



Transparency Index in Palestinian Local Authorities

(17 West Bank Municipalities)



AMAN
Transparency Palestine



The Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (AMAN)

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2022

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► Introduction

Local authorities play a vital role in the Palestinian society and represent at their different levels the second component of government, known as local government. Local governments provide several public services in accordance with their relevant legislation, rules, and financial and administrative systems. Since their function is directly related to citizens' rights, they must be subject to the public will and act with transparency, integrity, and accountability like other components of the public sector and must be immunized against any abuse of power by the elected members of their councils or any of their staff. To achieve this purpose, local authorities need to adopt a policy to promote integrity and prevent corruption.


Local authorities serve the strategic goal of local development and build and develop the necessary infrastructure. They need to apply democratic, participatory, and transparent mechanisms in their local councils, local communities, and public institutions; these mechanisms determine the level of integrity, transparency, and anticorruption in municipalities, as is the case in all public facilities¹.

Following the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1994 and the formation of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) in 1995, the Local Government Law was enacted in 1997 to define the relationship between the local government units and the local authority based on periodic elections whereby citizens elect their representatives to these councils. As part of the obligations of the head and staff of these units and their responsibility toward the elected council and citizens, they should comply with laws and regulations that prescribe citizens' right to access information on their work. Citizens need to be sure that the local authority complies with the law and promotes official and social accountability. Out of their commitment to the standards of integrity, accountability, and transparency, most local authorities adopted codes of conduct to express their voluntary adherence to these principles. Furthermore, some local authorities consulted social accountability systems and subjected themselves to a performance assessment.

A report prepared by AMAN Coalition on a number of local authorities revealed challenges to the exercise of transparency for several reasons including a regulatory gap in the laws governing these units and limited organizational capacity as well as poor disclosure, which is common among decision-makers in the public sector, which may be a characteristic of local authorities, their council, and/or head.

Local authorities' councils are vested with several functions, powers, and mandate within their boundaries, which are defined in Article (15) of the Law on Local Authorities No. (1) of 1997, as amended. The Council may exercise these powers directly via staff members or may delegate them wholly or partially to contractors or subcontractors. It may also grant concessions to individuals or companies for a maximum period of three years. The law also authorizes the local authority council to grant these powers or part thereof to individuals or companies for a maximum period of three years following approval of the minister.

¹ Al-Daour, Islam, Extent of Good Governance Practice in West Bank Municipalities, MA theses, Faculty of Higher Studies, University of Hebron, 2008, pp. 50-51



A transparency policy facilitates the dissemination of information and disclosure of documents related to the activities of local authorities and promotes the participation and accountability of citizens, the local community, and the media. Furthermore, dissemination facilitates the discovery of cases of conflict of interest and represents a deterrent factor. It also reduces the chances of corruption. When senior officials adopt a policy of transparency and disclosure, citizens' trust in the local authority and its council increases in all areas, mainly financial and administrative affairs. When the local authority publishes its annual budget, financial and administrative reports, strategic plans, local council resolutions, work and procedural manuals, codes of conduct, vacancy notices and tenders, and even the curriculum vitae of the president of the local council and the council's time schedule, decisions and structure and contact details to reach the heads of different departments, these items add up to what is called "transparency indicators"².

The Palestinian legislation on local government does not quite focus on transparency. For example, Article (8) of the Local Authorities Law No. (1) of 1997 prescribes that any person is allowed to attend the local council's session if the majority of members present at the meeting approve. This means that citizens may attend local councils' meetings, but this participation is restricted by a decision of the council. It would be better to prescribe an invitation upon the request of two-thirds of the council members. Article (36) of the same law provides that a copy of the annual report shall be sent to the Minister of Local Government but does not explicitly prescribe publication of the report for public access. As for the annual budget (Article 31) and closing account (Article 32), they are ratified by the local council and approved by the Minister but there is no reference to their publication. However, the council may decide to publish these documents without violating the law since the law does not prohibit such publication.

To promote integrity, accountability, and transparency of the local authorities, AMAN Coalition's Strategic Plan 2016-2020 focused on promoting local authorities' integrity system, raising local awareness of anticorruption, and devising internal and internal accountability mechanisms. AMAN Coalition focuses on this issue because of the important role played by local authorities, the bodies that provide daily services to citizens in all necessary areas of life. Local authorities manage the revenues and expenses of their corresponding local government unit, prepare tenders, appoint permanent and ad-hoc staff and make financial and administrative decisions of importance to their constituency.

The present study is part of these efforts made by the Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (AMAN) to promote transparency of local authorities.

² Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (AMAN), Transparency Index Report and its Application in Local Authorities in Category (c) in the West Bank, 2019, pp. 6-7

► Objective of the Report

The transparency index of Palestinian local authorities covers 17 local government units in the West Bank. It assesses the level of transparency in the performance of these units and provides recommendations to fill in the identified gaps.

► Methodology

To accomplish the report's objective, several parameters and questions related to the indicators have been identified after the selection of the targeted sample of local authorities. Each indicator was then verified via the collection of information using the following mechanisms:

- Accessing local authorities' websites, Facebook pages and search in their data to assess the extent of dissemination of information and data they make available to the public.
- Phone calls with local authorities to verify some remarks or inquire about missing information and check if the information is available but not published, or if it is not available?
- Sending emails to local authorities.
- To cross examine the accuracy of the responses of local authorities regarding readiness of the local authorities to share information with citizens upon request, their websites and social media pages were visited. Furthermore, contacts were established with their staff to inquire about the tools used to provide information to citizens in case such information is not published on the website and the optimal way to acquire such information (email, phone, personal visit to the municipality).

► LAs Sample covered by the report

The report covers a sample of 17 local authorities in the West Bank as represented in the following table:

Table (1) Sample

Municipalities			
Anabta	Qalqilia	Ramallah	Birzeit
Al-Bireh	Jenin	Salfit	Bethlehem
Beit Jala	Nablus	Hebron	
Tulkarem	Toubas	Halhoul	
Dora-Hebron	Jericho	Betonia	

▶ **Transparency assessment in LAs**

Local authorities' transparency assessment is conducted using indicators pertinent to the following principles:

- **Citizens' right to access the information available in principle:** Citizens have the right to access general information on the activity of the local authority automatically without needing to justify or prove a special interest to access such information. The local authority that decides to veil information must be held to account.
- **Easy and effective access to information:** Local authorities should collect, update and store data on regular basis, including information on the members of the local council (CVs, financial disclosure of assets), and (past, current and future) decision-making, identification of local and international stakeholders, information on the decisions and outcomes like financial and administrative reports, appointments and action plans.
- **The information available is useful and affordable:** the information must be correct, comprehensive and always updated.

▶ **International Transparency Index in Local Authorities**

The International Transparency Index aims to assess to what extent the local authorities comply with the policies and principles of disclosure and access to information. It also provides researchers and specialists with the tools to assess local authorities' compliance with the policies and principles of transparency and disclosure of information as prescribed in the law.

▶ **Goals of the report**

The report aims specifically to:

- Assess the degree of availability of information on the local authorities and identification of the strengths and weaknesses of disclosure.
- Motivate competition and encourage local authorities to disseminate information by adopting best practices.
- Draft recommendations to promote transparency and cooperation with the targeted local authorities.

▶ **Index parameters:**

The targeted local authorities were asked to answer Index's (44) questions to gather relevant information on (websites and other dissemination platforms), as follows:

- Information on all officers including the elected local council, officers of the executive office. The information includes CVs and financial assets disclosures.
- Information on how officers manage and perform their tasks to achieve their goals. This includes information on their decision-making, including strategic planning, action plans, citizens' engagement with the local authority and information on stakeholders.
- Information on the performance of tasks including information related to instructions, decisions, financial management, appointment procedures, planning and organization, and other issues like public outreach, services and terms to access such services, and taxes.

► Index tool and questions:

The previous section highlighted the key parameters of the Index. Following are details on the key questions used to collect the necessary information for the Index. The following points should be taken into account:

The response scale was adapted to the questions as follows:

Table (2): Response scaling

To a very high degree	To a high degree	To a middle degree	To a low degree	To a very low degree
4	3	2	1	0

The adopted Likert scaling was adjusted as follows:

Table (3): Adjusting the scaling

Assessment	Adjustment of Likert Scale (Penta)
Weak – at a very low degree	0.00-8.00
Acceptable – to a low degree	0.81-1.61
Good – to a moderate degree	1.62-2.42
Very good – to a high degree	2.43-3.23
Excellent – to a very high degree	3.2-4.004

The tool was adjusted to the Palestinian context by editing or deleting some questions. Following are the five parameters and their sub-components:

Table (4): Report Indicators

Parameter 1: information on local authority, employees and affiliated institutions
Curriculum vitae of the president of the local authority
Disclosure of the assets and property belonging to the head of the local authority during the four past years at maximum.
Disclosure of the income of the head of the local authority (annual statement of mayor's income)
Register of private financial interests (businesses) of the head of the local authority or his/her immediate relatives
The names of the heads of the departments of the local authority and their contact information (email and phone numbers)
The contact information of the head and members of the elected local council.
List of the members of the local council
The schedule of the meetings of the local council, especially the next meeting, which includes (hour, date and venue)
Decisions of the meetings of the executive office or local council over the past two years.
Local authority's work hours.
Information about the local authority's focal points, and complaints and objections centers.
A list of the associations, organizations and persons benefiting from the local authority.

Parameter 2. General Administration of the Local Authority (8 indicators)
Codes of conducts of the members of the council and staff of the local authority
Three-five -year strategic plan
Annual administrative report/ progress report
Anticorruption plan (with preventive measures and procedures and criminal prosecutions)
Systems, procedures, instructions, and regulations in force in the local authority
Taxes and fees of the services delivered by the local authority
Inventory of local authority's assets and property (roads, streets, buildings ... etc.)
List of associations and companies which the local authorities contributed substantially to their formation
Parameter 3. Financial administration of the local authority (8 indicators)
Current year budget
Detailed budget of the current year
List of local authority's revenues for last year.
The planned and implemented budget for last year.
All the amendments introduced to this year's budget
General debt
Local authority's payables to service providers and contractors
Audited annual financial reports
Parameter 4. Recruitment procedures (employment) and procurement
Advertisement of vacancies in local newspapers and the media ten days prior to the deadline for application.
Promotion and dismissal of employees and criminal proceedings against them
Total number of employees (including short-time and full-time contracts)
Public procurement policy that does not require bidding with competitive price offers, and their values and suppliers.
Public procurement policy "tender document" (purchase orders, offers, bids)
Overtime workload per work contract
Public contracts (public works and public services requiring contracts with private contractors) with all their annexes and attachments over the past year
Names of contractors, bidders or consulting companies that lost the bids during the past year
Parameter 4. Urban planning/zoning (8 indicators)
Local development plan: which means the existence of an updated document regulating the use of all municipal lands, identifying the road and transport systems, municipal equipment, water extraction and supply systems, wastewater system, telecommunications and other infrastructure.
Urbanization plans (organization and organizational structure)
The results of the public debates/ plenary meetings with the public on the plans of local authorities, including the handling of complaints, suggestions and comments made by citizens on this subject.
List of the associations, legal personalities and seized assets (forfeited) by the local authority and the sums assigned for this purpose during the past year
List of local authority's lands that were swotted or sold (locations, sums, and compensations)
Licensing services delays
Uses of the lands of the local authority and the changes introduced to these uses.
List of concession contracts owned by the municipality, whether by use or urban development rights (i.e., the licenses granted for use or construction on land owned by the municipality)

► Index used in the analysis

Table (5): the Index Used in the Analysis

Case	score
Non-applicability	The question is erased and not accounted for in the final score
Information published online	Full score (4)
If the information is not posted on the Internet but published by any other means and there is no legal provision	Score (2) or (3)
If the Information is not posted on the Internet, but published by any other means and there is a legal provision	Score (1)
If the information is not published by any means and there is a legal provision	Score (0)


► Applied framework for assessing the transparency index and its application in the work of Palestinian local authorities (Data Analysis)

• Parameter 1. Information about the local authority, employees and affiliated institutions:

The findings of the first parameter on information about the local authority, and its employees of the various municipalities show the level of disclosure and dissemination of information contained in the indicators of this parameter. Indicators on question son information about the local authority's focal points, complaints and objections centers, publication of local authority's working hours, and list of members of the municipal council show a high score. These indicators highlight the municipality's strengths in terms of publication and disclosure. It was evident through browsing municipal websites in general, and the interviews that they posted working hours on their Facebook pages as well as through leaflets posted on electronic screens in the public service centers. Some municipalities reported that publishing was done on the municipality's entrance and sometimes at the local stations.

Furthermore, in cases of changing working hours due to exceptional circumstances such as the coronavirus pandemic, this change is announced by the above-mentioned means. On another note, the dissemination of the complaints and objections mechanism appeared as a strength for most municipalities. There is a complaints' box in the municipality's headquarters in addition to the possibility of filing complaints through the municipal websites. In most municipalities, there is an icon and a place for filing a complaint or objection, which is also possible through social media messaging (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp), telephone and commentary on the municipality's page.

With regard to the publication of the decisions of the municipal council of the previous two years and the names and contact information of the heads of sections as well as the curriculum vitae of the head of the local authority, the score was acceptable but still low. Some municipalities already publish minutes of meetings on their official pages but not for all years. They have been publishing for only one or two years. Some others do not publish all decisions, or when published, they are not accessible via a separate icon for easier access to the decisions from previous years. Some municipalities publish on Facebook, which does not make it easy to access all decisions in previous years for difficulty of searching Facebook pages. Moreover, the pages of some municipalities publish briefly the minutes of meetings without showing all the details.



As for the names and contact details of the heads of sections, some municipalities have complied with the publication while most municipalities have not under the pretext that this is against the regular procedures and represents an infringement to the privacy of the employees since citizens may call at irregular times outside the official working hours. The reported that many of the heads of the vital departments suffered from these calls at critical times when they needed to make necessary calls or follow up on emergencies. A municipality explained that the numbers of the heads of sections are shared with persons who need to follow up on a specific issue when needed, adding that follow-up is usually carried out through official channels.

With regard to the curriculum vitae of the head of the local authority, some consider the municipal borders relatively small that these heads are well-known to their constituency, while other municipalities explained that the CV was shared during the electoral campaign.

Regarding the disclosure of the private assets and income of the head of the local authority, and the register of his/her private business and the business of his/her immediate relatives, they are not published. Interviews showed that the financial assets disclosures are handed to the Anti-Corruption Commission being a legal requirement but there isn't any law or regulation governing the work of the local authorities or any code of conduct that prescribes the publication of these disclosures.

As for the numbers of the heads and members of the municipal councils, some municipalities do not publish them stating the same reason mentioned before, i.e., citizens know the heads and members of the council and can access them by various ways, especially in small towns. Other justifications given include the possibility to call the municipality and ask to be transferred to the head or any of the members. In terms of the upcoming schedule of meetings, it was found that what is published is only the municipal council's weekly meetings without any details on the upcoming meetings. Some municipalities justified their position by saying that they only publish the meetings that are of direct concern to citizens. In which case, they announce the schedule as is the case of the weekly meetings. But, for the other meetings in which they discuss internal policies, strategies and decisions, they are not announced. Some municipalities, however, reported a possible change to their schedule of meetings.

There is weakness in the disclosure of the names of the associations, companies or persons benefiting from the municipality in some municipalities without any justification given. One local authority argued that the disclosure of such information may cause unnecessary chaos stemming from the need to justify why this is the only beneficiary group.

Table (6) Score of Parameter 1. "Information on the Local Authority, staff and affiliated institutions"

Municipality/ questions relating to the first indicator	CV of the head of the local authority	Disclosure of the assets and property of the head of the local authority over the past four years at maximum	Disclosure of the income of the head of the local authority (annual statement of mayor's income)	Register of the private business of the heads of the local authority or his/her immediate relatives	Names and contact information of the local authority's department heads (email and phone numbers)	Contact information of the head and members of the elected local council	List of the members of the local council	Schedule of meetings of the local council, in particular the next meeting including hour, date and place	Decisions of the executive office or local council in the past two years	Local authority's working hours	Information on focal points, complaints and objections centers in the local authority	List of names of the associations, companies and persons benefiting from the local authority
Tulkarem	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	4	0	0	4	4	0
Qalqilia	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	4	0	4	4	0	0
Jenin	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	4	4	0	0	4	4	0
Nablus	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	4	4	4	0
Toubas	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jericho	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	0
Ramallah	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	0	4	0	4	4	4	0
Salfit	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	4	4	4	0	0
Hebron	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	2	0	0	4	4	4
Halhoul	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	4	0	0	4	4	0
Betonia	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	4	0	4	4	0
Birzeit	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0
Bethlehem	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	0	4	0	0	4	4	4
Anabta	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	2	4	0	0	0	4	4
Al-Bireh	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	4	0	0	4	4	0
Beit Jala	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	0	4	0	0	4	4	0
Dora-Hebron	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
Average for all municipalities	1.59	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.94	0.353	2.47	0.471	1.18	3.059	2.824	0.71



• **Parameter 2. Administration of the Local Auth**

The findings of the second parameter on the administration of the local authorities show moderate strength in terms of disclosure and dissemination of the annual administrative reports/ progress reports. Browsing municipalities' webpages and social media pages and the interviews showed that most municipalities publish their progress and annual reports either on Facebook or in videos and images. In some cases, they add an icon on their websites to access the administrative reports. However, other municipalities scored low on this indicator because they do not publish a complete annual report but rather daily news on their Facebook pages.

Other strengths included dissemination of regulations, procedures, instructions and systems applicable in the local authority to enable citizens to fully understand and apply them and reduce the occurrence of any problems or violation so such regulations and instructions by the municipal staff or any person dealing with them.

The dissemination of information on taxes and fees of services scored a low-moderate point in some municipalities that publish on their official website direct information on their services and fees. They include mainly municipalities that publish a fully detailed public service manual or use municipal banners in different parts of their towns or social media to announce any discounts on the service fees or other public services charged via annual invoices sent to taxpayers, detailing the taxes and fees on such services. In the event there is a need to disseminate within a specific period, the information is shared via local media stations, as explained by some municipalities.

With regard to the dissemination and disclosure of an inventory of the municipality's assets and property including roads and streets, this came as a weakness. Some municipalities pointed out that they publish this information only in the audited budget and a special dissemination is pointless. Other municipalities explained that based on municipal council's instructions, they are working with the Municipal Development and Lending Fund to update their assets inventory software to be able to publish such information.

On another note, the interviews indicated that there are no associations or companies that the municipalities substantially contributed to their formation.

Table (7) Score of Parameter 2. Administration of the Local Authority

Municipality/second indicator questions	Codes of conduct of head and members of the local council	3-5-year strategic plan	Annual administrative report/ progress report	Anticorruption plan and preventive measures with prosecution procedures	Systems, procedures, regulations and instructions in force in the local authority	Taxes and fees on municipal services	Inventory of municipal assets and property including streets, roads, buildings, etc.	List of associations or companies that the local authority substantially contributed to their formation
Tulkarem	0	0	0	N/A	4	0	0	N/A
Qalqilia	0	0	0	N/A	0	0	0	N/A
Jenin	0	0	0	N/A	0	0	0	N/A
Nablus	0	0	0	N/A	0	0	0	N/A
Toubas	0	0	0	N/A	0	0	0	N/A
Jericho	0	0	4	N/A	4	4	0	N/A
Ramallah	1	4	4	N/A	4	4	0	N/A
Salfit	0	0	4	N/A	4	0	0	N/A
Hebron	0	0	4	N/A	4	0	0	N/A
Halhoul	0	0	4	N/A	4	0	0	N/A
Betonia	0	0	4	N/A	3	4	0	N/A
Birzeit	4	0	0	N/A	0	0	0	N/A
Bethlehem	0	4	4	N/A	0	3	0	N/A
Anabta	3	0	2	N/A	4	2	0	N/A
Al-Bireh	0	0	2	N/A	4	0	0	N/A
Beit Jala	3	0	0	N/A	4	4	0	N/A
Dora-Hebron	0	0	0	N/A	0	0	0	N/A
Average for all municipalities	0.65	0.47	1.88	N/A	2.29	1.24	0	N/A

On the other hand, the indicators related to disclosure and dissemination of the codes of conduct were a weakness since most municipalities explained they did not publish them to the public and only shared them internally with their staff. Some other municipalities explained that they do not have a code of conduct for the members of the municipal council.

The indicator on the strategic plan was a weakness with a very low score in most municipalities as browsing of their websites and social media page showed that they only published the strategies for 2021 and 2022 rather than a 3-5 year strategy while the icon entitled “strategic plan” on their website was empty and did not display any content, which could be because of a site technical failure.

The indicator relating to the anticorruption plan was also a weakness in most municipalities in terms of publication and disclosure because most municipalities do not think they are compelled to share these documents since they apply the disseminated PACC anti-corruption plan, which is posted on MoLG website. Some municipalities explained they did not have an anticorruption plan and applied the instructions of the Ministry.

Lastly, regarding the procedures and regulations effective in the local authority, this indicator was a strength with a moderate score in most municipalities in terms of disclosure. The procedures are posted at the state level on MoLG website, Official Gazette and the municipality's official websites. The publication serves the same objective, which is to facilitate citizens' access to the legislation and be informed of their rights and obligations.

• Parameter 3. Financial Administration of the Local Authority

The results of the indicators of Parameter 3 relating to the financial administration of the local authority showed that disclosure and information sharing in the different municipalities received a moderate score in terms of disclosure of the planned and implemented budgets of last year and the current year's budget. Linked to these indicators, the dissemination of the detailed budget received different scores as some municipalities shared it on their websites while others shared only the summary citizen's budget, which is more accessible and understandable to the public. This point was a weakness in other municipalities, which had not published their 2022 budget until the time of the present research, website browsing, and interviews. The reason is either because the budgets were still under preparation or needed the ratification of MoLG.

The dissemination of the audited financial reports was also a strength with a moderate score in nine municipalities in terms of publication via their websites more than other media. It was a weakness in eight municipalities as their site browsing showed they had not published the reports for several years. They posted either only a one-year report or reports covering certain months of the year. This is not enough to show full transparency and disclosure. In some cases, this indicator was a weakness because of website technical failure or empty icon or because the reports were not published at all, as reported in the interviews.

Table (8): scores of the indicators of Parameter 3 "financial administration of the local authority"

Municipality/ indicators questions	Current year budget	A detailed budget for the current year	List of local authority's revenues for last year	Planned and actual budgets for last year	All amendments introduced to the current budget	Public debt	Local authority's debt to the private sector and contractors	Audited annual financial statements
Tulkarem	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Qalqilia	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	4
Jenin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nablus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Toubas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jericho	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Ramallah	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

Salfit	4	4	4	4	4	4	0	0
Hebron	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	2
Halhoul	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Betonia	3	3	3	2	0	2	0	2
Birzeit	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bethlehem	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	4
Anabta	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Al-Bireh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Beit Jala	4	4	4	4	4	0	0	4
Dora-Hebron	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Average for all municipalities	2.06	1.18	1.41	1.71	1.12	1	0.65	1.88

Regarding the local authorities' dissemination of their revenues last year, it was acceptable, low in most municipalities. The findings of the official website and social media pages browsing show that 11 out of 17 municipalities have not published their revenues. The six municipalities that published their revenues made the publication via the citizens' budget. Most municipalities mentioned that they do not refer to their budgets and financial statements and therefore do not publish their revenues. This could be explained by the fact that some municipalities do not share their financial information or are unaware of the importance of such dissemination. One municipality reported that it needs a municipal council's decision to publish.

As for the amendments to the current year's budget and their dissemination, it was also a weakness for most municipalities either because they did not publish them or because they wait for a response and ratification of MoLG. As for the municipalities not affected by this indicator, they did not make any amendments. Regarding the public debt and municipalities' payables, these indicators also represented a weakness for most municipalities. During the interviews, some municipalities explained that they did not publish this information to avoid attracting their constituency to this data while other municipalities reported discussing some details of their debt with citizens in their yearly town hall meetings. On the other hand, some municipalities emitted reservations regarding the publication of any financial information.

● **Parameter 4. Recruitment and Procurement Procedures**

The indicators of Parameter 4 on recruitment and procurement procedures showed some strengths in terms of the advertisement of vacancies via a due procedure, which was a high strength for most municipalities. They advertised on their Facebook pages and via their official website's icon entitled "vacancies" as well as in official local newspapers.


Regarding the disclosure of the public procurement policy "tender document" (purchase orders, offers, bids), the score was strong to moderate in most municipalities. They published a call for tender and the outcome (contract award) in addition to sharing news throughout the implementation of the tendered project.

On the other hand, disclosure of the purchase policy that does not require tendering scored acceptable to low as all municipalities reported they did not share this information, citing that they adopt the public purchase regulation, which governs these policies, and thus there is no need for the municipalities to publish this information. Some municipalities explained they did not have a purchase plan prepared together with the budget as required by the public purchase law. This requirement helps in the assessment of the municipality's compliance with the plan adopted by the council and entrusted to the head of the council for implementation.

Table (9) Score of parameter 4 on recruitment and procurement procedures

Municipality/ indicators' questions	Advertisement of vacancies in the local newspapers and media 10 days prior to the deadline for application	Promotion and dismissal of employees and criminal proceedings against them	Number of all employees (including full-time and part-time staff)	Public procurement policy that does not require tendering and their value and suppliers	Public procurement policy "tender document" (purchase orders, offers, and bids)	The volume of over-time per work contract	Public contracts (public works, public services requiring contracts with private contractors) with all their annexes and attachments over the past year	Names of contractors, bidders, or consulting services that lost bids during the past year
Tulkarem	4	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
Qalqilia	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
Jenin	4	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
Nablus	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Toubas	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jericho	4	0	0	4	4	0	0	0
Ramallah	4	0	0	0	4	0	0	0
Salfit	4	0	4	4	4	0	0	0
Hebron	4	0	0	2	4	0	3	0
Halhoul	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Betonia	3	0	0	4	4	0	0	0
Birzeit	4	0	0	0	4	0	0	0
Bethlehem	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	0
Anabta	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Al-Bireh	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Beit Jala	4	0	4	0	4	0	0	0
Dora-Hebron	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Average for all municipalities	3.82	0	0.82	0.82	2	0	0.41	0

The other indicators of this parameter represented a weakness and received a very low score in many municipalities. For example, in terms of promotion and dismissal of employees and any criminal procedures against them, according to most interviewed municipalities and websites browsing, this information is not published. The reason given by the local authorities is the absence of a law that compels them to share this information, which they do not consider of interest to citizens but rather an internal matter. The same applies to the dissemination of the number of staff members and



type of contact (full-time or part-time). However, a few municipalities mentioned that they shared information on the number of employees in the budgets submitted to MoLG.

As for the volume of over-time per work contract, some municipalities mentioned that this information is mentioned in the work contracts and there is no need to post it on the official websites.

Regarding the disclosure of public contracts (public works and services that require contracts with contractors from the private sector), it was a weakness as well. Municipalities mentioned they only publish the name of the party implementing the project as part of the news on the bid award shared via Facebook or as part of the municipality's progress or activity reports but they never publish these contracts.

Regarding the list of contractors, bidders and consulting services that lost the bids, the municipalities explained they did not share this information on their websites or Facebook pages since the opening and bidding sessions are public and therefore it becomes known to the community and to all bidders who wins and who loses.

• **Parameter 5. Urban planning/ zoning**

The results of Parameter 5 on urban planning/zoning pointed out strengths in terms of disclosure of the local development plan and urbanization schemes. The score for these indicators was strong to moderate for many municipalities, most of which shared their plans on their official websites while the others posted them on Facebook.

The urbanization schemes are not always published, which the municipalities attributed to the infrequent changes made to the master and urbanization plans or their designs.

As for the result of the public discussions of the plans and pertinent complaints, the score was acceptable to low since only a few municipalities published this result. This was confirmed by browsing the websites. Regarding the publication of the list of local authority's lands that were swotted or sold (locations, sums, and compensations), many municipalities reported that they have not sold or swotted land. A very small number of municipalities were affected by this indicator, and they reported publishing the information on their Facebook page.

On the other hand, the disclosure of the deadlines or requirements for obtaining a license received an acceptable but low rating, with a number of municipalities indicating that the information was published in their Public Services Manual. However, other municipalities, representing the largest number, indicated that they did not publish licensing services deadlines. According to these municipalities, access to the service depends on citizens' ability to quickly fulfill the requirements and complete the procedures. Therefore, it is not possible to set a deadline since it depends on the citizens. Other municipalities – as shown also on their websites – indicated that the issued licenses are published to inform citizens to go and receive them.

Table (10). Parameter 5 score “Urban Planning/ zoning”

Municipality	Local Development Pla ⁿ³	Urbanization/ zoning and master plans	Results of the public discussions of the urban and zoning plans and master plan	List of the associations/ legal personalities and funds acquired (confiscated) by the local authority and the amounts designated for this during the past year	List of local authority's swotted and sold lands (locations, sums and compensations)	Licensing deadlines and requirements	Uses of the local authority's land and the changes made to these uses	List of concession contracts of the local authority
Tulkarem	4	2	0	N/A	0	4	0	N/A
Qalqilia	4	0	0	N/A	0	0	0	N/A
Jenin	0	4	0	N/A	0	0	0	N/A
Nablus	4	0	0	N/A	0	0	0	N/A
Toubas	4	0	0	N/A	0	0	0	N/A
Jericho	4	0	4	N/A	0	4	4	N/A
Ramallah	4	4	4	N/A	3	3	3	N/A
Salfit	4	4	4	N/A	4	0	0	N/A
Hebron	0	0	3	N/A	0	0	0	N/A
Halhoul	0	4	0	N/A	4	0	4	N/A
Betonia	4	4	0	N/A	0	0	3	N/A
Birzeit	0	4	0	N/A	0	4	0	N/A
Bethlehem	0	0	0	N/A	0	3	3	N/A
Anabta	0	2	0	N/A	0	2	0	N/A
Al-Bireh	0	0	0	N/A	0	3	0	N/A
Beit Jala	4	3	0	N/A	0	0	0	N/A
Dora-Hebron	0	0	0	N/A	0	0	0	N/A
Average for all municipalities	2.12	1.82	0.88	N/A	0.65	1.35	1	N/A

Regarding the other indicators of this parameter relating to the list of associations/ legal personalities and funds acquired (confiscated) by the local authority and the funds allocated for this purpose during the past year, most municipalities confirmed in the interviews that they had not acquired or confiscated such assets before. The same applies to the disclosure of the uses of lands and changes thereto. Some municipalities mentioned publishing the uses of their lands in their annual progress brochure while others reported no change in the use of their lands. Regarding the disclosure of the municipality's concession contracts, most municipalities mentioned they did not have such contracts.

³ This refers to the existence of an updated document on the uses of the entire municipal lands with the roads and transportation network, municipal equipment, water extraction and supply systems, wastewater systems, telecommunications and other infrastructures.

► Transparency Index Total Score

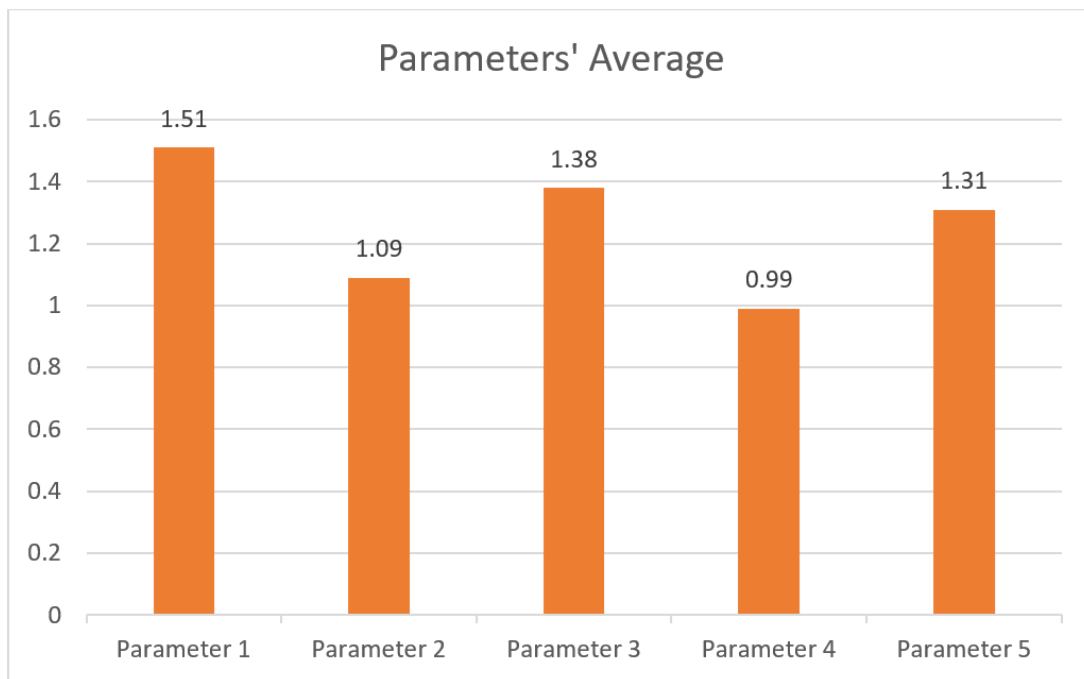
Table (11) Aggregated score for all municipalities according to the five-indicator scale

Municipality	Information about the local authority, its staff and affiliated organizations	General administration of the local authority	Financial administration of the local authority	Recruitment (appointments) and procurement	Urban planning/ zoning
Tulkarem	0	0.67	0.88	0.88	1.67
Qalqilia	1.33	0	1.5	1	0.67
Jenin	2.22	0	0	0.88	0.67
Nablus	1.33	0	0	0.5	0.67
Toubas	0	0	0	0.5	0.67
Jericho	0.89	2	4	1.5	2.67
Ramallah	2.67	2.83	4	1	3.5
Salfit	1.33	1.33	3	2	2.67
Hebron	1.89	1.33	1.25	1.63	0.5
Halhoul	1.33	1.33	0.5	0.5	2
Betonia	1.33	1.83	1.88	1.38	1.83
Birzeit	0.89	0.67	0.5	1	1.33
Bethlehem	2.67	1.83	1.5	1	1
Anabta	2	1.83	0.88	0.5	0.67
Al-Bireh	1.78	1	0	0.5	0.5
Beit Jala	2.22	1.83	3	1.5	1.17
Dora-Hebron	0.44	0	0.5	0.57	0
Average for all municipalities	1.51	1.09	1.38	0.99	1.31

Table (12) and the diagram below shows that parameter 1 on the information about the local authority and its staff and affiliated association ranked first with an average score of 1.51, which is a low score. Parameter 3 on the financial management of the local authority ranked second with an average score of 1.38, i.e., a very low score. Parameter 5 relating to urban planning/zoning ranked third with an average score of 1.31, which is a low score. Parameter 2 relating to the general administration of the local authority ranked fourth with an average score of 1.09, being low. Parameter 4 pertaining to recruitment (employment) and procurement ranked fifth with an average score of 0.99, which is very low. This means that the score for the five parameters was acceptable but low.

Table (12), Parameters' scores summary

Parameter	Average score	Assessment	Order
Parameter 1	1.51	Acceptable, low	First
Parameter 2	1.09	Acceptable, low	Fourth
Parameter 3	1.38	Acceptable, low	Second
Parameter 4	0.99	Acceptable, low	Fifth
Parameter 5	1.31	Acceptable, low	Third
General Average	1.26	Acceptable, low	



Disaggregated by municipality, the results for the five parameters show that Tulkarem scored highest (1.67) FOR parameter 5 (urban planning/ zoning), and lowest (0.67) for parameter 2 on the general administration of the local authority,

Qalqilia received the highest score (2.5) in parameter 3 relating to the financial administration of the local authority and the lowest (0) in parameter 2 on the general administration of the local authority. Jenin's highest score was 2.22, for parameter 1 relating to the information about the local authority, and its staff, and affiliated organizations, and its lowest score was 0 for parameter 2 on the general administration of the local authority and parameter 3 on the financial administration of the local authority.

Nablus scored highest (1.33) in parameter 1 on the information about the local authority and its staff and affiliated organizations and lowest (0) in parameter 2 on the general administration and parameter 3 on the financial administration.

In Toubas, parameter 5 on urban planning/ zoning received the highest score (0.67) while parameters 1, 2, and three on local authority's information, general administration and financial administration respectively received the lowest score (0).

Jericho scored highest (4) in parameter 3 on the financial administration and lowest (0.89) in parameter 1 relating to the local authority's information.

Ramallah's highest score was 4 for parameter 3 on the local authority's information while its lowest score was 1 in parameter 4 relating to recruitment (appointment) and procurement procedures.

Table (13): highest and lowest parameter score per municipality


parameter Municipality	Highest score	Lowest score
Tulkarem	Parameter (5) on urban planning/ zoning, Average score: 1.67	Parameter (2) on the general administration of the local authority Average score: 0.67
Qalqilia	Parameter (3) on the financial administration of the local authority Average score: 1.5	Parameter (2) on the general administration of the local authority. Average score: 0
Jenin	Parameter (1) on information about the local authority and its staff and affiliated organizations Average score: 2.2	Parameter (2) on the general administration of the local authority. Average score: 0 Parameter (3) on the financial administration of the local authority. Average score: 0
Nablus	Parameter (1) on information about the local authority and its staff and affiliated organizations Average score: 1.33	Parameter (2) on the general administration of the local authority. Average score: 0 Parameter (3) on the financial administration of the local authority. Average score: 0
Toubas	Parameter (5) on urban planning/ zoning, Average score: 0.67	Parameter (1) on information about the local authority and its staff and affiliated organizations Average score: 0 Parameter (2) on the general administration of the local authority. Average score: 0 Parameter (3) on the financial administration of the local authority. Average score: 0
Jericho	Parameter (3) on the financial administration of the local authority Average score: 4	Parameter (1) on information about the local authority and its staff and affiliated organizations Average score: 0.89
Ramallah	Parameter (3) on the financial administration of the local authority Average score: 4	Parameter (4) on recruitment (appointment) and procurement procedures Average score: 1
Salfit	Parameter (3) on the financial administration of the local authority Average score: 3	Parameter (1) on information about the local authority and its staff and affiliated organizations Average score: 1.33 Parameter (2) on the general administration of the local authority. Average score: 1.33
Hebron	Parameter (1) on information about the local authority and its staff and affiliated organizations Average score: 1.89	Parameter (5) on urban planning/ zoning, Average score: 0.5

Halhoul	Parameter (1) on information about the local authority and its staff and affiliated organizations Average score: 1.33 Parameter (2) on the general administration of the local authority. Average score: 1.33	Parameter (3) on the financial administration of the local authority. Average score: 0.5 Parameter (4) on recruitment (appointment) and procurement procedures, Average score: 0.5
Betonia	Parameter (3) on the financial administration of the local authority. Average score: 1.88	Parameter (1) on information about the local authority and its staff and affiliated organizations Average score: 1.33
Birzeit	Parameter (5) on urban planning/ zoning, Average score: 1.33	Parameter (3) on the financial administration of the local authority. Average score: 0.5
Bethlehem	Parameter (1) on information about the local authority and its staff and affiliated organizations Average score: 2.8	Parameter (4) on recruitment (appointment) and procurement procedures, Average score: 1 Parameter (5) on urban planning/ zoning, Average score: 1
Anabta	Parameter (1) on information about the local authority and its staff and affiliated organizations Average score: 2	Parameter (4) on recruitment (appointment) and procurement procedures, Average score: 0.5
Al-Bireh	Parameter (1) on information about the local authority and its staff and affiliated organizations Average score: 1.79	Parameter (3) on the financial administration of the local authority. Average score: 0
Beith Jala	Parameter (3) on the financial administration of the local authority. Average score: 3	Parameter (4) on recruitment (appointment) and procurement procedures, Average score: 1.5
Dora, Hebron	Parameter (4) on recruitment (appointment) and procurement procedures, Average score: 0.57	Parameter (2) on the general administration of the local authority. Average score: 0 Parameter (5) on urban planning/ zoning, Average score: 0

Salfit received the highest average score (3) in parameter (3) relating to financial administration while its lowest score was 1.33 in parameter (1) relating to the local authority's information and parameter (2) relating to the general administration of the local authority.

Hebron's highest score averaged 1.89 for parameter (1) on the local authority's information while the lowest score averaged 0.5 for parameter (5) on urban planning/zoning.

Halhoul's highest score average was 1.33 for Parameter (1) on the local authority's information, while its lowest average score was 0.5 for both parameter (3) relating to the financial management and parameter (4) relating to the recruitment and procurement procedures.



Betonia's highest average score was 1.88 for Parameter (3) relating to the financial administration of the local authority and the lowest was 1.33 for Parameter (1) relating to the local authority's information.

Birzeit's highest average score was 1.33 for Parameter (5) on urban planning/zoning and its lowest average was 0.5 for Parameter (3) relating to the financial administration of the local authority. Bethlehem's highest average score was 2.8 for Parameter (1) on the local authority's information, and its lowest average score reached 1 for Parameters (4) relating to recruitment and procurement procedures and (5) relating to urban planning/ zoning

As for Anabta, Parameter (1) relating to the local authority's information received the highest average score of 2 while Parameter (4) on recruitment and procurement procedures received the lowest average score of 0.5.

Al-Bireh Municipality scored highest for Parameter (1) relating to the local authority's information with an average score of 1.79 and lowest for Parameter (3) relating to the financial administration of the local authority with an average score of 0.

Beit Jala's highest average score of 3 was for Parameter (3) relating to the financial administration of the local authority, while its lowest was 1.5 for Parameter (4) relating to recruitment and procurement procedures.


Dora Hebron received its highest average score of 0.57 for Parameter 4 on recruitment and procurement procedures, its lowest average score of 0 for Parameter (2) on the general administration of the local authority, and Parameter (5) on urban planning/ zoning.

The statistical mode of the highest and lowest parameter score came as follows: Parameter (1) relating to the information about the local authority and its staff and affiliated organizations received the highest score in seven municipalities (occurring 7 times), followed by Parameter (3) relating to the financial administration of the local authority (occurring 6 times), then Parameter (5) relating to urban planning/ zoning (occurring 3 times). As for Parameters (4) on recruitment and procurement procedures and Parameter (2) on the general administration of the local authority, they occurred only once.

Parameter (2) relating to the general administration of the local authority had the most frequent occurrence ((7 times), while Parameter (3) relating to the financial administration of the local authority occurred 6 times, followed by Parameter (4) relating to recruitment and procurement procedures with 5 occurrences and Parameter (1) relating to the local authority's information with 4 occurrences and lastly Parameter (3) relating to urban planning/zoning with 3 occurrences.


► Conclusions:

1. The arithmetic mean for all five parameters for all sample municipalities reached 1.26, which is an acceptable low score. It means that the level of transparency and disclosure in the 17 sampled municipalities was acceptable.
2. Parameter (1) relating to the information about the local authority, its staff and affiliated organizations, ranked first with an average score of 1.51, which is low. Parameter (3) relating to the financial administration of the local authority ranked second with an average score of 1.38 (low), while Parameter (5) relating to urban planning/zoning ranked third with an average score of 1.31 (low) and Parameter (2) relating to the general administration of the local authority ranked fourth with an average score of 1.09 (low) and Parameter (4) relating to recruitment and procurement procedures ranked fifth with an average score of 0.99 (low).
3. Parameter (1) relating to the information about the local authority and its staff and affiliated organizations received the highest score in the largest number of the sampled municipalities since it has the highest frequency occurrence (7 times) while Parameter (4) relating to recruitment (employment and procurement procedures) and Parameter (2) relating to the general administration of the local authority was the least frequent as the highest score (only once).
4. Parameter (2) relating to the general administration of the local authority had the highest mode for the lowest score with seven occurrences, while the least frequent as the lowest score was the parameter relating to urban planning, with only three occurrences.
5. The research showed that most municipalities have an official website and social media page on Facebook, but most of them disseminate information via the official website compared to social media. The information on the webpage is organized by icons for easier access while the information posted on social media is harder to access especially due to a large number of posts. Furthermore, sites like Facebook publish only brief information without details and in some cases, posts include only daily news and events organized by the municipality but not substantial information of interest to the public.
6. Many municipalities do not provide all the data on their websites. It appeared that many of the icons are empty and do not display any content, which undermines transparency and disclosure and compromises the efficiency of the website in terms of posting the information required by laws including detailed financial and administrative reports and strategic plans as well as best good governance practices.
7. Municipalities do not have standard forms for sharing information. Such forms would help the municipalities highlight the information they are required to publish by law and the information whose publication is optional.

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8. Weak municipal staff awareness of the principles of transparency and their importance to achieve transparency and disseminate information with the local community to build citizens' trust in the municipality and create a corruption-free environment. Unawareness of these principles adversely affect the local authority's transparency and integrity.
 9. The weak transparency of the local authorities is attributed to weak institutional oversight, mainly by MoLG and SAACB, and weak accountability for the dissemination of the information the municipalities are required to post in addition to the lack of a law on the right to access information.
 10. Public relations departments in the local authorities are generally weak. They are the departments charged with the public sharing and dissemination of information, but many municipalities encounter technical failures in their websites. Some of these sites do not open while others have inactive icons that do not display any content; furthermore, the websites are not continually updated.
 11. There are several indicators that are not covered by the regulatory framework of the local authorities or their professional code of conduct. These include the financial assets disclosures and revenues of the head of the local authority and other indicators considered as best practices in the governance of local councils.

► Recommendations

1. Promote disclosure and transparency in all five parameters in the municipalities, starting from Parameter 1 relating to the local authority's information up to parameter 5 relating to urban planning/zoning. For this purpose, local authorities need to adopt a disclosure and dissemination policy to share all relevant information. This is particularly necessary noting that all municipalities received a low score.
2. Compel municipalities to develop their official website and post the required information in active icons. They also need to share previous years' information, including audited or amended financial reports, budgets, strategic plans, minutes of meetings, and decisions among other documents. The websites need to be used as the main media to share information required under the transparency index. Facebook and other social media should be a secondary and supplementary communication tools to share short posts with links to the website to access the icon that contains full information. Facebook is a good tool to inform citizens of the information shared by the municipality on its website since it is more accessed and browsed by the local community.
3. Amend the code of conduct to include indicators on the disclosure of assets and property of the head of the local authority, among other indicators.
4. Promulgate a law on the right to access information, which classifies data into public data accessible without an official permit and prescribes the access mechanism.
5. Ask MoLG and MDLF and the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) to implement rehabilitation and development programs.
6. Invite MoLG to design and disseminate new forms to facilitate citizens' access to information including the information that the municipalities are required to disseminate.
7. Raise awareness of local authorities' staff on the importance of community participation and information-sharing to promote transparency and accountability. This is possible via the organization of workshops and awareness campaigns on the importance of the indicator and its objectives.
8. Design applications that can be uploaded on smart phones and link them to each municipality to enable it send notifications and announcements to their constituency via their mobile phones. They can be used to disseminate important information like financial and administrative reports, plans, meetings, budgets and any other events related to the activity and business of the municipality.
9. Promote the role of public relations department and intensify their efforts to establish, develop and update official websites and share detailed information that is accessible to citizens.
10. Intensify and promote oversight by governmental oversight institutions of the compliance of local authorities with the dissemination of information by assigning a full-time team to track the websites and ensure that the required information is shared and apply deterrent measures in case of failure to comply.

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11. Raise public awareness of their right to reach and access information via the publication of manuals, and organization of workshops and awareness meetings. When citizens become aware of their rights, they act as an effective oversight body and hold the local authorities accountable to their obligations to ensure the highest level possible of integrity and transparency.
 12. Promote the concept of local authority's accountability to its constituency (citizens) among the members of the council and staff of the local authority.

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Ramallah

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- Jenin

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10. Phone interviews with the municipalities in the sample, except Nablus and Salfeet.

11. Email interviews with all the municipalities in the sample.



AMAN was established in 2000 as a civil society organization that seeks to combat corruption and promote integrity, transparency and accountability in the Palestinian society. The Coalition was first formed by an initiative from a number of civil society organizations working in the field of democracy, human rights and good governance. In 2006, the Coalition was accredited as a national chapter for Transparency International.

AMAN is a Palestinian think tank and a specialized body providing knowledge on corruption at the local and regional level through producing specialized reports and studies. The periodic publications include: The annual Integrity and Anti-Corruption Report, the annual Palestinian Integrity Index and the National Integrity System studies and reports, in addition to the Coalition's continued contributions to produce reports and studies on the status of corruption in the Arab region.

As part of the global anti-corruption movement - and of international alliances and partnerships with relevant specialized coalitions and organizations - AMAN plays a key role in the transfer and contextualization of necessary international knowledge and tools to combat corruption in all sectors.

Website: www.aman-palestine.org

Email : info@aman-palestine.org

AmanCoalition

Ramallah, Irsal St, Remawi Building , 1st floor

Tel : 2989506 2 (970+) 2974949 2 (970+)

Fax : 2974948 2 (970)

Gaza-Southern Rimal - Habboush St. - Sub of Martyrs St. Dream

Tel : 082884767

Fax : 082884766

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