

**UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
REGIONAL BUREAU FOR ARAB STATES**

**REGIONAL PROGRAMME ON GOVERNANCE
IN THE ARAB REGION
(POGAR)**

(RAB/99/005/L/01/31)

EVALUATION REPORT

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Good Governance is the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development

UN Secretary General (A/53/1)

TABLE OF CONTENT

	Content	<u>Page</u>
I	Executive Summary	3
II	Introduction	6
III	The Process	6
IV	The Findings	9
1.	POGAR's Implementation and Outputs	9
	Rule of Law	10
	Participation	13
	Human Rights	15
	Transparency and Accountability	16
	Knowledge and Access to Information	18
	Other POGAR Activities and Services	20
	Capacity Building	
	Local Governance	
	Democracy and Reform	
	Publications	
	Services provided by POGAR Coordinator	
2.	POGAR Programme Management and Funding	21
	Organisational Set-up	
	Financial Management	
3.	UNDB/RBAS Role in POGAR Management	25
4.	POGAR and UNOPS	25
5.	POGAR's Cooperation with UNDP Country Offices	25
V	Outline of POGAR Activities in the next Five Years: A future perspective	26
VI	Concluding Remarks and Recommendations	29

Annexes

I	Evaluation Terms of Reference
II	List of documents reviewed
III	List of Persons interviewed
IV	POGAR Website Visitor Statistics
V	Workshop and Seminar Participants
VI	POGAR Activities by Category
VII	Charts indicating expenditure by goal and by category
VIII	List of POGAR's Publications
IX	Glossary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The implementation of the Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR) started in mid-1999 with only the Programme Coordinator operating out of the UNDP/RBAS Headquarters. At the beginning, POGAR developed and implemented a modest number of activities and built a network of senior government officials and civil society organizations. It developed an important momentum when its operations and management were transferred to Beirut in mid-2002. This was a strategic move that brought the Programme closer to its beneficiary institutions, facilitated movement and reduced cost.

The support and guidance of UNDP/RBAS and the effective networks that POGAR built, integrating policy institutions, civil society organisations, and academia, were important contributors to the measurable impact that POGAR has made on the Arab Region. This was achieved through: a) value added activities; b) selectivity of target audience to secure critical mass support; c) complementarity with national Programmes and; c) the interrelated strategic support areas it chose for its focus. These mirror two of the areas indicated in the Regional Cooperation Framework for Arab States (RCF - 2002-2005): governance and knowledge.

POGAR addressed priorities shared by several Arab States in the following cluster areas:

- a. Rule of law;
- b. Participation;
- c. Human Rights;
- d. Transparency and accountability;
- e. Knowledge and access to information.

These are sensitive areas where a multinational approach proved to be beneficial.

POGAR's website is another value added and innovative contribution to Arabic knowledge building and development in the Arab region. Easily accessible and multilingual, it is visited by thousands in the Arab countries and elsewhere in the world. It has a reference library, regional statistics and country specific information. POGAR is regularly solicited by local and international institutions to use the website information as a source of training material; the request of the National Judicial Institute in Canada, is an example. The website has contributed to filling the knowledge deficit indicated in the 2003 Arab Human Development Report (AHDR). Regular analysis is made of the website visitors to identify and respond to their needs. The second phase of the website has been launched with a view to further facilitating accessibility and expand and enrich its content.

POGAR products combined several services as the RCF indicates: stocktaking, policy analysis and development, advocacy, policy dialogue, building partnerships and creating a momentum for policy change. POGAR played a catalytic role in the region through innovative activities (74) designed for capacity building, learning and knowledge sharing. Participants in training activities (490) came from 21 Arab countries; some came from academia, regional Arab institutions and the private sector. The majority of participants (60%) held senior positions in the public sector and civil society organisations. POGAR also built the capacity of about 40 graduate students who served

as trainees and gained practical experience in research methods, literature review, scanning pertinent knowledge on the Internet and preparing simple concept papers.

In implementing its activities, POGAR drew on the wealth of intellectual and technical resources of the region and utilised international consultants where relevant and needed. The Programme also benefited from the services of national and regional organisations as sub-contractors to assist in implementing activities and at the same time, build their institutional capacity.

POGAR is recognized in the region as a credible source of expertise and knowledge; its assistance was solicited by governments, civil society organisations and by UNDP country offices. In this context, direct assistance was given to a number of countries for building legal databases, preparing projects for legal reform and court modernisation, parliamentary reform and increasing parliamentarians access to information (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Yemen, Morocco, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Sudan). POGAR activities in all these areas harnessed the energy, the emerging interest and intellectual support in the region to build networks and venture into areas that were taboo in a number of conservative societies, such as the exercise of human rights and the preservation of human dignity in the operations and procedures of the office of the prosecutor general.

POGAR earned the trust of key partners in governments, regional organisations such as the League of Arab States, the Arab Parliamentary Union, the Union of Arab Banks, and the Arab Lawyers Union and shared many activities with them. POGAR's Coordinator participated in the drafting, debating and issuing of two crucial regional declarations, the Sana'a Declaration on Democracy and the Alexandria Declaration on Reform. Partnerships were also developed with UN agencies and other international organizations; they co-financed POGAR's activities and enriched their substance. These partners contributed 28% of POGAR's resources; UNDP covered 72% of resource requirements from 1999 to mid 2004.

Much has been achieved by POGAR, much more remains to be done. There is a new environment in the Arab region; governments, civil society and private sector organisations are now aware of the impact of globalization and of the need for change to stay active in the world community; people have become more vocal in their demand for reform. The impact of the Arab Human Development Reports, to which POGAR was a contributor, is evident. Intellectuals have shifted from passive criticism to positive and constructive sharing and building partnerships together to engage in guiding governments towards needed reform. This is a propitious moment for POGAR.

The future calls for more engagement and expanding networks and partnerships to respond effectively to existing and growing need for POGAR's services and products. A host of new demands have already been expressed by governments, the civil society and the private sector. New partners are now willing to join POGAR in building new ventures for reform, capacity building and expanding knowledge; the recent UNDP-OECD Initiative for Governance and Investment for Development is illustrative.

There is still a long way to go. The path of reform is long and has become much less hazardous in several Arab countries; it needs continued will, persistence and perseverance to succeed. Therefore, for POGAR's future operations, the following outline is recommended:

- a. Pursue its efforts under the existing Programme pillars and include a wider number of beneficiary countries.
- b. Re-establish “Public Financial Management” and “Decentralised Governance” as Programme pillars.
- c. Assist the Arab countries in operationalising the strategic recommendations emanating from POGAR’s conferences to effect needed policy change.
- d. Respond effectively and innovatively to the new and continuing demands of the region to:
 - i. Build the institutional capacity of anti-corruption agencies;
 - ii. Establish the Arab Institute for Penal Justice in a sponsoring country;
 - iii. Review the constitutions and laws of Arab countries and recommend changes to remove the provisions that impede the effective contribution of civil society organizations to development and democratic governance;
 - iv. Increase the reservoir of knowledge, facilitate the access to information and provide technical assistance to governments to improve the management of information.
 - v. Advance the policy debate on women empowerment and disseminate lessons learnt, in collaboration with the Center for Arab Women Training and Research (CAWTAR);
 - vi. Build the knowledge of parliamentarians to be fully aware of the obligations under international conventions, declarations and agreements and build their oversight capacity.

POGAR has been an effective catalyst in UNDP governance activities in the region of Arab States. It is strongly recommended that UNDP/RBAS pursues its commitment to support the regional governance activities. The region needs POGAR activities, their continuation and expansion is highly justified and strongly recommended.

I. INTRODUCTION

In preparation for the next UNDP programming cycle, the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) initiated the evaluation of the Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR). The purpose is to assess the impact of the Programme activities since they were launched in 1999 with a view to clearly defining the strategy, objectives and activities of the next phase. The evaluation also covered the Programme management and staffing, networking, resource mobilisation, relations with UNDP country offices and the opinions of beneficiaries regarding the need to continue its operations¹.

II. THE PROCESS

The evaluation process began in April 2004 with the examination of pertinent files and documents at UNOPS² and interviews at RBAS. It continued in the field, visiting Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria.³ A total of 107 persons were interviewed⁴. The interviews concentrated on:

- a) Impact of the Programme activities for creating a conducive environment for reform and democratic governance;
- b) Their views on the degree of innovativeness in designing and implementing activities for building national and regional capacities and enhancing opportunities for knowledge sharing;
- c) The benefits accrued to respondents from participating in different ways (as participants, recipients of technical assistance, consultants) in POGAR activities;
- d) Their opinion regarding the relevance and responsiveness of different POGAR activities to regional and national priorities and needs;
- e) Access to information and knowledge in the area of governance and human development;
- f) Effectiveness of activity organization and delivery;
- g) Their perspective for the future needs and the areas of concentration that are most relevant to them;

The mission also included meetings with UNDP country offices in each of the countries visited to assess synergies and complementarities between their Programmes and those of POGAR as well as the degree of effectiveness in the working relationship with POGAR. The mission reviewed several reports and publications produced by POGAR, in addition to workshop/seminar contents, concept papers, training materials and various documents to determine alignment with UNDP corporate policies and RBAS

¹ Evaluation Terms of Reference, ANNEX I.

² All pertinent files were examined. List of documents reviewed, ANNEX II

³ Tunisia was visited under different terms of reference relevant to CAWTAR project, but the mission seized this opportunity to interview the Director and staff of the Center for Arab Women Training and Research (CAWTAR) regarding their cooperation with POGAR.

⁴ List of Persons Interviewed, ANNEX III

Regional Cooperation Framework. The mission also assessed POGAR's website (www.undp-pogar.org) for substance and ease of public access (visitors statistics).

The mission had the opportunity to participate, as observer, in one of POGAR's seminars organized in Alexandria, Egypt, in collaboration with the Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR) and the Alexandria Library (Bibliotheca Alexandrina), on the subject of Civil Society and Development⁵.

The mission also examined the activities of five projects that emanated from POGAR and remained under its umbrella. These are:

- a. Project on Human Development and Human Rights in the Arab Region (PADHUR) RAB/01/004) – to be completed in December 2004.
- b. POGAR Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF), Strengthening Legislatures (RAB/99/M05) – completed.
- c. POGAR DGTTF 2003 – Strengthening the Oversight Function of Legislatures (RAB/03/M02) – completed.
- d. Promoting Good Governance and the Rule of Law in the Arab States: Implementing the Arab Human Development Report (RAB/03/H01) – completed.
- e. Promoting Good Governance through the Rule of Law in Iraq (RAB/03/H02) – to be completed in October 2004.

In addition, the mission examined the concept papers and preliminary report of the UNDP/UNDESA study on *Public Sector Transparency and Accountability in Selected Arab Countries: Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan and Yemen* (SPPD Project RAB/01/006). POGAR played a catalytic role in this project.

The activities under these projects were commingled with the other activities of POGAR and fed into each other.

The evaluation has considered the original context of the Programme as perceived in 1999, the key objectives as stated in the Programme document, the areas selected for its activities and the means utilised to fulfill the Programme goals. It then compared what had been intended with what has actually transpired. Greater attention, of the evaluation is given to POGAR's areas of concentration and outputs, its contribution to the region of Arab states, its impact on the environment for reform and the opinions of beneficiary institutions and individuals regarding the need for its continuity and actual expansion.

⁵ This was the fourth seminar organized by AOHR under an agreement with POGAR on Human Rights and Development.

III. BACKGROUND

POGAR's Programme document was signed by RBAS in July 1999 for the duration of three years and a total budgetary allocation of \$3,772,415. UNOPS signed, as the Executing Agency in July 2000. POGAR's original date of completion was July 2000; in view of the increasing and expanding demand for its services, it has continued its operations uninterrupted as more UNDP funds were allocated and cost-sharing resources from different sources became available.

The long term objective of the Programme was to contribute to the economic and social development of the Arab countries through the creation of an environment where good governance is advocated and practiced through partnerships between governments, civil society and the private sector. While the attainment of such objective was considered an "ideal", it was agreed to keep it in mind as the direction towards which activities should be directed.

The immediate objectives of the Programme aimed at:

- a. Creating a level of awareness on key governance issues appropriate to the region and establishing and demonstrating their linkage to SHD;
- b. Creating a sustainable level of regional dialogue on governance policies through an extensive network of partners and an accessible forum for dialogue;
- c. Demonstrating, through key pilot activities, that standards of good governance can be adapted to national realities at reasonable levels of commitment;

To achieve these goals, the original work Programme sought to concentrate on the following seven areas:

- a. Sound financial and administrative management;
- b. Strengthening legislative capacities;
- c. Judicial reform;
- d. Government and media;
- e. Women and decision making;
- f. Decentralized government and urban management;
- g. Support to countries with complex emergencies.

POGAR's work plan was designed to build strategic partnerships with local and international institutions and utilise local NGO's both for consultancies as well as for building essential networks. It called for using different mechanisms such as: a) discussion of policy issues with local and international partners for advocacy, awareness building and promoting innovative ideas and practices; b) organising conferences and workshops to disseminate ideas and; c) country anchored pilot activities producing results and lessons to be shared. The core message of the Programme was to demonstrate the strong linkage between sustainable human development and good governance. This message would be delivered through awareness building, establishing strong institutional partnerships, advocating concepts of good governance and enhancing institutional and individual capacity.

IV. THE FINDINGS

1. POGAR Implementation and Outputs:

Implementation began in November 1999 with only the Programme Coordinator working at RBAS in New York for 2.8 years, partially responsible for other duties and without support staff. In mid-2002, RBAS made a strategic decision to move the Programme operations and management to Beirut to be closer to the countries of the region and be cost effective.

At the beginning of POGAR implementation, country visits and consultation with UNDP Country Offices and with RBAS, in addition to short-term consultancies, local and international, led to the decision that POGAR should focus on innovative activities designed to secure a critical mass in support of policy changes and potential short-term impact in areas of critical needs. The recommended approach was a gradual awareness raising and advocacy in support of the concept of governance, capacity building to strengthen institutions at all levels and acquiring knowledge through learning and experience sharing.

The results of discussions with a number of governments and civil society organizations pointed the way to the incessant need to: a) reform the legal system through building capacity of the parliaments and the judiciary; b) uphold and protect human rights and; c) raise the status of women and endeavour to change legal impediments, particularly as regards the laws of citizenship and the rights of children. These are areas where many traditional donors did not provide significant assistance. This called for a realignment of the seven areas that were originally intended in the Programme document with a view to creating synergies with local projects, responding to expressed needs and leveraging available resources for the benefit of the countries in the region.

POGAR areas of focus were then clustered into the following core areas:

- f. Rule of law;
- g. Participation;
- h. Human Rights;
- i. Transparency and accountability;
- j. Knowledge and access to information;

In addition to these areas, POGAR contributed to the preparation of the Arab Human Development Reports (especially the first and the third) through conducting required studies and reviewing papers.

Thus, with the approval of UNDP/RBAS, the Programme concentrated on what was possible and highly supported by the region. In every one of these areas, POGAR broke new grounds and made landmark contributions. It created opportunities for sharing and provided a forum for debate. A strong sense of ownership developed and Programme delivery focused on demand-based services.

The *mechanisms* used to achieve the Programme goals remained the same: networking, advocacy, conferences, seminars, workshops and information sharing. In addition, technical assistance was provided to requesting countries and UNDP CO's. In some cases, projects were developed under UNDP country Programme to implement the recommended work (Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco). The innovative approach was in the preparation of country papers for stocktaking, analysis of the local environment and vetting them in expert group meetings before they are publicly

discussed in conferences and seminars. Donor representatives and interested international institutions participated in these events. Comparative studies and sharing of experience increased the value of these activities.

POGAR's strategy for capacity and awareness building was to network with organisations that are willing to participate in its activities then select qualified consultants to work with countries that accept to give researchers and case writers access to their files. This strategy gained POGAR a valuable capital of trust in addition to expanding its network and accumulating knowledge.

The following paragraphs illustrate and evaluate the activities and outputs under each of these clusters.

RULE OF LAW

Activities in this area represented an adventurous enterprise, especially in some traditional societies. Reform of the legal process, from legislation to enforcement, was a taboo subject in a number of countries; penetration in this area, at the country's request, was a response to an awakening from the *status quo*. The assistance provided by POGAR to collect, codify and record the laws, though partially in some cases (Yemen and Iraq), was considered an upheaval in certain quarters. In one country, using the word "law" or "civil law" was tantamount to heresy⁶. Modernisation of courts and case management had been unthinkable in such societies. Several regional workshops were organised and in-country coaching was provided to persuade the legal authorities of the value of reform and the benefits that would ensue.

The countries that welcome the assistance for reform had a long legal history with thousands of accumulated laws; they wanted to modernize the system and weed out outdated laws and update others, particularly in the area of economic management and civil law. Morocco, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon benefited most from this assistance. While POGAR was not the only source of assistance in these countries, its help was sought by governments to complement others in areas where an independent voice was needed. POGAR had the trust of governments and provided advice on the design and implementation of reform Programmes. In some cases, POGAR organized a number of meetings with stakeholders, including representatives of the legal profession to reach agreement on strategic actions (Jordan and Lebanon).

In some cases (Lebanon, Yemen and Jordan), there was synergy between POGAR and UNDP country Programme, the latter provided the funding needed to implement projects designed with the help of POGAR. In others, POGAR's assistance reinforced on-going activities funded by other donors (Egypt, Jordan and Morocco).

A special project under POGAR's umbrella: *Strengthening Legislatures in the Arab Region* (RAB/M05/A/MT/31)⁷, financed under the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund, aimed at building capacity of Arab Parliaments for research and

⁶ In one country (to remain anonymous), court modernisation had to begin by cleaning up the place, constructing and repairing sanitary facilities and air-conditioning in the area where computers were to be utilised.

⁷ The document was signed in mid-2002.

policy analysis and to strengthen the relationships among parliamentarians in the region and civil society. The activities of this project have been successfully completed.

A special project was designed in 2003 in cooperation with the United Nations Foundation (UNF) for Promoting Good Governance Through the Rule of Law in Iraq (RAB/03/H02/1/IV/31). This project aims at integrating Iraq into the mainstream work on the Rule of Law in the Arab Region, in implementation of the Arab Human Development Report. The project addresses the immediate situation of Iraq and the challenges of upholding the rule of law and security during the transition period. Iraqi lawyers from outside and inside Iraq have successfully located and recorded most of the Iraqi laws. The information is now available to officials and legal professionals as well as to international organizations working in Iraq. Two workshops for the training of judges and lawyers have already taken place in Jordan. The UN partners in this project are the UNOHCHR and UNDCCP. Planned activities have taken place on time; the project will be completed in October 2004.

Several conferences and workshops were organized. The following list demonstrates the topics included and the coverage of activities.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>Recommendations of the Conference on Modernising Public Prosecution Institutions in the Arab Region: Prospects and Challenges</p> <p>Modernise Prosecution (<i>Niaba</i>) concepts and Functions.</p> <p>Promote International Cooperation in Crime Prevention</p> <p>Enhance <i>Niaba</i> Human Resources and Operation Capacities</p> <p>Promote Arab-International Cooperation</p> | <p>a. Workshop on <i>Consulting Organisations and Arab Parliaments: Their mission and functions</i>. Cairo, Dec. 2001. Proceedings were published in Cooperation with the Faculty of Economics and Political Science and the Parliament Research Center, Cairo, Egypt.</p> <p>b. Workshop on the <i>Development of Parliamentary Functions</i>. Organised in May 2000, in cooperation with the Lebanese Parliament and the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies</p> <p>c. Conference on <i>Modernizing the Judicial Administration in the Arab Countries</i> organised in Marrakesh in 2002 in cooperation with the Moroccan Ministry of Justice and the World Bank. The Ministry of Justice printed the conference proceedings in French, Arabic and English and a CD is available. Representatives of 17 Arab countries and 12 donor agencies attended.</p> |
|--|---|
- d. Conference on the *Independence of the Judiciary and Legal Profession*, Cairo, Egypt 2003⁸. The conference was organised in collaboration with ACLIP⁹, the UNOHCHR and the Ford Foundation¹⁰.
- e. *Practicing Good Governance According to International standards*. Workshop organized in 2003 in collaboration with the Union of Arab Banks.

⁸ The first conference on the subject was held in Beirut in 1999. The Beirut Declaration on Justice resulted from that conference.

⁹ A regional network of Lawyers and Judges for the Promotion of UN Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary. POGAR started its cooperation with ACLIP in 2001.

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that 400 Saudi legal experts submitted a petition on the subject of the conference to the Saudi Crown Prince.

**Conference on
Judicial
Administration
Modernisation in the
Arab States**

Sample recommendations
Training of Judges and Court
Clerks in the use of IT
technologies
Consolidate the traditions
and honor of the profession.
Set criteria for admission to
training
Increase the number of
specialty in training to
respond to current demands
Take into account the area of
specilisation of judges when
assigning cases
Encourage the establishment
of alternative means to settle
disputes
Create a database on
legislation and jurisprudence
to facilitate the flow of
information

f. *Guide for the Promotion of the Independence and Integrity of the Judiciary*. (2003). This is an IFES publication; POGAR funded the translation of this Guide to increase the knowledge of Arab practitioners (219 pages).

g. Seminar on the *Development of Parliamentary Legislative Drafting for Arab Parliamentarians*. A *Guide on Legislative Drafting* was then prepared as Seminar Proceedings (350 pages), Beirut, February 2003. The seminar was organised in cooperation with the Arab Parliamentary Union.

h. Forum for the *Promotion of Good Governance in the Arab Financial Institutions*. This was organised in Jordan, March 2004, in collaboration with the OECD and the Union of Arab Banks.

i. Conference on *Modernising Public Prosecution Institutions (Niyaba) in the Arab Region: Prospects and Challenges*, Marrakesh. 2004. The conference discussed country case studies on: Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco and Yemen.

j. The following are studies completed by POGAR that may be published as "Technical Papers" or textbooks when financial resources permit. These are valuable additions to regional knowledge and experience:

- *Court Administration: New Challenges and Techniques for Court Administration and Case Management*. 560 pages. Prepared in collaboration with IDLO and the Ministry of Justice, Egypt.
- *Syrian Legal Information Network*, a study conducted by POGAR with 15 annexes.
- *Judicial Modernisation Project: a Preliminary Study on the Creation of a Database on Legislation in the UAE* (if permission is granted by the UAE authorities).
- *Study on the Institutional Dimensions of Law Enforcement in 16 Arab countries*.
- *Study on the Automation of Judicial Procedures in Selected Arab States: Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Egypt and Morocco*.
- *Study on the Methodology and Aid-Resources for Legal Drafting*.
- *Study on the Situation of Arab Lawyers and the Methods and Tools of their Work in the Arab Region*. Study prepared in cooperation with the Arab Lawyers Union.

PARTICIPATION

Gender: Activities in this area focused on gender and civil society. While both subjects have interested a number of donors and work started in the early 90's, the activities of POGAR have tried to avoid duplication through selectivity of partners and issues to be addressed. High value activities were designed in collaboration with a network of national, regional and international organizations. The approach followed is the same as before: knowledge building, expert vetting of country papers and studies, and experience sharing in conferences and workshops, followed by publications of results, in most cases.

Some of the gender issues covered by POGAR activities are still sensitive in a number of countries but the Programme dealt with them with tact and diligence. All were supported by a series of studies to document the essence of each activity to avoid unnecessary polemics. An example of this is the hot issue of citizenship for the children of women married to men from different nationalities. Another is the status of women in religious texts: the real dilemma between cultural traditions and the mis-interpretation of religious doctrines.

These issues have traditionally been kept tightly under lid. POGAR has addressed them boldly and made a tangible impact. Arab parliaments have started serious discussion of the issue of children citizenship and their rights, in fact the Moroccan Parliament may soon pass the necessary amendments to the citizenship laws to recognize those rights. In addition, religious authorities have not taken issue with the content and message of papers and workshops dealing with doctrinal topics. POGAR's main international partner in these activities was the International Development Research Center (IDRC) in Canada and the regional partners were the Center for Research and Training for Development (CRTD) in Lebanon, Maroc 20/20 in Morocco and ADEW in Egypt. POGAR has also established a cooperative relationship with the regional Center for Arab Women Training and Research (CAWTAR) in Tunisia; both have been effective partners in the area of women development and rights.

Civil society: Activities related to the legal status and freedom of civil society organizations aimed at enhancing their role in development and the value added for governments to consider them partners in development. The legal status of CSO's still leaves a lot to be desired in a number of Arab countries; numerous obstacles still impede their freedom of action and the control imposed over their activities is, in some cases, stifling. Their role in fighting corruption and in reform processes is still unrecognized. These activities have shown that in a number of countries, the constitutions need to be amended to allow these organizations the freedom they need as well as enhance their access to justice, in some countries, only the laws of association need to be modernised.

The network of civil society organisations working effectively with POGAR is among the most active in the region. This cooperation has resulted in a number of analytical surveys. They also designed and delivered workshops and prepared training materials for the benefit of training institutions.

The following activities highlight the issues addressed in POGAR activities in the area of "participation":

- a. Expert Group meeting on *Gender and Citizenship in the Arab World*, Casablanca, Morocco, July 2002.

- b. *Children Citizenship: The Logic of Belonging to the Islamic Nation and the Logic of Belonging to the International Community*. Conference on Gender and Citizenship in the Arab World, organized in Casablanca, Morocco, 2002 in collaboration with Maroc 20/20.
- c. Conference on *Gender and Nationality in the Arab World*, Beirut, October, 2003, organized in cooperation with IDRC and CRTD.
- d. *Women are Citizens too: The Laws of the State, the Lives of Women*. Synthesis of the papers commissioned for the Conference on Gender and Citizenship, Amman, October 2003.
- e. *Laws on Citizenship and Identification cards*. This workshop was organized in 2003, in cooperation with IDRC and a network of Arab women organizations. POGAR then produced the “*Guide on the Respect of Women in Religious Texts*” on the basis of the workshop papers and discussions.
- f. *Women Economic Empowerment Project*. This is a project of the Women in Development Network to which POGAR has contributed funds and expertise. The project aims at awareness building and increasing women literacy.
- g. Roundtable on the *Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, Beirut, February 2004. Eighty participants from 16 Arab countries participated in the discussions. Few presented their reservation on the “Convention”; the majority of participants were strongly in favour of its immediate ratification and implementation. Participants discussed and recommended the setting up of instruments to implement the “Convention”, monitor progress and train concerned persons.
- h. *Enhancing the Capacity of NGO’s on the Subject of Globalization and Trade*, Workshop organized in Beirut, Sept. 2001.
- i. *The Regulatory Framework of State/Civil Society Relations*. A study of the laws governing this regulatory framework. The study was conducted by POGAR in cooperation with Maroc 20/20.
- j. *Management of Elections: A Guide to Users of Electronic Resources*. This is a manual produced by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IIDEA), Stockholm, in cooperation with IDEA, IFES. It contains the lessons and experiences of 150 countries. POGAR translated the manual to increase the stock of knowledge and make it available to interested Arab parliaments, institutions and individuals.
- k. *Role of the Civil Society in Reform in the Arab World*. Workshop organized in the Alexandria Library (Biblioteca Alexandrina), in collaboration with the Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR). The workshop was part of the activities under the Human Rights project for which AOHR is a sub-contractor.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Interest in the area of human rights has been shared by many international, regional and national institutions and generic activities upholding human rights have taken place in the Arab region. The results of the UNDP/OHCHR Arab regional seminar and Human Development and Human Rights in June 1999 gave impetus to the activities of POGAR in this area. This regional seminar identified the most pressing problems in the region: poverty, inequitable distribution of wealth and absence of democracy. The challenges of globalisation, unemployment and the lack of transparency and accountability deepened the sense of urgency to tackle the issues of human rights in the areas of political, social, economic and cultural development.

POGAR and UNOHCHR have then jointly approached human rights under this project from a “development” perspective in the context of a dedicated project under POGAR’s umbrella: *Project on Human Development and Human Rights in the Region of Arab States (RAB/01/04/01/A/31)*. This project was cost shared between UNDP and the UNOHCHR and implemented with the assistance of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR) as sub-contractor.

POGAR cooperated with regional and national CSOs to develop their capacity to watch and monitor progress in the area of human rights. The Cairo Institute of Human Rights, the Arab Institute of Human Rights (Tunisia) and the National Institute of Social and Penal Sciences (Egypt) cooperated with the AOHR to act as think tanks reflecting on the concepts and implications of the right to development in national policies. The debates they organized to clarify the link between development and the ability of people to exercise their human rights have contributed to settling this issue. It is now unequivocally accepted that development is intrinsically linked to the freedom of exercise of human rights and will be sustainable only in societies that uphold those rights. The Alexandria Declaration of Reform in the Arab Region took cognizance of this fact and the regional top intellectuals endorsed it in the Declaration. The same sense was stated in the Sana’a Declaration on Democracy.

POGAR activities led to the formulation of an operational definition of the roles of civil society organisations in the area of reform and human rights. They also contributed to addressing the dearth of Arabic material on the subject. Relevant published material was translated by POGAR. A key Arabic manual on the exercise of human rights and participation will be completed in November 2004. This manual will cover the international Human Rights conventions and declarations and will provide guidance to institutions operating in this field.

The first phase of another special project related to the right to “security” was implemented. This was a limited “preparatory” phase in which POGAR and UNF collaborated effectively for the formulation of a broader project: *Promoting Good Governance and the Rule of Law in the Arab States: Implementing the Arab Human Development Report*. Efforts for resource mobilization for the second phase are ongoing. This project was based on the discussions and recommendations of POGAR’s activities and recommendations in the area of law and modernisation of the judiciary. It emphasizes the human rights to security and peace and aims at building the capacity and improves the quality of services of government institutions operating in this field (especially focusing on the office of the public prosecutor in Arab countries).

The following activities illustrate POGAR’s contribution in this area:

It is now unequivocally accepted that development is intrinsically linked to the freedom of exercise of human rights and will be sustainable only in societies that uphold those rights. R.M.

a. *Proceedings of the Regional Seminar on Human Rights and Development*, Cairo, Egypt, June 1999 (456 pages). In view of the importance of this Seminar (held before POGAR became effective), POGAR published its proceedings as well as the *Cairo Programme of Action for the Exercise of the Right to Development in Arab Countries*. The content of these proceedings provide suitable materials for the benefit of academic and training institutions.

b. *Workshop on the Implementation of Economic and Social and Cultural Rights in the Arab countries*, Casablanca 2003. A manual was produced after the Workshop (270 pages + brief in English 17 pages).

c. *A Study of the Office of the Prosecutor (Niyaba) and the Respect of Human Rights in Arab countries*. This study was used in a seminar organised in collaboration with the AOHR and is a rich source of knowledge and a valuable addition to the Arabic literature on the subject. Academic and training institutions may benefit from its content in their Programmes.

d. *Arab Initiative for the Freedom of Association*. This was developed in cooperation with a network of CSOs and is still considered work in progress.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Arab citizens are now demanding more of their government and public institutions. There is a critical change in intellectual discourse. Instead of being just “critical”, many intellectuals are now constructively contributing to “advising”, “advocating” and providing “guidance” to decision and policy makers. There is clear desire for reform, for transparency and for accountability. There is a sense of an awakening, a change in the tone and a realisation that only through positive “participation”, the message can be heard. A sense of positive citizenship characterises the present situation in most Arab countries. *POGAR may be credited to have contributed to creating this positive environment.*

Arab Parliamentarians are now actively involved in the area of transparency and accountability seeking to develop a new culture and claiming their right to effectively oversee government operations. In cooperation with the International Parliamentary Union, representatives of Arab Parliaments met in Beirut in June 2004, to establish the Arab Chapter of Parliamentarians for Transparency and Accountability. The Kuwaiti Parliament is championing this initiative with the support of a number of parliamentarians in different Arab countries.

The efforts for combating corruption are now strong and vocal. Jordan and Egypt are cooperating together and with others to strengthen their institutions and step up their anti-corruption campaign. Lebanon organized a number of activities for the youth to train them on ethical behaviour and ways of combating corruption. The Lebanese Ministry published a colorful book in three languages for Administrative Development

targeting the youth. POGAR and OECD are actively cooperating in this area, together with the Arab chapters of Transparency International.

The following are illustrative activities:

- a. *Mechanisms of Accountability in Arab Governance: The Present and Future of Judiciaries and Parliaments in the Arab World*. Two workshops were organized in 2002 and 2003 in cooperation with the Arab Anti-Corruption Parliamentary Committee.
- b. Seminar on the *Promotion of Transparency and Accountability in the Arab Countries*. The seminar was organised in collaboration with OECD, the Lebanese State Ministry of Administrative Development and the Union of Arab Banks, Beirut, 2003. This seminar addressed the political, legal, administrative and social dimensions of transparency and accountability. A number of recommendations ensued.
- c. *Transparency and Accountability in the Public Sector in the Arab Region*, part of the UNDP/OECD Conference on Good Governance for Development in the Middle East, Istanbul, February 2004. Presentations at this Conference referred to activities under the on-going UNDP-UNDESA project on the same subject. This activity and the seminar indicated above in (b) are related to the UNDESA/UNDP Project to study *Public Sector Transparency and Accountability in Selected Arab Countries: Policies and Practices* (Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen).
- c. *Combating Corruption for Good Governance*. TI International originally published this source book in 1998. POGAR translated it into Arabic to fill the knowledge deficit and make it accessible to Arab readers.
- d. In 2000, IDEA contributed US\$ 50,000 to support POGAR's work on electoral assistance, constitutional reform and capacity building of civil society organizations. Under this cooperation two workshops on transparency and accountability have already taken place (in Casablanca for an "anti-corruption campaign" and in Beirut on "conflict of interest"); the third will be held in Bahrain in 2005 with a theme of "NO to Corruption". The objective is to establish an Arab Transparency Network, issue a study on Transparency in the Arab World and regionalize the Transparency Source book.

KNOWLEDGE AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

While the activities under the previous core areas have had a significant impact in the Arab region, POGAR's website (www.undp-pogar.org) has been most influential in recording and spreading knowledge, a contribution to filling the knowledge deficit in the region. The website has gained POGAR national, regional and international recognition for disseminating much needed information. It is a rich reservoir of knowledge that is easily accessible and user-friendly. Cost effective and informative, this website is visited by thousands every month, both from within and outside the Arab region. It is noticeable

that countries where people don't have easy access to printed materials, represent the highest number of visitors to POGAR's website¹¹.

The website contains chapters on: Governance, Arab Reforms, Participation, Civil Society, Decentralization, Elections, Gender, Rule of Law, Constitutions, Judiciary, Transparency and Accountability, Financial Management and the Legislature. It also has chapters dealing with individual countries in the Arab Region and provides valuable information on POGAR activities and initiatives. There is a unanimous agreement that this website has become an essential reference in the Arab countries on all matters pertaining to Governance and the Rule of Law. The website is also solicited to provide materials to international institutions for training purposes, the request made by the National Judiciary Institute in Canada is an example.

Activities are underway to further improve accessibility to the website and to Arabise its content. There is much information in Arabic at present, but much more is being done to increase the flow of information from international resources to the Arab readers¹².

Apart from the website and the translations referred to above, POGAR has provided technical assistance to increase knowledge in the Arab region. Some of these activities concerned the region as a whole, others concerned specific countries. The following are illustrative activities:

- a. Preparation of a concept paper for the Establishment of an Arab Legal Database related to the Banking Profession (2002).
- b. Preparation of a concept paper for establishing an Arab database on the laws governing human rights in Arab countries (2003).
- c. Yemen: Preparation of a concept paper for: i. establishing a legal database for the Ministry of Justice; ii. Establishing a national database on law and jurisprudence and; iii. Automation of the printing and distribution of the Yemeni Official Gazette (2002).
- d. Morocco: Preparation of a concept paper for the establishment of a national legal database at the Ministry of Justice. In addition, a concept paper was prepared for the establishment of a legal information service at the Supreme Court.
- e. Syria: A concept paper was prepared in 2002 containing three projects: i. survey of the legislative and judiciary situation; ii. establishing a legal database and; iii. automation of a selected "model" court.
- f. Egypt: Preparation of a concept paper for the establishment of a national legal database (2003).
- g. Iraq: Preparation of a concept paper for establishing a database in support of legal reform in Iraq (2003).

¹¹ The monthly average number of visitors in 2003 was 19,874 of which 7,403 came from the Arab region; there were about 20,000 by the end of July 2004. See Tables in ANNEX IV

¹² It is interesting to note that the two persons responsible for the website live on two different continents and have created a virtual (electronic) operational relationship.

Some of these concept papers have been translated into actual projects (Yemen, Morocco and Egypt) and are presently under implementation. Others were followed by the preparation of in-depth studies in preparation for turning them into projects in the near future.

Other “knowledge” related projects have been completed. These include:

- a. Establishment of a regional database on legislations dealing with parliaments. Completed in cooperation with the Arab Parliamentary Union, 2002.
- b. Establishment of a database on financial control in Arab countries, 2003. It is possible to view this database through POGAR’s website and through the website of the Arab Parliamentary Union (www.arab-ipu.org).
- c. Establishment of a database on the banking profession. Completed in cooperation with the Union of Arab Banks. This can be viewed on POGAR’s website and on the website of the Union of Arab Banks (www.uabonline.org).
- d. Preparation of a “Metadirectory” on the management of justice and the modernisation of legal activities. This is a database containing pertinent international references on the subject published on the Internet. There are 170 references that can be viewed on POGAR’s website.
- e. Preparation of a “Metadirectory” about legislative drafting. This is also a data base containing international references on the subject, published on the internet. There are at present 120 references.
- f. Assistance was provided to the Lebanese Ministry of Justice and the Lebanese Parliament for updating and modernizing their respective website.

Other POGAR Activities and Services

Capacity building: POGAR’s workshops and seminars are actually capacity building events; consultancies also aimed at developing capacities of public sector institutions and civil society organizations. POGAR has developed training materials and case studies and used them in training activities, so did national and regional organisations. More than 490 persons coming from different Arab countries benefited from training and have appreciated their participation¹³. The highest percentage of participants came from Morocco (23%), Lebanon (20%), Egypt (10%) and Jordan (9).

Local Governance: The full range of activities that had originally been planned in the area of local governance did not materialise for the reasons explained above. However, one seminar on the subject was held early in project implementation. In December 2003 the Arab Local Governance Forum (ALGF) took place in Yemen and 90 participants came from 12 Arab countries. Another activity was to set up an electronic forum; this has been recently implemented. Participants showed a high degree of interest to continue this forum to learn and share opinions.

¹³ See Tables and charts providing details of participants by country, by level and institutional affiliation, ANNEX V

Activities and Publications: POGAR has organized 10 conferences, 18 workshops and seminars, expert group meetings (7) completed 21 research projects and working papers, and 9 IT-related activities (up to May 2004)¹⁴. A number of completed studies should be published when financial resources permit. The review of these studies revealed their relevance to the region; some of these could be valuable textbooks to academic and training institutions, particularly the regional comparisons in the area of rule of law, the office of the prosecutor general (niaba) and the parliaments.

Democracy and Reform: POGAR participated in and made contributions to the Alexandria Declaration for Reform in Arab Countries and the San'a Declaration on Democracy.

Services provided by POGAR Coordinator: The Coordinator was solicited by international organizations to be a keynote speaker subjects pertaining to Governance and the Rule of Law in the Arab Region (EU, the 18th Annual Euro-Mediterranean Economic Transition Meeting, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, UK and the Hoover Institution). This attests to the professional credibility of the person and the recognition given to POGAR for its role in the Arab region. The Coordinator has also acted as an international referee, twice for the *Global Corruption Report*.

2. Programme Management and Funding

Organisational set-up: As indicated above, the Programme began with only the Coordinator operating from UNDP/RBAS Headquarters in New York. UNOPS provided support through a capable JPO who later became the Portfolio Manager for POGAR. Working through local and international consultants, implementation was slow at the beginning, but soon took off with the increasing momentum and networking with local and international organizations.

After more than 2.5 years, POGAR was transferred to Beirut, a strategic move that brought it closer to the beneficiary countries. The staff remained at minimum, only the Coordinator and one Secretary located in a relatively small space at the UNESCWA building in Beirut, for which rent is being paid out of POGAR's budget. That space does not allow POGAR to display the library material it has accumulated; hundreds of books and reference material. Efforts are underway to rent additional space in an adjacent building with adequate security facilities.

POGAR's implementation depended largely on short-term consultants, local and international, as well as on sub-contracting qualified local institutions for cost effectiveness. There is a long-term Legal Consultant on the Rule of Law; he authored and guided most, if not all, the work on the subject and provided assistance to governments on the design of legal databases and automation of institutions of managing justice and law enforcement. POGAR's long-term Knowledge Management Consultant has been responsible for the design and management of the website and provided assistance to governments on information management. The Webmaster is a long-term Consultant who is regularly updating information, ensuring ease of

¹⁴ See Chart and tables, ANNEX VI

accessibility and responding to users' needs. POGAR has also utilised the services of a part-time consultant that facilitated the activities that took place in Morocco. It is admirable how this small staff was able to carry out all the tasks of managing this large Programme and producing results that are highly appreciated in the region.

Financial Management: POGAR's cost effectiveness is a credit to its management. A virtual office was established with electronic communication between New York, Ottawa, Texas, Rabat, Ramallah and Beirut, where its main consultants are located. In addition, the network of highly qualified local consultants has significantly reduced activity cost. Examination of the financial management files indicated the prudent utilization of funds¹⁵. To the extent possible, cooperating local institutions covered some elements of activity cost. Almost every activity was demand driven and justified the beneficiary's contribution to local costs.

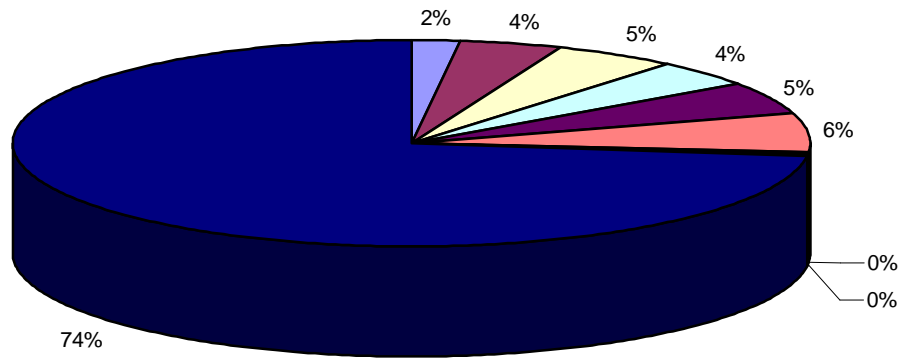
The UNDP/RBAS has provided 72% percent of the total funds needed to-date. POGAR attracted the attention of donors from UN agencies and international institutions. Additional funding (28%) came from: the UNDP Bureau for Development Policy, the World Bank, the International Development Research Center (Canada), UNOHCHR, United Nations Foundation, US State Department (Department for Legal Affairs), GTZ, and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Systems. (See Tables 1 and 2 and Chart 1 below.)

Table 1: List of Donors

Institution	% Amount
World Bank	2.0%
International Development Research Center (Canada)	4.0%
Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP	5.0%
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights	4.0%
United Nations Foundation	5.0%
US State Department, Dept. of Legal Affairs	7.6%
Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)	0.3%
International Institute for Democracy & Electoral Assistance (IIDEA)	0.1%
United Nations Development Programme	72.0%

¹⁵ The utilization of funds was audited by regular UNOPS audit.

Chart 1: Donors



- World Bank
- International Development Research Center (Canada)
- Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- United Nations Foundation
- US State Department, Dept. of Legal Affairs
- Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)

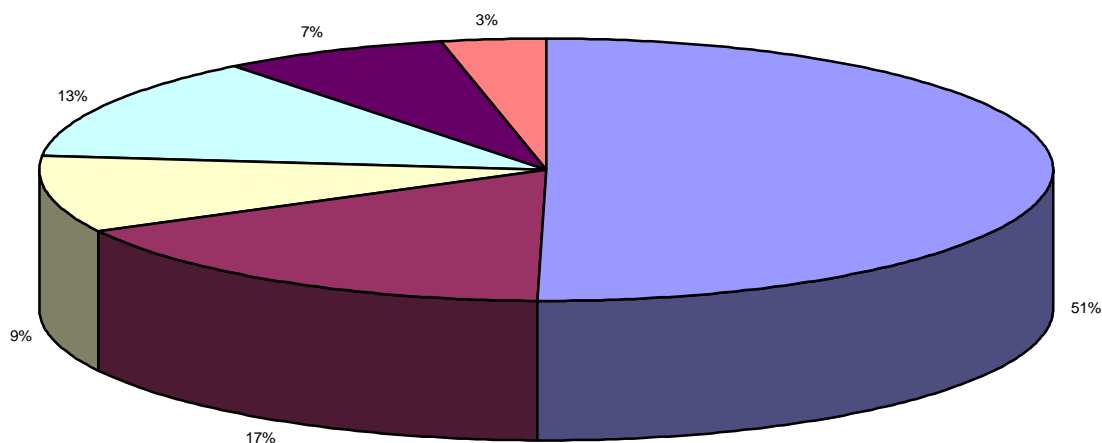
Table 2: Donors and Area of Cooperation

Institution	Area of Activity	Area of Activity	Amount	Area of Activity	Amount	Area of Activity	Amount	Total
World Bank	Rule of Law							\$ 140,000
International Development Research Center (Canada)	Gender & Citizenship							\$280,363
Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP		Strengthening Legislatures (2002)	\$ 140,000	Oversight & Legislation	\$ 75,000	Local Governance	\$ 150,000	\$ 365,000
UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights	Human Rights							\$ 295,500
United Nations Foundation		Rule of Law	\$100,000	Rule of Law (Iraq)	\$200,000			\$300,000
US State Department, Dept. of Legal Affairs	Transparency							\$400,000
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ, Germany)	Gender & Citizenship							\$22,356
International Institute for Democracy & Electoral Assistance (IDEA)	Administration of Elections							\$50,000
United Nations Development Programme	Various							\$4,941,828
								\$6,844,138

Considering POGAR's expenditure per core area of activity between July 1999 and May 2004, we find that actual expenditures are a good reflection of the weight of activities. Of the total funds, 51% went to the Rule of Law; Human Rights received 17%; Knowledge Building 13%; Transparency and Accountability 9%; Participation 7% and Local Governance 3%¹⁶.

¹⁶ Detailed charts showing annual expenditures by goal (5) and by category (5) are in ANNEX VII

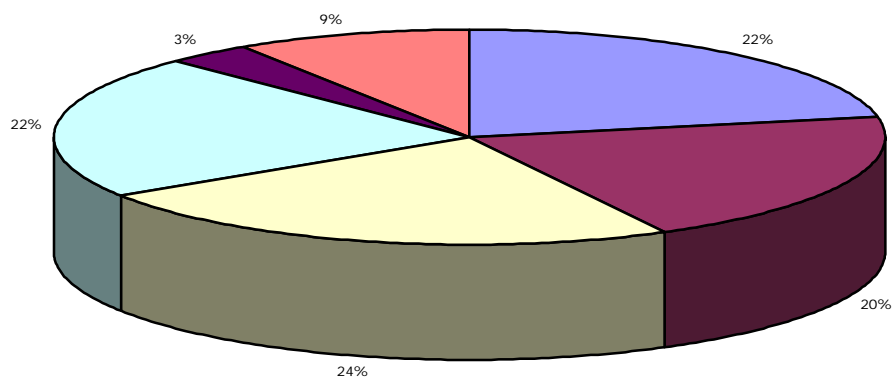
Chart 2: Expenditure per Goal 1999-1004



■ Rule of Law ■ Participation ■ Transparency & Accountability ■ Knowledge ■ Human Rights ■ Local Governance

Considering the expenditures per category during the period 1999 to mid-2004 (Chart 3), we find that POGAR allocated 24% for experts, 22% for training¹⁷, 22% for operations, 20% for subcontracts, 9% for travel and 3% for support staff.

Chart 3: Expenditure per Category, 1999-2004



■ Training ■ Subcontracts ■ Experts ■ Operations ■ Support Services ■ Travel Expenses

¹⁷ There were more than 490 trainees of whom only 66 were women, which is a good reflection of the percentage of males and females in public services and in the Arab labour market.

3. UNDP/RBAS Role in POGAR Management

The cooperation between POGAR management and the UNDP/RBAS is exemplary. The POGAR Coordinator kept the RBAS Regional Programme Division informed about activities, their progress and issues that need to be resolved. A high level of understanding and attention as well as useful guidance was given to Programme management. POGAR could not have achieved what it did without RBAS commitment and support. The cooperation of Arab governments and the network of local and international organizations that POGAR has successfully built was another factor in its success.

4. POGAR and UNOPS

The UNOPS played another important role in facilitating POGAR's implementation. The Portfolio Manager acted diligently and efficiently to expedite required actions for contracting consultants, facilitating their travel and the travel of all participants and settling their accounts.

5. POGAR's Cooperation with UNDP Country Offices

Opinions have varied significantly between supporters and otherwise. The supporters, Yemen, Jordan, Syria and Morocco, agreed that POGAR provided assistance to their country Programmes; while the critics were of the opinion that POGAR did not consult with them, that POGAR's Coordinator and consultants visited ministers and senior officials without their knowledge, while they are asked to provide tickets and per diem to participants of POGAR activities (services for which fees are paid by POGAR to the COs).

On the other hand, POGAR complained of the delay, and in some cases, lack of response from Country offices. In addition, some of the persons interviewed for this evaluation complained that the Country office did not inform them in time about the availability of their tickets and that, in some cases, offices insisted that the person should come to the office to receive the ticket. This obviously did not please the senior officials.

To resolve these issues, POGAR management agreed that effective immediately, UNDP Country offices will be timely informed of pertinent activities. It was also agreed that to the extent that resources of POGAR and of the Country offices may permit, an annual meeting will be organised by POGAR for all the Governance Focal Points in the region to discuss POGAR's annual plan, get them directly involved, seek their opinions and elicit their support. Effective cooperation between regional Programmes and country offices would facilitate their respective tasks and would certainly create a win/win situation.

With these issues settled, it is important to note that POGAR opened opportunities to CO's either directly through work on individual countries, or indirectly through the participation of senior officials in different POGAR activities. An example is Egypt's work on legal reform, Syria's work on parliamentary reform, Jordan's legal strategic plan and Yemen's work on legal reform and court modernisation.

V. OUTLINE OF POGAR ACTIVITIES IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS: A FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

POGAR activities are of the type that expand and need to be replicated in other countries of the region and the demand for POGAR's products and services continues to grow. The following recommendations are based on three inter-related considerations:

- a. The work that POGAR has begun and continues to do is not the simple short-term type, it is mostly of medium to long-term nature and keeps opening new areas, as beneficiaries realise that "Governance" is not a simple set of actions targeting particular institutions within a finite time frame. We are talking about whole systems, and people are now convinced of that.
- b. The recommendations emanating from POGAR's activities need to be implemented, monitored and evaluated. Governments need assistance and guidance in the implementation process. In addition, the wealth of knowledge POGAR has generated needs to be leveraged, disseminated and absorbed.
- c. There is a new UNDP-POGAR-OECD Initiative for the Middle East in the area of governance and investment for development. This Initiative was endorsed by the G-8 during their 2004 summit in Georgia, USA. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has decided to sponsor this Initiative. Already three activities have been jointly organized, in Beirut, Istanbul and Rabat in preparation for this Initiative. To formally launch this Initiative, a Ministerial meeting will take place in Amman, Jordan, on September 22, 2004, and a Heads of Government Conference will be held at the Dead Sea, Jordan in December, 2004. HM King Abdallah of Jordan will open that Conference and a Declaration of commitment to reform will be issued by the participating Arab governments. This Initiative is planned as a three-year initial phase to be followed by five years of reform implementation and impact measurement. The six themes covered under "Governance and Rule of Law" are closely linked to the current themes of POGAR and will need human and financial resources to implement them, they are:
 - i. Civil Society and integrity;
 - ii. E-government, administrative simplification and regulatory reform;
 - iii. Governance of public resources;
 - iv. Public service delivery;
 - v. Rule of law and enforcement;
 - vi. Civil society and media.

In addition, there is much that is requested by the region, for example:

- a. The anti-corruption agencies look to POGAR for assistance to establish a network of national, regional and international institutions to exchange experience and learn lessons on prevention measures, successful methods of combating corruption laws for prosecuting offenders;
- b. There is a request to establish an Arab Institute for Penal Justice.
- c. There is need for assistance to review the constitutions in the region to weed out all provisions impeding the work of civil society organizations. This may

be difficult to initiate at the individual country level and could be easier to approach at a regional level.

- d. Countries need assistance to review the 1994 Arab League Civil Rights Charter and create an environment that would facilitate its ratification by Arab States.¹⁸
- e. Many Arab parliamentarians need to learn about the international Treaties, Conventions and Agreements to which their countries are signatories. They are asked to discuss matters of which they have little or no knowledge.
- f. Parliamentarians need assistance to strengthen their budgetary oversight to rein in the executive branch. Again, building capacities, sharing experience and introducing new methods, will be possible if approached from a regional perspective.
- g. Women empowerment needs more work at regional level, leading to specific actions at the individual country level.
- h. The studies that were conducted on the laws and the office of the prosecutor (Niyaba) in five countries now need to be replicated in the region for obvious benefits.
- i. There is request for assistance to record court decisions on line and make them accessible to all Arab courts in an interactive mode to share experiences and exchange ideas.
- j. Local governance is an area that is certainly worth the attention of all concerned. Development that is people-based begins at the local government level. This area has recently been given attention by donors who realised that concentration on central government machinery and other central institutions did not give the cherished results after all the funds that have been poured into projects to reform the central public agencies.
- k. There is a need to provide assistance in the area of “information management” to further enhance the prospects for transparency and accountability in the region and build on the findings of the studies conducted in six Arab countries under the collaborative efforts of UNDESA and UNDP (POGAR).

¹⁸ The only Arab country that ratified the Charter was Iraq.

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The environment for reform in the Arab region has never been as conducive as it is today. Arab Intellectuals have now shifted from “criticizing” to constructive thinking and participatory guidance. Arab countries seem to have become more aware of their international surrounding and of the aspirations of people for freedom and democracy. While much has been done, it is just the beginning; the thirst for knowledge and sharing experience is evident.

This is a propitious moment for POGAR. The Programme struggled at the beginning until it earned professional credibility and was given the trust of the region. The sensitive areas in which it ventured have opened new vistas for the beneficiary countries and made them eager for learning opportunities. POGAR has provided a forum, an opportunity for public debate and for professionals to discuss issues of social, economic and political concern.

While it is not possible to credit any particular initiative or institution for the positive environment that has recently been created in most parts of the region, it is safe to say that POGAR has contributed significantly to it. The impact of its work is measured by the degree of responsiveness in the region, the projects that followed and the increasing demand for widening the scope of interventions. The impact is also measured by the financial support given by donors for different activities and for the desire of others (OECD, US State Department, UN Foundation) to join hands with POGAR for the benefit of the region.

The uniqueness of POGAR is illustrated by its innovative approach (in-depth studies, consultation among experts, followed by a public activity), the selectivity of themes and topics, the targeting of relevant participants and audiences, the demand-driven response style and the quality of its publications and training materials. The network of ministers and senior officials, the network of national, regional and international organizations have facilitated POGAR’s access to the centers of policy and decision-making and mobilized needed resources.

POGAR’s Capacity building efforts were well designed and targeted and about 500 persons from the region benefited from them. Some 40 graduate students served as interns and gained practical skills and practical experience in research methods, preparing papers and organizing activities. The knowledge reservoir that POGAR’s website has created is a landmark in the Arab region. The databases that it has helped establish have enriched the knowledge of their respective country and helped enhance the principles of transparency, accountability and access to knowledge. POGAR will also concentrate efforts for operationalising the recommendations of the Arab Human Development Reports (AHDR), with particular emphasis on Governance.

Endeavour to identify an institutional focal point in every country where there are operations and utilise their services to facilitate and expedite the POGAR activities, including communications with stakeholders and beneficiaries. Existing focal points in selected countries have proven their worth; this needs to be extended to all countries where there are activities. In view of the expanded work of POGAR, with the UNDP/OECD Initiative added to its workload, additional human resources will be required. When the UNDP/OECD Governance Initiative is launched, there will be six countries managing the thematic work groups and the specific institutions to manage them will be the natural focal points.

With POGAR's approach of making the best use of the intellectual reservoir of the Arab region, consultants will be the mainstay of needed resources to carry out short-to-medium term assignments. The structure of POGAR will remain slim, with only one long-term senior professional who would act for the Coordinator in his absence, and three additional support staff of high caliber. POGAR's work will be facilitated through close cooperation with its focal points in the region.

It is important to put a strategic emphasis in the future on creating and responding to demands from governments in all areas of POGAR's work. Interested and committed institutions will need to share the costs of activities, especially those that may be tailored to their needs. Equally important is the coordination both with SURF-AS experts and UNDP country offices in governance-related activities to create synergies.

Though the Programme is demand driven, every attempt should be made to balance resource distribution among the Programme Pillars to void the concentration of resources in any given area. As financial resources become available, POGAR staff should be reasonably enlarged to free the time of the Programme Coordinator to enhance policy dialogue and increase resource mobilisation efforts.

To avoid interruption of activities and delays, there may be no need for preparing a new Programme document; activities could continue along the same line as in the past two years with UNDP and other funds being added against work plans and specific activities. When the UNDP/OECD Governance Initiative is launched in December 2004, the new activities under this Initiative could be recorded in an Aide-Mémoire to be annexed to the existing Programme document.

In the future, for each and every activity, an ACTIVITY BRIEF should be prepared to describe the activity objectives, the targeted audiences, the content, the expected results in addition to the partnerships established for the conducting the activity, the estimated cost of the activity and the co-financiers if any. When the activity is completed, an ACTIVITY COMPLETION REPORT should be prepared to record what happened, the results obtained, the names of participants and every other detail regarding actual costs, the recommendations made and the way those recommendations will be followed.

Credibility is not easily earned; POGAR has amply earned it. The demand for its services is continuing and expanding and the environment for reform is just beginning to blossom. The region is eager for change and for genuine and sustainable human development and POGAR has been one of its effective partners. It is strongly recommended, therefore, that UNDP/RBAS continue its commitment and support to POGAR to deliver the assistance the Arab region needs and expects.

Ragaa Makharita
9 August, 2004

Arab citizens are now demanding more of their government and public institutions. There is a critical change in intellectual discourse. Instead of being just "critical", many intellectuals are now constructively contributing to "advising", "advocating" and providing "guidance" to decision and policy makers. There is clear desire for reform, for transparency and for accountability. There is a sense of an awakening, a change in the tone and a realisation that only through positive "participation", the message can be heard. A sense of positive citizenship characterises the present situation in most Arab countries. POGAR may be credited to have contributed to creating this positive environment.