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Events in the Arab region attest to lack of responsive governance in the region and widening gaps between citizens' expectations and governments performance. At the national level, a serious shift towards participatory, accountable and pluralistic governance or democratization will entail redirecting scarce resources in public budgets away from security and policing, which traditionally accounted for sizable portions of the GDP, towards implementing effective and innovative social programs geared towards poverty alleviation, education, as well as maternal/ child health. This shift in public expenditures is in line with the attainment of higher degrees of human security for the citizenry, and is more likely to happen as countries transition to democratic rule in the region. Given the region's development challenges, elected officials will derive their future mandates to govern on the bases of their ability to deliver concrete improvements in standards of living for the public. In addition, given the growing role of new labor movements and campaigns for minimum wages across the region, accountable governance will further the achievement of inequality moderation as a goal in the region. This is of crucial importance since there are signs that the uprisings were in some cases triggered by rising levels of inequality within countries and across classes (which we lack reliable data on) as well as perceived relative deprivation by important groups in society, like the middle classes. Arab states' introduction of information technologies in recent years, and e-governance have the potential to improve the impact of development initiatives on the ground. If accompanied by political will and capacity building among state and non-state actors, these technologies may also serve to improve both government responsiveness and civil society's monitoring role.

At the local level, undemocratic legacies and highly centralized state structures have rendered effective participatory mechanisms weak. Despite several decentralization initiatives in the past, development policies continue to be often decided at the center without substantiative input by relevant stakeholders or with limited consultations among narrow circles of unaccountable elite. As a result, local grievances among marginalized communities have contributed to, and in some cases even triggered, the 2011 mass uprisings in the Arab World. Two years after the uprisings, the preconditions for effective participation, such as citizens accesses to information as well as legitimate forums for grassroots consultation and inclusionary decision making, remain inadequate. These deficiencies prevail both at the level of existing formal political institutions, that are most often the focus of development practitioners and political protagonists, as well as established civil society organizations.

Future interventions focused on socio-economic and political development require implementing steps that facilitate citizen engagement, and empower local elected officials while improving the latters' accountability. Within the context of overall democratic

transformation, programmes that place local councils or municipalities as their focal points could potentially grant the local population, in both urban/ rural settings, the power to decide on their development priorities and to take an active part in their actual realization on the ground.

Consequently, decentralization for development, namely the empowerment of local councils or municipalities, and creating the necessary mechanisms to that effect - including capacity, legislation, fiscal space, political consensus - should figure prominently in the post-2015 development agenda. This is the case as only effective and sustained citizen engagement that targets the local level will improve governance and in turn will facilitate the realization of national development goals not to mention generate the resilience necessary to address the adverse ramifications of conflict and its spill over effects in the region. Questions of political will, reform sequencing, and capacity development will figure prominently as vital preconditions for reforms in this area.