External Evaluation Report:

"Support to the Role of Civil Society Organization and Youth in Local Public Oversight"
(RFQ-2015-174)

Submitted by:

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Acknowledgements

TABLE OF CONTENT

1. Introduction:

In line with development programming best practices, UNDP/PAPP has commissioned *Riyada Consulting and Training* to conduct an independent evaluation upon finalizing the two year implementation period of its pilot project titled: "Support to the Role of Civil Society Organization and Youth in Local Public Oversight". The evaluation aimed to assess the level of progress made towards achieving the outputs and outcome of the project. In addition, the evaluation is expected to provide actionable recommendations for refining and scaling up UNDP support, as well as identify lessons learned and best practices in order to enrich country and regional programming.

With support from the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF), the program's outcome was to see "an empowered community for effective participation in local governance." The project, with funding of over 250,000 USD, supported capacity development to civil society organizations in four municipalities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It intended to ensure that civil society, in particular marginalized groups like youth, are heard through meaningful participation at the local level and are able to hold local elected leaders and public organizations to account.

The project was developed based on the assumption that improving the quality of governance goes beyond the formal institution framework of developing systems of checks and balances across branches of government. It also encompasses the interaction between formal and informal institutions and between power holders and citizens.

During the current evaluation, Riyada has reviewed the achievement of the outputs and outcomes of the project, the overall impact of the project, if and how activities have been carried out in a mutually reinforcing manner, the sustainability of the project initiatives, and the program's efforts to mainstream gender and ensure a rights-based approach. Riyada has also examined the main challenges faced by the program, captured key lessons learned and best practices, and provided concrete recommendations for future similar programming in the West Bank and Gaza.

2. Methodology:

In order to provide UNDP with a comprehensive external evaluation of "Support to the Role of Civil Society Organization and Youth in Local Public Oversight", *Riyada Consulting and Training* implemented the following methodology during the evaluation:

2.1 Preparatory Phase:

At the outset of the assignment, our evaluation team held a *preparatory meeting* with Ms Maha Abusamra, Programme Manager, UNDP on Wednesday September 30th, 2015. At this meeting, Ms. Abusamra gave the evaluation team an overview of the project and its implementation in the West Bank and Gaza. She then forwarded the project documents to the evaluation team for review. In addition, a preparatory meeting was held with Mr. Said Abu Gaza, the UNDP Project manager in Gaza for briefing and additional insight into the project's implementation in Gaza Strip.

In order to gain a thorough understanding of the existing literature on the Project, our evaluation team undertook a comprehensive *document review*. This review has provided our team with better understanding of the Project's progress, outputs and outcomes and helped the evaluation team in designing the evaluation tools (Annex 1 – Evaluation Tools). The following documents have been received and reviewed:

- Project Proposal / Document "Support to the Role of Civil Society Organization and Youth in Local Public Oversight";
- UNDP Mission Reports;
- Work Plans;
- Progress Reports from UNDP and partners;
- Final reports from UNDP and partners;
- Proposals of implementing partners;
- Training and Workshop Reports;
- Interface meeting reports between partners and duty bearers;
- Studies, reports, and statistics on youth participation and social accountability in OPT;
- Sharek Social accountability and youth participation at local level, English and Arabic
- Results of Sharek Youth Secretariat
- Anti-corruption incentive day Report for partners

The document review gave first insights into the program and the existing data available from internal monitoring tools and external studies completed. Based on the document review, the evaluation tools were developed. Following the preparation of the final implementation methodology and discussions thereof with UNDP/PAPP, Riyada has finalized the review tools. The following questionnaires have been developed and used during the evaluation:

Questionnaire 1:	Interviews with UNDP/PAPP Colleagues and Program Manager;
Questionnaire 2:	Interview with project partners (Sharek and Karmel);
Questionnaire 3:	Interviews with representatives/focal points at the 4 municipalities;
Questionnaire 4:	Interviews with relevant international development agencies;
Questionnaire 5:	Focus Groups with youth beneficiaries.

2.2 Fieldwork Phase:

2.2.1 Interviews:

The evaluation team conducted the following interviews with the UNDP project staff and partners, key and stakeholders of the project in the West bank and Gaza as well as conducting key informant interviews with relevant international implementing agencies working in the sector of social accountability in Palestine:

No.	Name	Contact Number	organization	Date of interview
West Bank:				
1	Maha Abusamra	0598919774	Program Manager UNDP	23/10/2015 & 13/11/2015
2	Abderrahmane El Yessa	0548173949	Team Leader and Advisor – Governance and social Development Unit - UNDP	23/10/2015
3	Bader Zamareh	022967741	Executive Director, Sharek Youth Forum	27/10/2015
4	Adel Sabanneh	022967741	Project Manager, Sharek Youth Forum	02/11/2015
5	Mr. Omar Yasin	0597991105	Financial Manger Sharek Youth Forum	27/10/2015
6	Jehad Shakhshir	0599601213	Project Advisor - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH	04/11/2015
7	Isam Haj Hussein	0599122251	Programs and Projects Director - Aman	27/10/2015 & 04/11/2015
8	Haman Zeidan	0599357550	Programs and Projects Coordinator - Aman	27/10/2015
9	Ismail Abu Arafeh	0599668963	Operations Manager, Tajaawob Project – British Council	28/10/2015

10	Issa Sabri	092931818	Managing Director - Qalqiliya Zoo	23/11/2015
11	Issa Abu Hantash	092931818	Public Relations and Media Director – Qalqiliya Zoo	23/11/2015
12	Muhammed Jallaytah	022322417	Mayor of Jericho	12/11/2015
13	Muhammed Azmout	022322417	Public Relations and Media Director – Jericho Municipality	12/11/2015
14	Akram Taqatkah	02-2769490	Mayor of Beit Fajjar	17/11/2015
15	Ali Thawabet	02-2769490	Director General of Beit Fajjar Municipality	17/11/2015
Gaza Strip:				
16	Said Abu Gaza	599992640	UNDP	26/10/2015
17	Ayman Al hour	599677430	Al Karmel for development and culture association	28/10/2015
18	Mohamed Yousif Abu Eshkain		Al Nusirat Municipality /mayor	28/10/2015
19	Fadwa Eid	599600594	Al Nusirat Municipality /PR	28/10/2015

2.2.2 Focus Groups:

The evaluation team conducted qualitative fieldwork in each of the 4 municipalities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The focus groups targeted the participating youth and aimed at identifying the following key aspects of youth participation in local governance (Annex 2 – list of participants in Focus Groups):

- The extent to which the participating youth were originally active or have been activated as a result to the project's intervention. This will help in assessing existing opportunities for youth to participate before and after the project's intervention.
- The extent to which youth were provided with meaningful opportunities to participate.
- The initiatives and community issues raised by the youth and their results/achievements.
- Key challenges and limitation faced and whether or not they were able to find creative and innovative solutions to overcome those limitations.
- The impact on the youth and their future outlook and whether or not they intend to continue being engaged in their communities and how.
- The gender aspects and young women's empowerment will be captured and recommendations to further enhance female participation will be analyzed.

2.3 Analysis & Reporting Phase

After completing data collection on November 25th, 2015, the evaluation team conducted intensive analysis of all information gathered. The analysis focused on assessing the overall impact of the project, both for partners and municipalities, if and how activities have been carried out in a mutually reinforcing manner, the overall sustainability of the programme, the programme's efforts to mainstream gender and to apply and rights based approach, challenges, best practices, and lessons learned from the project. Key recommendations for future assistance in this sector as well as up scaling of the project were also documented. Findings, conclusions, and recommendations were consolidated in the current evaluation report and will be elaborated in the following sections.

3. Evaluation Findings:

The evaluation conducted found a wide agreement among the stakeholders and beneficiaries interviewed that the Youth Council project was an impressive attempt to address the challenges posed by involving young people within the different communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the development of public policy and practice in the local governance sector. It had a number of achievements and successes, in particular its positive impact on community initiatives implemented by those young people who remained involved with the Youth Councils throughout the life span of the project and the way it provided inspiration that also challenged the traditional perceptions of youth participation and social accountability in general for many of those who were directly involved with the project, particularly the implementing partners (Sharek in the West Bank and Al-Karmel in Gaza Strip), the municipalities who were involved in the pilot phase of the project (Nusseirate Municipality in Gaza and Beit Fajjar Municipality, Qalqiliya Municipality and Jericho Municipality in the West Bank) and of course the overall community in those geographic areas.

However, as might be expected given the demanding and exploratory nature of the project, there were also a number of challenges faced. It is hoped that the analysis of those challenges contained in this report will help UNDP and their respective and potential partners and individuals working in this area, to learn from the experience of this pilot phase and build on what has worked effectively and developing new approaches to tackle those areas that were more challenging.

The four projects carried out in the pilot phase of the project established common themes running across the different geographic areas. In spite of differences in geographic locations and community demographics, it appeared that both community activists (Youth councils and community representatives) and local government leaders had more in common than what appeared to be separating them. It was envisioned that local community needs and priorities in the different geographic areas were similar, but were implemented in different contexts that were carried out merely on the theme of embedding local community engagement across the service functions within local authorities; as a step towards enhancing social accountability practices.

3.1 Structural / Organizational Functions:

3.1.1 Recruitment and participation of the Youth Local Councils:

At the outset of the project, the Youth Local Councils were not nominated by a wide and diverse number of community activists within the localities, they were recruited from a pool within the membership of the implementing partners (Sharek and Al-Karmel) that were engaged and experienced in working in the youth sector, and this strategy was followed to capitalize on the previous experiences in youth initiatives that were implemented by the partner organizations. The initial recruitment plan was challenging because it did not represent diversified groups

within the communities (marginalized and vulnerable groups) and hence was less successful than anticipated due to the difficulty of building trust and relationships within a short period of time. However as the project progressed, an increased wider and more diversified numbers of volunteers from the youth within the target communities were elected to join the project giving more emphasis on the importance of wider community engagement in voluntary work and youth participation and representation; particularly the vulnerable groups within the communities. This new formulation brought together a group of highly committed and involved young people. However, almost three quarters of those young people initially recruited dropped out after the project came to closure and the initial representation of the youth local council was not maintained. The main barriers cited were the pressure of other commitments and the lack of incentives and support.

When asked about this phenomenon, the Director of Sharek commented by saying:

> *"… We are particularly interested in involving young people who have an interest in community work, who are from the less well represented sectors of our communities, but who may not have had a lot of experience in Social Accountability practices."*

Some youth local council members from Gaza Strip and even the West Bank confirmed that the systems for the project implementation that were put in place, mainly to address social accountability within the communities, did not work perfectly or easily, at least at the beginning. They perceived lack of clarity about the project's direction and the role of the youth councils in general to be the main challenges. As youth council members stated:

> *"… we felt the whole thing wasn't really thought through well enough and I wasn't clear about our role. The idea of the youth local council to implement a social accountability initiative was good, but it was ambitious within the constraints of the current political environment we live in and ambiguous because we never fully understood the intentions of the project".*

3.1.2 Roles and expectations:

The project was established with the aim of 'creating opportunities for young people to fully participate in the design, development and delivery of Social Accountability practices within their communities". This was anticipated to be implemented by advising and steering the development of the young people's participatory practices and approaches with the existing two implementing partners. Furthermore, an internal discussion document stated that the project should 'ensure that we hear the views of young people, engage them in decisions that affect them and broaden the range and appeal of our 'offer' so that it becomes relevant.

Given that the project was conceived as a pilot project and within a short time scale, these aims were broadly defined. Nevertheless, evidence from the stakeholder interviews and from internal documents suggests that while the project benefitted from a flexible management model that was able to adapt to the changing needs and demands of the project and its implementing

partners and other municipal participants; the 'open approach' model that was introduced, left the youth local council members; especially who joined the project soon afterwards, unclear about their defined specific role and they formed unrealistic expectations about their level of influence on the wider Social Accountability practices and its influence on the decision making process within their communities.

Our research found that the facilitators found it easier to adapt to this open approach than other stakeholders who were not directly involved in developing the project. For example:

One of the youth facilitators we interviewed stated:

> *"In the early days the aims of the project weren't very clear; however, I was always very clear about my own role"*

Another added:

> *"The program aims were not clearly defined, however all the facilitators knew this and were prepared to adapt and re-shape their approach to the program to make it successful, but now I can say that we did not necessary implement or establish social accountability practices, we merely covered community activism and implemented specific community needs and initiatives on behalf of the municipality, that was our role and I am sure will remain as such…. '.*

Similarly, a local government official concluded that

> *"It was never clear what the Youth Local Councils were trying to achieve, it was also difficult to accept their role in social accountability and questioning officials on their community work; … there has been a degree of confusion over what their responsibilities/roles are and what level of involvement and support they have been given..."*

3.1.3   Time commitments:

One of the biggest challenges for staying involved was committing time to the project. Many young people already had many other commitments. This was reflected by the youth themselves during the focus group discussions:

A young person who left after six months of being involved in the project explained:

> *"I left because of time constraints. I had so many different things going on that I had to make a decision. The Youth Local Council was doing an event in the city and even though this event was done in the middle of the city, I still didn't get there because I had university exams to attend".*

Another youth local council member mentioned that the project required a high level of engagement:

> *"In order for the group to work you have to commit completely; …unfortunately, changing circumstances in the lives of the young people (e.g. committing time alongside studies - the start of university) impacted on their capacity to get involved; also they need to earn money, in some cases, where youth local council members had to take time off from work to participate which caused problems. People's time and commitments change, which is difficult, so people leave..".*

A young person who stayed involved in the youth local council in Beit Fajjar recognizes that it is:

> *"Very hard to maintain the group because people have jobs and taking the time off work means a loss of wages"*

Evidence from the field interviews suggest that some people left because they didn't feel their involvement was rewarded; financially. This reflects the tension between committing time in voluntary work and the financial needs and demands of the involved youth. An ex-Youth Council member stated that:

> *"There were a lot of requests on our time as young practitioners, but there wasn't the money to back it. So much was expected of us without any real consideration of the practicalities like living expenses that and I was getting other and better paid work outside of this."*

3.2 Achievement of Outcomes and Outputs of the Project – Effectiveness:

The evaluation team has considered the project design, contract objectives, performance and implementation through document reviews, in depth interviews, data analysis and review of project systems.

The evaluation team believes that the general components of a results-oriented Logical Framework Approach (LFA) developed since the inception of the project were effectively integrated in the project proposal as project activities and conceptualized by a fundamental list of results that are to be delivered and achieved over the life span of the project.

According to the review of the project documents and the project overall performance, and from the focus group discussions and informant interviews conducted with the implementing partners, the evaluation team can ascertain with confidence that the outputs, activities and outcomes in the four projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have achieved their intended list of results and have made significant progress towards achieving their short-term outcomes of fostering community specific activism, participation and community-local government collaboration to meeting community needs and priorities, and hence strengthening community service delivery.

At the individual level, youth often report improved confidence, self-esteem, and sense of purpose. For example, one youth council member said that serving the youth through a youth council gives her great inner satisfaction. Another youth attributed his improved leadership skills and ability to plan and manage projects to his involvement in a youth local council.

Besides, as youth local council members in focus group discussions explained:

> *"…Thank you for inspiring the young generation within the communities served and for positively impacting our teams. We believe we have achieved more than 100% performance on the projects implemented.* Also added *….. The social accountability project have helped us gain new perspective on leadership and community collaboration to meet our daily tasks and work with passion and focus. The materials that were shared with us, had caused great growth in the team, created new excitement and highlighted our strengths allowing necessary change for the future…. Personally, we have grown to a whole new level, and have new confidence that elevates our abilities, respect and confidence within our own communities..."*

In other place like Beit Fajjar, the youth local council earned the respect of the community when they succeeded to bring around, a collective town hall meeting that brought public officials of local government, other ministries and government representatives, NGOs and other community leaders together with citizens to discuss and agree on list of community priorities and needs.

With reference to the project design and performance, and based on the understanding of the implementing partners, youth local councils and other stakeholders of the support to the role of Civil Society Organizations and youth in local public oversight, it is believed that project performance targets and intended results were achieved. As the field study had identified, the following sample activities were implemented in the 4 geographic locations:

1. **In Qalqilya** – they youth local council implemented a Zoo management project. Their activities were focused on enhancing tourism and hence did the following:
    a. Produced the first zoo map and information plaques for each animal according to international standards (animal identify and information cards),
    b. Conducted a series of First aid training to zoo employees as part of capacity development and enhancement.
    c. Developed a face book page for the zoo and updated it with valuable data.
    d. Youth local council also tried to conduct a social media campaign and TV casting to encourage the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism to include the zoo on the Palestinian tourism map, to commensurate their successful efforts to attain membership in the European Association for Zoo and Aquaria (EAZA), which was only possible through the youth council who alleviated the level of provided services and enhanced accessibility to the Zoo.
    e. Besides, the youth local council and Qalqiliya Zoo staff produced a video to promote the Zoo and enhance access to its facilities. This flagship activity and

idea of the video replicated previous EAZA experiences. (Reference https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrTz-NejOyA.)

2. **In Jericho –** the youth local council initiated a community priority need to "Keeping Jericho Clean". Their activities focused on the following:

   a. Community mobilization initiative. They divided Jericho to 16 neighborhood committees to promote the cleanliness of the areas; Organized 'Jericho's most Beautiful Neighborhood' Competition which was based on the extent to which the neighborhoods were committed counteracting negative habits: throwing garbage on the floor, placing garbage at home entrances, flooding water in the streets, etc…. the flagship activity was topped up with developing a documentary video that became viral on You tube and social media networks. It was also screened at a number of neighborhoods in Jericho and distributed to other organizations. (Reference: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZWh8CPPcbI).

   b. Held the municipality accountable for health and environmental conditions

   c. Established a one-time rewarding system through a neighborhoods competition to improve services; and the wining area was offered the cleanest neighborhood prize

3. **In Beit Fajjar** – the youth local council focused on the treatment of the industrial sludge waste from stone factories. Their activities were mainly focused on:

   a. Safety instructions and information plates that were put up in selected factories and became a standard requirement for safety in the work place.

   b. They facilitated dialogue between citizens and the municipality on several occasions, and in others, they represented the municipality in community events. One of the important achievements of the Youth Local Council in Beit Fajjar was to initiate dialogue between citizens and the Beit Fajjar municipality who lacked the open door policy; people for the first time attended public municipal meeting that led to building trust between them.

   c. Other flagship activities that were undertaken in Beit Fajjar includes producing two videos (i) to promote the Municipal services, which were initiated by the YLC to ensure efficient and effective cooperation with the Municipality. (Check the link for the reference: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfaeBDUifaw). (ii) to promote the stone manufacturing in Beit Fajjar and its importance to the Palestinian economy and exposes their cooperation to ensure commitment to the initiative and abiding to safety to preserve the environment. (Reference link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOiNo6U3uAo)

4. **In Nusseirate (Gaza Strip)** – the youth local council focused their efforts on Street lighting and garbage collection. Their activities were focused on:

   a. Youth, Community Based Organizations and the municipality drafted and won a grant project proposal for a sustainable solar panel street lighting to reduce electricity costs.

b. They conducted several awareness campaigns to clean neighborhoods. In addition, offered a series of training workshops for kids at schools about the importance of environmental health and cleanliness.

c. Created a face book page for clean Nusseirate initiative. Succeeded to create a link for coordination and collaboration between the municipality and the refugee camp for the cleaning services and joint work tasks among them for the benefit of the community.

d. During the international UNV day, they worked with the community for clean Nusseirate. This volunteerism brought the citizens closer to their local government decision makers. Focus group discussion with youth local council members attested that the day event facilitated a good relationship among different stakeholders. For instance in the awareness cleaning campaign conducted, UNRWAs cooperated with youth volunteers and provided them with cleaning tools and workers to implement the activity, and that UNRWA now welcomes more future coordination and cooperation with youth group to provide services to the refugees.

e. They supported other flagship activities like a shelter management through the latest aggression during the War on Gaza. During June / July 2014, they took a civic engagement initiative to cooperate with the municipality to support 2000 persons residing in shelters. They organized recreational activities focusing on how to keep the environment clean and how to safely dispose garbage; they provided families with sanitary and plastic bags to improve sanitary and health conditions in the shelters.

5. Besides, there were other activities that the UNDP project undertook that added value to the project's achievements and were considered an important contribution to advancing social accountability practices in Palestine. It included the following:

a. Development of Social accountability tools, mainly training on community scorecards among other different tools for public hearings, conducting interviews and surveys, etc.) This was followed by a series of public meetings conducted in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to facilitate social accountability practices, mainly questioning public officials to providing quality services, understanding municipal problems encountered and how to engage community participation in the municipality planning and implementation of services, etc.

b. Implementing the community scorecard in the different 4 geographic locations. This was done in consultation with CSOs, municipalities, youth local councils and communities at large. Youth local council members expressed repeatedly that as a result of the project, positive relationship was built between youth and their respective municipal staff that evolved to a strong mutual trust. As one youth member from Gaza stated: *"…the project helped in breaking the ice between us and the municipality and now we get closer to the municipality and its department and staff"* *obviously, this relationship facilitates youth access to municipality department and thus access to information.."*

c. Developed a work plan in each geographic area to improve the selection of services where activities were implemented. It is believed that youth local councils in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip geared their efforts towards initiatives that contribute to service delivery improvement and to raise awareness on citizens' involvement.

d. Enhanced capacity development interventions for the CSOs, youth local councils and the selected municipalities in the 4 geographic locations. This included creating a pool of trainers at the local governance level in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to transfer knowledge and experience. In addition, Sharek implementing partner of the West Bank created an electronic platform for youth local council elections guidelines, youth secretariat as incubator for the youth gathering and exchange of information and coordination among different youth local councils, creation of a youth network portal.

e. Limited evidence was captured on the capacity of youth local council to participate in local government elections. Focus group discussions with youth members revealed that poor linkages were made that link all knowledge and skills developed in social accountability during and after the project to effectively participate in local governance municipal elections. It should be noted that the evaluators are aware of the fact that local government elections are governed by complicated social and political dynamics beyond the capacity of a small scale pilot project to influence.

f. Al-Karmel in Gaza Strip provided training of trainers for the youth local council members in several parts of capacity development.

g. Supported a campaign for anti-corruption day focusing on the role of the youth. From the various focus group discussions in West Bank and Gaza strip, many youth local council members explained that the project has eliminated many communication barriers between youth and the relevant municipality which made practicing social accountability effortless. As a youth council member from Gaza explained: "… *I remember after the project came to closure, we continued to provide services to the municipality. Once I went to the mayor and talked to him about corruption conduct of one of the municipality staff. The mayor took the matter seriously, he investigated this matter and took the right decision in this regards....*" He also confirmed that the youth local council members continue to supporting community initiatives like assisting in the rehabilitation to public places to enable people with disabilities easy access to municipal services.

h. Supported short films and reports for the achievement of initiatives, radio and TV programme participation, open discussion sessions held regarding social accountability practices and discuss future plans, etc.

i. Produced several advocacy and capacity building materials on raising awareness and rights of citizens which streamlines more citizen participation and response to promote democratic governance best practices.

j. Sharek youth forum in the West Bank created a youth local council network (Youth Local Secretariat). The launching event included representatives from the UNDP, Ministry of Local Governance, President of Jericho Municipality,

representative from the Higher Council for Youth and Sports, and representatives from the Youth Local Councils. A video was produced to document the launching (Referencing links: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFjznVfCFo4, and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltQ0PiNHEkg).

3.3 Coherence and cohesiveness with Similar Projects among Different Stakeholders supporting Youth Local Councils Social Accountability projects:

Many community activists explain that public governance is a shared responsibility. It is not only the work of people in office but also a duty of all citizens. The quality of life of a society is inextricably linked to the quality of public good governance. Thus, it's everyone's business to improve our public institutions. With this in mind, it becomes imperative that the coordination and cohesion of Social Accountability efforts and interventions with other partners is crucial to complement efforts and avoid duplication. There is available data to suggest donor interest in implementing social accountability mechanisms in Palestine, especially when Social accountability appears to be the flavor of the day among all major donors, with multiple interventions backed by large budgets.

During the field study, the team observed many donors working on social accountability practices with youth local councils, civil society organizations, media and other major players within selected local government units and communities. For instance, the UNDP's Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund was channeled towards creating the Integrity Toolkit that aimed at evaluating the transparency and integrity of LGUs. Another example is the World Bank's fourth Palestinian NGO project (PNGO IV) that included the adoption of a number of social accountability mechanisms. Another is the GIZ Germany project that enhances knowledge and work on social accountability best practices with Local Government Units in Palestine. The British Council (Tajaawob project) that is implemented by a British Council consortium including MIFTAH, AMAN, Palvision, Oxfam and BBC Media Action. Other USAID contractors, mainly IREX project that focused on capacity building, professional development for stakeholders, partnership development, internship programs, innovative media and leadership training, mainly for youth in Palestine and the Global Communities (partners for Good) who are helping young Palestinians build job skills through the Engineering Fellows Program and promoting youth involvement in democracy and local governance through established 25 Youth Local Councils. Their main objective of the project is to use and help communities to use a variety of traditional and innovative tools and spaces to persuade the authorities to improve services and policies.

Group conformity and group-think are two of the potential hazards of high group cohesiveness. Group conformity happens when different team members and major players within any specific community, adopt similar behaviors, usually in an attempt to fit in or to reduce disagreements between group members. This set of behaviors becomes the group's norm that may cause lowered productivity or lack of creativity and innovation to make constructive decisions. However, it was observed that each of those donors has their own specific agendas, and only

modest coordination among them have been foreseen and much efforts are needed to build and encourage coordination and cohesion among those different stakeholders for bridging the interest of those donors in social accountability with that of the civil society and media that can expand the impact of social accountability interventions. Lots of opportunities can present themselves for Donor group conformity to work together and improve both work related initiatives and impact to advance social accountability and the livelihoods of marginalized communities.

Unfortunately, this suggested that influential civil society and media actors in the field of accountability, especially in Palestine, are yet to be seen in integrating the synergy for these roles to joining efforts with partners for the success of social accountability interventions to become higher. As have been observed during the field visits and interviews conducted, there is limited constructive cohesion and coordination among different donors working with youth programs in the geographic location that the evaluation team visited, except what was conveyed in few instances of cooperation with GIZ Germany and the British Council Consortium, mainly in Qalqiliya municipality in the West Bank, to ensure joint work and avoid duplication of efforts while working in the public oversight and accountability field on the municipality level, which created an impression rather than real synergy on the ground. That enabled them to share information and opportunities, helped develop or sustain new and exciting ideas and to work together with and encourage local grass root organizations and other stakeholders to find solutions to public issues that impact on their local communities and more importantly involve better support to young people and community groups in general to the public reform process and good governance practices.

3.4 Factors Affecting Sustainability:

In general terms and during project implementation, the trend towards project sustainability was showing significant improvement as the project implementation progressed, yet with the post implementation sustainability remains a major challenge. Many projects and initiatives implemented tend to experience difficulties with sustainability, because of the general trend of major donors and other bilateral aid agencies who do not continue supporting project initiatives after their post implementation and projects come to closure.

As the pilot phase of the project came to closure, further development became necessary to consolidate the gains achieved over almost the 12 months of the life of the project. The evaluation team identified that the strategic and technical approaches employed have confirmed that sustainability was built in from the start. All assistance was provided by UNDP in collaboration with the main concept of service delivery within existing systems and structures of the implementing partners, local government units (municipalities) and the youth local councils enrolled in the project activities in the West Bank and Gaza strip.

The team also assessed partner's approach and plan for sustainability. UNDP, Sharek and Al-Karmel personnel interviewed generally felt that the youth local councils and the initiatives

implemented has made considerable contributions in developing a comprehensive community service delivery activities in the supported 4 geographic locations of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These respondents mentioned that factors improving sustainability include group contributions (Human resources and financial), support and commitment of the municipalities involved in the project towards the provision of needed community services, supportive alignment working within government systems to promote aid effectiveness, and supplies and other operating costs.

3.4.1 Factors that Enabled Sustainability of Project Interventions:

Drawing on the findings of the desk review, as well as the recent initiatives taken by the different partners in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, mark the enabling factors that contributed to ensuring aspects of sustainability of the outcomes and impact of the UNDP supported project in the 4 geographic locations. These are summarized in the following points:

1. **Effective linkages between project components** - A key element in sustainable project outcomes is a design based on a holistic consideration for community needs and opportunities. Specific examples of effective linkages noted in the field visits include:
   a. On youth – all participants agreed that the project made a considerable change in the mind-set of the local community members, attitude and behavior. They have cited that youth sense of social accountability and oversight instruments had significantly increased. As one youth council member stated: *"… we became more sensitive to our community needs and generally more sensitive to social work; the project was like the electrical shock that revived the youth council and brought it back to life…"*
   b. The agreement with Sharek in the West Bank and Al-Karmel in Gaza proved very efficient to implementing the various activities of the project. Those implementing partners have the capacity, knowhow, strong constituency of youth forums, mobility and expertise to implement community based initiatives. Executive and project managers of implementing partners confirmed that a positive change in developmental and community think tank and how the youth speak and dialogue with public officials had encouraged them to take the extra mile to achieve better results.
   c. Broad mixes of interventions, as a set, responded well to the observed and expressed needs of communities.
   d. Activities were expanded to include a forum for awareness, capacity building and training workshops on social accountability that would strengthen community participation and mobilization efforts that address social problems within the 4 geographic localities.

2. **Community participation** - While many development projects include participatory measures in the design, they obtain sustainable results through putting into practice sound concepts, focused dedication, careful monitoring, and appropriate adaptive

measures when necessary. Successful projects use bottom-up planning to determine priorities and then accurately reflect community needs in project design. Designs with promising sustainability results include plans for communities to promote a greater sense of ownership. The following are specific examples of successful community participation instilled by the project and was noted during field visits:

a. Community priorities were assessed during the design phase; activities to be implemented were concluded using participatory approaches. They were selected based on community priorities and implemented with significant local contributions of all stakeholders involved which strengthened the relationship with the local groups (public officials, citizens, CSOs and other community representatives).

b. By successfully integrating local government stakeholders into the role of youth to support social accountability and oversight helped establish local ownership of the project and significantly increased awareness among government units of the project development model.

c. Flexibility in design expands the ability of a project to be demand-driven, with community grown initiatives that take advantage of local knowledge and practices and promote community ownership and sustainability.

3. **Building on existing assets and knowledge** - Community participation in and ownership of initiatives – and thus their sustainability – is much greater when implementing agencies draw on existing practices and engage established community institutions, like Sharek and Al-karmel, and other existing youth local councils, as opposed to creating new structures and mechanisms. By building on existing community assets and knowledge, development agencies can promote positive community attitudes towards collaboration and collective decision-making, as well as support social cohesion by strengthening internal relationships within the communities served.

3.4.2 Constraining Factors affecting Sustainability:

The desk review and field visits conducted in the West Bank and Gaza Strip found that the future sustainability among the number of initiatives implemented was constrained by the conspicuous absence of one or more key enabling factors.

1. The accurate contextual, institutional and opportunity analyses to provide clear guidance on project design and intention that will enable the implementing partners and other stakeholders to conduct accurate and sophisticated needs assessments.

2. Insufficient attention paid to creating effective linkages among different sectors (private and public), CSOs, community leaders, media outlets, community bodies and institutions, etc. When dealing with social accountability and oversight, it is important to facilitate discussions among all sectors within the communities, advocate for change and help see the importance of linking different components for the benefit of the community at large. (such as town hall meetings, public hearings, peaceful field demonstrations, training, financial services and infrastructure, etc.)

3. Underinvestment in institutional strengthening, capacity development and the level of funding resources allocated to community initiatives, could give rise to inefficient municipal and managerial decisions. Rather than engaging youth local councils and community activists to mobilize for resource contribution and fundraising to meet needs and priorities at the local government level, we need to build approaches for constructively engaging community specific initiatives to perform certain oversight and accountability functions. Youth local council members and community local activists need to be involved from the start of projects; they need to be viewed as value added community members who can be useful and are a good source of advice to draw upon by the local government units and community at large.

4. Insufficient time and resources to the promotion of wider and active community participation, collaboration and collective decision-making necessary to ensuring social accountability. The insufficient technical and implementation support, coupled with short project time frames reduce partnerships networks, limit capacity-building for enabling communities to acquire the ongoing financing needed to sustainably improve community livelihoods.

3.5 Impact of the Project on the Youth and Local Communities:

The impacts of the project in the four locations where it was implemented were diverse, and particularly positive with regard to the individual Youth Council members and the influence they were able to achieve within their communities on the personal and professional level. The youth local councils developed a number of skills and the opportunity to explore a professional magnitude to become future leaders in their communities, offered constructive input on community needs, and were inspired to think about how they can inform and encourage confidence building around the voices of young people in their own community to reconsider their own approaches to participatory work.

On the overall, the current pilot phase of the project had positive impact and effects on a range of areas that we try to outline below:

Individual impact –the greatest impacts of the project on social accountability have been on those young people who remained engaged throughout the duration of the project. There is evidence to suggest that, for many, their involvement was a transformative life experience. In particular, Youth Council members benefitted from participating in the project in the following aspects including but not limited to the following:

1. Skills – young people gained new, or extended existing, skills, as several Youth Council members from the West Bank and Gaza explained: *'The Youth Local Council has had a good impact on the young people involved, overall they have been able to develop many project management and organizational skills.'*

2. Professional development ('networking') – Several Youth Local Council members had the opportunity to develop professionally in a range of areas. Many young people gained a clear idea of their professional goals and have been substantially helped to begin achieving them. In particular, many young people benefitted from networking opportunities with community leadership. Many youth local council members and even community leaders who were interviewed reported that *"…. Networking has been a major advantage for our work and collaboration on the local community level…',*

3. Personal development - Many young people felt that the experience of the youth local council had enabled them to develop on a personal level. A significant increase in confidence was reported. One youth council member explained that this experience helped him to further himself *"… I gained amazing opportunities, experience, help with big life decisions…."* Another member was quoted saying: *"… the event was superb for the young people's confidence and sense of achievement for actually making things happen. I watched them blossom, their confidence grew, they became more articulate and had a greater sense of themselves…"* A third youth local council member felt that she was more ready to take on challenges: *"… It made me step outside my comfort zone."*

Nonetheless, the assessment team believes that it is too early to determine the wider impact of the youth local councils on social accountability practices, policy formulation and influence decision making agendas within their communities. This is due to the flexible project management model that was put in place that evolved in response to the changing community needs, priorities, demands and understanding of civic engagement by the different stakeholders and youth local councils, implementing partners and municipal stakeholders.

The evaluation team believes that the project implementation focused more on becoming a vehicle for promoting creative thinking about social change efforts, tap on local resource that can significantly contribute towards taking effective actions on broader view of the community problems, stepping up towards planning for activities and factors that help mitigate the problem for the benefit of the community. In other terms, the youth local council concept of implementing Social accountability in this project is a new model that has being developed by the young for tackling entrenched problems in areas where community capacity is low and where public services of local authorities have difficulty engaging local community representatives and citizens in proper civic engagement. While this direction in the project implementation; can be considered a good strategy for gaining the trust and ownership of local communities and stakeholders, it had also moved the project towards a service-delivery initiative that builds collaborative relationships and structures within the communities, develop future youth leadership and promotes positive social dialogue, encourages active literacy across boundaries of age, race, class, gender, culture, and sexual orientation, but does not consensually encourage institutionalized practices of participatory decision-making. On the other hand, and taking into account the characteristics of the project objectives, the emphasis on social accountability systems is not a conventional service-delivery initiative. It has a growing recognition focus from the immediacy of service delivery to the long-term systems-change work

between citizens and civil society to play a vital role with regards to enhancing accountability of public officials, reducing corruption and leakage of public funds and improving public service delivery. As a result, Social Accountability becomes an attractive approach to both the public sector and civil society for improving good governance and reform processes, service delivery outcomes, and improving resource allocation decisions.

Nonetheless, field visits, interviews and focus group discussions have proven that social accountability practices through community control over finances, public services and assets brings threats of fragmentation, mismanagement of public goods, politicization of community issues, and the potential for localized power to create or exaggerate community disparity and division. This has influenced both, the focus on social accountability practices to find ways to achieve a balance between giving communities some influence or control over local issues, and ensuring that local action did not encourage communities to compete or become inward-looking. On the other hand, some interviewees, mainly local authorities, felt a great risk and hence bigger conflict between different social local networks especially when giving communities direct influence over local decisions or resources. Our field research study identified three main categories of risk associated with stronger community governance:

a. Risks associated with the inclusiveness, accountability and performance of youth local council bodies raises important questions about the legitimacy, institutional framework and status of such representative bodies within the community that highlights a wide variation in capacity and influence to affect positive change within the community.
b. Risks associated with institutional commitment and capacity to empower on both ends, (1) youth local councils and other community representatives in social accountability and good governance reform best practices, and (2) strengthen the lack of capacity within local authorities to make local community governance a practical reality.
c. Risks associated with community capacity and social community capital, such as the huge variation in levels of social support and practical skills within the community. This could mean that more affluent communities and local authorities disproportionately benefit from new opportunities for local actions, because they are more able to organize, articulate their needs and interests, and raise funds to mitigate them.

3.6 Challenges / Lessons Learned:

Building healthy local communities, participation and greater civic engagement for enhancing reform and social accountability practices, remains a very long-term goal towards which UNDP through Sharek and Al-Karmel has just began to establish with the current pilot project. In addition, the political circumstances of the time period by which the evaluation team has implemented the assignment was very unusual, making the task of extracting "lessons learned" that might be applicable in other contexts extremely difficult. The key challenges and lessons learned on the project:

Lesson 1: Under the current political circumstances, it takes time to build the trust necessary to convince communities especially the marginalized youth and women to participate in the formulation of community civic engagement and decision making. At only twelve months life interval of the pilot project and prior to the no cost extension, the primary challenge of the project was achieving concrete results in this short period of time. This was made especially difficult due to the political environment in West Bank and the Gaza Strip that is surrounding final status negotiations with Israel that could allow the communities to look internally at their own community affairs, or the deadlock in reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah that could have assisted in disseminating the experience more efficiently among the different PA institutions, communities and Partners who may have been a little hesitant during every phase of the project, from youth facilitators team selection to project implementation. For example, Al-Karmel in Gaza Strip had difficult time during the early stages of the project to mobilize the community in Nuseirate, particularly youth, to participate, although series of meetings were held with community and youth leaders to convince them that the project would bring benefit to their communities. Had the project been held over an extended time span, it would have been possible to build trust among marginalized communities and gradually encourage more diverse participation in project activities (i.e. women, youth and other marginalized groups).

Lesson 2: Plan for the need to build capacity in basic project design, proposal writing and financial management. A Review of the project in the four participating communities showed that the two implementing partners had worked previously on community development projects, but lacked the experience of transforming this knowledge and expertise to build the institutional capacity of the present youth local councils that were formed. The evaluation team found that in both cases of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, youth local councils lack experience dealing with donors, proposal development and/or community development; they even expressed a much more difficult conceptualizing the goals and objectives of developing the projects that met community needs and criteria. The implementing partners (Sharek youth forum, Al-Karmel and even the municipalities in the 4 geographic locations) see international development work, particularly when it comes to municipal services, as infrastructure repair or construction and had trouble envisioning the benefit in human capacity development to mitigate conflict and promote community welfare. The analytical process of diagnosing issues in a community and then coming up with concrete, logical projects that contribute to solving those problems is a learned skill. The implementing partners were specifically chosen because they had the relative foundations and youth base to implement the project efficiently in the served areas, but upon implementation, they needed a lot of help in the methodology to roll out this expertise vertically to the youth local councils participating in the project and horizontally to other municipalities in Palestine. Both partners should have included at least one person from an NGO, private sector, Local government, media and other stakeholders working within the community in the project design and implementation experience who could help enhance and institute social accountability best practices, and more time should have been spent training facilitators and project team formulation in these important skills.

Lesson 3: Engaging youth local councils in developing effective community driven behaviors increases success to greater civic participation. However, youth today are less likely than those

in earlier generations to exhibit many important characteristics of active citizenship. Although local government units, policymakers and public officials across the West bank and Gaza Strip are working to engage youth in positive opportunities for civic participation and good governance practices, which are important for healthy youth development, partnerships and performance of democracy, yet in spite of these efforts, the evaluation team found that many young people between ages of 18 to 24 do not understand the principals of citizenship, are disengaged from the political process, lack the knowledge necessary for effective government and have a limited appreciation of democracy.

Lesson 4: Although citizens, youth local councils, and other community leaders wanted to participate in local governance decisions, yet remained a challenge to some municipal government authorities like Beit Fajjar to address the issue of not taking citizen priorities into account in decision-making processes. In particular, this was due to the disparity and disconnect between the government units and local community, citizens and marginalized groups like youth who felt that they, in particular, had little say in how municipal resources were distributed, which led to tension and conflict. However, the social accountability "Citizen: Decision-making Factor" in the Sharek/UNDP project resulted in the revitalization of the youth local council, an informal local democratic structure that ensure the concerns and needs of the community in Beit Fajjar where an unprecedented opportunity was provided to community representatives, NGOs, local businesses and minorities to engage in a productive dialogue with their municipality for the well-being of the community. Often, the timing and procedures involved were so complex, civic engagement has been difficult in understanding when and how to approach their local government about identifying priorities and how to help citizens participate more fully in the resource allocation in economic development decisions of their local government. The most common concern amongst all the youth local councils was that the depressed economy and lack of job opportunities made envisioning a shared, prosperous future that enhances the embedded democratic reform best practices, social accountability and advocacy extremely difficult.

Lesson 5: Investing in human capital for sustainable results leaves behind an important resource in the participating communities: the participants themselves. The project incorporated three important levels of human capital investment:
   a. Firstly, the youth local councils themselves are to be commended for their personal commitment, leadership and hard work in the community service delivery that was envisioned within the community activism in project implementation within the 4 geographic communities of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. During this project, they can easily be categorized as issue-specific youth local council groups, who are embodied to share a common focus on an issue; they not only received training, but also had a chance to put that training to use while leading implementation of community identified needs and initiatives in their municipalities.
   b. Secondly, the coaching and mentoring support of Partners helped them to successfully lead complex planning processes, including mediating difficult disputes that arose. For example, having worked within a diversified team of youth council members and community leaders, the youth local councils have developed relationships of trust and

familiarity with each other. This not only provided an important example of internal community cooperation, but also represents a new and dynamic resource that can be built upon, especially when they have gained credibility as leaders within their communities, and hence, can help raise support for new community initiatives in the future. Each of the youth local council representatives that were met, have reported plans to continue working together with the local government units, for the good of their communities past the end of project.

c. The third level of human capital lies within each of the participating municipalities. Implementation of the small grants required the intensive cooperation of people from all sectors within each community / geographic location. The web of cooperative relationships between stakeholders in these communities is an important, if intangible, sustainable resource that will serve them well in the difficult years to come.

Lesson 6: There has been increased political focus on the need to boost opportunities for both individuals and collective communities, to influence the reform process in Palestine with a strong message about the need to involve citizens in decision making and service provision, both on the national and local government levels. However, this forward thinking in local authorities have been testing innovative models to involve citizens, support local councilors and devolve powers to communities. Despite the unique circumstances of each targeted area in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, we found that many of the challenges local authorities face were found to be critical to developing appropriate and effective work structures; nurturing and supporting the institutional capacity of the people involved to managing change, the processes through which community decisions are made; and creating the right organizational structure and culture where clear leadership fosters and supports good working relationships and innovation at the very local level.

Based on the field studies conducted with different partners and stakeholders to the UNDP/PAPP project, we conclude that it is most often the way in which change is managed locally that has the greatest impact on local empowerment. Citizens and local community representatives want reassurance that their voice will be heard, their skills and experience will be acknowledged and utilized, youth local councils want to know that they will be supported to play a central role locally and how would local government manage these demands well and empowers all the key players, would benefit hugely from the enthusiasm and dedication of all parties concerned and hence together can improve local services and create better communities.

Lesson 7: The project included intensive practical work with local authority partners to help understand community needs, challenges and develop new working solutions to community needs. The work ranged from small initiatives to other events that brought together stakeholders with different local interests to help understand common community problems. It is suggested that UNDP should be more realistic in designing similar initiatives or projects in the future where high synergy among all parties concerned throws away their political disputes and sensitivity for the sake of the community at large if they are to envision their effective role in supporting

oversight and social accountability and hence become agents of change and part of the policy and decision making processes.

Lesson 8: The youth local council experience of working closely with a number of local authorities over the past few months generated the debate and discussion towards the prospect of what was believed to be a strongly revolutionary concept that pushed community dialogue and empowerment up the agenda for local authorities. The 4 projects carried out established a number of common themes running across the different areas, which were being played out in very different contexts. It appeared that in spite of variations in types of areas and the nature of their constituency, local authorities shared similar proceedings and faced the same challenges locally. From the field visits and focus group discussions with public officials, it was observed that building on the priorities of local authority partners, the key focus areas for work weren't to facilitate the role of youth local councils to support oversight and social accountability, the focus was actually embedded on civic and community engagement to mitigate community needs and priorities. As many youth council members noted: "…*The project succeeded in raising awareness and skills in social accountability, public oversight, and community needs assessment. However, we the youth still lack the deep understanding on how these concepts and practices align with the context of good governance and democratic best practices and processes. We still perceive application of these themes through small projects and initiatives. None is able to identify efficiently our role and the role of other CSO and community agencies as a watchdog to ensure that local government units, mainly municipalities are fulfilling their commitments…*"

Lesson 9: Various interviews and focus group discussions revealed that people involved in the project implementation faced different challenges and pressures. Youth local council members were being asked to 'raise their game' against government and local authorities, but often feel that their actions have been a core function of community issue-specific activism. On the other hand, community leaders and public officials felt exhausted and disillusioned of agitating for change and were often dismissed as 'usual suspects' of corruption. Other public officers faced competing demands from youth local council members, citizens, community activists, partners and other services and often carry high levels of risk. Accordingly, local authorities took varying approaches; their decisions were mainly shaped by local politics and the anticipated pressure to meeting community needs, priorities and initiatives. What emerged as key was not the nature of the structures to be created, but the processes that were put in place to shape, design and implement the projects.

Lesson 10: Nurturing people in each of these diverse roles is important to enable them to develop the skills, experience and trust to enter into the sort of mature dialogues needed to resolve complex local issues and innovate to meet community demands, mainly if supporting social accountability and oversight functions becomes the norm. In response to this need to make governance a more tangible, personal and interesting concept for the youth, we need to make the creation of a youth local council as the center-piece of the youth local agenda. This idea will allow a broader youth-base to participate in governance and in the process, account the local leadership on their promises during elections, and resume better understanding of

social accountability dimensions from participation, transparency, to oversight and accountability. It is a proactive form of political engagement where we give the opportunity to directly engage political power based on a youth agenda that we articulate and at the same time amplify through individual advocacies at a community wide level. The unfolding story hopes to serve as an alternative model for youth empowerment where existing organized youth groups, which are more cohesive, grounded and neutral, are given the tools to widen their advocacy and given a seat at the table of informed decisions and policy-making. In the long run, this can spur a culture of engaged citizenship among the young and a sense of communal ownership of the solutions as well as the challenges of the community.

Lesson 11: The theme of embedding community engagement in local authority structures and practice emerged throughout the life span of the project. However, differences in the understanding of their role and responsibility emerged. This was especially seen within the community civic engagement agendas that conflicted with other local government policy imperatives that pre-empts the outcomes of consultation and advisory exercise offered by the youth local councils in informing proper decision making. In order to enhance this civic engagement, the youth local council must undergo a makeover; they need restructuring through new elections, drafting of internal legislations and laws to enable youth council real institutionalization process under the umbrella of a PA ministry (maybe Supreme Council for Youth and Sports), incubate youth councils as advisory congress at the municipal level, and allocate a financial support mechanisms to fulfill their role in building democratic communities. It is important not to underestimate: fear of change, reluctance to / or abandon established 'comfort zones' and relying on entrenched stereotypes, etc; that are all common amongst local authority officers, other public services and community groups.

Lesson 12: Social accountability in the Palestinian context is a challenge **-** Because Palestine is under occupation and the Palestinian National Authority do not seize control on most of the land, natural resources, its borders and the movement of its citizens, the division of its territories between two distinctive geographic locations embodied with existing two governments (PA in the West Bank and the De Facto Hamas government in Gaza); because of this split, citizens in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip deal with two different governmental bodies, that exposes major impediments in front of an effective social accountability. These may include:
1. Israeli occupation, a pretext to justify shortcomings in delivery, performance and the ability of the Palestinian government institutions to reflect on the effectiveness of public service delivery;
2. The weakness of representative bodies and effective community government institutions; this is reflected in the weakness and disconnect in the relationship between elected elites of public officials in local government units and citizens.
3. The weakness of the judicial system and its impact on the internal policies of government and other institutions, particularly the influence of factional climate (Fattah PLO, Hamas, Islamic front, etc.), nepotism and favoritism, that impedes effective civic engagement and core principles for social accountability.

4. Conclusions:

The UNDP project demonstrated that it is possible to run civic engagement and social accountability projects at a small scale in the current complicated political environment, even when projects adequately or modestly achieve specific objectives and targets. Despite having the perspective of only one year life span under the pilot phase project prior to the no cost extension, Partners have seen significant progress towards greater integration and cooperation as a result of the project, more support was foreseen on the role of youth to support oversight and social accountability practices.

The target communities were deliberately chosen, but Partners believe that the projects could be expanded to include other, perhaps even more challenging municipalities. Were the UNDP project is to be replicated and scaled up, it would have to be longer to allow better tracking of project outcomes and to give time for more community mobilization efforts, and involvement of more communities. We hope that these community projects, however small, are the beginning of further participatory, community-based civic engagement efforts in Palestine.

The experience of youth supporting social accountability and oversight role demonstrates that, at the local level, there is an enormous amount of enthusiasm and commitment among community activists, citizens, elected officials and frontline officers for localization and community empowerment. The youth local council members and implementing partners carried out this work because they believed they had a commitment to increasing the empowerment of local communities. For decades community activists have been trying to push local government units, including local authorities, to be more responsive and to devolve more power and control to their citizens. If this work is to be nurtured, it is vital that more citizens are encouraged to become involved in local activism and those local authorities and other community service providers are supported to develop their strategies. Government in its national policies and strategies must be clear about the expectations it has regarding ways in which local people should be empowered and given a voice.

5. Recommendations:

Programming recommendations for future similar interventions:

1. There are innumerable benefits to fostering an active and engaged exercise of citizenship among youth, which are not limited to the potential contributions that they can make to shape their immediate and future contextual state of affairs, but has a performative or practical dimension which is manifested in the active exercise and fulfilment of these rights, roles and responsibilities through civic engagement, democratic action, and political dialogue and decision-making participation. In this respect, youth who are active, engaged and responsible citizens have the tendency to continue maintain such active role, and invest in an aware, educated and well-informed citizenry that has important implications for economic and community developmental needs and growth. This active citizenship fosters

productive civic engagement, trust and responsibility, and reduces opportunities for youth's frustrations, negative social behaviors and violence. With this in mind, we need to foster youth participation in the decisions that affect them and in the development of their communities, increasing their access to the aforementioned resources and allowing them to create a strong social network. Indeed, citizenship is a continuous process that stems from their participation in, and influencing of decisions and outcomes that affect them, at the personal, family, communal, societal (local, regional and national) levels.

2. By experiencing direct participation in matters that concern them, youth acquire the capacities and skills to foster democratic, good governance and rights-conscious peaceful societies. They develop the ability for critical thinking and learn to take responsibility and become better at making informed decisions. The effective and full realization of this yields several benefits:

    a. It leads to a culture of respect, in which decision-making processes involve negotiation rather than confrontation. Participation is the gateway to citizenship;
    b. It leads to the realization of reciprocal community relation and not a route to individualism and self-interest. This begins with youth local council strategic actions that acknowledge their stake in the issues that concern them; contribute to create safe spaces for youth to express their opinion and participate in decision-making; and enhances their access to information and the media, and increases their capacity and willingness to come together in youth-led organizations and networks.
    c. It enhanced interpersonal communication among all parties, and encourages the youth to get involved in the decisions affecting their communities. It is believed that government services are more efficient and less wasteful when they are informed by the concerns and opinions of their constituency – youth included.
    d. Community-level decisions are the best starting point for building lasting mechanisms for youth participation. Recognizing and facilitating youth's meaningful participation in public decision making helps build a better future for all of society.
    e. Participation is the gateway for active citizenship. It provides youth with a particular knowledge about government and democracy, and strengthens their sense of social accountability and responsibility. To ensure youth's influence over public decision-making processes, local government units must create open and effective mechanisms and structures at the local and national levels for youth to be consulted and have a say in policy formulation and resource allocation. They should also mandate committees, councils and mechanisms in all government institutions, in addition to review of the legal and administrative procedures to ensure youth involvement in important decisions, and raise awareness among adults and youth in general within the communities.

3. Community CBOs, NGOs, Public and Private sector institutions; Youth-led organizations, clubs, etc., must be effectively engaged to develop youth's civic and leadership skills within the geographic areas, as they foster democratic and good governance principles. They are especially important for developing the skills of marginalized youth, giving them

opportunities to express their views, engage them in the most diverse causes within the community, provide peer outreach and effectively advocate for their civic engagement allowing society to become more aware of the community needs, desires and problems.

4. Civic engagement is a powerful way to create, reinforce and expand transferrable skills and an effective conduit to build the stronger communities we envision for rising generation – the Youth. We also know that at the core of these broad range of actions and mechanisms that rely on civic engagement to hold the state to account for its decisions, polices, programs and actions, are the principles of social accountability, inclusion and the effective instrument for intangible networks, relationships and personal interactions that enhances information sharing, cooperation and collective problem-solving, that strengthens trust and a sense of community. With this in mind and in order to carry out effective social accountability practices within the community, citizens, mass media, civil society organizations, private sector, other youth leg-organizations, public and government institutions need to collaborate and work in tandem, to actively utilize their discourse and advocacy efforts to scrutinize public officials, become capable to check and monitor government practices that rises above patronage or partisanship. At the same time, we recognize that there are other complex factors that are involved for these goals to be achieved encourage or prevent participation in civic life. The commitment, obligation and believe of public officials and electoral political leaders within relevant communities, to be open to criticism, engage in dialogue with citizens and civil society groups, explain, justify plans, course of action and results, and work proactively with society to improve honesty, bolster oversight and performance of government and answer for their political decisions that make social accountability easier and more accessible. It is therefore imperative that more community and effective good governance accountability discourse mechanisms are needed to emphasize young adults' access to civic engagement opportunities and to help achieve stronger social cohesion to tackle policy and political issues.

5. Strengthen relationship with existing youth led organizations and groups within the community. Many youth groups may already exist in the communities that have been focusing on various aspects of youth development (social and cultural, sports and entertainment, economic development, etc.). After all, because the Youth Local Council is perceived the new kid on the block, it is critical that they acknowledge the work of these other Youth led organizations and engages them in the work of developing a comprehensive youth service system within the community. It just makes a good sense to build on existing expertise and interest to take advantage of the partnerships already accomplished and to make sure that the groups' focus takes on new energy, communal responsibility and an expanded vision for new challenges within the community for the emerging youth development system.

6. The core principles of social accountability initiatives require interfacing of community representatives with many agencies and branches of government, which makes their executive systems and bureaucracies more involved in accounting for their activities. It is recommended, that for social accountability initiatives to succeed, they need to actively

cultivate the benefits found in many types of governance dimensions, from the planning processes of decentralized governments, to the interface with the diverse community institutions and actors like civil society (CBOs and NGOs), media, public and private sector; who can participate in public dialogue and policy-making processes. When you allow the involvement of an array of national civil society organizations and citizens to participate and engage in programs and activities, you support social accountability processes, advocacy campaigning, enhance citizenship through awareness of rights, build up and increase capacities for political participation, while social movements utilize their networking experiences to bring together government and nongovernment actors together to successfully press local government responsiveness to citizens' rights and agendas.

Forward looking for Youth Engagement – Recommendations for the scaling up of the project:

Successful youth engagement strategies in civic engagement and core principles of social accountability require that youth have genuine and meaningful opportunities to work with each other and with policymakers to impact issues of importance within the society they serve (Society-Centered). Effective initiatives respect the value of young people in public problem-solving and provide young people and adults with information, tools and support to work effectively together with all community stakeholders (NGOS, Youth-led organizations, Media outlets, Private sector, public institutions and other community bodies, etc.), as partners, allowing opportunities for youth to take ownership of parts of the process; mobilize others and become powerful role models. It is important to be inclusive in planning and working with youth, placing particular emphasis on engaging young people who have not traditionally been included in community youth development opportunities. By creating opportunities for youth civic participation and partnership, policymakers promote the healthy development of democracy and good governance, while civic engagement provides young people with core principles and opportunities to gain work experience, acquire new skills, and to learn responsibility and accountability, all while contributing to the good of their communities.

This "society-centered" youth local advisory councils aim to effect change in the attitude and space society gives to youth in general to bring the concerns, desires, and hopes to the forefront of municipal policymaking and programming; work with government to change policy, advocate for human and protection rights, lobby to change social structures to accommodate community and local societal concerns, voice their opinions and guide interventions to address their needs, create a positive environment that enables and encourages youth development, in addition to sensitizing the community to accept qualified youth local councils' members to take on leadership positions. While these activities are primarily society-centered, UNDP needs to also engage in youth-centered activities, such as hosting forums, seminars and workshops and institutional capacity-building where youth can both exchange ideas and develop their own individual skills.

With this in mind, it is important to consider two approaches to the forward looking at youth engagement.

a. Consider the elements for an effective youth engagement within the communities that encourages youth to become active citizens by providing them with opportunities to increase their skills, influence their communities, and learn about good governance to bolster oversight and social accountability through direct participation and consultation.

b. Revitalizing the establishment of an advisory body from youth local councils, youth-led organizations and other community bodies and institutions, to emerge as platforms for community civic engagement to vocalize, partner, participate and connect with one another in real and active ways. These advisory bodies serve as intermediary representatives / agencies to promote information exchange, build leadership, foster civic engagement, and create opportunities for citizens to see and understand their issues in a broader context.

Fostering effective youth, civic and participatory engagement:

1. **Clearly defined purpose and role**. Young people need to understand both what they are doing and the intended outcomes of their actions. Providing them with context and clearly defined expectations allows for a deeper connection to their work. Their involvement in defining the needs and services at the local level, and their participation in the policy formulation and influencing public decision-making adds a new strategic and permanent dimension to municipal services. This has to follow the youth declaration and policy framework that was developed in the Cross-sectoral youth strategy 2011-2013 (first strategic objective) that was issued by the PA Ministry of Youth and Sports. This first strategic objective emphasized the great importance to linking young people to local councils, municipal government units and administrative bodies of youth clubs and institutions; "… promote, integrate, expand and develop youth participation in all spheres of life".

2. **Fair and equal representation.** Youth local councils need to represent the youth they purport to serve fairly; otherwise they risk losing legitimacy with non-member youth. Fair representation from all community clusters in the advisory body helps create a cohesive youth local council that promotes unity among young people. A lack of fair representation potentially marginalizes under-represented youth. Effective youth local councils allow people of different backgrounds, institutions and backgrounds to share their ideas and experiences. They need to make membership requirements and member election processes transparent to prevent misunderstandings about recognized equal representation embodying a cross-spectrum of political and religious affiliations, which can lead to poor perceptions of the council.

3. **Active youth participation.** Youth should be involved in the work of the council in a meaningful way. Youth can easily spot when their participation is tokenistic, decoration or manipulative, and will consequently resent the pretense. In order to retain and truly include the voices of young people, youth must be treated as experts in their own right, must see that their participation is having an impact and are allowed to initiate a series of civil society consultations in open dialogues and integrates their voices into the development of viable macroeconomic policies.

4. **Successful partnerships and relationships.** It is important to develop a nation-wide integrated youth partnerships and relationships, not only with youth councils or organizations in other geographic locations in the West Bank and Gaza, but also with government entities, institutions and other community bodies. The intention is to help demonstrate techniques, teach youth applicable skills, and enhance the capacity of youth councils' ability to succeed with activities and uphold positive attitudes and motivations to create and implement successful networks.

5. **Clear communication -** both internal and external. Within the council itself, it is necessary to establish a system of communication that can be very helpful in ensuring the smooth functioning of the council. For example, setting meeting agendas ahead of time and having weekly updates on the work of the council contributes to the council's success. External communications, such as identifying the target audience(s) and devising a communication strategy to ensure timely and accurate information, can elevate the visibility of a youth council and further promote its work.

Youth are often designated as "the future"; thus, promoting youth development through effective participation clearly benefits future societies. To cultivate the growth of effective youth local advisory councils and ignite a new wave of effective civic engagement, several goals may be achieved. They are the following:

a. Connect young people in state and public affairs, especially on the domestic and local level; thus taking advantage of their involvement in community needs and priorities, utilize their energy, creativity and innovative ideas for the well-being of their relevant communities.

b. Increase the acquisition of young people to the knowledge and skills of community participation, starting with issues that affect their lives directly, and the lives of their families and their surroundings, especially issues of livelihood and service delivery;

c. Encourage and influence the development of public policies and decisions making at the local municipal level to ensure taking into account the interests of groups and social strata, especially young people. This gives them a higher degree of consensus, self-confidence and positive contributors to community needs and priorities, and thus reduces the risk of marginalization, neglect and community belonging.

d. Above all, it remains critical to learn and understand the essential elements for success, and extrapolate key lessons learned from the challenges often encountered.

Creating a New Youth Local Advisory Council

UNDP can create their own youth local advisory councils to help further their work. The council members can (i) serve as advisors to UNDP governance programme to support the role of oversight and social accountability. (ii) bring a valuable perspective on how to better engage young people in the process of development planning at community level, (iii) tap to participate with UNDP team that is working to design new youth projects and initiatives, and (iv) act as intermediaries between UNDP and other youth organizations to support the exchange of ideas and information regarding youth-related community developmental initiatives.

Steps to Create a Youth Local Advisory Council

As noted earlier, it is important to have a clear purpose and objective for the youth local council. This should be developed at the outset so that staff members and youth council members can create appropriate expectations and prepare appropriately for their roles and responsibility, create selection criteria and choose a method for identifying and recruiting members of the youth local council through nomination process. Important factors to keep in mind during this process include diversity and representation, including age, gender, background, and experience; level of motivation and commitment required to particular issues like anti-corruption, oversight and accountability; ability to plan and execute with other youth activities on democracy and governance issues, etc.

Steps to Work with Existing Youth Councils

1. Decide which type of relationship is desirable: will it be for a project "issue-specific", or will it be more in-depth "society-specific"?
2. Identify all youth local councils that already operate in the geographic area of interest (e.g., governorate, city or village) or in the issue area of interest (e.g., civic education, anti-corruption, social accountability, etc.).
3. Evaluate the prospective youth local council partners on several factors. These include:
   a. Representation: Is membership diverse in terms of gender, age and background?
   b. Previous experience: What has the youth local council worked on? What has it achieved to date?
   c. Processes, including communication and membership: Is there a good communication system, both internal and external? Is there access to technology to facilitate communications? What communication style (written or verbal) is commonly used? Does that fit with UNDP needs?
   d. How is membership determined? Is the recruitment process open and transparent?
4. After evaluating the youth local councils, begin discussions with the top youth council choice(s) to identify partnership opportunities. Although the type of partnership desired would have already been determined earlier, some flexibility may facilitate the process of developing a relationship with an existing youth local council. In general, revisiting and discussing the objectives of the partnership during initial conversations with the current youth local council is vital because the participating advisory youth body brings new perspectives that will enrich the way the partnership is implemented.
5. Finally develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which clearly defines the expectations of both UNDP and the newly revitalized youth local advisory council, including funding and partnership objectives.

Few strategies that help promote youth local advisory councils.

Strategy #1 – Provide on-going training in civic participation and engagement and create opportunities for youth advisory councils to interface with elected public officials and policymakers within the localities.

- This can amplify youth voice and support the formation of life-long voting and civic engagement habits;
- Help hold elected officials accountable to the needs of their youth constituents and the community at large.
- Promote and empower youth constituency to engage in society specific issues that they pursue;
- Promote communication and collaboration among all stakeholders' concerned (organizations, institutions, NGOs, media outlets, public officials and local government units) in the localities to conduct civic engagement, accountability, oversight programs and more!
- Promote questioning forums, town hall meetings and others to enable youth to identify issues of importance to their community and peers and grasp opportunities to hold accountable their elected officials and policymakers.

Strategy # 2 Establish opportunities for authentic youth representation in local government

Institutionalizing youth representation in the policymaking process engages young people and helps policymakers make wiser investments and policy decisions responsive to community needs. By creating formal youth local advisory councils and involving them in local municipal mapping and planning efforts, local government policymakers and elected officials encourage civic engagement and participation and enable the advisory councils to identify ways in which policies and programmatic priorities can better serve community developmental and good governance needs.

Strategy #3 - Promote diverse forms of youth service

Youth members who participate in diverse service activities, through the youth local advisory councils, are more likely to become engaged in the community and are more likely to develop a long-lasting sense of civic responsibility and partnership. Engaging youth in a range of service options allows for them to:
- Develop skills and gain experience, while giving back to their communities;
- Allows for local government units to undertake needed community projects while providing young people with opportunities for learning or leading a public awareness campaign. Providing diverse opportunities for youth to engage in community service is a strategy that promotes the development of a new generation of caring and experienced citizens, activists and volunteers.

- Involve a critical mass of youth; define categories of youth expertise to be represented on the council. For example, include youth with expertise in new media and social networking, someone with experience designing or implementing an effective peer advocacy, civic education program, oversight and social accountability mechanisms and/or someone who knows youth culture, etc.
- Enhancing participatory policy making and planning including the monitoring and evaluation of public service delivery encompasses a broad array of social accountability practices. This provides opportunities to engage in online forums and consultations that generate awareness on key topics through local issue seminars, workshops and study circles, deliberative public opinion polling, public hearings, citizen's reports cards and community scorecards, etc.

Overall, a youth local advisory council program increases its chances of success, efficiency, and relevance if it engages young people in its programming, including design, implementation, and evaluation. Youth participation in social groups fosters a feeling of connectedness and belonging, is a way to provide opportunities for youth develop a sense of identity to take on greater responsibilities and, through these real world experiences, build competencies and develop into successful adults.

6. Annexes:

Annex 1 – Evaluation Tools:

External Evaluation of UNDP/PAPP's "Support to the Role of Civil Society Organizations and Youth in Local Public Oversight"
Questionnaire 1: UNDP/PAPP - Interview Questions

Intro:

1) Can you explain your role on the project? UNDP/PAPP's strategies and plans for supporting marginalized groups like youth's meaningful participation initiative? Why?

Coherence and Cohesiveness:
1) What is unique about the project (if anything)?
     a. How did the project relate to and integrate similar initiatives of UNDP in the oPt?
     b. How did the project fill any gaps in beneficiary needs according to UNDP and PA strategies?

2) Does the project overlap or complement any other initiatives your organization is involved with? Can you explain what are they and how they are related?

3) Do you know of other projects that are implemented by other Donors with similar perspective, what are they and is there any coordination among you?

4) How integrated and linked are activities with local stakeholders (CBOs, NGOs, community leaders/representatives)?

Impact:

1) As a result of the project, have you noticed any changes within the youth sector, i.e., behavior, engagement, community participation, trust in local institutions, others? Please explain
2) As a result of the project implementation, do you believe that youth participation enabled them to hold local elected leaders accountable, how and why?
3) As a result of the project, how are the targeted municipalities more accountable to their citizens? Can you please give clarifying examples?
     a. Have accountability mechanisms been strengthened in targeted municipalities? How did you notice that?
4) In your opinion, has the project implementation progress achieved the intended outcomes and outputs; to what extent; is it aligned with the original project documentation?
5) Has the project been able to establish the foundations for long-term impact and social accountability practices within the programs/activities of the partner organizations?
     a. Why/Why not?

6) How would you rate the overall performance of the implementing partners to date – strong, weak, adequate, problematic, or in some other way – and why would you rate it that way?

7) From a donor perspective, are there challenges to organizational development and activity implementation that disproportionately affected project implementation? Can you be more specific? What are they and what causes them?

8) What obstacles challenge the ability of the project to establish a long term impact?

9) Overall, how is the project perceived on the local level?

10) Do you believe that the project has achieved the desired results?
    a. Why/why not?

11) What aspects of the project do you feel should be modified/adjusted to ensure a greater overall impact?

12) According to your understanding, what were some of the project's unintended impacts?
    a. How did the project contribute to unintended impacts?
    b. What do you view as the two most significant constraints on project ability to have a larger impact on public policy and public life?
    c. How would you evaluate your own engagement with the project and implementing partners; which main lessons do you draw from that experience?
    d. In your opinion, what has been the most positive result or impact of donors' engagement to date if any? And what has been the most negative one?

Sustainability / moving forward:

1) Would you be able to make use of the human resources trained in this project?

2) When the funding stops for the project, will you still be engaged/involved with the project? What programmatic recommendations would you propose for moving the project a step forward?

3) How capable are the partner NGOs of implementing similar projects in the future?

4) What can your organization do to further contribute to the project? Or the work of its alumni?

5) What corrections / recommendations can be brought into the project if another phase of the project is funded?

6) Is the project managed/implemented efficiently and effectively?
   a. Do you have any recommendations regarding implementation methodologies and or management implementation strategies?

7) How would you describe / perceive the relationship between the municipalities and implementing partners (Youth), and in your opinion what accounts for the nature of that relationship? What do you consider to be the best example or examples of successful engagement? What could enhance that role? Are you optimistic or less optimistic about the future of this relationship in the future; and Why?

8) What corrections, if any, were brought into the project to ensure medium and long-term sustainability?

Gender and Rights Based Approach:

1) To what degree did the project identify, respond to and integrate the considerations of marginalized populations (gender, youth)?
2) How were gender considerations build into the project at the design stage?
   a. Were any changes made during the project to take into account challenges relating to equal participation?

Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Best Practices

1) What were some challenges faced, and examples of how they were overcome? How risks have been managed?

2) In general, what are some obstacles to building an empowered community for effective participation in local governance in the oPt?
3) What were some lessons learned from the programme? Strengths and weaknesses?
4) How successful is the programme in bringing in and implementing evidence based best practices and technical approaches?
5) Do you have any final comments or recommendations for moving forward?

External Evaluation of UNDP/PAPP's "Support to the Role of Civil Society Organizations and Youth in Local Public Oversight"
Questionnaire 2: Project Partners - Interview Questions

Intro:

1) Can you explain your role on the project?
    a. How do you see project implementation is achieving its anticipated outcomes and outputs?
    b. How aligned are project objectives with the mandate and strategic vision of your organization, and the sector?
2) Overall, what do you see as the main strengths and weaknesses of the project implementation to date? What do you consider to be its main accomplishments but also the key areas in which it has failed?
3) Are there challenges to organizational development and activity implementation that disproportionately affected your implementation? What are they?

Coherence and Cohesiveness:
1) What is unique about the project (if anything)?
    a. How did the project relate to and integrate similar initiatives in the oPt?
    b. How did the project fill any gaps in beneficiary needs?
2) Does the project overlap or complement any other initiatives your organization is involved with?
4) Has donor programming created outstanding redundancies or absorption capacity issues during the project implementation? Conversely, has it left important gaps in assistance? If so, which ones? (If you can provide specific examples to illustrate your answers it would be very helpful to us.)
5) In your opinion, from a programming perspective, which main lessons can be drawn from the various projects and entities that donors have supported thus far on youth programs?

Impact:

1) Overall has the project structure, composition, and elections process been effective in producing the desired results?
    a. Where there any challenges and variations from original design that affected efficiency and effective implementation of project needs, what were they, and how did you come to resolve them?
    b. What would you propose any significant changes for the future?
    c. Were other methodologies used or tried?
2) As a result of the project, have you noticed any changes within the youth sector, i.e., behavior, engagement, community participation, trust in local institutions?

3) As a result of the project, how are the targeted municipalities more accountable to their citizens?
    a. Have accountability mechanisms been strengthened in targeted municipalities?
4) Has the project been able to establish the foundations for long-term impact and social accountability practices within the programs/activities of your organization?
    a. Why/Why not?

5) How well has the project involved the main stakeholders in the local government system?
6) What obstacles challenge the ability of the project to establish a long term impact?
7) Overall, how is the project perceived on the local level?
8) What aspects of the project do you feel should be modified/adjusted to ensure a greater overall impact?
9) How successful have the project activities been in regards to sustainable impact?
10) How integrated and linked are activities with local stakeholders (CBOs, NGOs, community leaders/representatives)?
11) According to your understanding, what were some of the project's unintended impacts?
    a. How did the project contribute to unintended impacts?

Sustainability / moving forward:

1) To what extent have the beneficiaries of the YSLC project successfully gained capacities (directly through training or through the implementation of project activities) that will be remain beyond the life of the intervention.
2) When the funding stops for the project, will you still be engaged/involved with the project? How would you ensure continuity of the activities? What mechanisms will be introduced to continue engaging youth and gender mainstreaming in ongoing activities?
3) What can your organization do to further contribute to the project? Or the work of its alumni? What institutional capacity needs are to sustain and further develop similar project interventions?

4) What corrections, if any, were brought into the project to ensure medium and long-term sustainability?
5) What particular features of the project contributed to producing a long-term impact? repeated question in impact topic

6) Overall, do you think the community and especially the Youth are going in the right direction and are engaged in the right way, or the wrong direction? What makes you think this way?
7) If you were given the chance to change the implementation methodology for an efficient and effective implementation, what would you propose, and why?

Gender and Rights Based Approach:

1) To what degree did the project identify, respond to and integrate the considerations of marginalized populations (gender, youth)?
2) How were gender considerations built into the project?
   a. Were any changes made during the project to take into account challenges relating to equal participation?
3) Has the project in any way improved civic participation among young Palestinian women?
   a. Explain

Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Best Practices

1) What were some challenges faced, and examples of how they were overcome? how risks have been managed?

2) In general, what are some obstacles to building an empowered community for effective participation in local governance in the oPt?
3) What were some lessons learned from the project? Strengths and weaknesses?
4) How successful is the project in bringing in and implementing evidence based best practices and technical approaches?
5) Do you have any final comments or recommendations for moving forward?

External Evaluation of UNDP/PAPP's "Support to the Role of Civil Society Organizations and Youth in Local Public Oversight"
Questionnaire 3: Representatives/focal points at the 4 municipalities - Interview Questions

Intro:
1) How knowledgeable are you of the project; how familiar are you with the methodology? When you heard of the project the first time, what expression / impression first came to your mind. Do you have a rather favorable or rather unfavorable impression and why?
2) Can you explain your role on the project?
3) Can you assist in explaining how the institutional dimensions of implementing and sustaining democratic practices in local government were implemented in your municipality?
4) Can you provide examples of the ways in which your municipality has engaged with the youth project? Were these efforts successful, or rather unsuccessful, and why?
5) In addition to what we have discussed already, what other roles would you like the youth to play in your community?

Impact:

1) In what way does the local government instill good governance practices and trust among youth council members? Local community members?
2) In what way does the local government enhance the skills/capacity of the youth members?
3) Has the project instigated any sort of shift in LGU policies in regards to the youth sector?
4) Has the project instigated any sort of shift in LGU policies in regards to the project 's targeted activities?
5) In what ways does the local government increase the knowledge of the youth members?
6) Overall, how is the project perceived (how satisfied) by the local government?
   a. Discuss.
   b. In which main areas, if any, have youth participation made substantive contributions to public life in your city? Can you provide specific examples of those contributions?
   c. How can the youth participation better support you as a mayor / local council member and how can it better support the community?
   d. What roles do you like them to play or get engaged in your community? Why?

Sustainability:

1) Has the project contributed to any positive and sustainable change within the local government system?

a. Discuss - Many analysts argue that youth engagement and participation has little impact, if any, on government policies and decisions. From your perspective as a mayor / municipal council member, do you think that this assessment is accurate? Why/why not, and can you provide a few relevant illustrations?

b. In your opinion, what are the main strengths and weaknesses of youth participation is in your city? Can you provide specific illustrations of those strengths and weaknesses?

2) Would you like to see the partnership between the CSO/youth council and local government continue?
    a. Why/why not?
    b. To what extent does the municipality intend to continue to engage youth in their activities? What is required to change the culture of the day-to-day business of the municipality towards more youth participation? (talk about communication channels, tools, forums, mechanisms applied for enhancing and encouraging youth participation, etc.).

3) In what way will the local government institutions will enhance skills, capacity and knowledge of the youth directly or indirectly to ensure sustainable civic engagement in local governance ?

4) What can the local government do to improve the project?

5) Are you more optimistic or less optimistic about the future of youth participation in your city? Why?

Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Best Practices

1) What were some challenges faced, and examples of how they were overcome?

2) What were some lessons learned from the project? Strengths and weaknesses?

3) On a local government level, do you have any other suggestions for moving forward with similar projects?

4) What would you recommend to make their engagement more substantive?

External Evaluation of UNDP/PAPP's "Support to the Role of Civil Society Organizations and Youth in Local Public Oversight"
Questionnaire 4: International Development Agencies - Interview Questions

Intro:

1) How familiar are you with the UNDP project?
2) Can you explain your experience relating to similar project in the oPt?

Coherence and Cohesiveness:

1) According to your understanding, what is unique about the UNDP project (if anything)?
   a. How did the project relate to and integrate similar initiatives in the oPt?
   b. How did the project fill any gaps in beneficiary needs?
2) Does the UNDP project overlap or complement any other initiatives your organization is involved with? Can you provide more details?
3) Has there been any coordination, harmonization and complementarity of planning similar youth activities; allocation of resources, etc.?

Impact:

1) As a result of the project, have you noticed any changes within the youth sector, i.e., behavior, engagement, community participation, trust in local institutions?
2) Has the project, or similar project, been able to establish the foundations for long-term social and political change in the oPt?
   a. Why/Why not?
3) In your opinion, What obstacles challenge the ability of the project to establish a long term impact?
4) Overall, how is the project perceived on the local level?
   a. Similar project s?

Sustainability / moving forward:

1) How capable are local CSOs of implementing similar projects in the future?
2) Do you have any recommendations for moving forward? (the same as above)
3) What particular features of the project contributed to producing a long-term impact?
4) how would see an integration / complementary/coordination among International NGOs who would implement similar project in the future?
5) Do you have any final comments or recommendations for moving forward?

Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Best Practices

1) In general, what are some obstacles to building an empowered community for effective participation in local governance in the oPt? Also what are best practices for effective participation in LG

2) What lessons learned from this project or similar projects can be brought into the project if another phase of the project is funded?

External Evaluation of UNDP/PAPP's "Support to the Role of Civil Society Organizations and Youth in Local Public Oversight"
Questionnaire 5: Guiding questions for focus groups with youth beneficiaries (Youth Local Council Representatives)

Target Group	
Moderators	
Moderators assistant	
Location	
Date	

No.	Name	Age	Contact Number
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			

Intro:

1) Can you describe your experience with the youth council and the project overall?
2) Please explain about the major activities undertaken by your council related to the project:

Impact:

1) Explain the relationship that youth council members have with LGUs. Specifically in regard to support, responsiveness, and overall interaction.
2) How did the project lead to enhanced social accountability in your municipality?
3) How the project led to increased trust between LGUs and youth? The overall community?
4) To what extent is youth council members involved in community decision making and/or local activities?
5) Has the project been used as a tool to raise issues regarding youth service plans and policies, or to raise matters that concern them (youth) with relevant institutions?
   a. Has this been effective?
6) What have been the long-term changes to youth and community? Can these changes be attributed to the project? Please give some evidences on this change(s).

7) Were trainings received linked in any way to project activities?
   a. Explain and give examples.
8) Please describe your experience developing the community score cards.

Sustainability:

1) As youth council members, do you feel a sense of ownership over the council concept?
2) To what extent have the members successfully gained skills, knowledge and capacities (directly through training or through the implementation of project activities) that will be remain beyond the life of the intervention?
3) What are the most important lessons that you have learned from your participation with the UNDP project?
   a. Can you offer any ideas that may ensure continuation and sustainability of the project?
4) Is the project replicable?
   a. Discuss
5) How youth council members will continue their initiatives to ensure sustainable participation with local government and CSOs (i.e. how youth council members will continue participation with LG/local public oversight after the end of the project?

Gender and Rights Based Approach:
1) To what degree did the project identify, respond to and integrate the considerations of young women?
2) Were any changes made during the project to take into account challenges relating to equal participation?

Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Best Practices

1) What were some challenges faced, and examples of how they were overcome? How were risks and problems managed?

2) What were some lessons learned from your participation in the project?

3) Do you have any final comments or recommendations for moving forward?

External Evaluation of UNDP/PAPP's "Support to the Role of Civil Society Organizations and Youth in Local Public Oversight"
Questionnaire 6 Guiding questions for focus groups with local community committee

Target Group	
Moderators	
Moderators assistant	
Location	
Date	

No.	Name	Age	Contact Number
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			

Intro:

3) Can you describe your experience in oversight local governance (municipality)?
4) How did you involve in the project? What exactly your role was in the project?
5) Please explain about the major activities undertaken by community committee members related to the project:
6) Were trainings you have received linked in any way to project activities?
   a. Explain and give examples.
7) Please describe your experience developing the community score cards.
8) As a local committee, you may have involved in similar project implemented by other implementing agencies and donors in your area. Can you tell us what is distinguishing UNDP project? what strengths and weakness?

Impact:

9) Explain the relationship that community committee members have with youth council members and LGUs. Specifically in regard to support, responsiveness, and overall interaction.
10) How this relationship has built the foundation for long- term impact on the civic engagement in LG?
11) From your perspective how the project has led to enhanced social accountability in your municipality?
12) How—the project led to increased trust between LGUs and youth? The overall community?

13) What have been the long-term changes to youth and community? Can these changes be attributed to the project? Please give some evidences on this change(s).

Sustainability:

6) To what extent have the members successfully gained skills, knowledge and capacities (directly through training or through the implementation of project activities) that will be remain beyond the life of the intervention?
7) What are the most important lessons that you have learned from your participation with the UNDP project?
   a. Can you offer any ideas that may ensure continuation and sustainability of the project?
8) Is the project replicable?
   a. Discuss
9) How community committee will ensure suitable integration and cooperation with other actors (youth council & CSOs) in order to enhance local public oversight?

Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Best Practices
4) What are the most important lessons that you have learned from your participation with the UNDP project?
5) As you already have significant participation in local governance, what value(s) this project added to that participation?

6) Do you have any final comments or recommendations for moving forward?

Annex 2 – List of Participants in Focus Groups:

West Bank:

Target Group	Local Youth Council Representatives - Qalqiliya		
Moderators	Hanna Theodorie		
Location	Qalqiliya Zoo		
Date	November 23, 2015		
No.	Name	Age	Contact Number
1	Daoud Daoud	23	0598775555
2	Dr. Wala' Shanti	22	09 2943064

Target Group	Local Youth Council Representatives - Jericho		
Moderators	Hanna Theodorie		
Location	Jericho Municipality		
Date	November 12, 2015		
No.	Name	Age	Contact Number
1	Assem Hamed Jallaytah	21	0568197768
2	Muhammed Abed Kharrouf	22	0597171957
3	Ayman Mousa Al-Fouh	23	0598634338

Target Group	Local Youth Council Representatives – Beit Fajjar		
Moderators	Hanna Theodorie		
Location	Beit Fajjar Municipality		
Date	November 17, 2015		
No.	Name	Age	Contact Number
1	Khalil Hamad Deiriyeh	20	0598204110
2	Marwan Abdel Hadi	22	0592462393
3	Ahmad Abdel Jalil Taqatkah	24	0598140066
4	Muhammed Khalaf Taqatkah	21	0598469450
5	Baraa' Usama Taqatkah	23	0595390439
6	Ashraf Hussein Taqatkah	25	0598202182

Gaza Strip:

Name	Contact	Role	Date

5	Abed Alfatah shalabi	598332712	Youth council member	29/10/2015
6	Mahmoud mzher	599183903	Youth council member	29/10/2015
7	Alaa' Al zimry	592129442	Youth council member	29/10/2015
8	Mostafa Al Ghrbawi	599111820	Youth council member	4/11/2015
9	Mohamed younis	592045086	Youth council member	4/11/2015
10	Imad Al krainawi	597866308	Youth council member	4/11/2015
11	Nidaa' Al Ghafeer	597714385	Youth council member	4/11/2015
12	Ahmed Abu shawish	599918643	Youth council member	4/11/2015
13	Fidaa' Al ledawi	599346567	Youth council member	4/11/2015
14	Alaa' Al Shami	597114761	Youth council member	4/11/2015
15	Atta Saleh Hamdan	599 739162	local committee	4/11/2015
16	Hani Abu Rahma	599 917182	local committee	4/11/2015
17	Mahmoud Darwish	592 229941	local committee	4/11/2015
18	Omar Shaheen	599 993741	local committee	29/10/2015