems have emerged in an effort to develop a base of empirical and quantifiable data on accountability. The majority of these indicators are based on surveys conducted by international organizations, international CSOs and think tanks. The two most commonly referenced indicators for accountability are those of the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators and Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index.

The Worldwide Governance Indicators provide an overview of 6 indicators of governance, ranked from 0 to 100.⁹ The MENA Region's ranking remains low and has shown little change since 2006, with a few exceptions. The most relevant indicator for the purposes of this study is Voice and Accountability with measures "perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media." Across the MENA region, scores remained very low in 2016: 24 in 2006 and 25 in 2016. Egypt remains the lowest at 14 and Tunisia the highest at 57, up from 10 in 2006.

Government Effectiveness "captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies" Across the MENA Region, perception of effectiveness has decreased slightly from 47 to 44 between 2006 and 2016. Of the target countries, Egypt ranks the lowest at 24 and Jordan the highest, at 59.¹⁰

Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index surveys experts and businesspeople to measure perceived corruption in the public sector, with results presented on a scale of 0 to 100. In 2017, every country in the MENA Region ranked below 50 (with the exception of the UAE), with Jordan at 48, Tunisia at 42, Morocco 40, Egypt 32 and Lebanon 28.¹¹

The International Budget Index is a biannual survey that ""evaluates whether governments give the public access to budgetary information and opportunities to participate in the budget process at the national level."¹² In 2017, Jordan scored the highest of the target countries with a score of 63 out of 100, Morocco scored 45, Egypt 41, Tunisia 39, and Lebanon 3.

The Wall Street Journal and The Heritage Foundation produce an annual index of economic freedom, which measures of government integrity, including transparency of policymaking and absence of corruption in its calculations. The MENA Region ranks in the two middle categories, "Moderately free" and "Mostly Unfree", except for the United Arab Emirates, which is ranked "mostly free".¹³

Finally, The Open Government Partnership has also established a set of eligibility criteria; however, it has specifically declined to create a ranking system, in favor of a platform to track the

⁹ <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/#reports>

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017

¹² <http://survey.internationalbudget.org/#home>

¹³ <https://www.heritage.org/international-economies/commentary/2018-index-economic-freedom>

implementation of government commitments. Tunisia and Jordan have made commitments to implement open government action plans, while Morocco is in the process of developing its action plan.

These indices were included in our mapping of accountability platforms; they will be discussed further in the mapping results section.

METHODOLOGY

This study primarily targeted three countries identified by the members of the I4C hub: Morocco, Tunisia, and Jordan, but includes relevant cases from other countries in the region, notably Egypt and Lebanon. The latter two countries were included in the mapping exercise and success stories, but not in the needs analysis. Initiatives were selected according to the criteria below. The list of initiatives contacted (Annex B) emerged from desk research as well as recommendations from the I4C Hub and happy smala's network and was updated with recommendations from the survey and interviews. The table below divides target groups according to geography, type of organization, thematic areas of work, and the relevant phase of the research.

Country	Type	Themes	Intervention
Morocco	CSOs, activists, startups, journalists	Political accountability (national), anti-corruption, transparency, participatory budgets	Desk research, mapping
	Platform	Political accountability (national), anti-corruption, transparency, participatory budgets	Success story
Tunisia	CSOs, activists, startups journalists	Political accountability (national/local), anti-corruption, transparency, participatory budgets	Desk research, mapping, interview
	Platform	Political accountability (national/local), anti-corruption, transparency, participatory budgets	Success story
Jordan	CSOs, activists, startups, journalists	Political accountability (national/local), anti-corruption, transparency, participatory budgets	Desk research, mapping, interview
	Platform	Political accountability (national/local), anti-corruption, transparency, participatory budgets	Success story
Regional	International CSOs, International Organizations, activists, journalists,	Political accountability (national/local), anti-corruption, transparency, participatory budgets	Desk research, mapping, success story

	startups, platforms, Research Centers		
--	--	--	--

Mapping and interviews

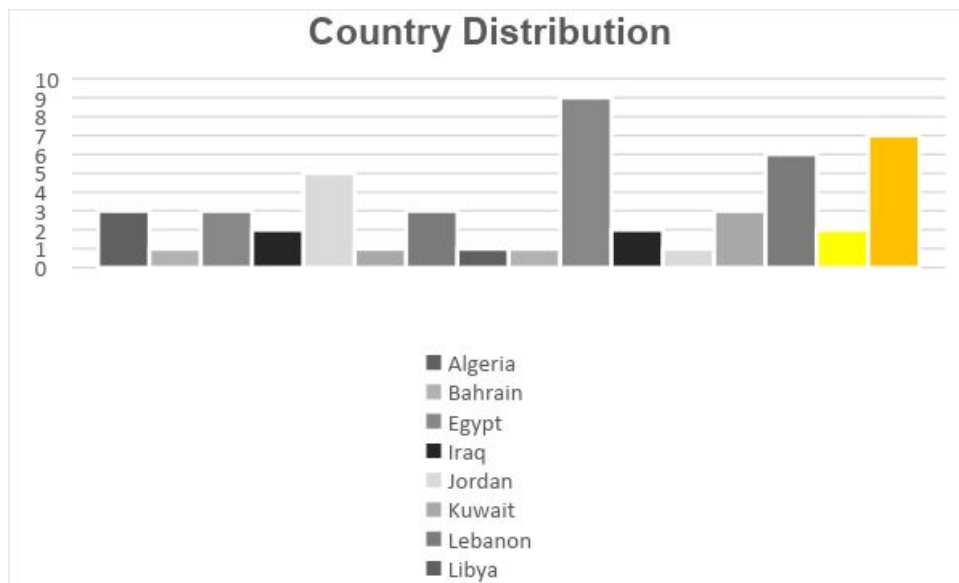
Initiatives that fit the above criteria were sent a survey regarding their work on accountability and their current needs in order to identify potential functionalities for the accountability dashboard. Survey respondents were also invited to participate in in-person or skype interviews to give more detailed explanations of their work and their current needs.

We received a total of 10 responses to the survey and conducted 5 interviews. While the sample size of respondents was smaller than planned, their responses are sufficiently consistent that we can formulate recommendations for the accountability dashboard.

MAPPING RESULTS

Initiatives

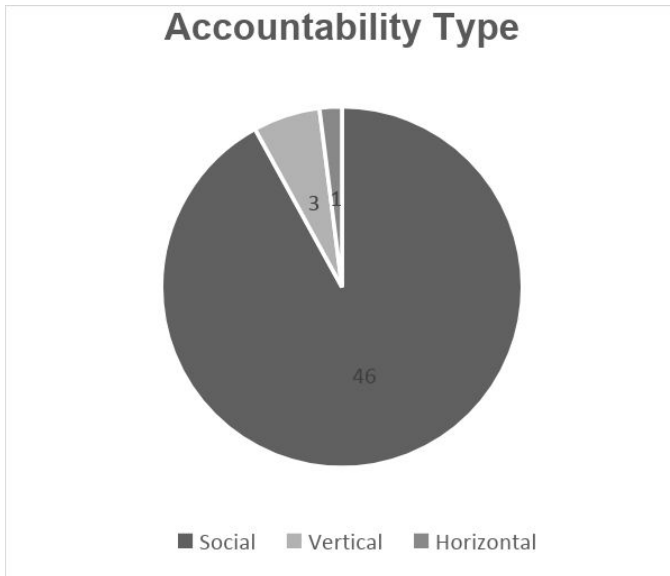
We identified 81 initiatives in the region working on accountability and distributed a survey to every organization for whom we would find contact information. The survey was accompanied by invitations to participate in live or skype interviews to gather more information. We eliminated initiatives for whom we could not find contact information or could not find sufficient information online regarding their objectives and activities, which narrowed the list to 51 initiatives.



We identified the highest concentrations of accountability initiatives in Morocco (9), Tunisia (6), and Jordan (5). We also identified a number of global initiatives with a presence in the MENA region (7) and regional platforms (2). We have further categorized these according to the following criteria:

- + Accountability type (vertical, horizontal, social, or rude)
- + Organization type (local CSO, international CSO, activist, media, research, public sector, or other)
- + Thematic area (accountability, anti-corruption, transparency, open government, participatory governance, participatory budgeting)

Accountability type

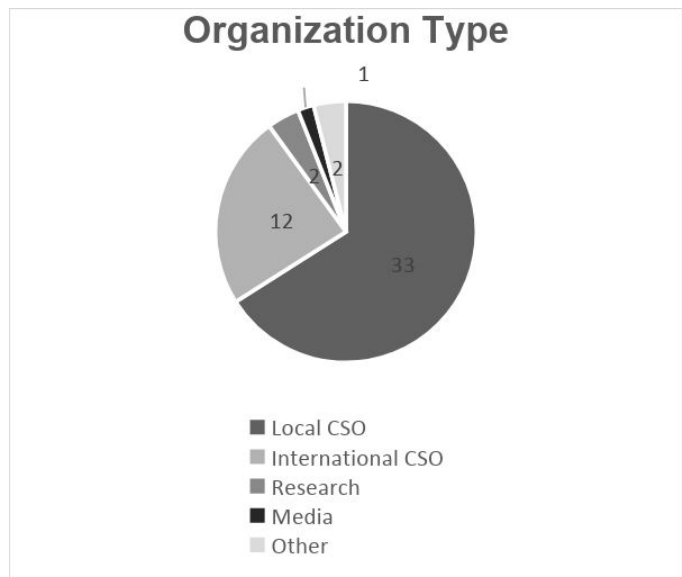


All but 4 of the identified initiatives fall into the social accountability type. The 4 exceptions included a Moroccan CSO that provides pro bono legal support in addition to advocacy work on access to justice and a transparent legal system, and two organizations working on election monitoring. We categorized these as vertical accountability initiatives because they work to improve existing public accountability mechanisms, rather than developing or promoting new ones. The single initiative we identified that integrates horizontal accountability is Coopération Municipale au Maghreb (CoMun), a GIZ (German aid

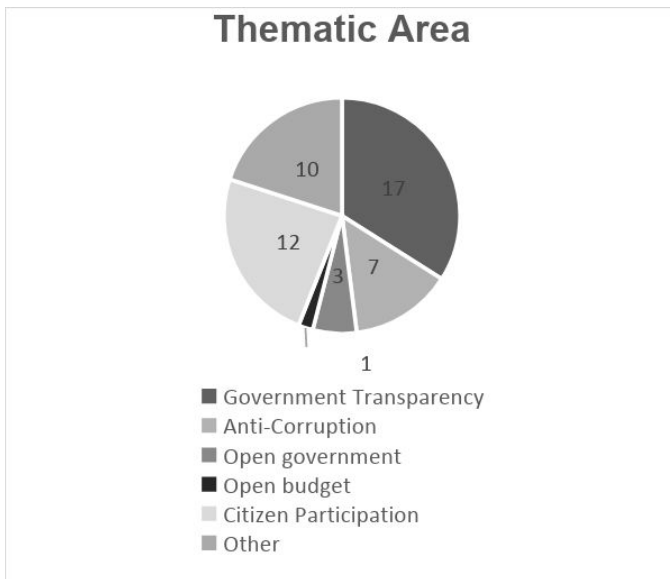
agency) project focused on participative governance and sharing of best practices between municipalities in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

Organization Type

33 of the initiatives identified are local civil society organizations. A further 12 are international CSOs. Two organizations are research institutions (one think-tank and one university), one is a media initiative (a YouTube channel) that includes, but is not exclusive to, content pertaining to citizen participation and political accountability. Finally, the Aforementioned CoMun is a regional program, and one is a digital development agency focused on CSOs and accountability initiatives.



Thematic Area



We divided the identified initiatives into six thematic areas: Government Transparency (17), Anti-corruption (7), Open Government (3), Open Budget (1), Citizen Participation (12) and other (10). Some initiatives cover a number of topics, in this case they were categorized according to their primary activities and objectives. Government Transparency initiatives covered a broad subject matter, from due process to human rights, but all included a transparency component within their activities.

The second most common thematic area, citizen participation, included six initiatives

focused on youth political participation and one focused exclusively on women.

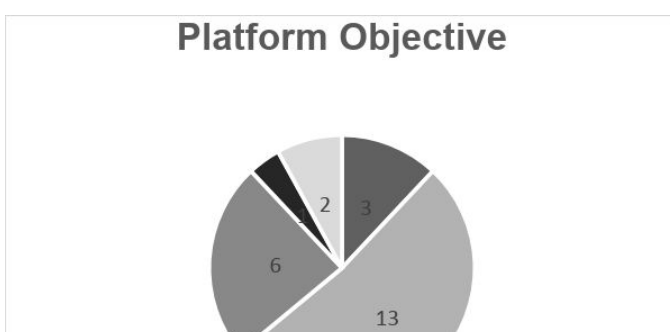
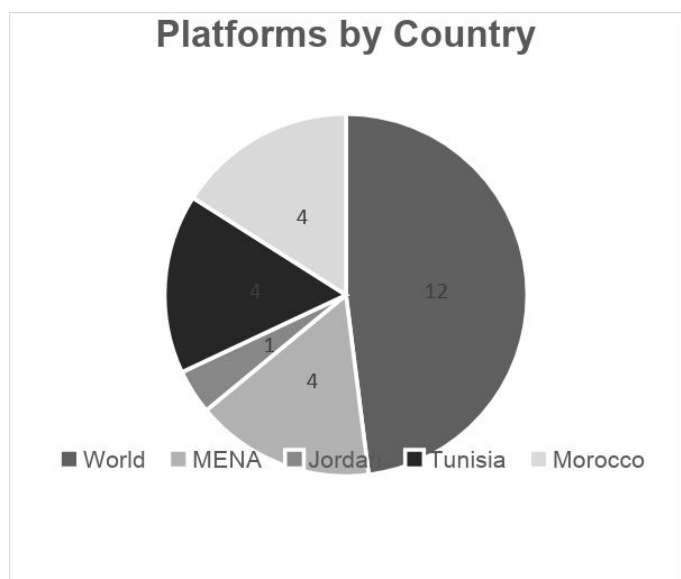
The "other" category includes two initiatives focused on CSO or donor accountability, one promoting migrant rights, two working on accountability research and public policy evaluation, one on election monitoring, one on political awareness-raising, two providing technical training or support to CSOs, and one providing support to CSOs working on accountability.

Success Stories

The identification and analysis of success stories depends largely on self-reporting through interviews, as it is difficult to ascertain the specific impacts of their work from internet and documentary sources. As a result of the limited response rate to the survey and interview requests, we found insufficient information to formulate clear success stories.

Platforms

We have identified 25 online platforms contributing to work on political accountability that are either based in the MENA region or with significant content pertaining to the region (Annex A). Approximately half of these platforms are part of the latter category, most of them run by large international CSOs. 19 platforms are currently active, 2 are still live but have suspended their activity, and 4 have closed. All four closed platforms were MENA-specific but were sufficiently unique as to warrant their inclusion in the benchmark.



Platforms were classified according to one of five primary objectives:

- + Information collection: tools for citizen reporting and information gathering (ex: corruption hotlines)
- + Information diffusion: tools for disseminating information (ex: the above ranking and indices)
- + Training: tools for diffusing toolkits and capacity-building materials
- + Advocacy/petition: tools for collecting signatures in support of CSO or activist initiatives
- + Other: platforms that do not fit into the above categories

13 of the 25 platforms had information diffusion as a primary objective. This category includes the international governance and accountability indices discussed above, as well as activist platforms like the Tunisian Presidential Plane tracker, which allowed users to know where former President Ben Ali was traveling at a given time, or the TarSniper, who posted videos documenting Moroccan police corruption on YouTube. We've identified only one government-run information diffusion accountability platform, Mizaniatouna a budget transparency platform run by the Tunisian Ministry of Finance.

Training platforms have a specific focus on sharing educational materials, videos, and toolkits, as opposed to the general information diffusion category, which is constituted primarily of data and research. In this case, training materials can include toolkits, presentations, guides, and videos. While some of these platforms include commenting and question and answer functionalities, they are generally "one-way" means of diffusion, which serve as complements to in-person capacity-building programs.

Three platforms had information collection as a primary objective. Ishki and Twiyar are platforms for managing citizen complaints. The former, now closed, served as a means of collecting and passing along citizen complaints about public and private actors in Jordan. The latter, which is still active, connects citizen complaints and service requests (such as broken streetlamps) to the relevant public authorities. Finally, Sharek961 was a means of crowdsourcing citizen reporting on national elections in Lebanon in 2008.

We identified only one platform focused on petitions, avaaz.org, an international advocacy platform with over 1 million users in the MENA region. Other platforms working on advocacy frequently refer to Avaaz for the management of petitions.

Two platforms were placed in the "other" category, as they simultaneously served multiple objectives. The first, Li Tgal Yddar, was a Moroccan platform that diffused toolkits, videos, and other educational materials, as well as hosting a forum for youth to discuss politics and share their experiences and questions regarding municipal and regional government accountability. It has been offline since 2017. The second, Participedia, is a global repository of participatory political processes that includes user generated case studies, methodologies, research, and a listing of organizations working on participatory governance.

USER NEEDS

Based on the survey results and interviews conducted to date, we have identified four general needs across CSO working on political accountability: communication, information sharing between CSOs and public institutions, information sharing between CSOs, and sharing of best practices.

Communication needs can be split into two categories. The first is the need to communicate to constituents and the general public. CSOs have limited communication resources and need

access to means of amplifying their messages to reach a wider audience. The second is the need to communicate with other CSOs and public institutions. Existing communication vectors such as mailing lists or personal contacts are effective, but dependent on CSO members ability to maintain them.

Information sharing between CSOs and public institutions is a frequent challenge for actors working on accountability. Information such as budgets, plans, minutes of meetings, and contracts are rarely publicly available to the public. While Morocco, Jordan, and Tunisia all have policies in place regarding transparency and freedom of information, lack of clear procedures to access information and closed institutional culture often complicate what would otherwise straightforward requests. Interviewees have identified informal means of accessing this information through personal contacts within relevant institutions, however they are dependent on individual relationships, which cannot be scaled up and must be reestablished in the case of employee / volunteer turnover. In addition to difficulty of general access, poor information management within public institutions means that available documents are often out-of-date or inconsistent across sources. Despite these challenges, CSOs find that their informal networks are the most effective means of accessing necessary information, short of high-level policy reform within their respective governments.

Information sharing between CSOs includes internal and external sources of data, documents, and contacts. Given the daily challenges CSOs face in accessing necessary information, CSO networks, particularly between local actors with deep knowledge of a particular area, can be a very powerful means of advancing larger-scale advocacy efforts. Interviewees cited the need for a common forum to discuss their challenges, exchange data and resources, and share opportunities and successes.

Best practices can cover a wide variety of topics, from mobilizing citizens for advocacy campaigns to monitoring and evaluation of public policies, to establishing trusting relationships with local authorities. While there are a number of toolkits, templates and trainings available to accountability-focused CSOs, the majority are only available in English, and are not necessarily adapted to local context and local needs. Therefore, CSOs refer to peer organizations to exchange tips and tricks. Much like the aforementioned needs regarding information sharing, this approach depends on personal contacts and lacks a common repository or format for sharing best practices across a larger network. The need expressed by interviewees is to create a repository of more structured user cases and tutorials, so as to preserve institutional knowledge within their organizations and the larger network.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND USER CASES

The preliminary results of our study indicate that regional accountability actors share common challenges regarding their relationships with public institutions, the citizens, and each other. Ensuring consistent access to data from public institutions is a common preoccupation across all of our interviews. Gathering, managing, and sharing this data is extremely important to regional actors, however the volume, heterogeneity, and inconsistency of data across one country, much less several makes a regional data management platform unfeasible. The other primary preoccupations of regional accountability actors are coordination and institutional knowledge management, both of which the I4C hub is well-equipped to address. Therefore, we recommend

that the accountability dashboard and its related functions focus on reinforcing linkages between actors in the network and providing tools to support their activities on the local level.

To this end, we have formulated 7 user cases incorporating the most commonly identified needs. Each case includes the user type, the specific user needs to be addressed, the context of this need, the proposed solution, the workflow of the solution, and notes regarding the potential implementation of the user case.

- + User Case 1: Data gathering
- + User Case 2: Expert opinion
- + User Case 3: Resource Sharing
- + User Case 4: Best Practice Tutorial
- + User Case 5: Petition Management
- + User Case 6: Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policies
- + User Case 7: Feedback on Public Policies

The first 4 user cases can be implemented using existing or modified versions of features already available on the I4C platform. User case 5, petition management can be developed as a stand-alone resource, a pre-configured template such as a google form, or through a partnership with an established platform. User cases 6 and 7 could be deployed as a single standalone resource, or as extensions of the I4C platform.

User Case 1: Data gathering

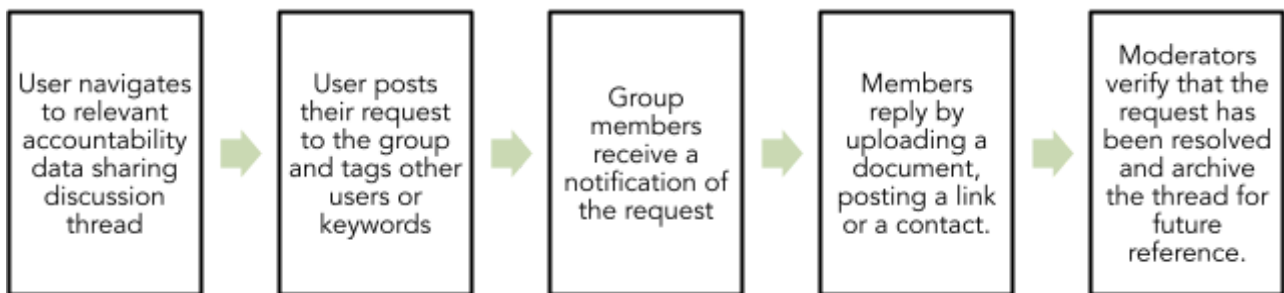
User: CSO, journalist, activist, researcher

Need: A user requires specific data from a public institution (statistics, budgets, reports, plans, etc.)

Context: The needed information is not readily available to the public. I4C MENA hub members can leverage their personal networks to retrieve data from privileged contacts in relevant institutions.

Solution: Users post their data requests on the platform. Members of the I4C MENA community respond with the requested data or with contacts who can supply it.

Workflow



Implementation: The network support functionality already available on the I4C platform could serve to field information requests from users. A dedicated series of threads for requesting and exchanging data can be set up, and community managers from the I4C hub or volunteers from member CSOs can serve as moderators.

User Case 2: Expert opinion

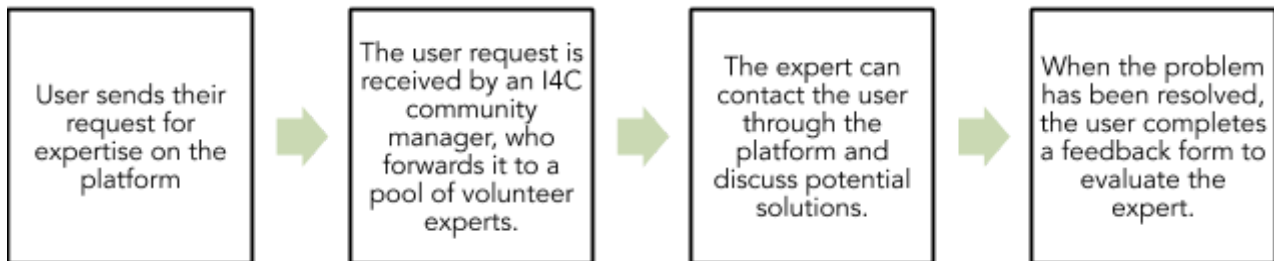
User: CSO, journalist, activist, researcher

Need: User requires an expert opinion to resolve a problem.

Context: A user has encountered a specific problem in the course of their work that cannot be resolved by other members of the hub. This problem could require advice from an expert in local law, statistics, monitoring and evaluation, etc.

Solution: The user posts their need to the platform and receives advice from a qualified expert.

Workflow



Implementation: This functionality is similar to TrustLaw.org or the I4C Helper Hub. The value of this functionality is the Hub's creation and management of a community of experts to respond to the community's questions.

User Case 3: Resource Sharing

User: Any I4C Hub member

Need: A user has a resource (data, report, tool, etc.) that he/she wishes to share with the I4C MENA community.

Context: Information is not readily available to the public. I4C MENA hub members can leverage their personal networks to retrieve data from privileged contacts in relevant institutions.

Solution: The user posts the resource to a knowledge base dedicated to accountability and tags it according to resource type, content, and origin. Other users can rate the resource's usefulness and recommend it to the community.

Workflow



Implementation: User-uploaded resources can be integrated into the existing I4C resource database depending on type. "Perishable" resources such as local government data or reports can be placed in a separate category with an "expiration date". Responses to data gathering requests can also be added to this category.

User Case 4: Best Practice Tutorial

User: Any I4C Hub member

Need: A user has a resource (data, report, tool, etc.) that he/she wishes to share with the I4C MENA community.

Context: A user has developed a successful approach to resolving a particular challenge that other members of the Hub can benefit from.

Solution: A user can share their best practice by completing a template on the platform. A community manager will help them finalize their tutorial and post in on the I4C hub.

Workflow



Implementation: The tutorial template can be rapidly implemented using existing forms on the platform. The key differentiation of best practices from the previous user cases is that the tutorial follows a common, structured format. Step-by-step tutorials can be complemented by videos and images. Sites like Instructables.com and wikipediawiki.com can serve as inspiration for the structure of the best practice form.

User Case 5: Petition Management

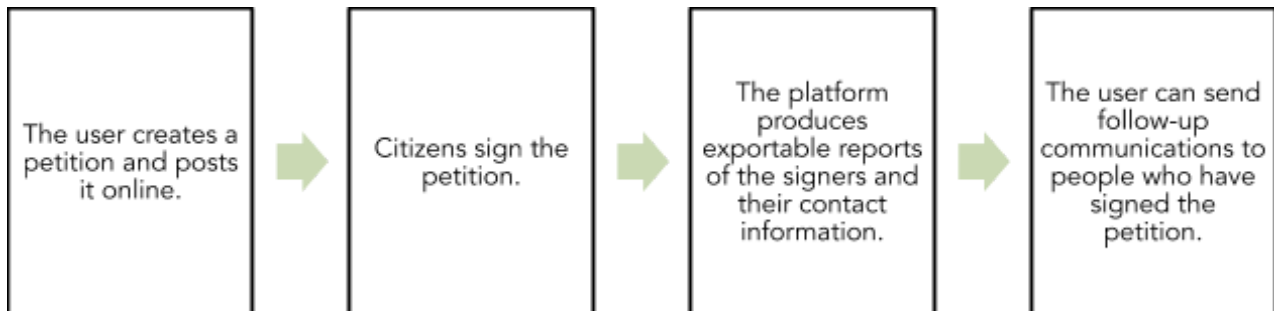
User: CSO, activist

Need: A user is mounting a petition campaign and needs tools to manage signatures.

Context: Online/offline management of petitions can be complex, especially across a large geographic area.

Solution: The user can connect to a platform that allows her/him to manage diffusion of the petition as well as signatures and follow-up with supporters.

Workflow



Implementation: This functionality can be implemented through sites such as thepetitionsite.com, avaaz.com, or change.org. In the case of formal petitions, some adaptation or intermediary tools may be needed to ensure that signatures are collected in a format recognized by the local authorities.

User Case 6: Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policies

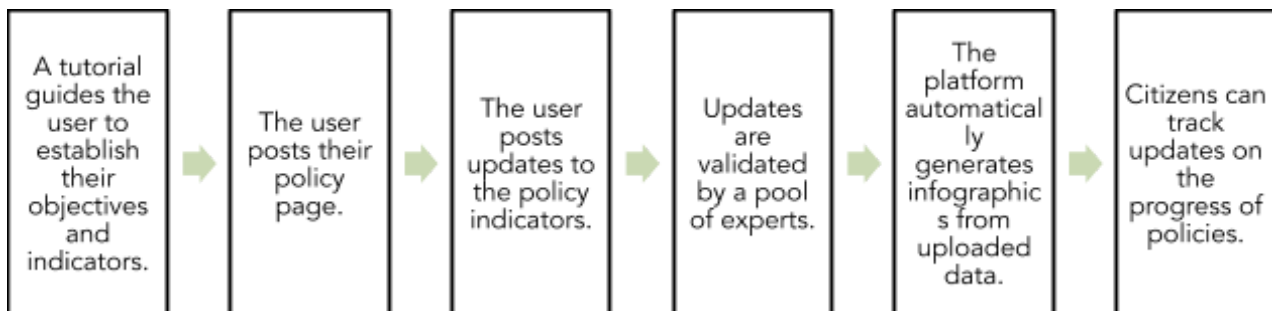
User: Local CSO, activist, general public

Need: A user wishes to track the implementation of a policy or set of policies.

Context: A user has created an advocacy campaign or wants to track the progress of their activities in implementing or changing a policy or policies. She/he wants to make this information public and easy to follow.

Solution: The user can create a policy tracking page using a white-label platform. The user can post progress updates with the support of experts.

Workflow 1:



Implementation: This user case is based on the functionalities presented on <http://www.softwarecentre.ma/wassata/>. Based on interviews and feedback, users would like to be able to use the platform as a hosted, customizable tool, like strikingly.com for websites, or sites like avaaz.com for petitions. The tutorial can be complemented by additional documents posted on the Knowledge Souq.

The pool of experts needed to ensure qualified updates regarding public policies could participate at an earlier stage in the workflow, for example to support users in establishing indicators. This decision depends primarily on their level of availability and engagement.

User Case 7: Feedback on Public Policies

User: Local CSO, activist, public institution

Need: A user wishes to feedback from the public or from beneficiaries regarding a policy or set of policies.

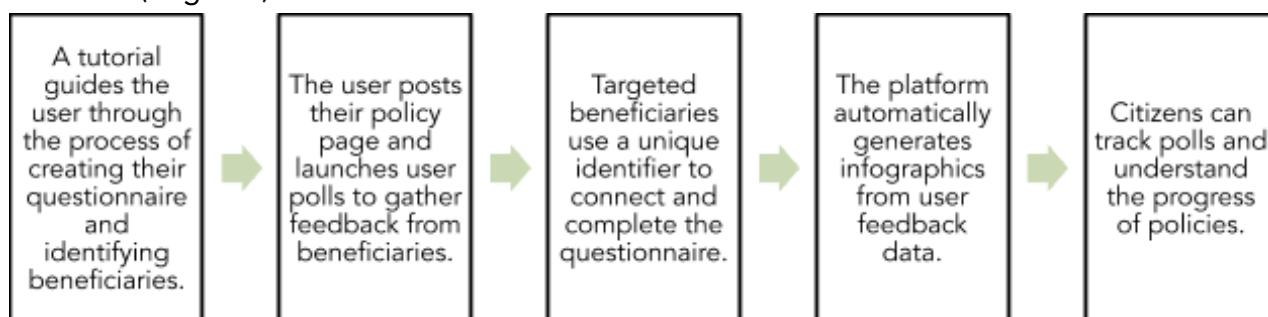
Context: A user has created an advocacy campaign or wants to track the progress of their activities in implementing or changing a policy or policies. She/he wants to gather feedback from the public or from targeted beneficiaries of the policy and make this information transparent and easy to follow.

Solution: The user can create a policy feedback page using a white-label platform. The user can create progress updates themselves, or through public polling on the page.

Workflow (public)



Workflow (targeted)



Implementation: This user case resembles sites such as <https://www.chikaya.ma/>, a public complaint management app in Morocco, however feedback in this case is presented in a structured and transparent manner. This public feedback functionality is primarily for CSOs to gather citizen feedback, but it could eventually be a means of developing collaborations with public institutions.

ANNEXES

Annex A – Platform Analysis
Annex B – CSOs Contacted

Annex C – Interviewees
Annex D – Questionnaires