Transparency and Accountability in the Public Sector in the Arab Region

Findings of the Regional Survey

Presentation by Elia Yi Armstrong, UN DESA

Arab Regional Forum on Reinventing Government:
Integrity, Transparency and Accountability in the Public Sector

21-23 March 2005 Dubai, U.A.E.

Support to Policy & Programme Development

- Joint project by UN DESA & UNDP RBAS,
- Carried out in 2002-3
- Comparative study of 6 countries:
  - Jordan
  - Lebanon
  - Morocco
  - Tunisia
  - Sudan
  - Yemen

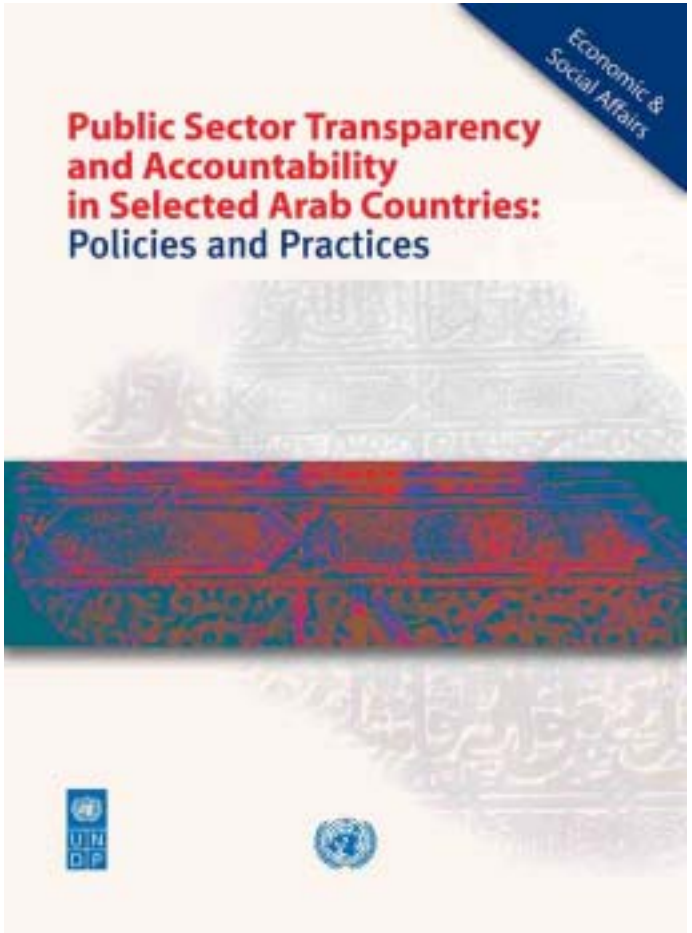
Objective

to assist national governments in the Arab Region to improve public sector transparency and accountability

through

comparing existing policies and practices in financial, human resources and information management

Regional Report & Case Studies



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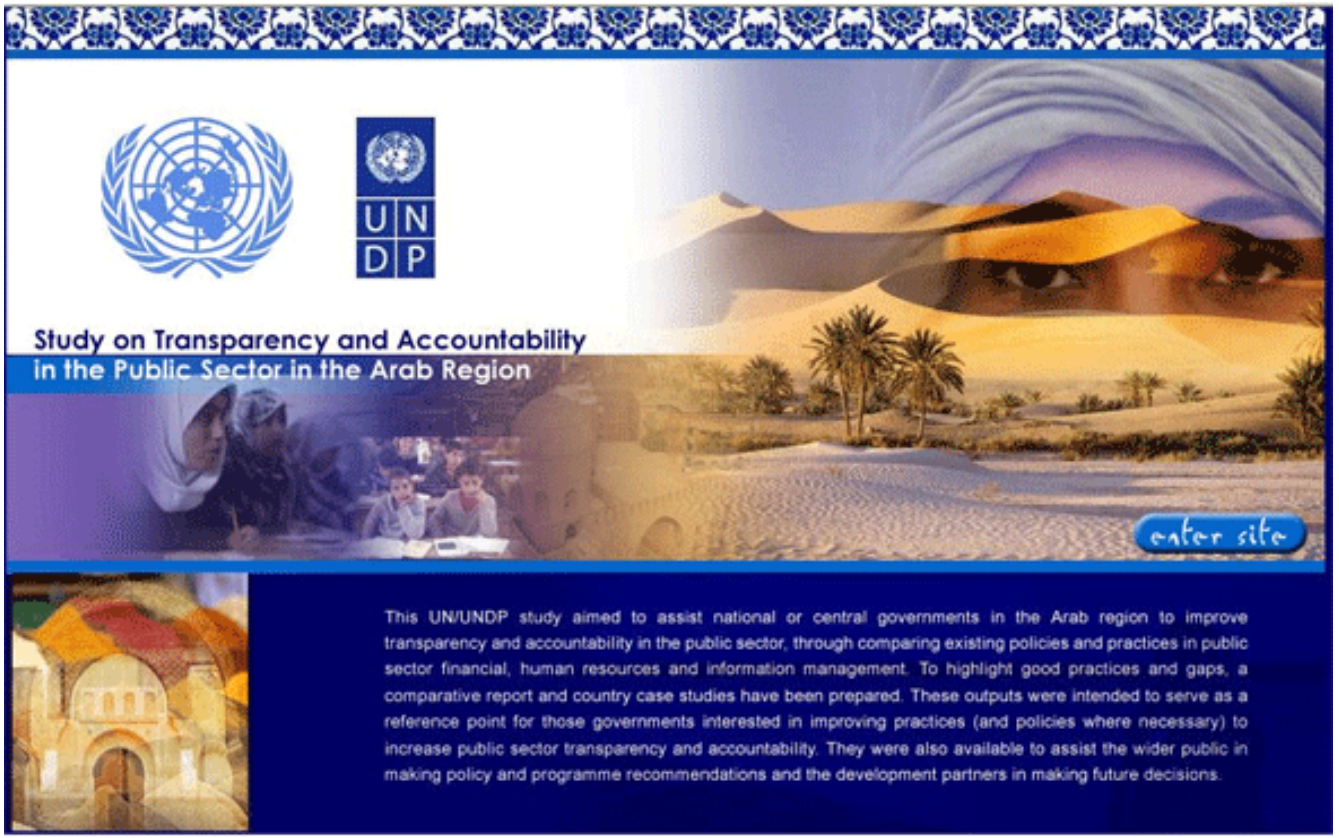
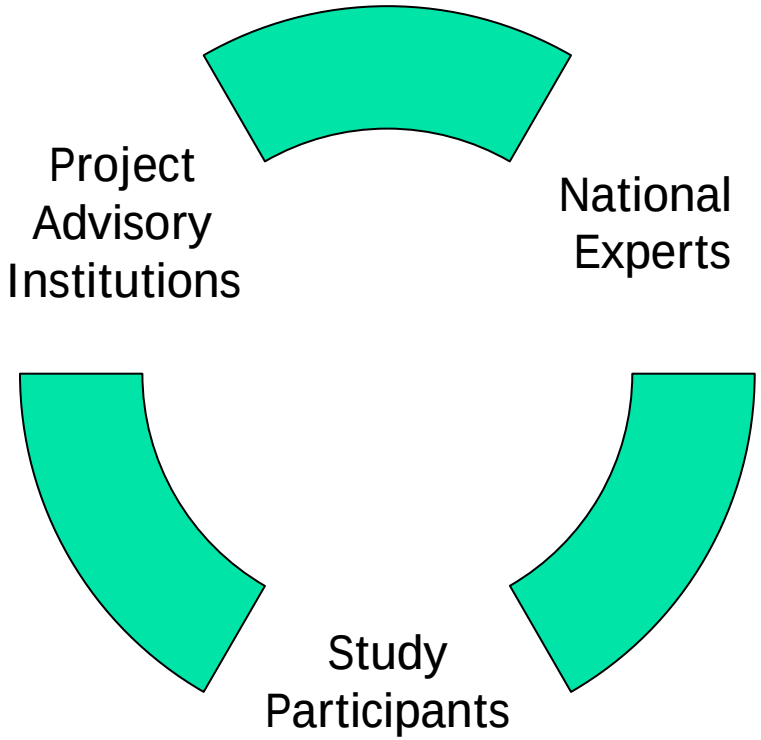

Study on Transparency and Accountability
in the Public Sector in the Arab Region
enter site
This UN/UNDP study aimed to assist national or central governments in the Arab region to improve transparency and accountability in the public sector, through comparing existing policies and practices in public sector financial, human resources and information management. To highlight good practices and gaps, a comparative report and country case studies have been prepared. These outputs were intended to serve as a reference point for those governments interested in improving practices (and policies where necessary) to increase public sector transparency and accountability. They were also available to assist the wider public in making policy and programme recommendations and the development partners in making future decisions.

Project Website

www.unpan.org/technical_highlights-Transparency-Arabstates.asp

Informal Regional Network



Regional Policy Forum

United Nations Development Programme

برنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي

Programme on Governance in the Arab Region

برنامج إدارة الحكم في الدول العربية

POGAR

- **Istanbul meeting - Expert Group Meeting on Good Public Governance for Development in the Middle East and North Africa**
  Istanbul - Turkey, 10-11 February, 2004.
  Organized by: United Nations Development Programme - Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (UNDP-POGAR) - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
  The meeting, organized by OECD in co-operation with the Istanbul Centre for Private Sector Development, expanded and strengthened the engagement of countries and international organisations in the launching of an initiative on Good Public Governance for Development in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Project Advisory Group

- ARABOSAI
- ARADO
- Arab Council for Economic Unity
- Federation of Arab Journalists
- Arab Social Science Research Network
- The League of Arab States
- Union of Arab Banks

National Consultants

- Dr. Zuhair Abd Al-Kareem Al-Kayed (JORDAN)
- Dr. Okleh Mohammed Mubaidin (JORDAN)
- Dr. Randa Antoun (LEBANON)
- Dr. Azeddine Akesbi (MOROCCO)
- Dr. Ahmed Essoussi (TUNISIA)
- Dr. Abdalla Mohamed Ahmed Kafeel (SUDAN)
- Dr. Ahmed Mohamed Al-Shami (YEMEN)
- Dr. Mohamed Abdo Saeed Moghram (YEMEN)

Scope of Study

- Public sector: core central government agencies, establishments and services
- Transparency: availability of and free access to information
- Accountability: answerability for choices and actions

Conceptual Framework

- Country Contexts:
  - Public sector structures
  - Recent transparency and accountability initiatives
- Financial Management
- Human Resources Management
- Information Management

Concept Papers ⇒ Issues

Guide	Issues
Financial Management	• general financial controls • budgets • revenue • payroll • procurement • assets management • privatization and service concessions • payments • accounting • internal audit • external audit
Human Resources Management	• stated official values • codes of conduct • selection process • conflicts-of-interest disclosures • whistle-blowing • investigation • disciplinary procedures • oversight?
Information Management	• access to information legislation • communication • private media • investigative journalism • non-governmental watchdog organizations

Methodology

- Desk review of around 200 documents for:
  - public sector structure and employment
  - public sector transparency and accountability initiatives and policies
- 435 expert interviews held (25 discarded):
  - Financial: 141 (73% public sector)
  - Human Resources: 132 (77% public sector)
  - Information: 137 (66% public sector)

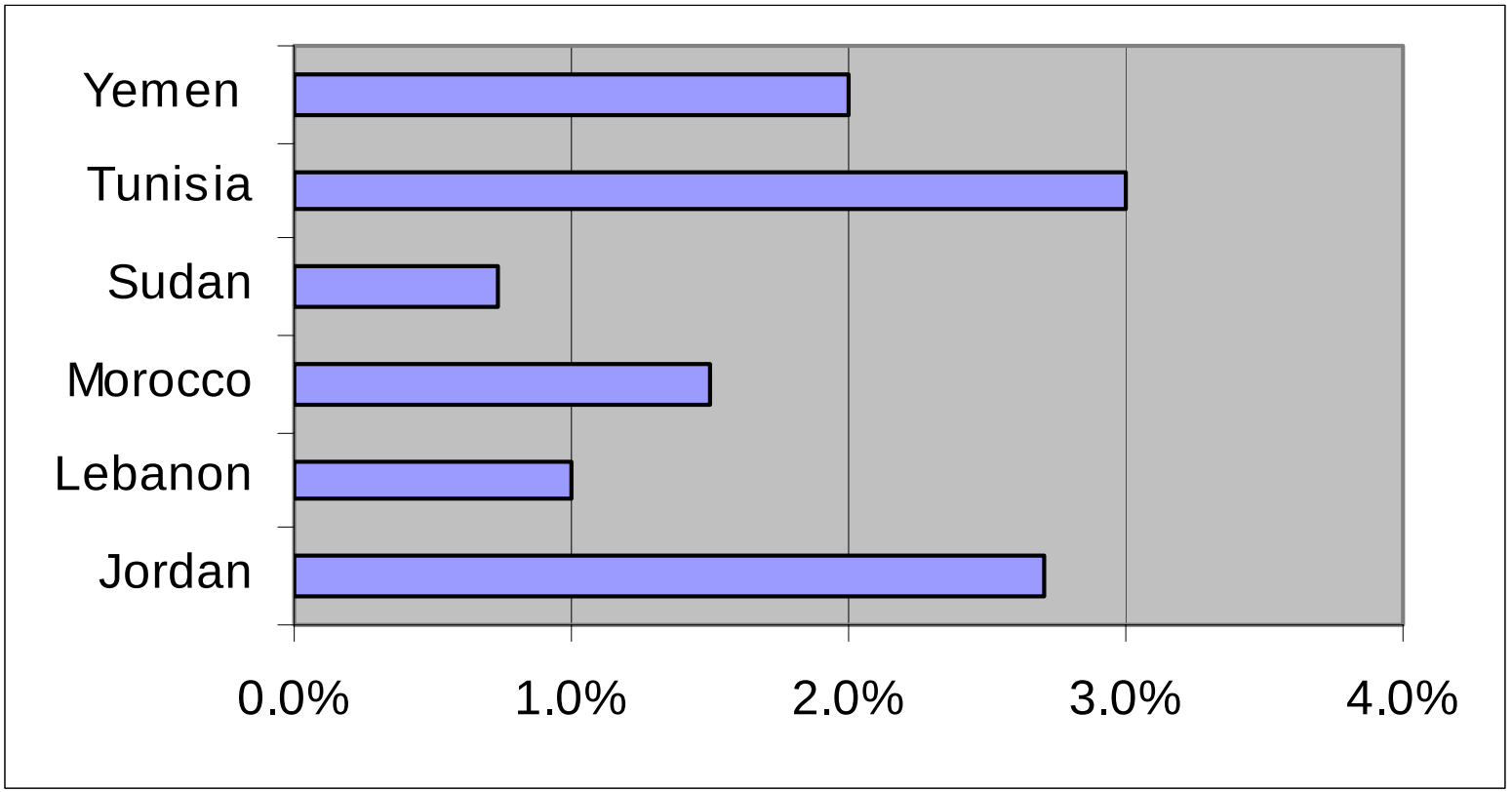
Analysis

- Regional comparison of policies and practices (although presented by country)
- National case studies (professional assessments by national consultants and country-specific recommendations)

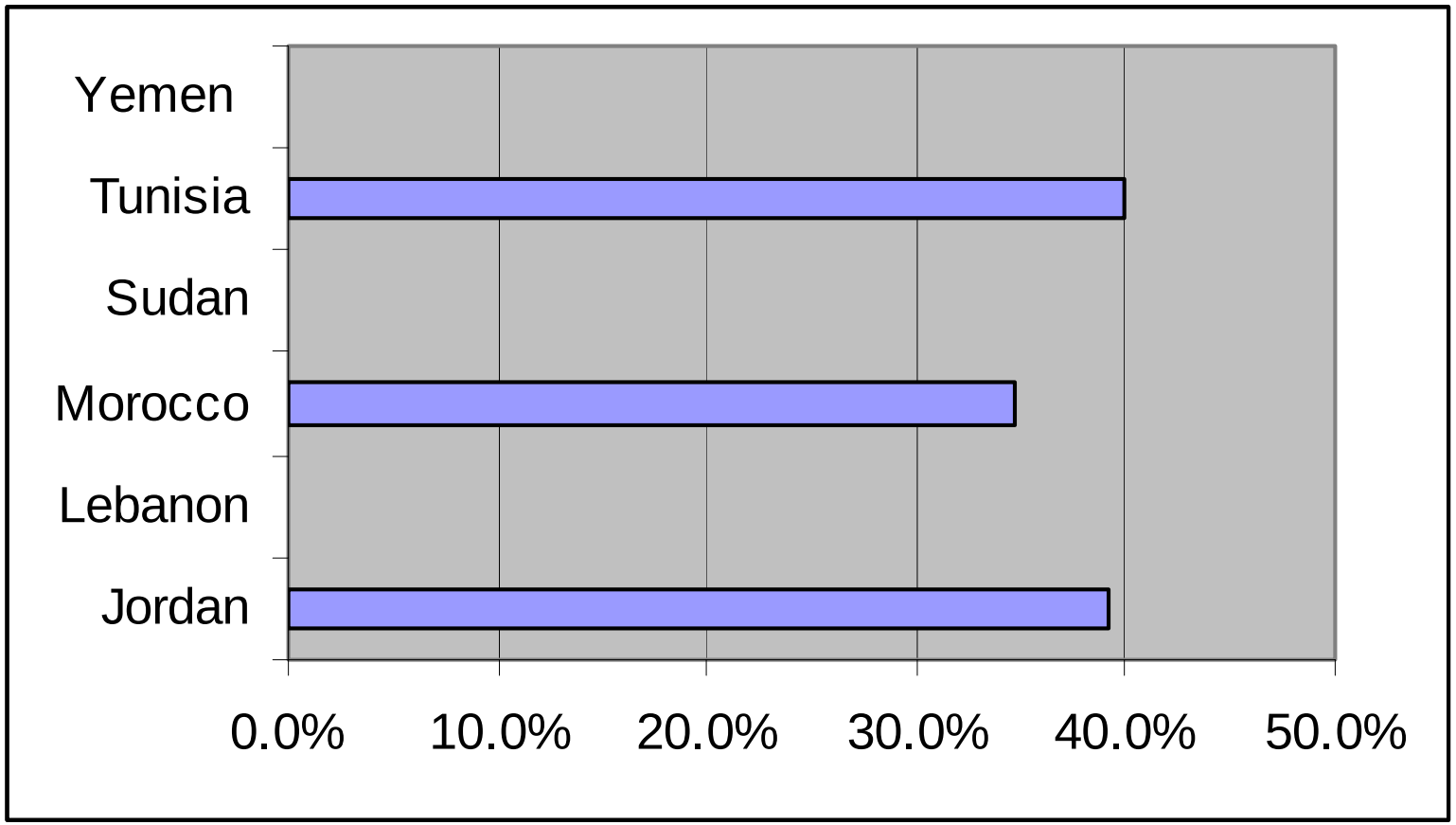
Findings: Country Contexts

- Public Sector
  - Limited organization and employment data
- Past Initiatives (1993-2003)
  - Studies: Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco
  - Major Conferences: Jordan, Lebanon
  - Public campaigns: Morocco, Sudan
  - Reform or modernization projects: Morocco, Sudan, Yemen

Proportion of PS to Population (1999-2002)



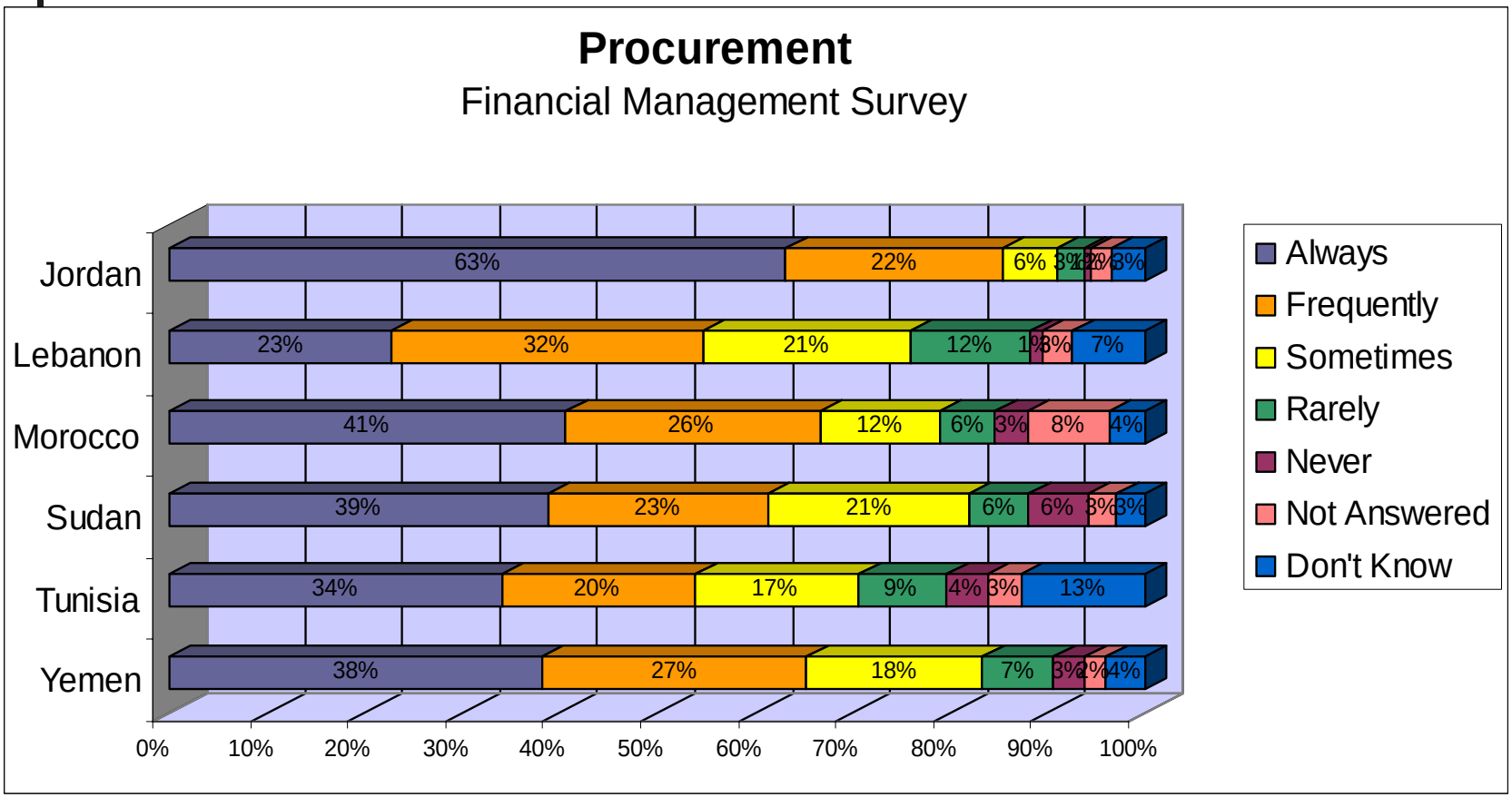
Proportion of Women in PS (1999-2003)



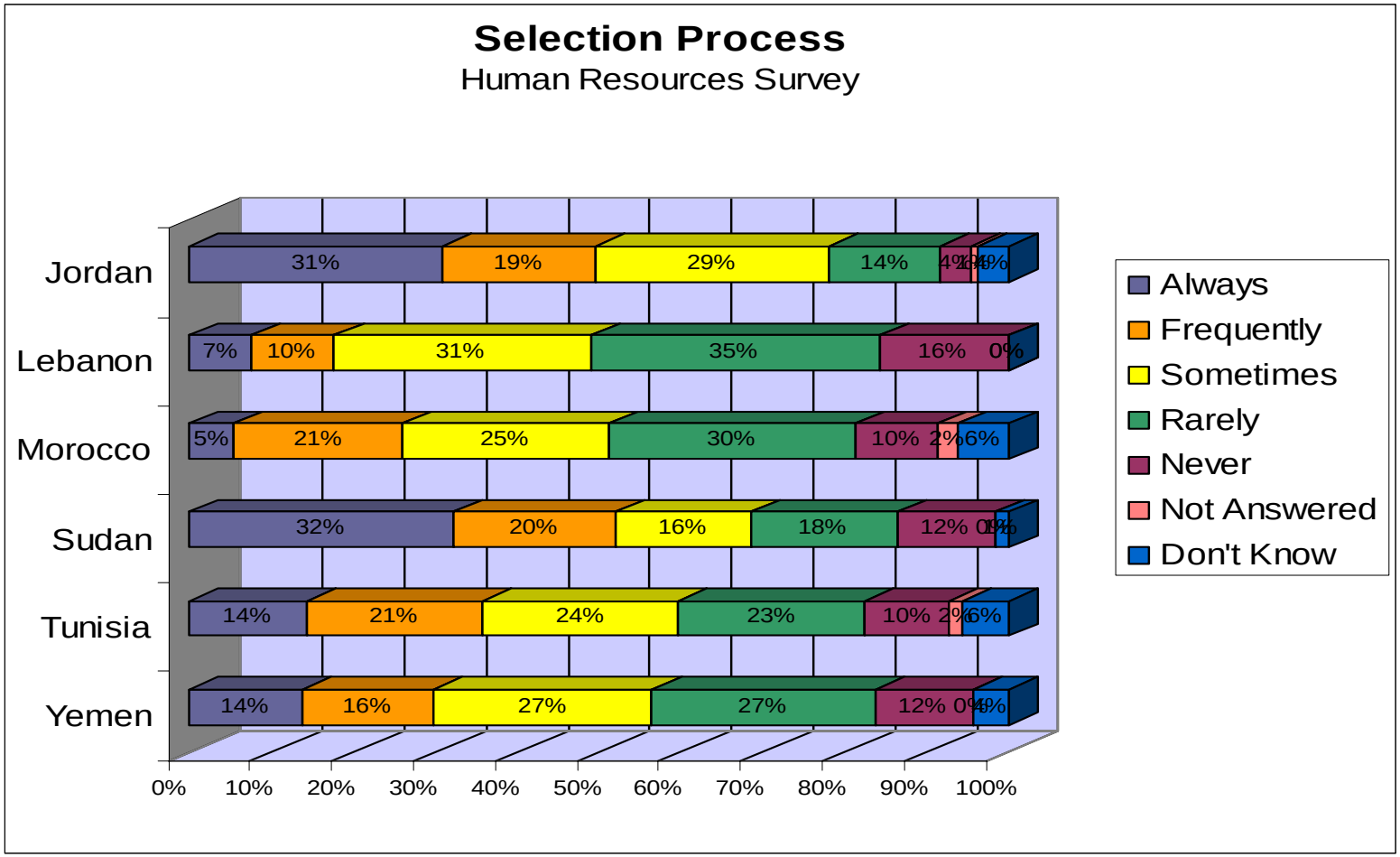
Overall Findings

- Financial management practices perceived to conform most with policies.
- Human resources management policies perceived to be followed less.
- Information management, for policy and practice, least developed.

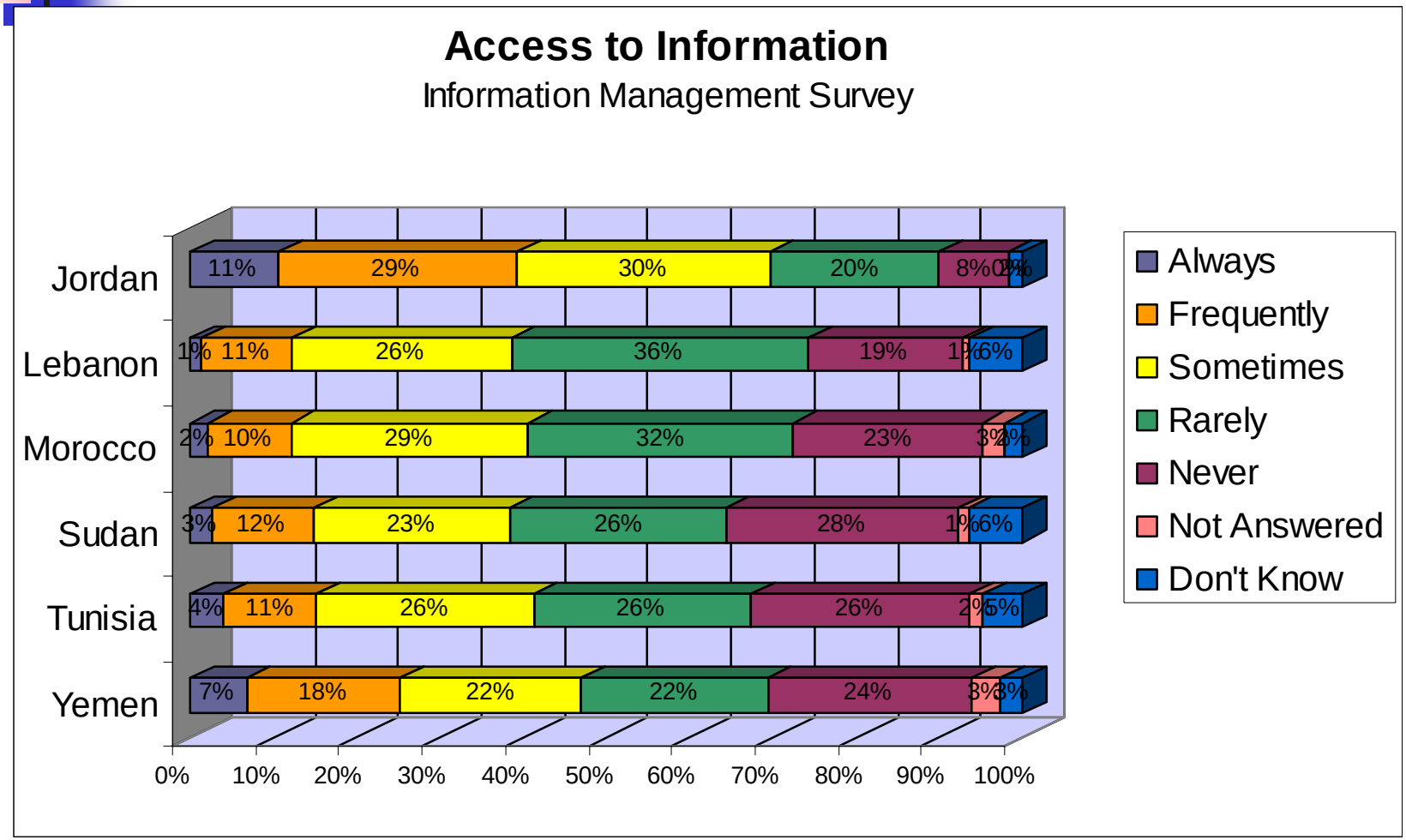
Financial Management: e.g.



Human Resources Management: e.g.



Information Management: e.g.



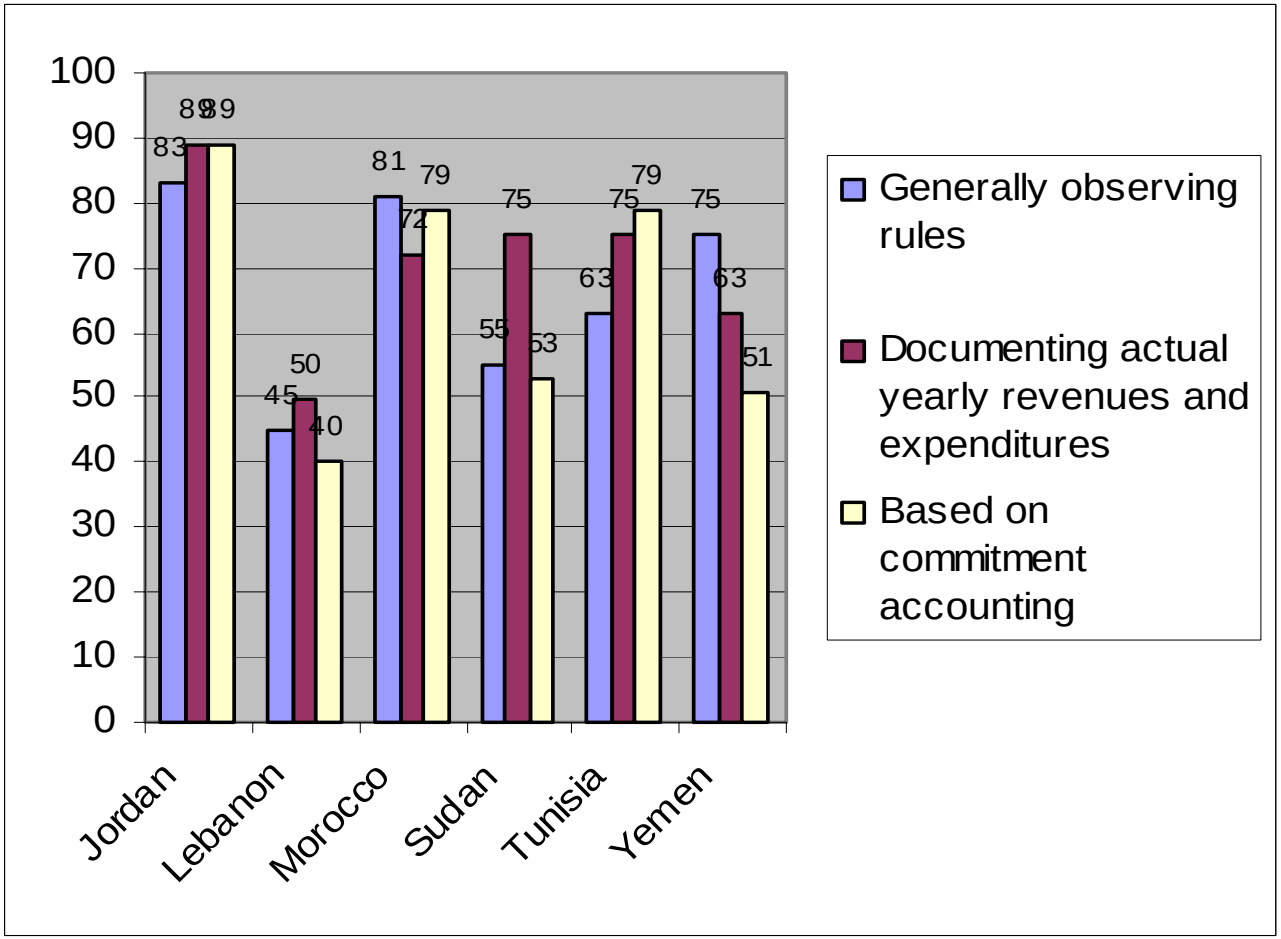
Findings: Financial Management

- Framework
- Budgeting
- Revenue
- Payroll
- Procurement
- Privatisation & Concessions
- Payment
- Accounting
- Internal Audit
- External Audit

E.G.: Framework

- Legislative and administrative framework for financial transactions in place
- General financial controls are not perceived to be highly visible

E.G.: Budgeting



E.G.: Procurement

- Estimated 66-90% of large contracts subjected to competitive bidding
- But the majority of respondents (in 5 out of 6 countries) do not perceive contracts being consistently awarded to the best bids
- Making the evaluation stage of bids more transparent may help

E.G.: Internal & External Audit

- Internal Audit: Greater independence of staff
- External Audit: More timely release of findings

Human Resources Management

- Framework
- Stated officials values
- Codes of conduct
- Legal restrictions
- Selection process
- Conflicts-of-interest disclosures
- Reporting of wrongdoing
- Investigation
- Disciplinary procedures

E.G.: Framework

- Core values, as stated in legislative texts, not seen to be consistently communicated or practiced by leadership
- Standards of conduct not seen to be consistently followed by rank and file public sector employees

E. G.: Selection Process

- Perceived to be not consistently based on merit
- Insufficiently protected from political influence

E.G.: Conflicts-of-interest

Country	Occupational Groups	How Often Required/Verified	Items to be Disclosed
Jordan	No disclosure	N/A	N/A
Lebanon	Same for all	Required upon induction, changing positions and leaving (verified only when charges brought against an employee)	Assets and liabilities, loans, sources and levels of income
Morocco	More stringent for judges	Required upon induction and changes in assets and annually for judges (not verified)	Real estate and securities
Sudan	No disclosure (Rules drafted but not implemented)	N/A	N/A
Tunisia	Conflict of Interest Law and procedures for elected officials and Senior Civil Servants	Upon Entering Office for Elected Officials, Varied for Others	Different types of Revenue, Property
Yemen	No disclosure	N/A	N/A

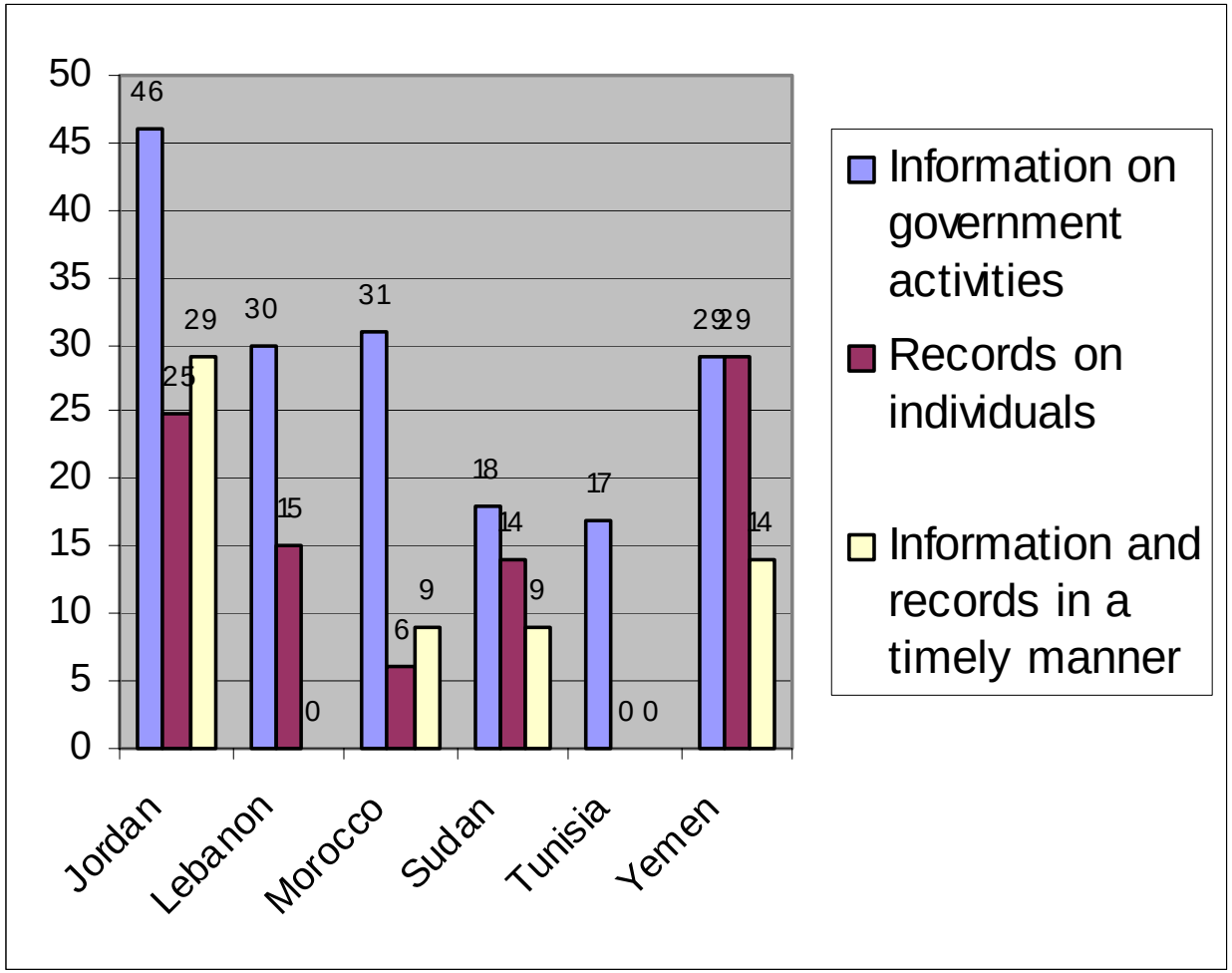
Information Management

- Framework
- Access to information
- Records management
- Investigative journalism
- NGOs

E.G.: Access to Information Framework

Country	Official Policy on Access to Information	Reporting Government Activities	Private Means of Reporting
Jordan	None	Some ministerial websites, government T.V. and radio stations, press releases and conferences	Private university research
Lebanon	None (but proposed in 2002)	Some ministerial websites, government T.V. and radio stations, press releases and conferences, annual reports	Websites, T.V. stations, radios, press
Morocco	None	Some ministerial websites, government T.V. and radio stations, press	None (Law on the suppression of monopoly of the government over the media adopted but not yet implemented.)
Sudan	None	Government T.V. and radio stations, press releases and conferences	None
Tunisia	None	Government TV and radio stations, press, press conferences, official internet sites	Limited press, bookstores, internet sites and researchers
Yemen	None	Government T.V. stations, press releases and conferences	None

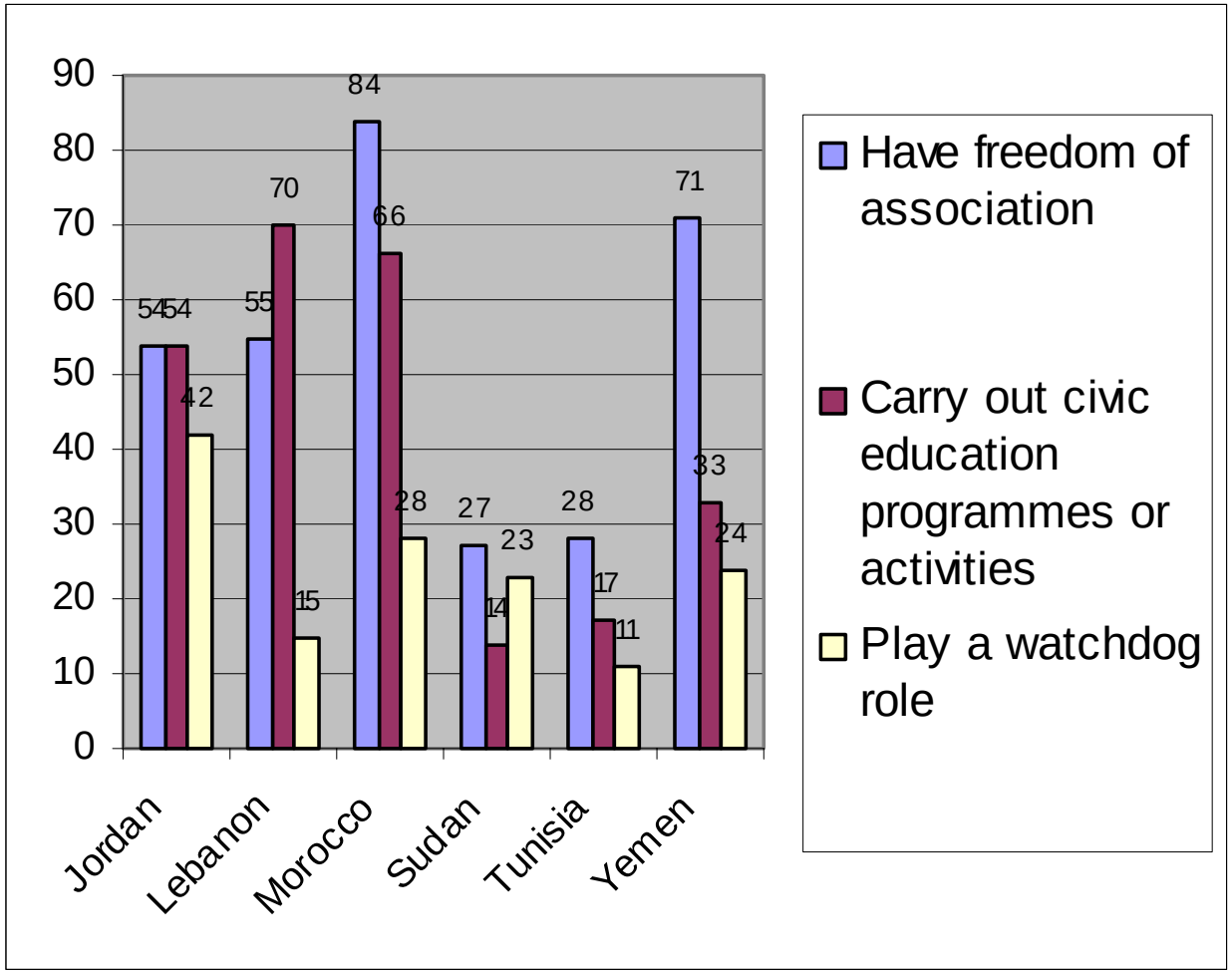
E.G.: Reasonable Access To:



Records Management

- Varies among ministries but, generally, record keeping not well maintained (Jordan reported an exception and Tunisia reported good government statistics)
- Generally, no specific policy for when and how to make records public

NGOs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Jordan
Lebanon
Morocco
Sudan
Tunisia
Yemen
Have freedom of association
Carry out civic education programmes or activities
Play a watchdog role

Conclusion

- All 3 areas interrelated and important
- Give priority to information management reforms
- Encourage freer flow of information within and outside of the public sector

Corroboration

- Consistent with UNDP Arab Human Development Reports 2003/4, acknowledging knowledge deficit.
- Supported by World Bank MENA Development Report 2003, noting weaknesses of external accountabilities.

United Nations
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Public Administration and
Development Management

UNDP
Regional Bureau for Arab States

Contacts

Mr. Guido Bertucci
Director

Mr. Shabbir Cheema
Principal Advisor and
Programme Director for Governance

Mr. John-Mary Kauzya
Chief, Governance and Public
Administration Branch

Ms. Elia Yi Armstrong
Public Administration Officer
Tel: (+1-212) 963-2926
Fax: (+1-212) 963-2916
E-mail: armstronge@un.org

Mr. Zahir Jamal
Chief, Regional Programme Division

Mr. Adel Abdellatif
Regional Coordinator
Programme on Governance in the Arab
Region
Tel: (+961-1) 981-301/311 x. 1729
Fax: (+961-1) 981-521/2
E-mail: adel.abdellatif@undp.org