

Strengthening the Citizen-State Compact through Feedback:

*Effective Complaint Management as
a Pathway for Articulating Citizen Voice
and Improving State Response*



**SUMMARY ASSESSMENT REPORT ON
COMPLAINT HANDLING MECHANISMS IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES**

Report No: ACS18685

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Acronyms

AMAN	Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (Palestinian chapter of Transparency International)
CMS	complaint management system
DGC	Directorate General of Complaints
MIS	management information system
NGO	nongovernmental organization
PMC	Palestinian Medial Complex

Executive Summary

“Leadership is to have the humility to continue to get feedback and to try to get better.”

■ Jim Yong Kim, World Bank President, April 2014

The Palestinian Authority is committed to improving state-citizen relations through various mechanisms, including complaints resolution. The Regulation on Complaints (No. 6), issued in 2009 by the Council of Ministers of the Palestinian Authority, establishes an internal system for handling citizen complaints based on rights-based approaches. It provides for the establishment of the Directorate General of Complaints (DGC) in the Council of Ministers and outlines the role, mandate, and procedures of complaint units in Palestinian ministries. As a result, 56 units have been established in various ministries and governorates to receive complaints regarding programs and services implemented by their ministries.

This technical assistance, undertaken at the request of the DGC, seeks to strengthen the complaint handling mechanisms of the DGC and five Palestinian ministries or government entities supported by World Bank-financed projects: the Ministry of Social Development (formerly called the Ministry of Social Affairs), the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Local Government, and the Palestinian Land Authority. It resonates with the World Bank’s commitment to include beneficiary feedback in 100 percent of projects with clearly identified beneficiaries, as defined in the “Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Citizen Engagement in World Bank Group Operations” (World Bank 2014). Complaint handling mechanisms help empower citizens and integrate their voices into programs. The inclusion in 2014 of an indicator on complaints handling—the percentage of registered grievances resolved—in the World Bank Corporate Scorecard is catalyzing the integration of complaint handling mechanisms in Bank projects and their results frameworks.

Activities included a preliminary assessment of complaint handling mechanisms in the five priority ministries, a formulation of initial recommendations for improving them, a survey of complainants and others who either have or may use the complaint handling mechanisms in the five target ministries, support for the elaboration of ministry-specific action plans, several workshops, and a study tour for the Ministry of Social Development staff to learn from the complaint handling mechanism established as part of Pantawid Pamilya, the Philippine government's flagship conditional cash transfer program.

This summary report synthesizes key findings from the technical assistance and formulates ministry-specific recommendations. It forms the basis of the project's potential second phase, which would support the implementation of the recommendations. The report presents the innovative methodology used to bring together demand- and supply-side perspectives on complaint handling mechanisms in target ministries, important survey and ministry-by-ministry assessment findings, key suggestions for improvement, and next steps.

Several interesting findings emerge. In over half of the cases, information about the complaint unit was provided by a source other than a ministry; citizens often turned to third parties to voice complaints and inquire about the complaint handling process; and the public was generally aware of the procedures to file a complaint. According to the survey results, the key barriers to complaint submission are perceived bureaucracy, the need for technical and legal advice, the frequent occurrence of personal mediation, and limited trust in the performance of the government. These barriers also impact citizens' readiness to appeal the results of the complaint handling process. There is a fairly widespread willingness among dissatisfied complainants to appeal the results of the complaint handling process, but at the same time, many citizens express reluctance because of the system's reputation for being corrupt, slow, and untrustworthy.

Overall, the behavior by complaint unit staff toward complainants appears to be respectful, neutral, and nondiscriminatory, but there has been some criticism with regard to preferential treatment and gender discrimination. In addition, citizens often perceive the communications about procedures, follow-up mechanisms, and results by complaint unit staff as unclear or not straightforward. In the Gaza Strip, complainants did not think

the physical facilities for complaint submission were suited for their purpose, and complained about missing or overly complex grievance forms provided by the ministry. Satisfaction rates regarding complaint resolution outcomes and the timeliness of handling complaints are quite low. Table 1 summarizes key findings and how they relate to good practices in the area of complaint handling mechanisms.

This technical assistance identified several areas that need improvement in the existing complaint handling processes of the DGC, the four ministries, and the Palestinian Land Authority. All entities requested additional staff, equipment, furniture, and automobiles. Key suggestions for building trust and confidence among citizens in the ministry's complaint handling mechanisms include: clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the complaint unit relative to other departments within the ministry and of the complaint units compared with the Directorate General of Complaints; improving citizen awareness programs regarding complaint procedures; simplifying business processes and creating ministry-specific guidelines; fast-tracking the rollout of the complaint management system that would allow for online complaint submission; building staff capacity for those involved in complaint resolution; and measuring complainant satisfaction through short surveys. Given the evident resource constraints, both financial and human, it will be crucial to prioritize these areas, mobilize internal and external resources from within the ministry and from development partners, and then implement relevant actions. The example of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education clearly indicates that complaint units can take a number of actions internally (box 4.3). Similarly, lessons from the complaint handling mechanism of the Ramallah Medical Complex can easily be scaled up (box 4.5). Such commendable initiatives should be further encouraged.

The technical assistance has generated a great deal of interest among the relevant ministries, the DGC, and development partners. A second phase would allow for follow-up efforts to support the target ministries and the DGC in applying the assessment recommendations and expanding the activities to other ministries. Subject to the availability of funds, possible activities to consider include a technical assessment of the complaint management system and support for its strengthening and rollout; sensitization regarding complaint handling mechanisms for the senior management of all target ministries; technical, and to the best extent possible financial, support

to the target ministries for implementing the suggestions for improvement and their action plans; capacity development of staff of complaint units to improve the management of citizen complaints and to use a management information system; development of communications material for each ministry—internally for ministry staff and externally for complaint handling mechanism users; and, subject to the availability of funds, an expansion of strengthening activities for complaint handling mechanism to an additional five ministries.

Table 1. Summary of Key Findings

Good Practice	Key Findings
Citizens know about the complaint handling mechanism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the West Bank, an average of 4–6 people out of 10 were aware of the complaint unit’s existence. In the Gaza Strip, between 6 and 7 people out of 10 were aware of it. • The public is generally aware of the procedures to file a complaint. Over two-thirds of respondents were aware of the procedures to file a complaint with a complaint unit, except in the case of the Palestinian Land Authority in the West Bank. • In over half of the cases, information about the complaint unit was provided by a source other than a ministry.
Citizens trust the complaint handling mechanism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens often turn to third parties to voice their complaints and inquire about the complaint handling process. • Low trust in government performance is a factor that prevents citizens from submitting complaints to a complaint unit.
Barriers to complaint submission are low.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key barriers to complaint submission are perceived bureaucracy, the need for technical and legal advice, and the frequent use of personal mediation. • Complainants in the Gaza Strip did not feel that the physical facilities for complaint submission were suited for their purpose and highlighted that the forms at the ministry were sometimes missing or overly complex.

(continued)

Table 1. Continued

Good Practice	Key Findings
<p>The complaint handling mechanism informs users about procedures, follow-up mechanisms, and results.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens often think that communication about procedures, follow-up mechanisms, and results by complaint unit staff is not clear or straightforward. • In the West Bank, 34.8–62.5 percent of complainants found it easy to reach the complaint unit to inquire about complaint handling procedures. In the Gaza Strip, 50.8–66.0 percent found it easy. • In the West Bank, 13.0–62.5 percent of complainants agreed that the complaint unit clearly informed them of the procedures and follow-up mechanisms linked to complaints. In the Gaza Strip, 63.8–72.5 percent agreed. Complainants who were unclear about procedures and follow-up mechanisms tended to blame uncooperative complaint unit employees. • A significant percentage of respondents were seeking help outside the ministry in order to get updated information on the status of their complaints. • Complainants were not systematically informed about the results of their complaints.
<p>The complaint handling mechanism is quick.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall satisfaction rates with the timeliness of handling complaints remains fairly low, although they are systematically higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank.
Good Practice	Key Findings
<p>The complaint handling mechanism is effective.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction rates with complaint resolution outcomes are quite low in the West Bank (the highest satisfaction rate is 37.5 percent for the Palestinian Land Authority; the lowest is 12.3 percent for the Ministry of Health). Rates are relatively higher in the Gaza Strip—34.5 percent for the Ministry of Social Development and 79.2 percent for the Ministry of Health. • There is a fairly widespread willingness among dissatisfied complainants to appeal the results of the complaint handling process (over half would do so), but at the same time, many expressed reluctance because of the system’s reputation for being corrupt, slow, and untrustworthy.
<p>The complaint handling mechanism treats all users equally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, behavior by complaint unit staff toward complainants seems to be respectful, neutral, and nondiscriminatory, but some complained of preferential treatment and gender discrimination.

1. Introduction

The objective of this technical assistance, undertaken at the request of the Complaints Directorate of the Cabinet Secretariat, is to strengthen the complaint handling mechanisms of five Palestinian ministries and government entities supported by World Bank-financed projects: the Ministry of Social Development (formerly called the Ministry of Social Affairs), the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Local Government, the Palestinian Land Authority, and the Complaints Directorate.

The technical assistance resonates with the World Bank’s commitment to include beneficiary feedback in 100 percent of projects with clearly identified beneficiaries, as defined in “Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Citizen Engagement in World Bank Group Operations” (World Bank 2014). Complaint handling mechanisms help empower citizens and integrate their voices into programs. The inclusion of an indicator on complaint handling—the percentage of registered grievances resolved—in the World Bank Corporate Scorecard in 2014 is catalyzing the integration of complaint handling mechanisms in Bank projects and their results frameworks.

The technical assistance also aligns with the focus on strengthening the citizen-state compact specified in the World Bank Group’s 2015/16 Assistance Strategy for the West Bank and Gaza. Reflecting the Palestinian Authority’s priorities as expressed in its National Development Plan, the strategy’s first pillar is to “strengthen the institutions of a future state to ensure service delivery to citizens.” The proposed outcome 1.2 is “increased transparency and accountability in service delivery.” With its emphasis on state- and institution-building, the strategy also builds on the governance elements present in the Middle East and North Africa regional strategy. The technical assistance aligns well with these outcomes.

Activities undertaken as part of this effort have included: a preliminary assessment of the complaint handling mechanisms in the five priority ministries;¹ the formulation of initial recommendations for improving them; a survey of complainants and others who have or may use a complaint handling mechanism in one of the five target ministries; support for the expansion of ministry-specific action plans; several workshops; and a study tour for Ministry of Social Development staff to learn from the complaint handling mechanism established as part of Pantawid Pamilya, the Philippine government's flagship conditional cash transfer program.

This summary report synthesizes key findings from the technical assistance and formulates ministry-specific recommendations. It forms the basis of a possible second phase for the project, which would support the implementation of recommendations. The following sections describe the context, the methodology used to bring together demand- and supply-side perspectives on complaint handling mechanisms in the target ministries, the key findings from the survey and the ministry-by-ministry assessments, key suggestions for improvement, and recommended next steps.

1. The Ministry of Social Development's complaint handling mechanism was not evaluated as part of the May 2015 mission because a rapid assessment had already been conducted during an implementation support mission in May 2014 for the World Bank-assisted cash transfer program, which had led the Ministry of Social Development to start implementing several of the earlier recommendations.

2. Context

The Palestinian Authority was established in the West Bank and Gaza shortly after the Oslo Accords of 1993. It assumed civilian responsibility for most Palestinian residents, but its security powers were limited to the major urban centers. Israel maintained full control of large tracts of land around settlements and primary movement axes, leaving 61 percent of the West Bank—Area C²—outside the Palestinian Authority's reach. Under the Oslo Accords, this arrangement was intended to be a temporary measure, to be replaced with a final-status agreement by the year 2000, but it still remains in force. Several peace processes have been initiated but, to date, none have succeeded.

In November 2012, the United Nations voted in favor of the Palestinian Authority's application to be a nonmember observer state. This opened the door for the Palestinian Authority to apply for membership in a number of United Nations agencies, but the positive vote put additional strain on its relations with Israel. The United States facilitated Palestinian–Israeli peace talks restarted in mid-2013. By the end of March 2014, the peace talks began to stall. After Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas forged a unity pact with Hamas, which forms the de facto authority in Gaza, Israel suspended its participation in the talks.

In May 2014, a formal unity government was created between Fatah and Hamas, but it has been severely strained, particularly by violence that erupted in Gaza in July–August 2014 and by the hostility of both parties toward one another. The “consensus government” is composed of a cabinet of technocrats unaffiliated with any political party, who are endorsed by both Fatah and Hamas. In practice, the ruling power is split into two separate administrations: (i) the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority, which rules the West

2. The West Bank is divided into three zones: Areas A, B, and C. The land in Area A is entirely controlled by the Palestinian Authority. Area B is under Palestinian civil authority but is controlled by Israeli military forces. Area C is under complete Israeli authority.

Bank Area A and has civil control over Area B; and (ii) the Hamas government, which is de facto administering the Gaza Strip since the violent conflict between Fatah and Hamas in 2007, which led to the expulsion of officials affiliated with Fatah from the Gaza Strip and to Hamas taking control of the area. Governance arrangements and service delivery in Gaza are complicated by the existence of two distinct public service providers—one funded and managed by the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, the other by the Hamas administration. At the end of 2015, Gaza's unemployment rate was 38 percent—twice that of the West Bank—including a particularly high rate of youth unemployment in 2015. Poverty rates were at 39 percent in 2014—nearly 2.5 times higher than that of the West Bank. Since June 2007, the movement of all people and goods in and out of Gaza has been restricted by Israel and Egypt. The July–August 2014 conflict in Gaza prompted a humanitarian and economic crisis. At the current pace of recovery, the Gaza economy is not expected to rebound to its pre-war level until 2018. According to the United Nation's Relief and Works Agency, almost 80 percent of Gaza's population of around 1.8 million currently depends on aid. The West Bank fares better than Gaza, but by late 2015, 19 percent of the West Bank's population (estimated at 2.8 million in July 2015) was unemployed, and 15 percent lived below the poverty line. The persistence of administrative, trade, movement, and access restrictions has had a dampening effect on private investment and private sector activity.

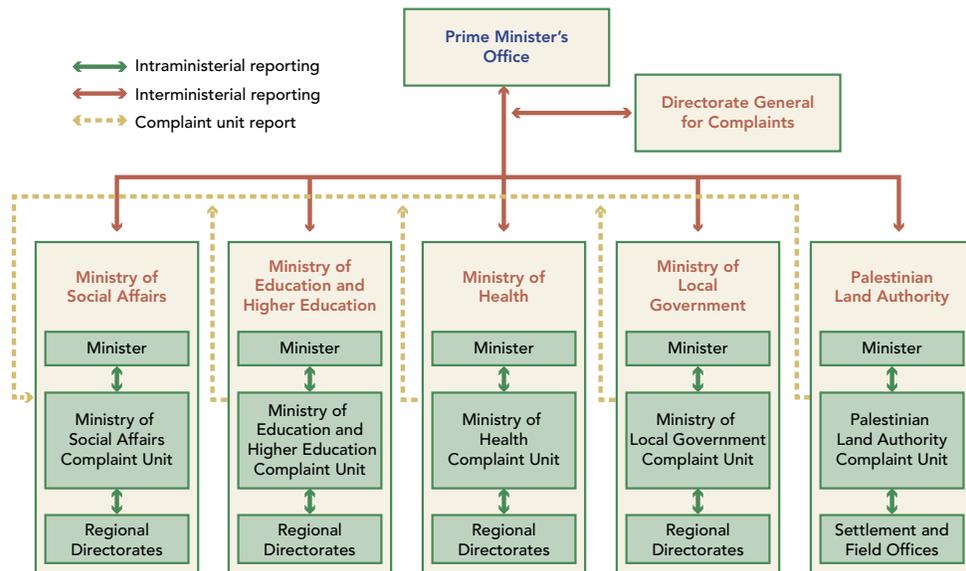
The Palestinian Authority is committed to improving state–citizen relations through various mechanisms, including complaints resolution. The Regulation on Complaints (No. 6), issued in 2009 by the Palestinian Authority's Council of Ministers, establishes an internal system for handling citizen complaints based on rights-based approaches. The regulation provides for the establishment of a Directorate General of Complaints (DGC) in the Council of Ministers. It also outlines the role, mandate, and procedures of complaint units in Palestinian ministries. As a result, 56 complaint units were established in various ministries and governorates. These units receive complaints about programs and services being implemented by their ministries. According to the regulation, the DGC is responsible for supervising all complaint units.

The regulation sets timeframes for units to resolve complaints. A complaint unit has three days to accept or reject a complaint and two weeks to resolve it. If that amount of time is insufficient, the unit informs the complainant, and it is allowed to take up to one month to resolve the issue.

The activities of the Directorate General of Complaints are focused on solving complaints and providing support to the complaint units of ministries and other entities. According to the regulation, the DGC's duties are to: (i) receive complaints from public institutions and organizations; (ii) review each case and discuss it with relevant parties to find solutions or send it to court if a solution cannot be reached through legal negotiations; and (iii) coordinate with the General Administration for Legal Affairs to follow up on complaints about ministries not implementing Supreme Court decisions. The DGC handles complaints referred to it and appeals of complaints that ministry and lower-level complaint units cannot resolve. The DGC also receives complaints from citizens directly; provides training to complaint units about how to run their units; develops procedures and bylaws on complaint handling; receives quarterly reports from ministry complaint units; and produces quarterly and annual reports for the Prime Minister's Office. The DGC monitors and evaluates complaint units with a focus on problems or delays in the resolution of complaints. The DGC makes direct recommendations to the Prime Minister's Office, but its authority over ministry complaint units is limited. Given the DGC's strategic position in the Council of Ministers, several of its recommendations to the Prime Minister's Office have been positively received. Its recommendations generally focus on suggesting amendments to laws or regulations impeding the resolution of complaints. Ministry complaint units are accountable to their respective ministries, but they also report to the DGC.

The DGC is developing an electronic complaint management system. Once operational, it will provide ministry complaint units with a comprehensive database to replace the current system based on hard copies of complaints. The new system will allow for the online submission of complaints as well as for the anonymous submission of complaints. It is expected to improve complaint processing and tracking and allow for a broader analysis of complaints statistics (e.g., percentage of complaints resolved by each ministry and areas where complaints are most frequent).

Figure 2.1.
Complaint Handling Architecture in the West Bank and Gaza



Source: Authors.

The technical assistance supports the DGC and five selected ministries and nonministerial entities in strengthening their complaint handling mechanism. The World Bank portfolio in the Palestinian Territories comprises 25 active projects and 15 pipeline projects.³ Based on the West Bank's institutional mandate on grievance redress and the Palestinian Authority's commitment and efforts to address complaints from Palestinian citizens, the World Bank decided to support the Complaints Directorate in strengthening its complaints resolution procedures in five selected ministries and other entities that the World Bank is already directly supporting through projects. An integrated approach toward strengthening the Palestinian Authority's complaint handling mechanism is likely to result in increased cost savings, improved and sustained technical support, greater efficiency and effectiveness, and better project implementation. Figure 2.1. schematizes relationships and reporting lines between the various actors involved in complaint handling mechanisms who were directly or indirectly targeted by the technical assistance.

3. According to data from the operational portal on February 26, 2015.

3. Methodology

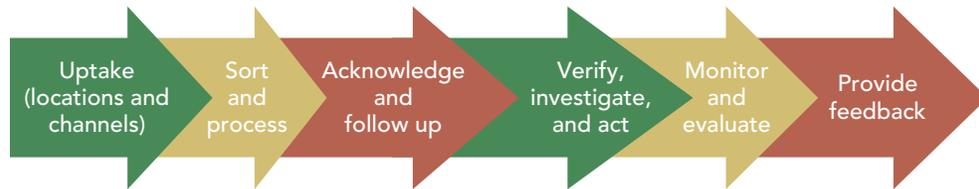
This technical assistance adopted an innovative methodology by combining demand- and supply-side approaches in analyzing complaint handling mechanisms. Identifying and including the perspectives of the government as well as citizens regarding the functioning of the complaint handling mechanisms was considered essential. Indeed, demand for good governance initiatives can succeed only when they take into account the willingness and capacity of the government to be held accountable and of the citizens to demand accountability (Agarwal and Van Wicklin 2012).

A preliminary analysis (World Bank 2015) regarding the supply side was performed for each ministry using the Grievance Redress/Complaint Handling Mechanism Value Chain framework for analysis (figure 3.1.).

Every step of the grievance/complaint management process addresses different questions, including:

- **Uptake.** How is the grievance collected? At how many locations and through what channels?
- **Sorting and processing.** How is the grievance categorized, logged, and prioritized? Who is it referred to? How is the complaint addressed?
- **Acknowledgment and follow up.** Does the complainant receive an acknowledgment of submitting a grievance? How are they provided progress updates? Are complainants informed of the timeline and process to address their concerns?
- **Verifying, investigating, and acting.** How is information about the complaint gathered in order to resolve it? How is it resolved? How does it escalate to higher levels?

Figure 3.1.
Grievance Redress/Complaints Handling Mechanism Value Chain



Source: Post and Agarwal 2012.

- **Monitoring and evaluation.** How does management track the complaint? Is grievance data analyzed? Does management get regular reports on grievance receipt and resolution trends? Is complaint-gathering an agenda item in management meetings?
- **Providing feedback.** Are complainants informed of the action(s) taken regarding their grievance? How? Is information on the complaint and the action(s) taken made available to other citizens and beneficiaries?

Supply-side perspectives were obtained through interactions with government officials. Two missions were undertaken as part of the technical assistance: May 18–29, 2015, and February 8–18, 2016. The first mission focused on meetings with complaint unit staff in the four relevant ministries, the Palestinian Land Authority, and the Directorate General of Complaints (DGC) as well as with beneficiary groups, regional offices, and others. It closed with a half-day validation workshop, which brought the heads of the six complaint units together, giving them an opportunity to share strengths, challenges, concerns, and experiences about complaint handling mechanisms and to identify priority actions to strengthen them.

Demand-side perspectives were obtained from a survey of complainants and from focus group discussions with program beneficiaries. Because of its pertinent experience and existing relationships with the relevant ministries, the Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (AMAN), the Palestinian branch of Transparency International, was selected to carry out the survey of citizen experiences and perceptions regarding complaint units and complaint handling procedures. Meetings and focus group discussions with program beneficiaries, parent and beneficiary councils, and nongovernmental organizations provided deeper insights, supplementing the findings of the survey.

Box 3.1. User Survey Topics

- Awareness of the complaint unit
- Knowledge about method for filing complaint at ministry
- Other nonministerial parties to which citizens filed complaints
- Information about procedures to file a complaint and about follow-up mechanisms
- Treatment by complaint unit (respectful, neutral, and nondiscriminatory)
- Ease of access to complaint unit and inquiry about complaint handling procedures
- Provision of information on handling of grievance by complaint unit
- Timeliness in resolving complaint
- Communication to complainant regarding outcome of grievance
- Ease of follow-up
- Satisfaction with resolution
- Appeals
- Suggestions for improvement

The survey examined several aspects of complaint handling mechanisms, including awareness of the complaint unit, knowledge of methods to file complaints, timeliness of the process, ease of follow-up, and satisfaction with outcomes (box 3.1). There was a face-to-face exit survey of visitors to the five target ministries (sample size: 1,656) and a telephone survey targeting individuals who had submitted complaints (sample size: 635). The latter were identified from the databases available at the four target ministries and Palestinian Land Authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (table 3.1),⁴ but because most complainants prefer to verbally air their grievances rather than submit them in writing, most grievances are not registered. In order to account for the nonregistered grievances, the face-to-face exit survey included non-complainants; focus group discussions were held; and interviews were conducted with Parents Council members for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Beneficiary Council members for the Ministry of Social Development, complainants who approached the AMAN office and agreed

4. Databases were made available by all of the complaint units of the ministries and the Palestinian Land Authority in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, databases were provided by the complaint units of all ministries, but in the cases of the Palestinian Land Authority and the Ministry of Social Development, they were made available by the internal audit units.

to take part in focus group discussions, and the Independent Human Rights Commission. Finally, there were meetings and interviews with officials from the four target ministries and the Palestinian Land Authority from the complaint units as well as the public relations, legal, administrative, and internal audit departments; with hospital administrators from the Ministry of Health in Ramallah; with Ramallah and Gaza municipality officials; and with lawyers.

Key findings and suggestions were discussed and refined at a validation workshop. The second mission closed with a workshop that brought together officials from the four ministries, the Palestinian Land Authority, and the DGC. It included progress updates by representatives from participating ministries and broadly validated the findings of the AMAN survey. Participants identified priority actions to further improve their complaint handling mechanisms over the next 6–9 months.

Table 3.1.
Number of Survey Respondents

Name of Ministry or Institution	Number of Respondents			
	Face-to-face Surveys in the West Bank	Face-to-face Surveys in the Gaza Strip	Phone Surveys in the West Bank	Phone Surveys in the Gaza Strip
Ministry of Social Development (formerly called the Ministry of Social Affairs)	298	171	229	58
Ministry of Education and Higher Education	104	128	86	50
Ministry of Health	235	124	58	24
Ministry of Local Government	144	112	23	59
Palestinian Land Authority	234	106	8	40
Total	1,015	641	404	231

Source: AMAN 2016.

4. Key Findings

The findings presented in this section build on the ministry-by-ministry assessments carried out during two missions to the Palestinian Territories as well as the May 2016 background report that summarizes the survey results: “Status, Effectiveness and Efficiency of Palestinian Complaint Units,” produced by the Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (AMAN)—the Palestinian chapter of Transparency International. The present section starts with a summary of key findings, then outlines the findings of the face-to-face survey, and then summarizes the findings of the phone survey. Face-to-face survey participants consisted of complainants and noncomplainants exiting one of the relevant ministry offices. Phone survey respondents were complainants identified using databases made available by the complaint units or internal audit units of the ministries for 2014–August 2015. To account for the differences in the governance systems between the two territories and to allow for greater granularity, the figures in this report present the data for the West Bank and Gaza Strip separately. The findings are not intended as inter-regional comparisons—i.e., the West Bank versus the Gaza Strip—because the context and governance arrangements are quite distinct. Nor are the findings intended for interministerial comparisons, such as the Ministry of Education and Higher Education versus the Ministry of Health, because the programs and services offered by each ministry are specific to it. Some observations will require additional time and research to test causal relationships and explain variations in patterns—e.g., between ministries in the same territory or between the same ministry in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. The survey’s key findings are presented in box 4.1.

Box 4.1. Key Findings

FACE-TO-FACE SURVEYS

Factors Facilitating Grievance Uptake

- **Awareness of procedures.** With the exception of the Palestinian Land Authority in the West Bank, two-thirds or more of respondents were aware of the procedures to file a complaint with a complaint unit.
- **Willingness to appeal.** Over half of the complainants who were dissatisfied with the result of their complaint intended to appeal, reflecting a readiness to use the complaint management system and a certain degree of trust in it.

Factors Limiting Grievance Uptake

- **If you don't know, you don't go.** Awareness of the existence of complaint units is low and can be enhanced, especially in the West Bank where only 40–60 percent of respondents knew of them. In the Gaza Strip, 60–70 percent were aware of them. Even among respondents who were aware of the complaint units, many did not know about the procedures for filing a complaint.
- **Three main reasons emerge for why citizens do not want to file a complaint with a ministry:**
 - **Time is money.** Over one-fifth of respondents did not want to file a complaint with a ministry because they thought the procedures were too slow.
 - **What counts is who you know.** Over one-fifth of survey participants did not want to file their complaint with a ministry because the frequent use of personal mediation has led them to believe that the system is corrupt.
 - **Trust takes years to build and seconds to break.** A third major group of respondents said they did not want to file a complaint because they did not trust the performance of the government.
- **Kafka's legacy.** Except for the Ministry of Health in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the Gaza Strip's Ministry of Education and Higher Education and Ministry of Social Development complaint units, over one-third of respondents who filed their complaint somewhere else than with the

(continued)

Box 4.1. Continued

complaint unit did so because they thought that approaching the ministry with their grievance would be a highly bureaucratic process.

Importance of Nonministry Actors

- **Second-hand information about the complaint unit.** Over half of the respondents said they learned about the complaint unit from a source other than a ministry.
- **Citizens trust that nonministry entities can handle the complaint well.** Citizens think of third parties as very relevant and credible alternatives to the complaint unit for filing complaints. Among the face-to-face complainants, 20–50 percent filed their complaint to another party before heading to the relevant ministry. In the West Bank, most filed complaints with the Directorate General of Complaints (DGC), private institutions, and non-governmental human rights organizations. In the Gaza Strip, most turned to the DGC and the Anti-Corruption Commission.
- **The need for outside help.** Other than the respondents for the Palestinian Land Authority, over one-fifth of respondents reported submitting their complaint to another party because they thought they needed technical and legal support. A significant percentage of respondents sought help from outside the ministry in order to receive updated information on the status of their complaint.

PHONE SURVEYS

Main Factors Impacting the Experience of Citizens

- **Customer service.** Complainants generally believed that the complaint unit staff was respectful, neutral, and nondiscriminatory. However, in the Gaza Strip, many respondents indicated gender-based discrimination as a reason for dissatisfaction with complaint unit staff. Others complained of the absence of a “first-come, first-served” rule, with more attention given to some over others. Complainants who were unclear about procedures and follow-up mechanisms tended to blame uncooperative complaint unit employees. A significant proportion of complainants in the Gaza Strip pointed out that the physical space for filing complaints was not suitable

(continued)

Box 4.1. Continued

and that the complaint form provided by the ministry was too complex or was unavailable.

- **Communication about procedures.** Complainants in the Gaza Strip tended to agree much more than those in the West Bank that the complaint unit had clearly informed them about procedures and follow-up mechanisms related to their grievance—63.8 percent or more compared with 13.0–62.5 percent, respectively.
- **Communication about status updates and results.** Views were mixed regarding ease of access to the complaint unit to inquire about complaint handling procedures. Respondents who did not find it easy to get in touch with the complaint unit cited as reasons for their dissatisfaction the unwillingness of complaint unit employees to offer information, a lack of updated data, lengthy timeframes to retrieve complaints, and staff absenteeism. Many citizens—especially in the West Bank—expressed their sense that they had not received all of the necessary information regarding their inquiries about complaint handling and the result of the complaint.
- **Satisfaction with outcomes.** Satisfaction rates with complaint resolution outcomes are quite low in the West Bank—the highest satisfaction rate is 37.5 percent for the Palestinian Land Authority; the lowest is 12.3 percent for the Ministry of Health. Rates are relatively higher in the Gaza Strip—ranging from 34.5 percent for the Ministry of Social Development to 79.2 percent for the Ministry of Health.
- **Timeliness.** Satisfaction rates with the timeliness of complaint handling remain fairly low overall, but they are systematically higher in the Gaza Strip (up to 65 percent) than in the West Bank (up to 50 percent).

Complainants' Choices Impacted by Current Processes

- **Likelihood of returning to the complaint unit.** The likelihood of a complainant returning to the complaint unit if a problem reoccurs varies between 41.4 and 77.8 percent in the West Bank and 45.8 and 65.0 percent in the Gaza Strip. This finding is linked to the perception of a lack of professionalism in the complaint units, especially pronounced in the West Bank, and to dissatisfaction with results.

(continued)

Box 4.1. Continued

- **Complainants search for internal and external assistance.** Up to one-fourth of citizens in the West Bank ask ministry employees or external officials to follow-up on their complaints. If dissatisfied with the complaint unit, a significant proportion of citizens would choose to approach the DGC. In the Gaza Strip, around one-third of respondents addressed ministry or external employees or officials, seeking help regarding their complaint. Many respondents who were dissatisfied with the complaint unit said they would turn to the Anti-Corruption Commission or the State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau.

Recommendations for Improvement

- In the Gaza Strip, respondents broadly recommended improving **citizen awareness programs** regarding complaint procedures (13–43 percent depending on the ministry), **simplifying processes** (22–38 percent), **increasing the number of complaint unit employees** (15–38 percent), and **mainstreaming digitalized procedures** (12–19 percent). In the West Bank, priorities for improvement are less clear: over 40 percent of respondents from each ministry recommend taking **“other” measures**.

Complaint units receive more complaints when they are empowered and communicate better with the public. Most complaint units do not receive many formal complaints (table 4.1) because most complainants prefer to air their grievances rather than submitting them in writing. It is therefore likely that these complaints are not registered in the complaint unit databases.

Table 4.1.
Complaints Received by Complaint Units in the West Bank^a

Complaint Unit	2013	2014	2015
Ministry of Social Development	691	371	399
Ministry of Education and Higher Education	345	314	1,160
Ministry of Local Government	644	123	355
Palestinian Land Authority	17	20	6
Ministry of Health	83	76	77

Source: AMAN 2016.

a. Data for the Gaza Strip was not readily available.

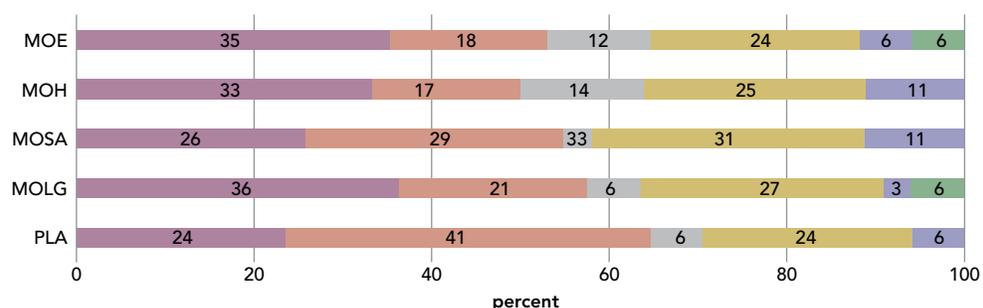
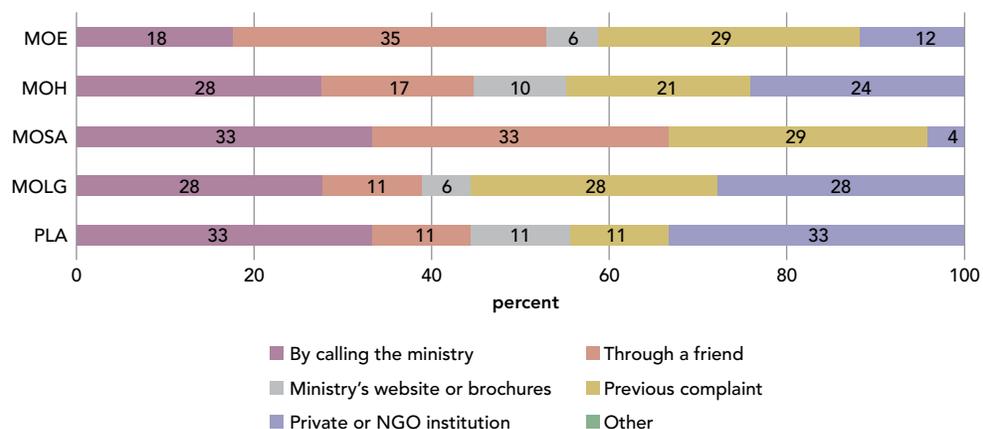
For instance, the Ministry of Social Development has three different types of formal and informal mechanisms to receive and respond to complaints. The first, which is formal and quite effective, involves the complaint unit, entrusted with the responsibility of receiving, responding to, and resolving all complaints. The second involves written complaints received by the ministry operational staff at the national and regional levels. The staff investigates and responds to the complaints. Grievances received through this mechanism are not captured in the complaint management information system nor are they reported to the complaint unit, but cases are opened for them, and they are documented in regional offices. Data on these types of complaints are not readily available. The third and final mechanism deals with verbal complaints received by Ministry of Social Development operational staff at all levels. Because there is no documentation for complaints received this way, tracking, monitoring, and analysis are not possible. However, informal estimates suggest that this is the most common channel used. Recent interventions by the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (see boxes 4.2 and 4.3) that have empowered their complaint units led to an increase in complaints received.

Face-to-Face Survey—Overall Findings

Questions beginning with S1 (figures 4.1–4.9) summarize the responses from face-to-face interviews with citizens who came to file a complaint.

Questions beginning with S2 (figures 4.10–4.16) summarize the responses from face-to-face interviews with citizens who came for any reason other than filing a complaint. Citizens who visited the ministry without filing a complaint were also interviewed in order to capture perceptions and levels of awareness of the complaint unit by individuals who have no grievance.

More than half of the citizens learned about the complaint units from a source other than the ministries. Across all ministries, information about the complaint unit is often passed on through personal acquaintances or previous complainants rather than through documentation issued by the ministries, which appear to provide information to only about one-third of respondents. These results point out deficiencies in the ministries' communication strategies, particularly regarding their online presence, which could be developed to better highlight the existence and role of the complaint unit and how to contact it (figure 4.1).

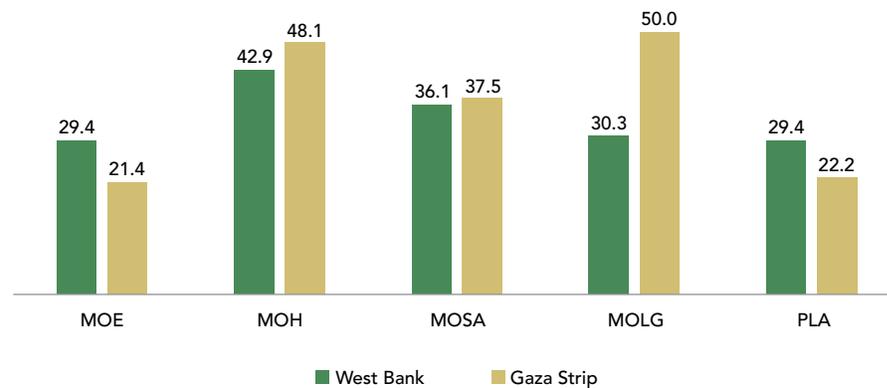
Figure 4.1.**S1_1—How did you learn about the complaint unit in the ministry?****a. West Bank****b. Gaza Strip**

Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

In about one-third of recorded cases, citizens submitted complaints to entities other than the complaint unit (e.g., ministerial sections or departments, other bodies). This tendency highlights the low level of citizen knowledge and trust in the ministry complaint units. It could also be linked to insufficient communications by the ministries regarding what constitutes a complaint; the role of the complaint units with respect to other bodies and ministries; and how citizens can locate and benefit from the complaint units. In the West Bank, percentages of respondents who filed their complaints elsewhere range from 29.4 (Ministry of Education and Higher Education) to 42.9 percent (Ministry of Health). In the Gaza Strip, these percentages range from 21.4 percent (Ministry of Education and Higher Education) to 50 percent (Ministry of Local Government). (See figure 4.2.)

Figure 4.2.
S1_2—Have you filed your complaint to another party before heading to the ministry? (percentage of respondents answering yes)



Source: AMAN 2016.

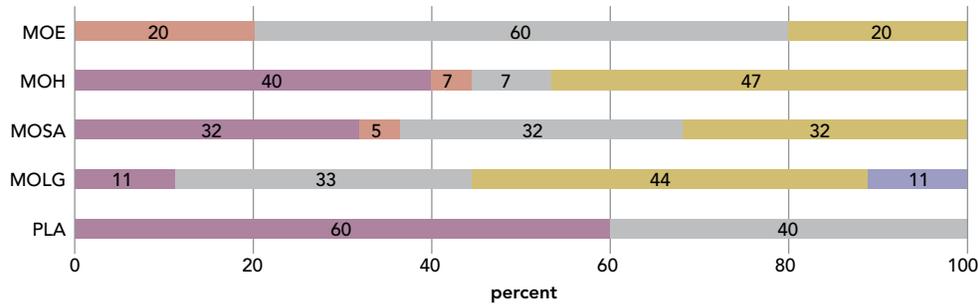
MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

The impression that the procedures are highly bureaucratic and the perceived need for technical and legal advice deter citizens from submitting their grievances to complaint units. These trends are identified in figure 4.3. Other than the Ministry of Health and the Gaza Strip’s Ministry of Education and Higher Education, there seems to be a widespread perception that filing a complaint with a ministry’s complaint unit is a very bureaucratic procedure. A significant percentage of respondents emphasized their desire to receive additional support and legal advice (except for the Palestinian Land Authority), and believed they could not receive it at the complaint units. Two conclusions can be derived from these findings. First, grievance uptake procedures can be further simplified so that citizens do not feel discouraged from submitting complaints. Second, complaint units could better inform citizens about the array of assistance mechanisms at their disposal, including legal support. Another insight provided by the data is that there is a widespread lack of awareness about complaint units, except that of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

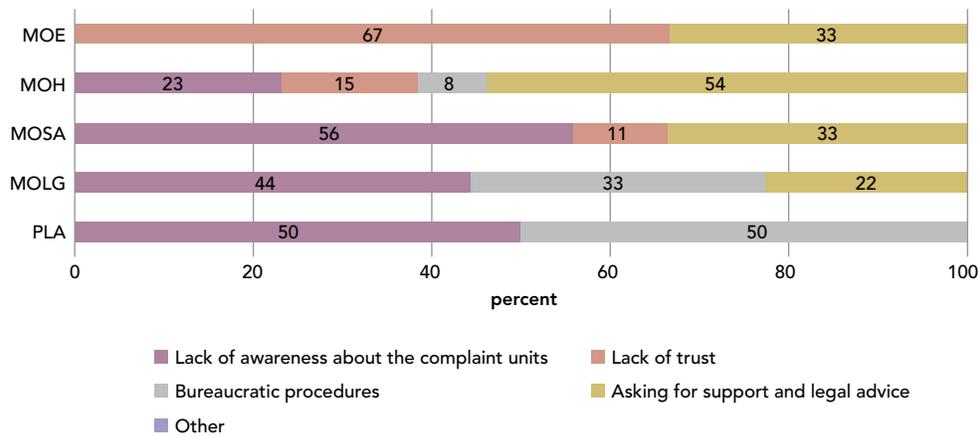
Citizens take their complaints to a variety of entities other than complaint units. In the West Bank, citizens who do not file their complaints with a ministry complaint unit usually turns to private institutions, nongovernmental

Figure 4.3.
S1_2a—Why did you file your complaint to another party?

a. West Bank



b. Gaza Strip



Source: AMAN 2016.

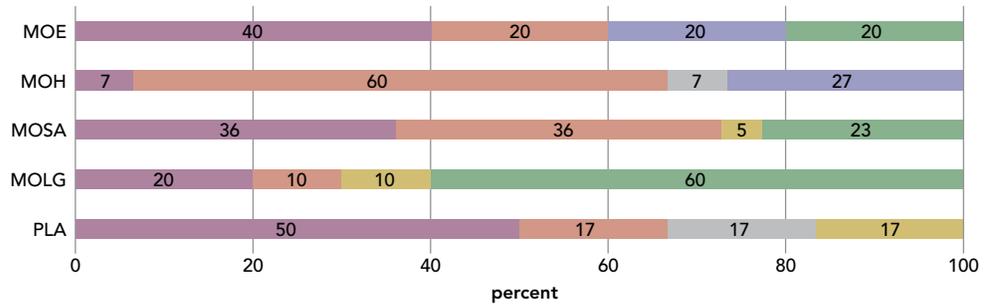
MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

human rights organizations, or the Directorate General for Complaints. With regard to complaints addressed to the Ministry of Local Government, 60 per cent of citizens ask for help from officials, possibly at other levels (e.g., municipalities). Private institutions, human rights organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the Directorate General for Complaints are often solicited in the Gaza Strip as well. For complaints related to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Palestinian Land Authority, over half of Gaza Strip respondents turn toward the Anti-Corruption Commission. It seems that the relationship and differences between complaint units and

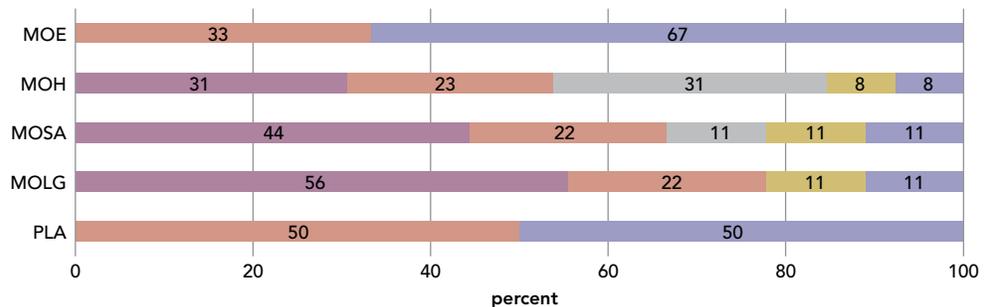
other entities frequently receiving complaints—such as the Independent Commission for Human Rights—are unclear. Even within ministry structures, citizens seem confused regarding the roles and responsibilities of the various entities involved in complaint handling mechanisms, including senior management, complaint unit staff, regional directorates, the Directorate General for Complaints, and other departments (figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4.
S1_2b—With whom did you file your complaint?

a. West Bank



b. Gaza Strip



■ Complaint unit at the Council of Ministers
 ■ Private institution or human rights NGO
■ Member of Parliament in the Legislative Council
 ■ State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau

Source: AMAN 2016.

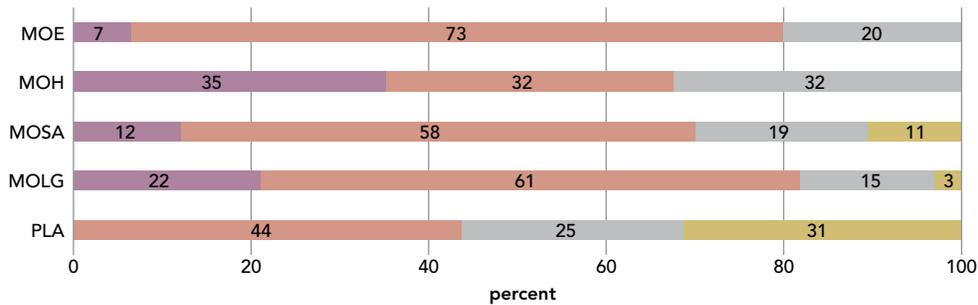
MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs;
MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

With the exception of the Palestinian Land Authority in the West Bank, it appears that two-thirds or more of respondents were aware of the procedures to file a complaint with a complaint unit. In the West Bank, awareness levels of procedures range from 44–82 percent (including respondents who selected both *agree* and *strongly agree*), depending on the ministry or government entity. In the Gaza Strip, for four out of five ministries, more than 80 percent of citizens “agree” or “strongly agree” that they had prior information about complaint handling channels, revealing that knowledge of complaint filing procedures is quite widespread (figure 4.5).

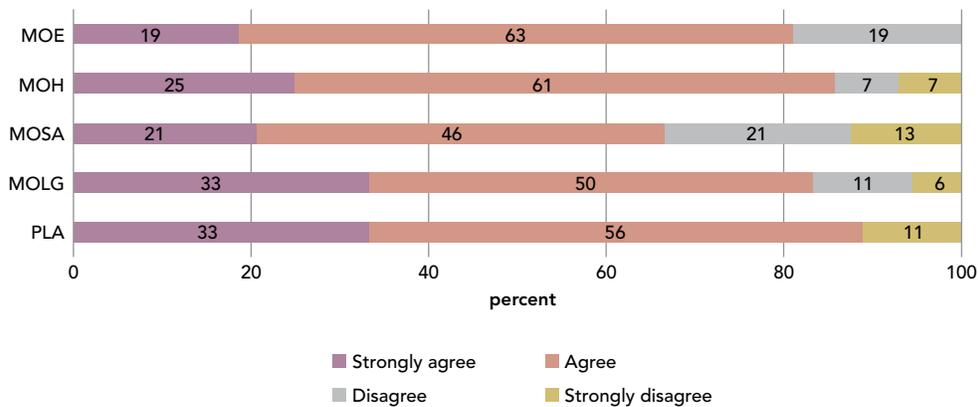
Figure 4.5.

S1_3—Do you agree with the statement: You have previous information about the procedures for filing a complaint?

a. West Bank



b. Gaza Strip



Source: AMAN 2016.

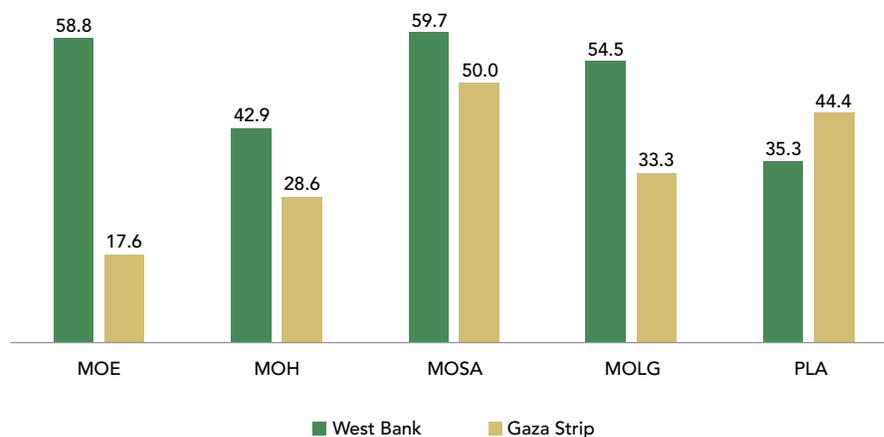
MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

A significant percentage of respondents seek help from outside the ministry to get updated information on the status of their complaints, suggesting insufficient ministry communication, clarity, and accessibility regarding follow-up on individual complaints. In the West Bank, between 35.3 percent (Palestinian Land Authority) and 59.7 percent (Ministry of Social Development) of respondents had sought outside help to follow up on their complaint. The percentages are lower in the Gaza Strip, where between 17.6 percent (Ministry of Education and Higher Education) and 50 percent (Ministry of Social Development) of citizens sought external support. These results suggest that complaint units could, as part of the overall trust-building exercise toward citizens, do a better job of spreading the message that they are obliged to respond to grievances and will act on them (figure 4.6).

In addition to the perceived amount of bureaucracy involved in submitting and following up on the status of a complaint, many respondents were unsure about the degree of support and legal advice they could receive from a ministry's complaint unit. The negative experiences of previous complainants also influenced the behavior of potential complainants (figure 4.7).

Figure 4.6.

S1_4—Did you seek help from an employee or an official from outside the ministry to follow up on your complaint? (percentage of respondents answering yes)

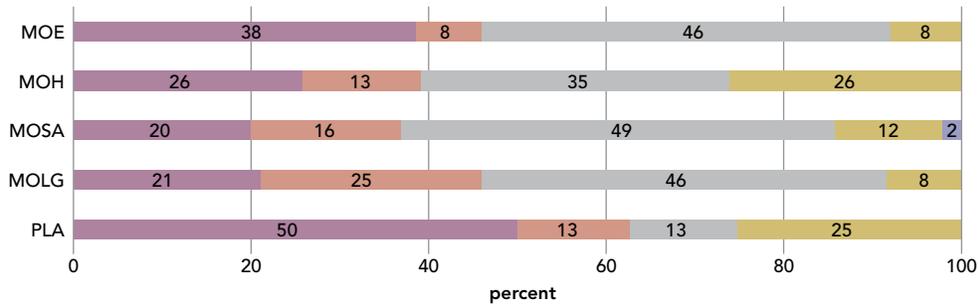


Source: AMAN 2016.

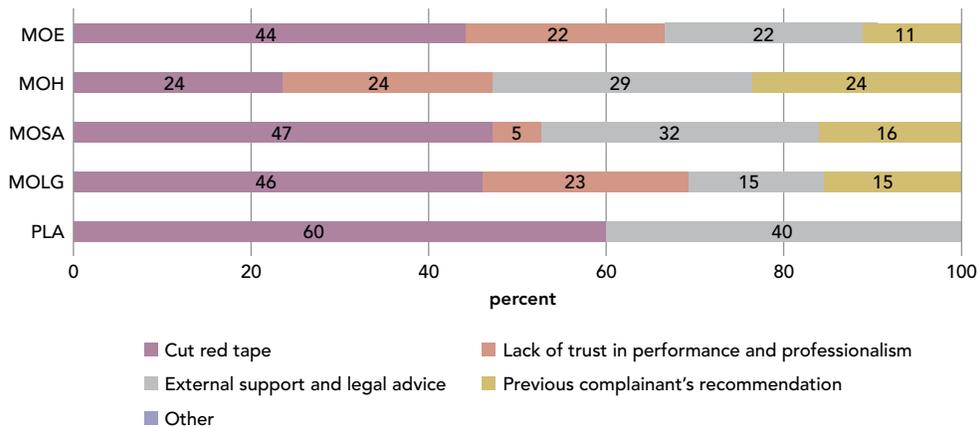
MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Figure 4.7.
S1_5—If your answer to the previous question (S1_4) is yes, why did you seek help?

a. West Bank



b. Gaza Strip

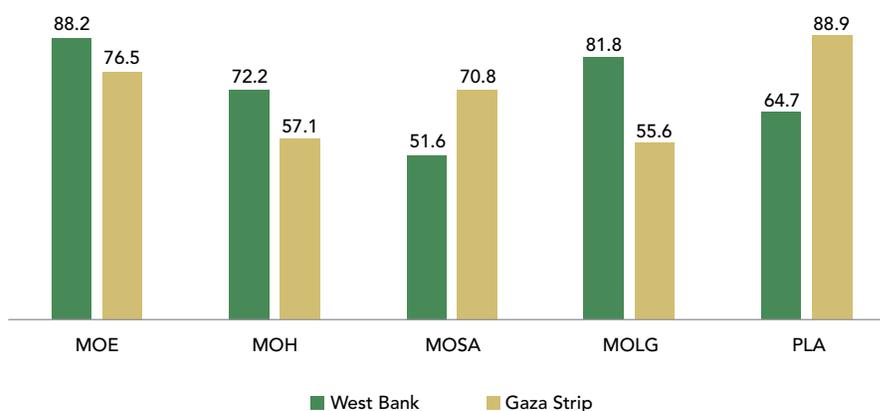


Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

More than half of complainants dissatisfied with the result of their complaint intended to appeal the decision. Given the time and resources inherent to an appeal process, these results are significant because they reveal the fact that complainants were unhappy with the quality and outcomes of the complaint handling process (figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8.
S1_6—If you are not satisfied with the result of your complaint, will you appeal the decision? (percentage of respondents answering yes)



Source: AMAN 2016.

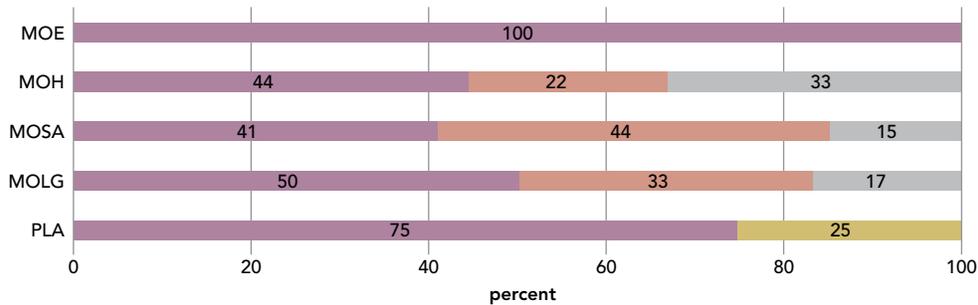
MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

The reluctance to appeal reveals a general lack of trust in the system, which many citizens perceive as corrupt and slow. The main reason why respondents in the West Bank did not want to appeal decisions was that they lacked hope that the results would improve, followed by the perception of slow procedures. In the Gaza Strip, more than one-fourth of respondents believed that their appeal could not succeed without interference or mediation by personal connections (*wasta*), highlighting the low level of confidence among respondents in the complaint unit and its processes (figure 4.9).

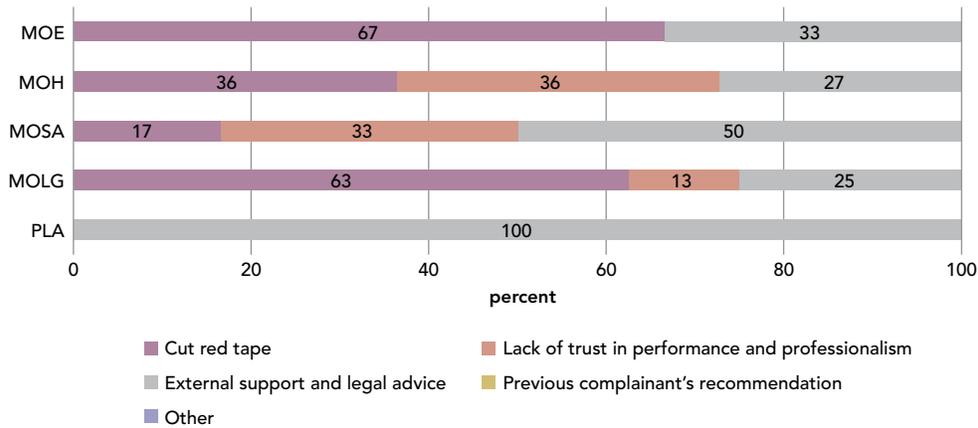
Overall awareness of the complaint unit is low and can be enhanced. In the West Bank, levels of awareness range from 39.4 percent for the Ministry of Social Development to 62.1 percent for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. In the Gaza Strip, awareness levels range from 64.9 percent for the Palestinian Land Authority to 70.2 percent for the Ministry of Local Government. Evidently, the awareness of complaint units in Gaza Strip is higher than in the West Bank. Figure 4.10 shows that further improvements are still required in terms of communicating about the complaint unit.

Figure 4.9.
S1_6/S1_6a—If you are not satisfied with the result of your complaint, and if you are not appealing the decision, why not?

a. West Bank



b. Gaza Strip



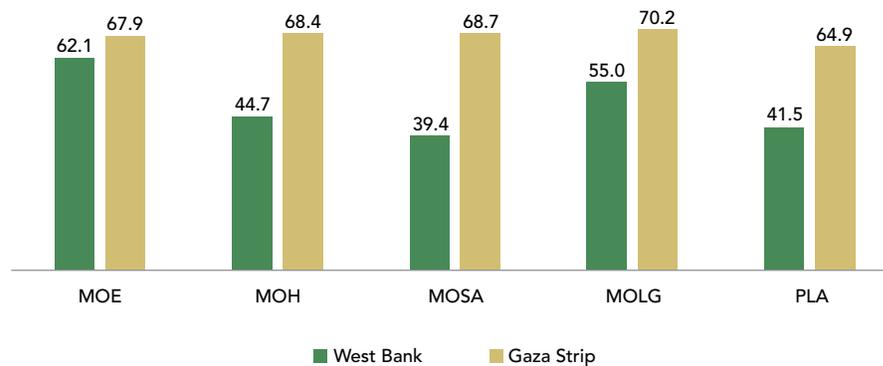
Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Citizens still consider third parties to be very relevant and credible alternatives to the complaint units for filing complaints (figures 4.11–4.14).

These findings may be partly due to the absence of community-specific communication strategies to allay mistrust and an unwillingness to directly submit grievances to the complaint unit through, for example, intermediaries like civil society organizations. It appears that citizens of the Gaza Strip are

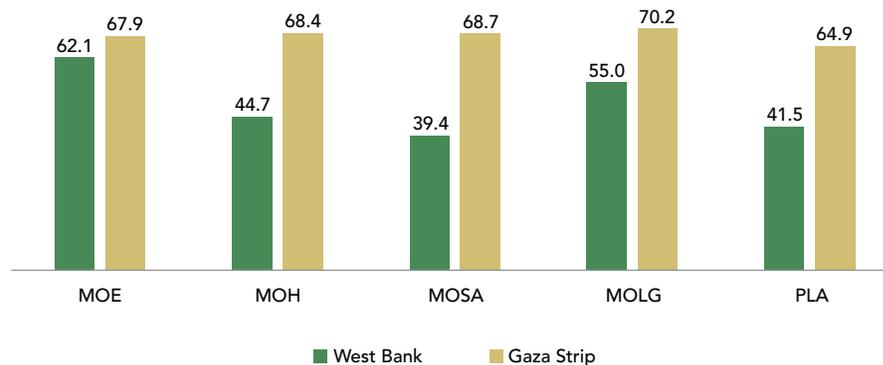
Figure 4.10.
S2_1—Do you know about the complaint unit of the ministry?
(percentage of respondents answering yes)



Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Figure 4.11.
S2_2—If you encounter a problem with the ministry regarding a service you requested or a right you are entitled to, would you file a complaint with the complaint unit? (percentage of respondents answering yes)

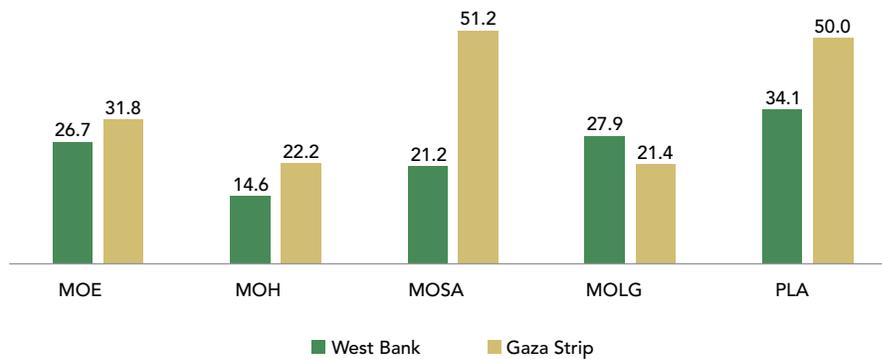


Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Figure 4.12.

S2_3—Have you ever had a problem receiving service from the ministry and resorted to a party other than the ministry’s complaint unit for recourse? (percentage of respondents answering yes)



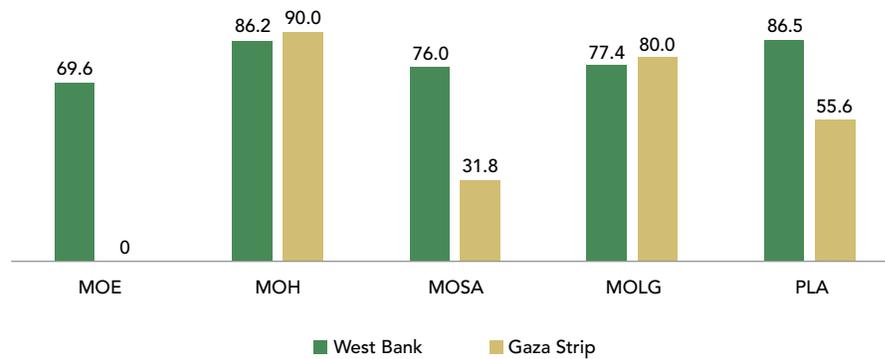
Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

more willing to submit complaints to the complaint unit than are citizens of the West Bank, but they also resort to third parties to solve ministry-related problems more frequently. Figure 4.13 shows that complaint resolution rates by third parties are quite high in the West Bank (consistently around or above 70 percent). In the Gaza Strip, they vary between 31.8 percent for the Ministry of Social Development and 90 percent for the Ministry of Health.

A significant proportion of dissatisfied citizens in the West Bank would choose to approach the Complaints Directorate of the Council of Ministers to file a complaint, while in the Gaza Strip, most would choose to turn to the Anti-Corruption Commission or the State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau. The results demonstrate that many actors are approached by dissatisfied users, including officials, private institutions, and more rarely, Members of Parliament (figure 4.15).

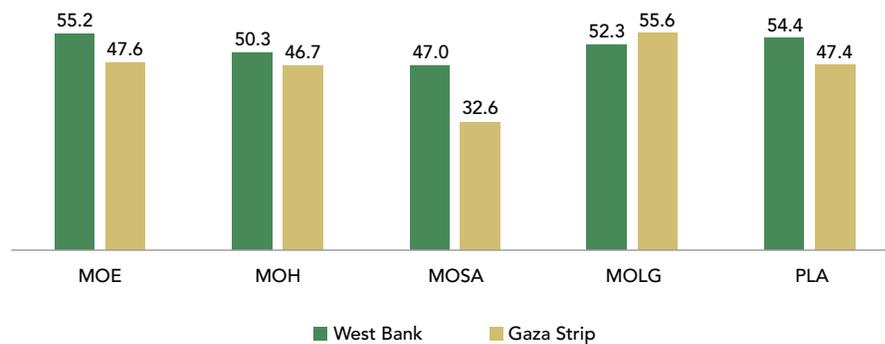
Figure 4.13.
S2_3a—If the answer is yes (to S2_3), was the complaint handled/solved?
(percentage of respondents answering yes)



Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs;
MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Figure 4.14.
S2_4—If you do not want to file a complaint with the ministry, would you
file it with another party? (percentage of respondents answering yes)

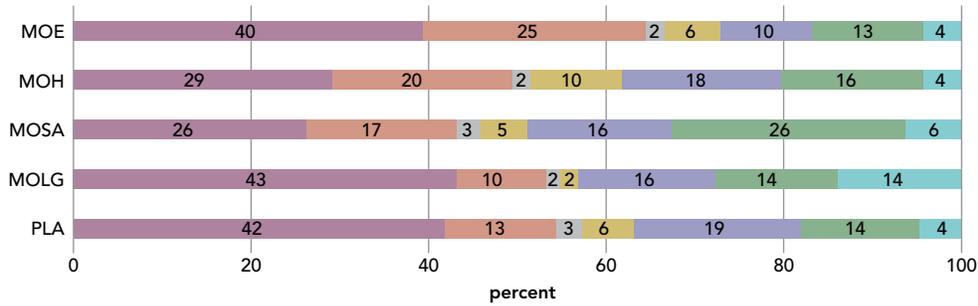


Source: AMAN 2016.

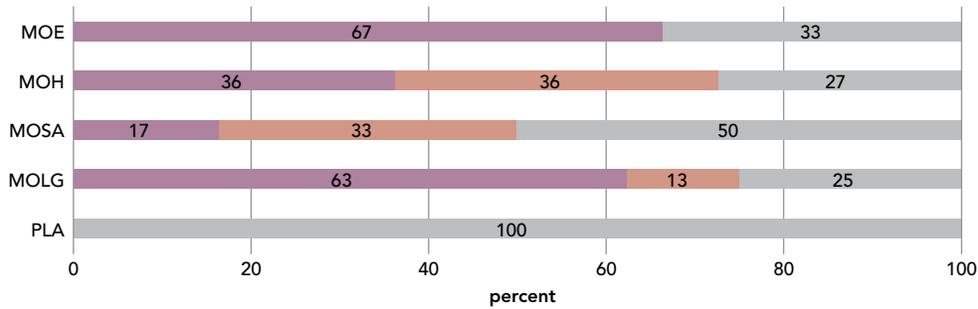
MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs;
MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Figure 4.15.
S2_4a—If yes to S2_4, with what party would you file a complaint?

a. West Bank



b. Gaza Strip



- Complaint unit—Council of Ministers
- Private institutions
- Member of Parliament—Legislative Council
- State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau
- Anticorruption commission
- Help from an official
- Other

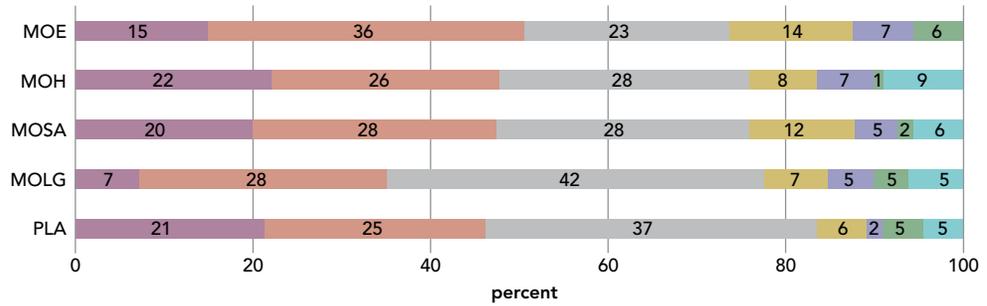
Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

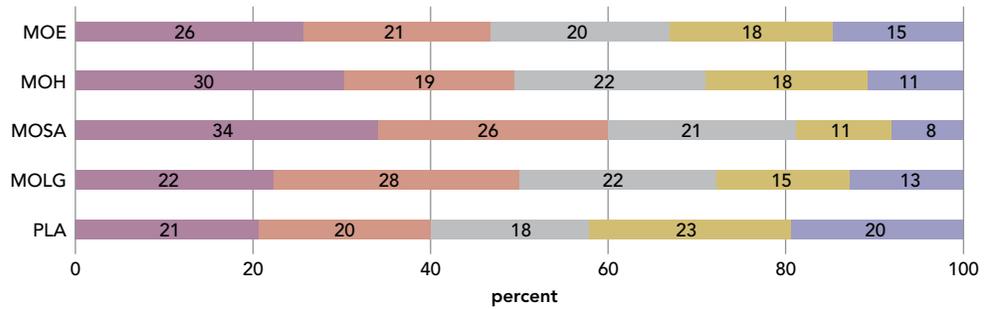
The length of procedures, the frequent occurrence of personal mediation, and a low trust in government performance all affect citizens’ willingness to submit complaints with a complaint unit. Across ministries, around one-fifth or more of respondents thought procedures were slow, underlining the fact that current grievance response systems are not sufficiently timely. Around one-fifth (or more) were also convinced that mediation was needed if their complaint was to be taken seriously and lead to an outcome (figure 4.16).

Figure 4.16.
S2_5— If you do not want to file a complaint with the ministry, why not?

a. West Bank



b. Gaza Strip



- You do not trust governmental performance
- Need of mediation
- Slow procedures
- Recommendation from friend with previous experience
- Better private independent institution
- Other
- I have no opinion

Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs;
MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Phone Survey—Overall Findings

The face-to-face-survey explored in the above section was complemented by a phone survey. While the face-to-face survey was an exit poll, the phone survey interviews only included citizens who had actually submitted complaints to a ministry. The sample size of the phone survey was therefore much smaller than that of the face-to-face survey (635 for the phone survey compared with 1,656 for the face-to-face survey). Several questions overlap in these two surveys and show comparable results: phone survey questions 1, 3, 3_1, 14, and 14_1 mirror questions 1_1, 1_2, 1_2a, 1_6, and 1_6a of the face-to-face survey, respectively (see appendix A for both survey instruments). Findings from the phone survey that are not covered in the face-to-face survey are presented in figures 4.17–4.35. For additional information, please see the “Status, Effectiveness and Efficiency of Palestinian Complaint Units” background report produced by AMAN (2016).

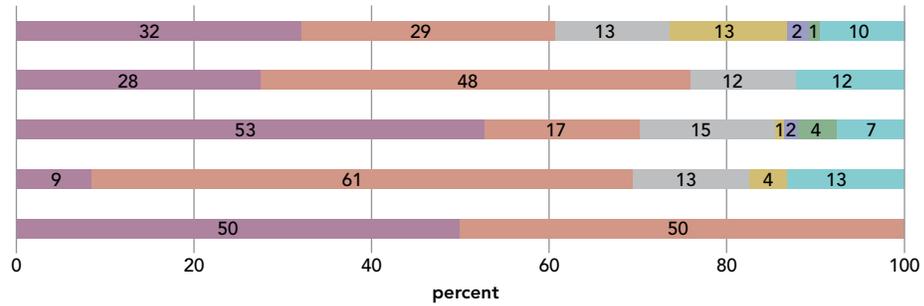
Channels to submit grievances. In the West Bank, grievances are usually submitted either by completing a ministry-specific complaint form or by writing a personal letter. Almost no respondents submitted grievances by phone. In the Gaza Strip, fax or email complaints are the most widely used channels. Phone calls are also used to verbally file complaints (figure 4.17)

Information provision to complainants about procedures by the complaint unit. Complainants in the Gaza Strip tended to agree much more than those in the West Bank that the complaint unit had clearly informed them about procedures and follow-up mechanisms related to their grievances (figure 4.18). Complainants in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip who were unclear about procedures and follow-up mechanisms tended to primarily blame a lack of cooperative behavior among complaint unit employees. A significant proportion of Gaza Strip complainants pointed out that the physical space for filing complaints was not suitable and that the complaint forms provided by the ministries were too complex or not available (figure 4.19).

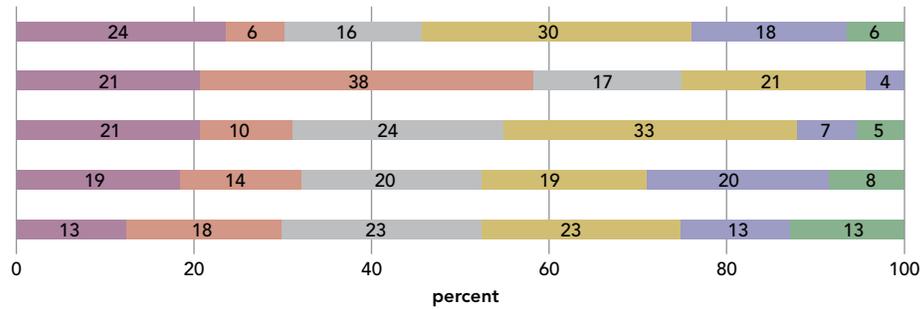
Behavior of complaint unit staff. In the West Bank, the percentage of respondents who strongly agreed or agreed that the complaint unit staff was respectful, neutral, and nondiscriminatory is highest for the Palestinian Land Authority (75 percent) and lowest for the Ministry of Local Government,

Figure 4.17.
2—How did you file your complaint to the ministry?

a. West Bank



b. Gaza Strip



- Complaint form at ministry
- Own format at ministry
- Fax complaint letter to ministry
- Email to the ministry
- Phone call to the ministry
- Through private institution or NGO
- Other

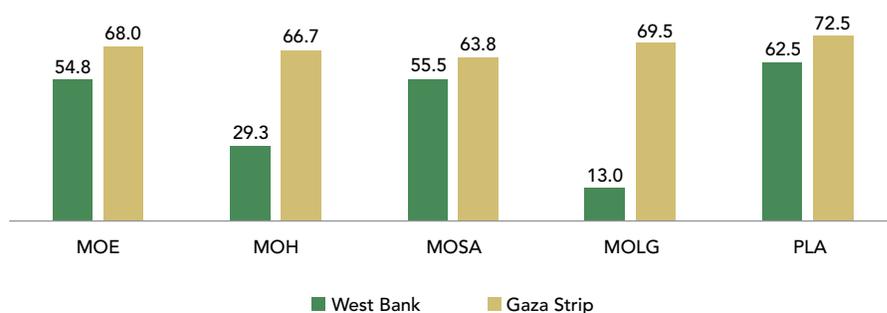
Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs;
MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

where it reaches a mere 30.4 percent (figure 4.20). In the Gaza Strip, the highest satisfaction rates with customer service are recorded with the Palestinian Land Authority (70 percent); the lowest with the Ministry of Health (58.3 percent). Gender-based discrimination was not mentioned by West Bank complainants. In the Gaza Strip, however, a majority of respondents cited

Figure 4.18.

4—Do you agree with the statement: The complaints unit clearly informed you of the procedures and follow-up mechanisms involved in filing a complaint. (percentage of complainants who “strongly agree” or “agree”)



Source: AMAN 2016.

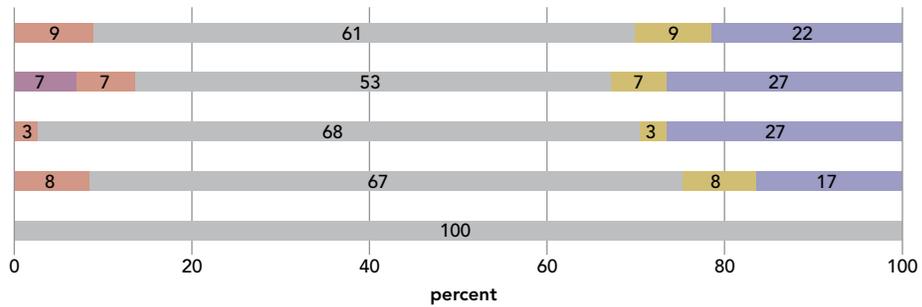
MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

gender-based discrimination to explain their dissatisfaction with complaint unit staff (up to 56 percent for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education respondents). Additional reasons included the absence of a “first-come, first-served” rule and the belief that more attention was given to some complainants over others (figure 4.21)

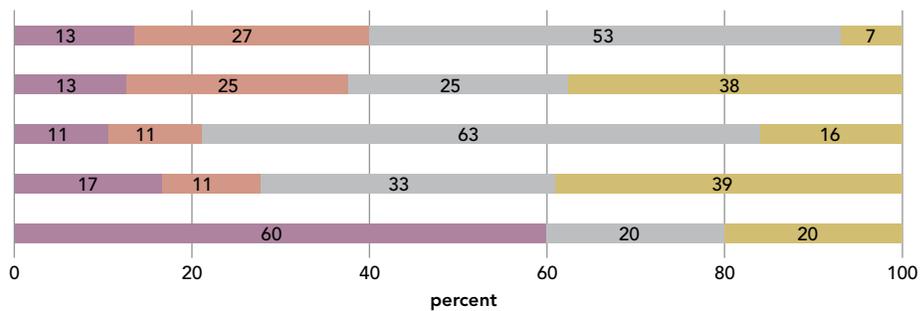
Ease of access to the complaint unit. Satisfaction with ease of access to the complaint unit to inquire about complaint handling procedures is mixed. In the West Bank, it ranges from 34.8 percent for the Ministry of Local Government to 62.5 percent for the Palestinian Land Authority. In the Gaza Strip, it ranges from 50.8 percent for the Ministry of Local Government to 66 percent for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (figure 4.22). In the West Bank, reasons indicated for dissatisfaction usually focused on the unwillingness of complaint unit employees to offer information or a lack of current data. Reasons cited in the Gaza Strip were varied, including the time needed to access complaint files and staff absenteeism (figure 4.23).

Figure 4.19.
4_1—If the answer to question 4 is disagree or strongly disagree, why?

a. West Bank



b. Gaza Strip



■ The complaint form is difficult ■ There is no form to fill a complaint
■ The employee at the complaint unit was not cooperative ■ The place to file complaints is unsuitable
■ Other

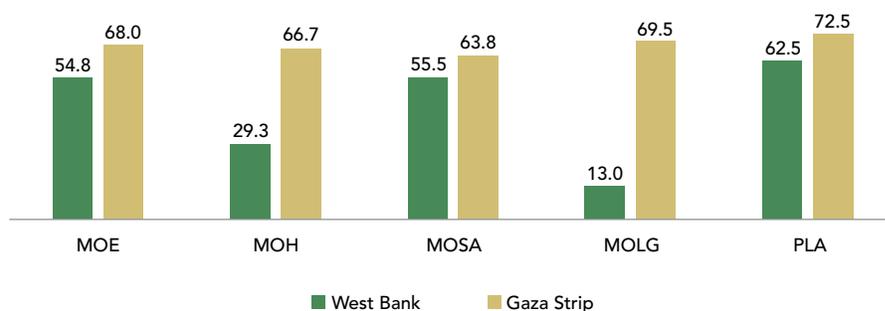
Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Provision of status updates by complaint unit to complainants. In the West Bank, the Ministry of Social Development complaint unit received the highest percentage—55.9 percent—of complainants who agreed or strongly agreed that the complaint unit gave them all the information they needed regarding their inquiry about handling a complaint. In the Gaza Strip, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education’s complaint unit scored highest at 72 percent; other ministries scored fairly high as well (figure 4.24).

Figure 4.20.

5—Do you agree with the statement: The unit team treated you respectfully, neutrally, and without discrimination? (percentage of complainants who strongly agree or agree)



Source: AMAN 2016.

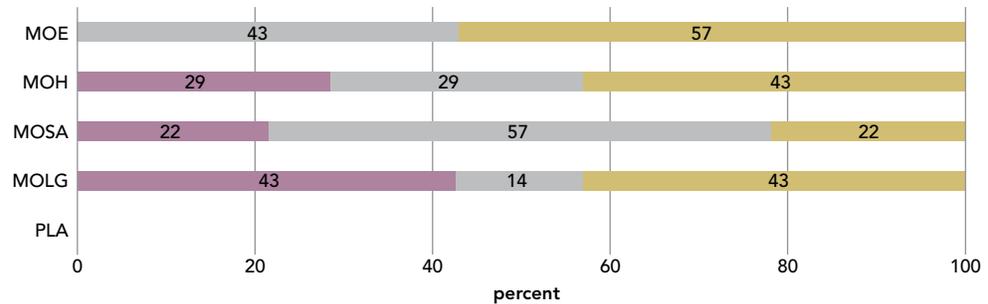
MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Timeliness of complaint handling. Overall, satisfaction rates with the timeliness of complaint handling remain fairly low, but they are systematically higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. In the West Bank, only 4.3 percent of citizens agreed or strongly agreed that the Ministry of Local Government dealt with their complaint in a reasonable timeframe; while the Palestinian Land Authority received the highest rating at 50 percent. In the Gaza Strip, the lowest score is for the Ministry of Social Development at 34.5 percent and the highest is for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education at 66 percent (figure 4.25).

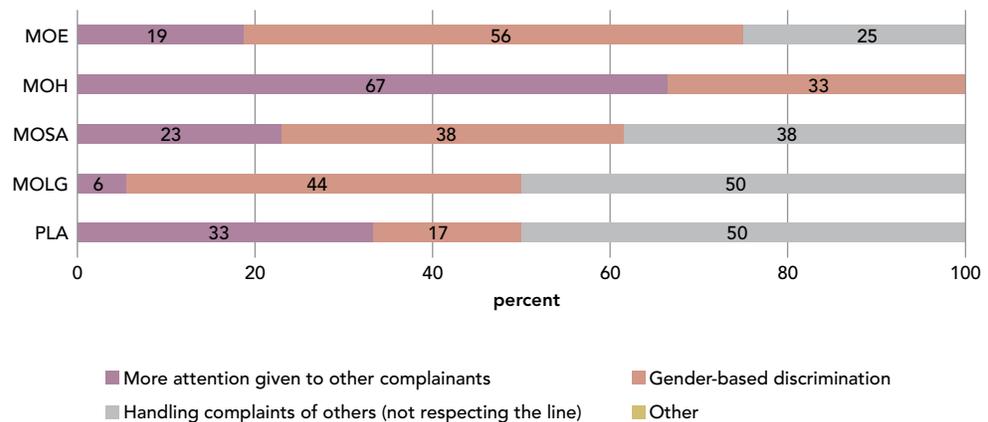
Communication of results. In the West Bank, complainants were not systematically informed of the results of their complaints: fewer than half of the respondents said they ever received this information. In the Gaza Strip, an average of approximately two-thirds of complainants were informed of the results of their undertaking by the complaint unit (figure 4.26). Information about the results of complaints usually took place over the telephone or otherwise verbally rather than in writing by email or on a specific form (figure 4.27). Across the West Bank and Gaza Strip, apart from complainants with the West Bank Ministry of Social Development complaint unit, less than one-third

Figure 4.21.
5_1—If the answer to question 5 is disagree or strongly disagree, why?

a. West Bank



b. Gaza Strip



Source: AMAN 2016.

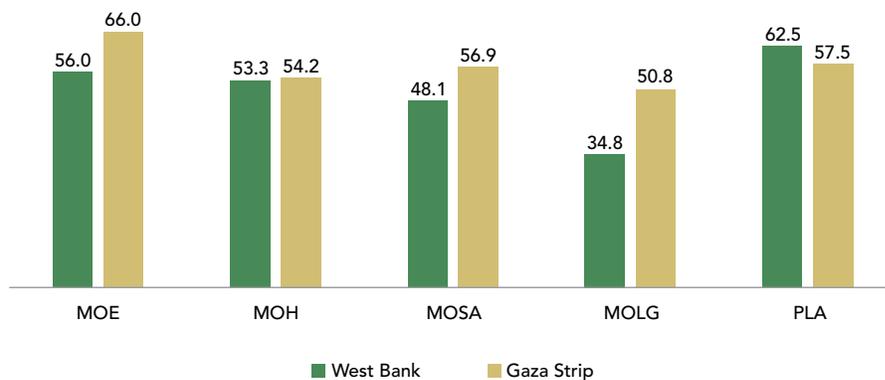
MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

of all respondents who were not informed of the result of their grievance thought that retrieving their files during subsequent visits was fast and easy (figure 4.28).

Search for assistance by complainants. In the West Bank, up to one-fourth of citizens asked ministry employees or external officials to follow-up on their complaints. Citizens in the Gaza Strip sought help to follow up on their

Figure 4.22.

6—Do you agree with the statement: It was easy to reach the complaint unit and inquire about the procedures for complaint handling (percentage of complainants who strongly agree or agree)



Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

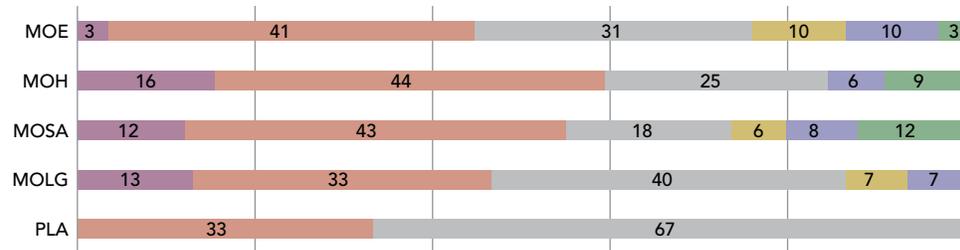
complaints more frequently: around one-third of respondents addressed ministry or external employees and officials (figures 4.29 and 4.30).

Satisfaction with outcomes. Satisfaction rates with outcomes are quite low in the West Bank. The highest satisfaction rate is 37.5 percent for the Palestinian Land Authority; the lowest is 12.3 percent for the Ministry of Health. The likelihood that West Bank complainants would return to the complaint unit if a problem reoccurs fluctuates between 41.4–77.8 percent. In the Gaza Strip, satisfaction rates with complaint results are generally fairly high—34.5 percent for the Ministry of Social Development and 79.2 percent for the Ministry of Health—and 45.8–65.0 percent of complainants say that, if necessary, they may return to the complaint unit (figures 4.31 and 4.32). An unwillingness to return to the complaint unit is primarily linked to the perception of a lack of professionalism among complaint unit staff—especially pronounced in the West Bank—as well as dissatisfaction with results (figures 4.33 and 4.34).

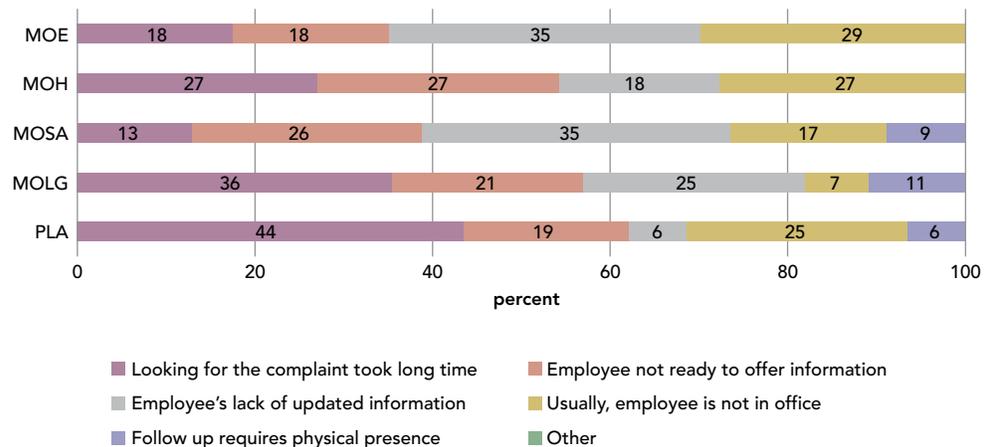
Recommendations for improvement. In the Gaza Strip, respondents frequently recommend improving citizen awareness programs regarding

Figure 4.23.
6_1— If the answer to question 6 is disagree or strongly disagree, why?

a. West Bank



b. Gaza Strip



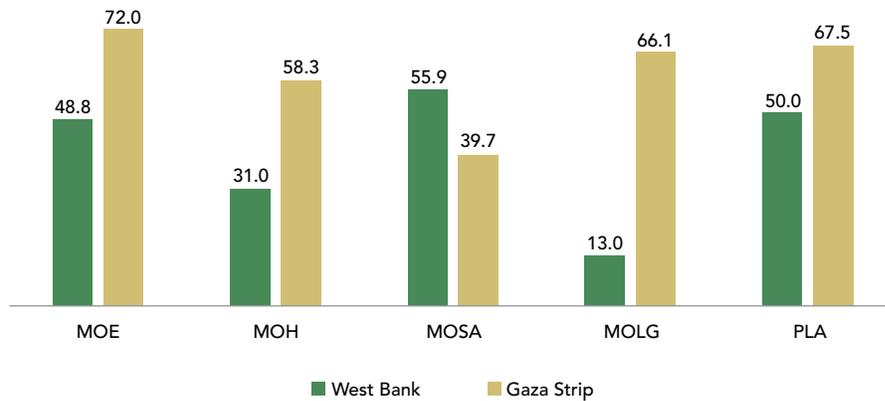
Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs;
MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

complaint procedures (13–43 percent depending on the ministry), simplifying processes (22–38 percent), increasing the number of complaint unit employees (15–38 percent), and mainstreaming digitalized procedures (12–19 percent). In the West Bank, priorities for improvement are less clear (over 40 percent of respondents in each ministry recommend taking “other” measures) (figure 4.35).

Figure 4.24.

7_7—Do you agree with the statement: The complaint unit provided you with all information about your inquiry of handling a complaint? (percentage of complainants who strongly agree or agree)

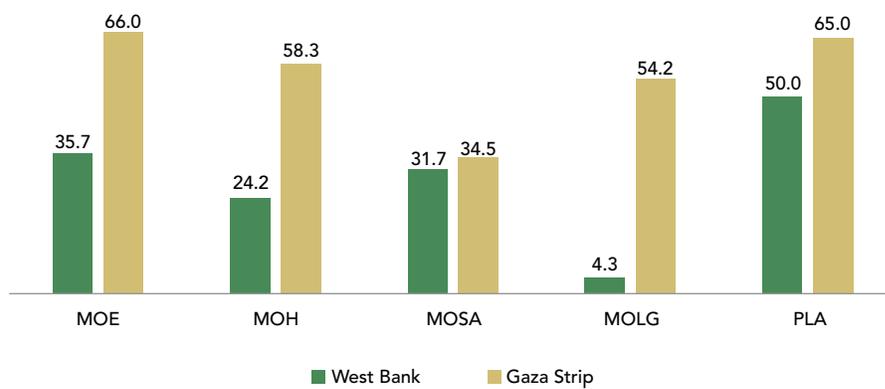


Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Figure 4.25.

8—Do you agree with the statement: Your complaint was handled in a reasonable time? (percentage of complainants who strongly agree or agree)

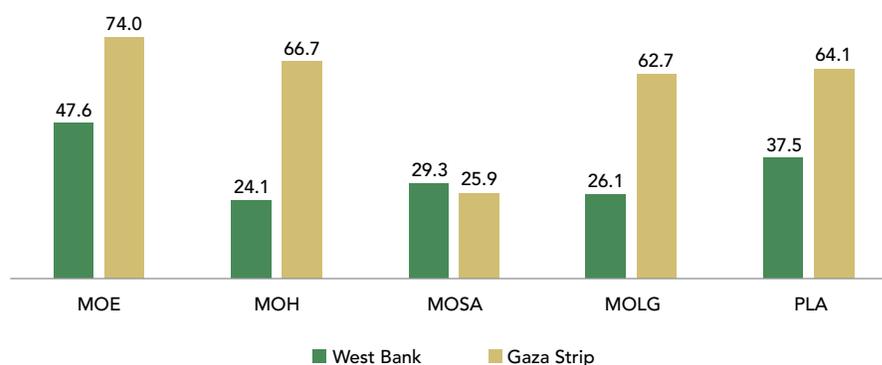


Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Figure 4.26.

9—Do you agree with the statement: The unit employee informed you of the result of the complaint? (percentage of respondents answering yes)



Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Including the citizens' point of view in the analysis of the ministries' complaint units is an essential complement to the assessments based on interviews and discussions with government officials. However, methodological questions requiring further research regarding the results of the user survey include:

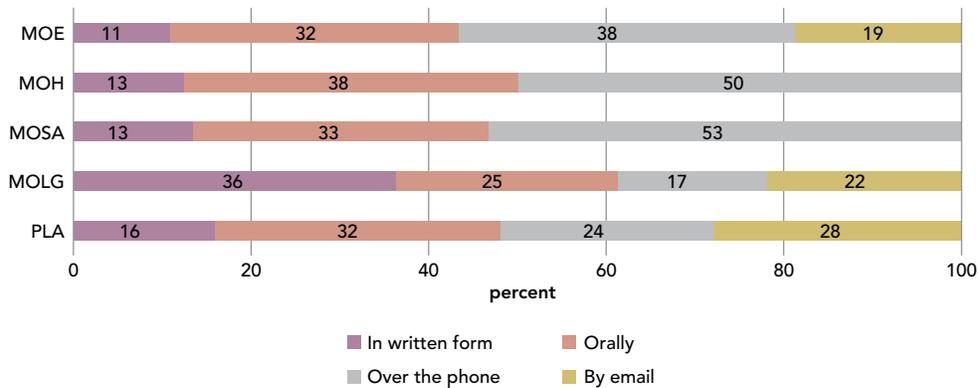
- What factors account for intra-ministry differences between the West Bank and Gaza?
- How great is the influence of subsample size on the results of particular ministries?
- How should the answer "other" or "don't know," indicated by several respondents, be interpreted? Can these responses be further drilled down?

Figure 4.27.
9_1—If the answer to question 9 is yes, how were you informed?

a. West Bank



b. Gaza Strip



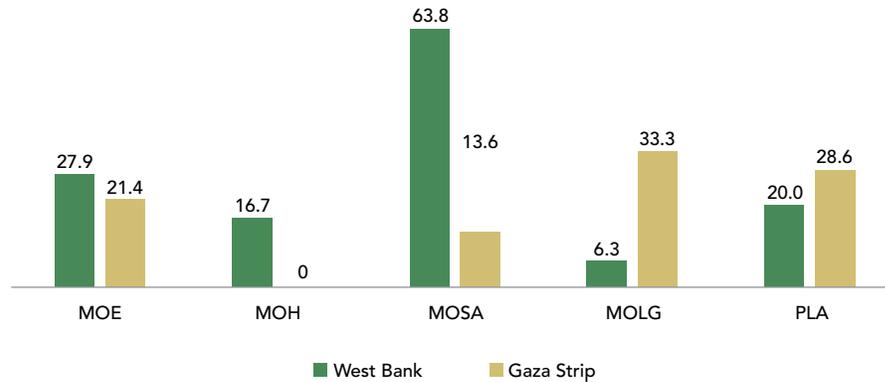
Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

- Did the formulation of some questions cause categories to overlap? For example, is there overlap between the potential answers “employee not ready to offer information” and “employee’s lack of updated information”?
- If an interviewer read aloud the possible answers to the questions to a respondent, could this have introduced bias in the responses, regardless of the fact that the respondent had the option of indicating “other” as an answer?

Figure 4.28.

10—If the answer to question 9 is no, when you revisited the unit, was it easy to find your file and receive a quick response? (percentage of respondents answering yes)

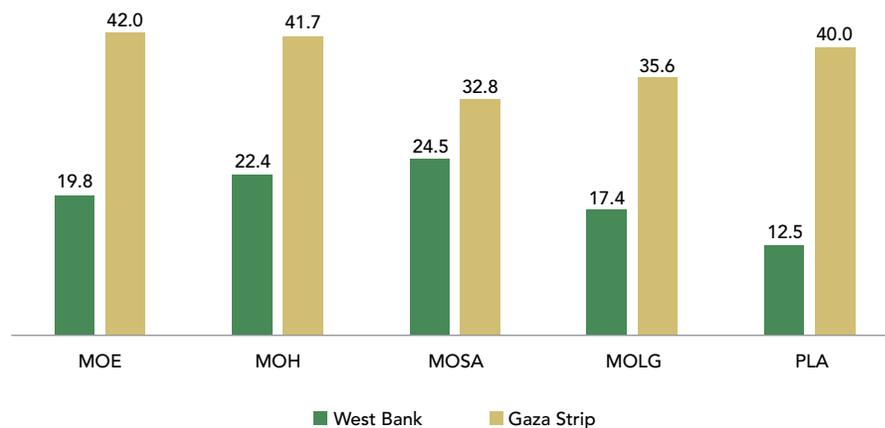


Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Figure 4.29.

11—Did you ask any ministry employee or official to follow-up on your complaint? (percentage of respondents answering yes)

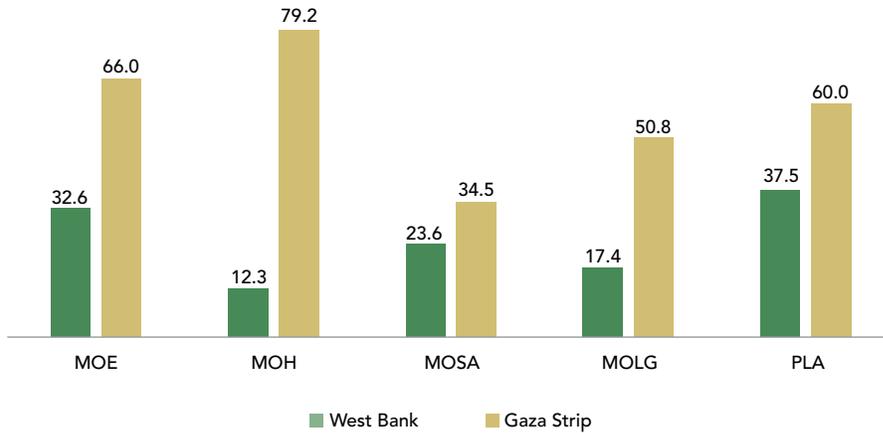


Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Figure 4.30.

12—Did you seek help from an employee or an official from outside the ministry to follow up on your complaint? (percentage of respondents answering yes)

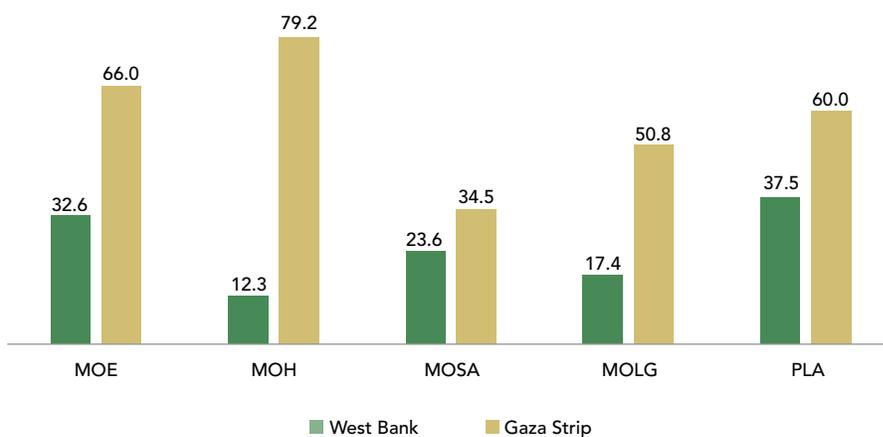


Source: AMAN 2016.

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Figure 4.31.

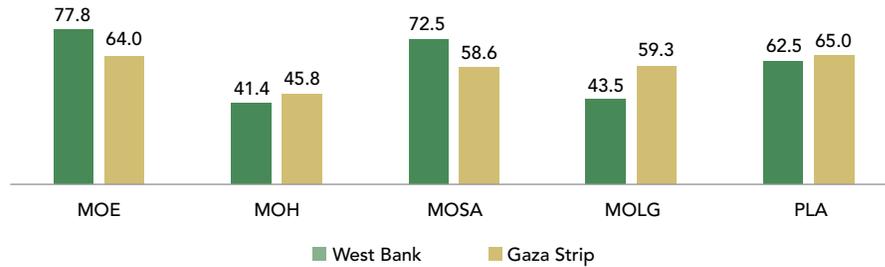
13—In general, are you satisfied with the result of your complaint? (percentage of complainants who strongly agree or agree)



Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Figure 4.32.
15—If a problem relating to the ministry’s services reoccurs, would you file it with the complaint unit? (percentage of respondents answering yes)

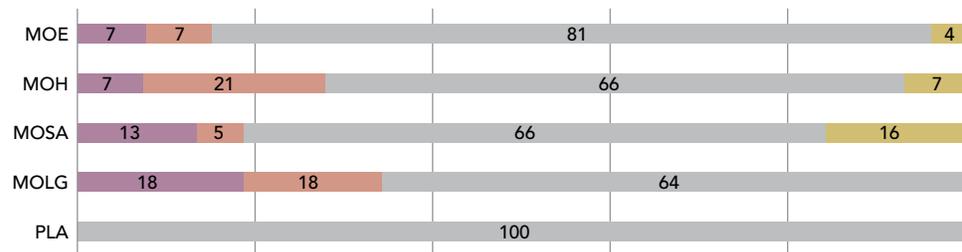


Source: AMAN 2016.

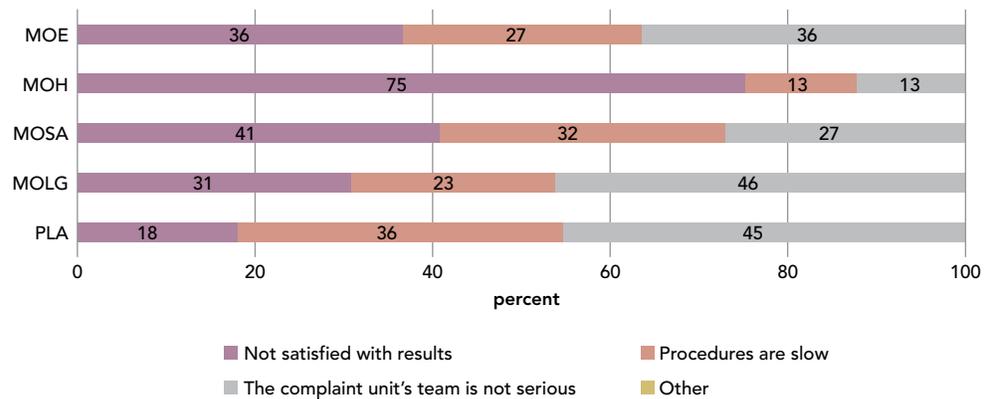
MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Figure 4.33.
15_1—If the answer to question 15 is No, why?

a. West Bank



b. Gaza Strip



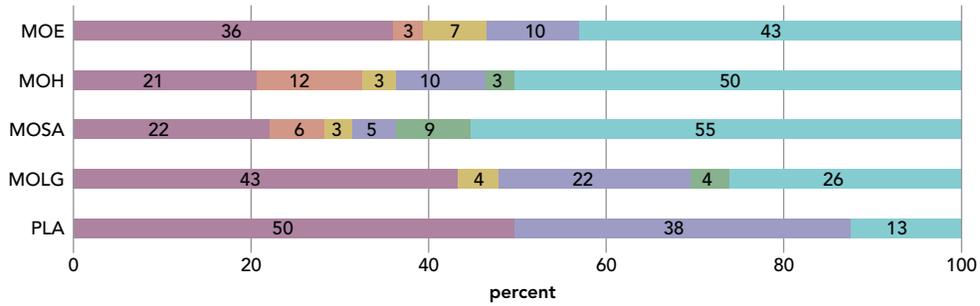
Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

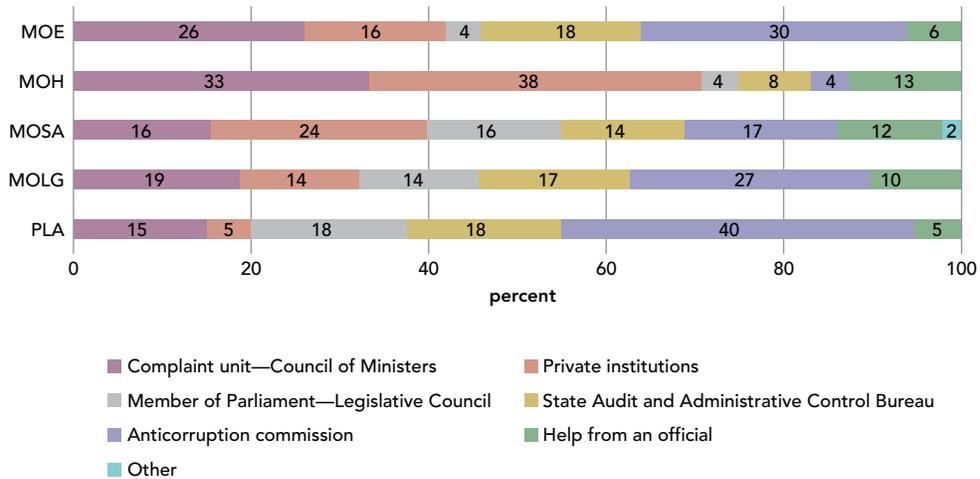
Figure 4.34. 1

6—If you encounter another problem and do not wish to file your complaint with the ministry, to whom would you direct your complaint?

a. West Bank



b. Gaza Strip

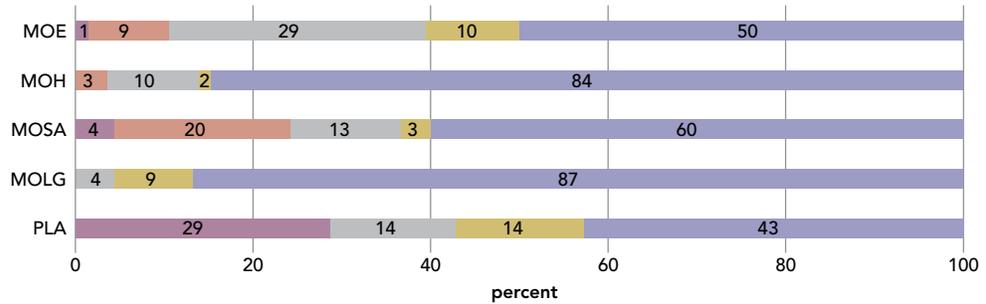


Source: AMAN 2016.

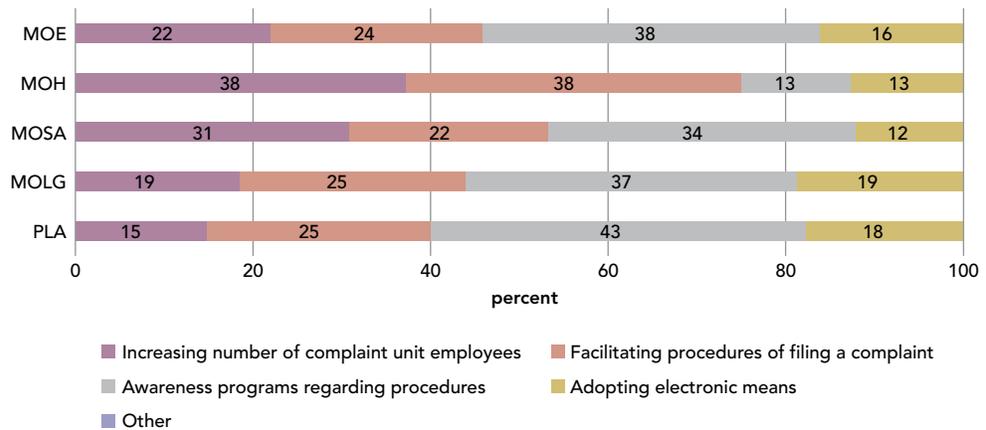
MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs; MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Figure 4.35.
17—What actions would you recommend to improve the complaint unit’s performance and effectiveness?

a. West Bank



b. Gaza Strip



Source: AMAN 2016.

MOE = Ministry of Education; MOH = Ministry of Health; MOSA = Ministry of Social Affairs;
MOLG = Ministry of Local Government; PLA = Palestinian Land Authority.

Ministry-by-Ministry Findings

Following is a selection of the most significant results of the survey, disaggregated by ministry.

Ministry of Social Development (formerly called the Ministry of Social Affairs)

Communications and awareness-raising

In the West Bank, awareness levels among citizens regarding the existence of the Ministry of Social Development's complaint unit is much lower than in the Gaza Strip. Only 39.4 percent of face-to-face interviewees in the West Bank were aware of the unit—the lowest level among ministries in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, 68.7 percent of face-to-face respondents were aware of the unit. Awareness levels are heavily dependent on a respondent's education level. One hundred percent of face-to-face respondents holding a bachelor's degree were aware of the complaint unit's existence, but only 74 percent who had completed intermediate college education, 55 percent who had completed secondary education, 30 percent with preparatory education, 24 percent with elementary education, and a mere 13 percent of illiterate respondents were aware of the unit, suggesting that access to the complaint handling mechanism is not adapted to citizens with low levels of literacy.

While the Ministry of Social Development has conducted several awareness-raising initiatives, its communications materials regarding complaint handling mechanisms could be improved. The ministry developed materials for the 2015 "Information, Education, and Communication" campaign, including information for ministry clients and staff regarding their rights and the process for submitting and handling complaints. In fact, around two-thirds of citizens who were interviewed face-to-face in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip agreed or strongly agreed that they had prior knowledge of the procedure for filing a complaint. In 2015, with support from the World Bank, the ministry developed several brochures and a poster (box 4.2). The Jenin Directorate, one of the two regional directorates to pilot the strengthening of complaint handling mechanisms, created a promotional video with information about the ministry's programs and the process for submitting complaints. Similar initiatives should be expanded. When asked about the sources of knowledge regarding the complaint handling mechanism, less than 5 percent of survey respondents in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip cited the ministry's website or its publications.

Box 4.2. Improving Citizen Engagement in the Ministry of Social Development's Cash Transfer Program

In May 2014, the World Bank conducted a rapid diagnostic of the existing complaint handling mechanism of the Ministry of Social Development (formerly called the Ministry of Social Affairs), the implementing agency for the World Bank-supported cash transfer program, at the ministry's request, to identify constraints and areas for improvement. Based on this assessment, the ministry has: (i) improved the design of their complaint handling mechanism; (ii) developed communication and training materials about it; (iii) created a ministry-specific manual; (iv) delivered a number of capacity-building workshops on the mechanism and citizen engagement; and (v) piloted a formal, structured, and effective complaint handling mechanism in two pilot regional directorates in Jenin and Abu Dees. Two consultants assisted the ministry in developing the operating manual, communications and training materials, and building the capacity of ministry staff regarding the procedures of the complaint handling mechanism. The ministry is planning to launch an information, education, and communication campaign in the pilot governorates to inform ministry clients about their rights, the new structures in place, how to submit complaints, and the process for handling them. It is also upgrading its website to allow citizens to submit their complaints online.

وزارة الشؤون الاجتماعية

أخي المواطن، أختي المواطنة،

إذا تعرضت لسوء المعاملة أو انتهاك الحقوق في أي من المجالات التالية:

- المساعدات الطارئة
- الإعاقات
- الرعاية الأسرية
- التحويلات النقدية
- التأمين الصحي
- الإعفاءات المدرسية

نحن في وزارة الشؤون الاجتماعية

- جاهزون لاستقبال شكاواكم في جميع محافظات الوطن
- من حقلك علينا الإجابة خطياً أو عبر رسالة قصيرة SMS على شكاواك سواء كان الجواب إيجابياً أو سلبياً
- نسعى لبذل كل مجهود ممكن لحماية حقوقكم وتعزيز مبدأ الشفافية

دولة فلسطين
وزارة الشؤون الاجتماعية
وحدة الشكاوى
تلفون: 02 240 2083
فاكس: 02 240 5644

مركز الشكاوى

information, education, and communication campaign in the pilot governorates to inform ministry clients about their rights, the new structures in place, how to submit complaints, and the process for handling them. It is also upgrading its website to allow citizens to submit their complaints online.

In addition, as part of the effort to engage beneficiaries and other citizens in the cash transfer program, the ministry has

(continued)

Box 4.2. Continued

consulted with beneficiaries, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders; established text message-based two-way communications with the program's beneficiaries to proactively share project-related information and receive feedback; and linked the complaint handling mechanism to the project's management information system and its poverty-mapping efforts (using geographic information systems) to identify grievance hotspots. In addition, the ministry has been actively communicating with its beneficiaries through a revamped website and social media. More recently, with support from the World Bank, the ministry has secured 38 tablets for social workers, which will facilitate beneficiary outreach.

Subject to the availability of additional funding, the ministry plans to expand the complaint handling mechanism pilot in the two governorates in a phased manner to the remaining governorates. In collaboration with the Complaints Department at the Cabinet Secretariat, the ministry plans to upgrade the management information system for its complaint handling mechanism to improve its capacity to capture, track, address, and monitor complaints and beneficiary feedback.



Channels for the uptake of grievances

Over half of the complainants in the West Bank submitted letters of complaint in person or by mail; fax and email were more widely used in the Gaza Strip. Over half (52.8 percent) of complainants in the West Bank interviewed by phone indicated that they submitted their complaints at the ministry in person by filling out a special form designed for that purpose; 17.5 percent submitted their letter of complaints in person at the ministry; and 15.3 percent sent a letter by fax. The remainder expressed their grievances via email, by telephone, or through an NGO or other private body. These figures are markedly different from those of the Gaza Strip, where 32.8 percent of respondents submitted complaints by email and 24.1 percent by fax.

Consistency and quality

Overall, users seem satisfied with the performance of the complaint unit staff. The phone survey revealed that around two-thirds of phone survey respondents in the West Bank and Gaza Strip agreed or strongly agreed that complaint unit staff acted in a respectful and nondiscriminatory way toward them. Dissatisfaction was usually related to aspects such as a lack of respect for lines and a sense that there was an unequal provision of information to complainants. In the Gaza Strip, 38 percent of respondents who were dissatisfied with the customer service felt they had been discriminated against based on gender.

Communication about the progress on complaints by unit staff is often considered unsatisfactory. Among the West Bank survey phone respondents, 47.2 percent agreed and 8.7 percent strongly agreed that the complaint unit provided them with all necessary information on the progress of their complaint. However, 17 percent of respondents disagreed, 7 percent strongly disagreed, and 20.1 percent indicated that they “did not know,” reflecting the complainants’ uncertainty regarding the amount of information to which the complaint unit has access and how much information could or should be communicated to them. Reasons cited for being dissatisfied with the unit’s communication regarding the status of their complaint are primarily linked to the perception that complaint unit staff were not prepared to provide information about the complaint. These findings, in addition to highlighting the perception that the unit is not sufficiently transparent, reveal deficiencies in the complaint tracking system, which is characterized

by missing status updates. Therefore, while the ministry has an advanced electronic archive system that does a good job of documenting complaints, there is room for improving the complaint follow-up system.

Citizens think the timeframe for responding to complaints is unreasonable, and their satisfaction with outcomes is low. Only around one-third of phone respondents in the West Bank reported that their complaints were processed in a reasonable timeframe. Over half did not consider the timeframes to be reasonable, and 10.5 percent “did not know.” Only one-quarter of complainants were satisfied with the result of the process. The Gaza Strip phone survey revealed similar results. Only 34.5 percent of complainants said the Ministry of Social Development complaint unit handled their complaint in a reasonable amount of time, and only 34.5 percent were satisfied with the result.

There is a widespread belief among citizens that resorting to the complaint unit will not make any difference and that the result will be unsatisfactory. Only 50.4 percent of face-to-face interviewees in the West Bank said they would file a complaint at the ministry if they encountered a problem; 68.7 percent of interviewees in the Gaza Strip said the same. In the West Bank phone survey, 68.9 percent of dissatisfied complainants indicated an intention to appeal; in the Gaza Strip, 56.8 percent did. The remaining interviewees chose not to submit an appeal, mainly because they did not believe that the results would improve (55 percent in the West Bank; 36 percent in the Gaza Strip) or they thought mediation was required for an appeal to succeed (18 percent in the West Bank; 36 percent in the Gaza Strip). In the face-to-face survey, 51.6 percent of respondents in the West Bank and 70.8 percent in the Gaza Strip intended to submit appeals if they were dissatisfied with the result of their complaint.

Capacity building

Significant progress has been made in terms of the capacity of complaint units. In 2015–16, the Ministry of Social Development prepared a ministry-specific manual that provides detailed guidance to staff on how to handle complaints. The ministry developed and tested training materials on complaint handling, including at a three-day training in Jericho held in April 2015 for ministry staff from Jenin and Abu Dees governorates. The training of

governorate staff greatly increased their understanding of complaints handling, improved their communications, and increased their morale. In addition, facilities and equipment in pilot governorates were improved through the purchase of furniture and computers and with office remodeling that included reception areas for visitors—including potential complainants—in the ministry complaints department and at the pilot directorates of Jenin and Abu Dees.

Coordination and cooperation

The Ministry of Social Development is successfully cooperating with regional directorates. It has agreed to initiate steps to capture as many complaints as possible in the complaints module of their management information system and to make the module available to pilot directorates so that they can enter complaints directly.

Ministry of Education and Higher Education

Communications and awareness-raising

About two-thirds of respondents in the West Bank and Gaza Strip know of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's complaint unit, but awareness levels are strongly influenced by education levels. In the West Bank, 62.1 percent of face-to-face respondents indicated being aware of the complaint unit—the highest rate captured by the survey among ministry complaint units in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, 67.9 percent of face-to-face respondents were aware of the ministry's complaint unit. In the West Bank, 75 percent of respondents with a bachelor's degree were aware of the complaint unit, but among those who only completed elementary school, 100 percent were unaware of it. In the Gaza Strip, 100 percent of respondents with a bachelor's degree were aware of the complaint unit, but only 33 percent of respondents who had only completed elementary school or who were illiterate were, suggesting that access to the complaint handling mechanism is not adapted to citizens with low literacy levels.

Prior knowledge of the procedures to file a complaint appears to be widespread. Eighty percent of face-to-face survey respondents in the West Bank and 82 percent in the Gaza Strip agreed or strongly agreed that they knew about the procedure to submit complaints.

Box 4.3. Recent Interventions by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to Improve Complaint Resolution

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education recently took a number of steps to listen to citizens, collect their feedback, and improve the complaint resolution process. The ministry's complaint unit, empowered by the new minister who took office in August 2015, has:

- Increased staff in the complaint unit;
- Adopted the complaint management system piloted by the Directorate General of Complaints (DGC), which allows citizens to submit complaints online;
- Initiated a campaign to increase awareness about the complaint handling mechanism through social and electronic media;
- Began accepting complaints through email and social media; and
- Started using complaints analysis to improve policy and procedures.

As a result of these measures, the complaint unit received 1,160 complaints in 2015 compared with 314 complaints in 2014. About 100 of the 1,660 complaints were submitted through a newly rolled-out complaint management system. In September–November 2015, 55 percent of complaints were submitted through email, 20 percent through the complaint management system, and 2 percent through face-to-face meetings at the ministry and regular mail. The sharp increase in the number of complaints can be attributed to the minister's support, the awareness campaign led by the minister, and the addition of email and the complaint management system as complaint-up-take channels that make it easier to submit complaints. Some complaints have led to procedural changes in the ministry, such as a series of complaints from teachers regarding their transfers, which led to a directive regarding the matter. Similarly, complaints submitted by a number of teachers about their firings were investigated and led to the reinstatement of 13 of the 18 teachers whose employment had been unjustly terminated. This then led to further enhancements in school oversight and supervision practices, including instituting a transparent system for the provision of periodical staff appraisal and performance feedback. The complaint unit has drafted an action plan to further improve complaint handling practices.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education promoted the complaint unit and provided information to potential users through posters, brochures, television spots, and newspaper advertisements, among other methods (box 4.3). In the West Bank, only about one-fourth of face-to-face survey respondents had received information about the complaint unit through the ministry, either through the ministry's website, publications, or brochures, or by calling the ministry. Word of mouth is another important source of information about the complaint unit: 35 percent of respondents knew of the complaint unit through a friend and 29 percent through a former complainant. In the Gaza Strip, just under half of the face-to-face respondents learned about the complaint unit through ministry-provided information, 18 percent through friends, and 24 percent through former complainants.

The media campaign of the ministry's complaint unit, supported by the new minister who took office in August 2015, including social media and television outreach efforts, has been effective. In addition, the complaint unit has been working with the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces on workshops and brochures aimed at diversifying communications materials to increase citizen awareness of the complaint unit and of the procedures for submitting complaints. These efforts could explain the recent spike in the number of complaints from 314 in 2014 to 1,660 in 2015, and are reflected in the survey results regarding knowledge of the procedure to submit complaints. Indeed, two-thirds of West Bank respondents indicated that their knowledge originated from the ministry: 33.3 percent through a ministry employee, 20.1 percent through the ministry website or publications, and 13.3 percent through a phone call to the ministry. As for Gaza Strip respondents, 57.1 percent said that their knowledge came from the ministry, 28.6 percent through a ministry employee, 14.3 percent through a phone call to the ministry, 14.2 percent through the ministry website or publications, and the rest through former complainants (AMAN 2016: 63–64).

Complaints have been used to drive visible change in terms of the policies and procedures of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education on topics such as teacher transfers; unfair dismissals; and school oversight and supervision practices, including instituting a transparent system for the provision of periodic staff appraisal and performance feedback (box 4.3). Despite these efforts, when asked about possible ways to improve the complaint unit, 29 percent of West Bank and 38 percent of Gaza Strip phone survey respondents continued to suggest: "increasing awareness raising programs."

Channels for grievance uptake

The majority of West Bank complainants submitted their complaints in person by submitting a written letter or by filling out the ministry's grievance form. Results of the telephone interviews in the West Bank revealed that 32 percent of complainants submitted their grievance by filling out the ministry-specific form for complaints at the ministry; and 29 percent by submitting a written letter of complaint at the ministry. Thirteen percent of complaints were submitted by email; 13 percent by fax; and 13 percent through other means, such as by telephone or through an NGO, a third party, a municipality, or a local council. In the Gaza Strip, 24 percent of complainants used the special form available at the ministry, 30 percent submitted complaints by email, and 16 and 18 percent by fax and telephone, respectively. In a meeting with parent councils, participants highlighted that the availability of telephone access to the ministry was not always optimal. They said the lines were often busy and expressed a desire for a toll free phone number.

However, these channels for grievance uptake are beginning to expand due to the rollout of a complaint management system that allows for the submission of complaints online. Complaints can now also be accepted through email and social media. In September–November 2015, 55 percent of complaints were submitted through email, 20 percent through the complaint management system and 2 percent through face-to-face meetings at the ministry and by mail. These additions have made important contributions and have facilitated the expression of grievances.

For the most part, citizens are willing to submit complaints to the complaint unit if necessary, and this is a positive trend. Among the respondents exiting the ministry in the West Bank, 67.8 percent agreed that they would submit a complaint if they had a problem, indicating a fairly well-established level of trust in the ministry's complaint unit. Among complainants in the West Bank interviewed by telephone, only 14.3 percent had submitted complaints to parties other than the ministry. Among those that had, half said they did so mainly to avoid the bureaucracy. In the Gaza Strip, 80 percent of visitors said that they would be willing to file a complaint with the complaint unit, and 40.8 percent of those interviewed by phone in the Gaza Strip said that they submitted complaints to parties other than the ministry complaint unit. The most important reason expressed by half of the respondents was that they did not know that the complaint unit existed.

Consistency and quality

Survey results point toward good customer service. Among respondents interviewed by phone who had interacted with the West Bank Ministry of Education and Higher Education complaint unit, 72.6 percent agreed that the unit staff interacted with users in a respectful, neutral, and nondiscriminatory manner. In the Gaza Strip, 68 percent agreed. In the Gaza Strip, over half of the respondents who were dissatisfied with the behavior of the complaint unit staff indicated that they believed they had been discriminated against based on their gender (56 percent).

The ministry's complaint handling mechanism appears to be working well—it is registering all received complaints and resolving most of them—but more progress can be made in terms of procedures for providing information regarding the status of complaints. Since 2007, the complaint unit has used a computerized system for tracking complaints with Microsoft Excel®. The unit strives to communicate with complainants on a regular basis, keeping them updated on the status of their complaints. In fact, 56 percent of phone respondents in the West Bank and 66 percent in the Gaza Strip agreed or strongly agreed that accessing the complaint unit to inquire about the status of their complaint was easy. More than half of respondents in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip who reported that they did not find it easy to follow up on their complaints indicated that this was due to a lack of information provided by ministry employees or an unwillingness of complaint unit staff to keep them updated. Significantly, 29 percent of Gaza Strip respondents pointed out that there is sometimes no staff present in the office.

Citizens feel that timeframes should be shortened, and communication with users about results systematized. Only 35.7 percent of respondents in the West Bank thought the timeframe for resolving complaints was reasonable; and fewer than half (47.6 percent) reported being informed of the result. In the Gaza Strip, however, 66 percent of complainants agreed that the unit addressed complaints in a reasonable amount of time, and 74 percent said they had been informed of the results of their complaints.

Similarly, satisfaction with results in the West Bank is fairly low. Only approximately one-third (32.6 percent) of respondents in the West Bank said they were satisfied with the results of their complaint. By contrast, in the Gaza Strip, two-thirds (66 percent) of complainants expressed satisfaction with the

results of their complaints: 12 percent very satisfied and 54 percent satisfied. In the past, in order to evaluate satisfaction levels among users, the complaint unit has taken the commendable initiative to survey a random sample of 50 complainants to get an understanding of their experience with the complaint handling mechanism. This was only a one-off undertaking, however, and there is no institutionalized feedback mechanism for complainants.

Capacity building

The staff of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's complaint unit is rather small, given that it receives more complaints than any other ministry. The unit used to be staffed by only one person, but since August 2015, with the appointment of the new minister, the number of staff has increased (World Bank 2016). The lack of staff creates the risk of backlogs and makes the unit dependent on lower level institutions—e.g., schools—to resolve complaints. Due to the staff shortage, the unit is not always in a position to conduct on-the-ground investigations or monitoring to ensure that complaints have been satisfactorily resolved.

To date, staff shortages have limited the complaint unit's ability to use available data to guide decision making. The management information system for the complaint unit can facilitate the analysis of trends in performance and problem areas at the ministry, but the complaint unit is too busy to conduct statistical analysis of the complaints beyond what they do for their reports to the Directorate General of Complaints (DGC).

Cooperation and coordination

Cooperation across administrative levels and departments appears to be strong in the ministry. The complaint unit seems to cooperate well with the DGC and with other ministry departments. Ministry complaint unit staff was involved in the development of DGC's complaint management system. About 95 percent of the recommendations of the complaint unit to the Minister of Education are approved. In addition, the ability of school staff and administrators to resolve many complaints means that a good number of them never reach the ministry complaint handling mechanism.

In the absence of dedicated focal points for registering complaints at lower levels, the ministry complaint unit relies heavily on the regional directorates' internal control units. This is problematic because the

internal control units do not have the same autonomy or specialized focus as the complaint unit—e.g., they lack the authority to conduct on-site investigations. There are still no dedicated focal points in the regional directorates to handle complaints even though the complaint unit has been pushing for them for a long time. Many complaints received by the directorates are not passed on to the complaint unit.

Ministry of Local Government

Communications and awareness-raising

The level of awareness of the Ministry of Local Government complaint unit across the Palestinian territories is fairly high, but the complaint unit's online presence could be strengthened. Fifty-five percent of face-to-face survey respondents in West Bank and 70.2 percent in the Gaza Strip are aware of the complaint unit's existence. Knowledge about the complaint unit originates from a variety of sources, such as contact with the ministry or through a former complainant. Some users also find out about the complaint unit independently by spotting the grievance boxes displayed by the ministry. In general, the ministry website and publications are underutilized: only 9 percent of respondents in the West Bank phone survey, 6 percent in the West Bank face-to-face survey, 15 percent in the Gaza Strip phone survey, and 6 percent in the Gaza Strip face-to-face survey cited either as a source of information about the complaint unit.

User awareness of the procedures to submit complaints is widespread. Eighty-two percent of the face-to-face survey respondents in the West Bank and 83 percent in the Gaza Strip agreed or strongly agreed that they knew about the procedures. The ministry seems to be a solid source of information on the procedures, according to face-to-face respondents in the West Bank: 29.6 percent said they received the information through a phone call to the ministry, 25.9 percent through a ministry employee, 14.8 percent through a ministry website or publication, 22.2 percent through a former complainant, and 7.5 percent through other means. In the Gaza Strip, 43.8 percent of face-to-face respondents received the information they needed through a phone call to the ministry, 18.7 percent through a ministry employee, 18.7 percent through the website, and 18.8 percent through former complainants (AMAN 2016: 93–94).

These results reflect the efforts made by the complaint unit to produce materials that would increase citizen awareness of the complaint unit and the process to submit complaints. Indeed, the Ministry of Local Government complaint unit conducted a student-led outreach campaign in 2012 that included the dissemination of printed materials—e.g., brochures and posters—to families explaining the objective of the complaint unit, where and how to submit complaints, and the appeals process. However, this campaign lapsed when the Belgian Technical Cooperation financial support ended.

Channels for grievance uptake

While most West Bank complainants submit their grievances in person with a letter to the ministry, Gaza Strip complainants favor phone, fax, and email to communicate their complaints to the complaint unit. In the West Bank phone survey, 61 percent of respondents submitted complaints by personally delivering a letter of complaint to the ministry, 13 percent by sending a letter of complaint by fax, 9 percent by filling out the dedicated ministry form at the ministry in person, and 4 percent by email. The results of the Gaza Strip phone survey are quite different: 20 percent of respondents submitted their complaints by phone, 20 percent by fax, 19 percent by email, 19 percent by filling out the ministry form, 14 percent by delivering a personal complaint letter to the ministry, and 8 percent by channeling their complaint through an NGO or other private body.

Citizens seem quite willing to submit grievances to the complaint unit. Among face-to-face survey participants, 73.9 percent from the West Bank and 79.6 percent from the Gaza Strip agreed that they would submit a complaint if they had a problem, reflecting a fairly high level of trust and confidence in the ministry and the complaint unit. In the West Bank, 42 percent of the respondents who said they would not file a complaint to the complaint unit indicated “highly bureaucratic procedures” as a reason. In the Gaza Strip, 28 percent indicated as the reason for not filing a complaint their conviction that nepotism and favoritism would determine the complaint’s resolution.

A significant proportion of citizens who address their complaints to entities other than the complaint unit do so to receive legal advice and additional support. Results of the telephone interviews in the West Bank reveal that 26.1 percent of complainants filed their grievances through parties other

than the ministry's complaint unit (e.g., an NGOs or the Anti-Corruption Commission). Half of these complainants said they did so in search of support, backing, and legal advice; 17 percent claimed a lack of awareness of the complaint unit, another 17 percent sought to avoid bureaucratic procedures, and yet another 17 percent lacked confidence and trust in the performance and professionalism of the government. The face-to-face survey in the West Bank has similar results: 30.3 percent of respondents submitted complaints to parties other than the ministry's complaint unit. The main factors underlying their decisions are the need to receive legal support and advice (44 percent), the hope of avoiding bureaucratic procedures (33 percent), and a lack of knowledge about the complaint unit (11 percent). The need for legal advice was clearly the main reason why many turned to outside parties. This can be linked to the services provided by the ministry, municipalities, and local councils, which concentrate on issues of construction and building permits. In the Gaza Strip, 39 percent of phone survey respondents and 50 percent of face-to-face survey respondents submitted complaints to parties other than the Ministry of Local Government because they were unaware of the complaint unit (phone survey: 18 percent; face-to-face survey: 44 percent), bureaucratic procedures (phone survey: 32 percent; face-to-face survey: 33 percent) and the need for support and technical advice (phone survey: 27 percent; face-to-face survey: 22 percent).

Consistency and quality

Further progress can be made in terms of staff behavior toward complainants, especially in the West Bank. Indeed, survey results have shown that only approximately one-third of West Bank phone survey respondents agreed that the Ministry of Local Government complaint unit staff behavior was respectful and nondiscriminatory (but none strongly agreed), one-third disagreed or strongly disagreed, and one-third did not encounter complaint unit staff. In the Gaza Strip, 67.8 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the treatment of complainants by unit staff was respectful, neutral, and nondiscriminatory. All of the respondents met with a complaint unit employee during the process. The main reason for dissatisfaction indicated by phone survey respondents in the West Bank was their perception of unfair treatment: 43 percent said they felt that some complainants were given preferential treatment over others. Similarly, in the Gaza Strip, 50 percent of respondents indicated that their negative assessment of staff behavior was

linked to a perception of nepotism or favoritism (*wasta*) rather than the equal principle of “first-come first-served,” and 44 percent believed their negative treatment by staff was due to gender bias.

Although the Ministry of Local Government complaint unit has a database to track complaints, there is room for improvement in terms of communicating status updates to complainants. The complaint unit issues receipts for complaints received and has developed a management information system that allows for complaint analysis. Even so, the West Bank phone survey reveals that only 34.8 percent of complainants agreed that accessing the complaint unit to follow-up on their complaint was easy; around two-thirds disagreed or strongly disagreed. Many respondents expressed strong views: 56 percent strongly disagreed that access was easy. The main reason cited for dissatisfaction with the process was a lack of updated information (40 percent) and lack of preparedness among complaint unit staff to provide information regarding the complaints (33 percent). In the Gaza Strip, approximately half of the phone respondents found it easy to get information on the status of their complaints; half did not. In addition to a lack of updated information and staff preparedness, respondents in the Gaza strip (36 percent) also noted that the process of retrieving complainant files was lengthy. In the West Bank phone survey, a very significant proportion of respondents—60.9 percent—strongly disagreed, and 26.1 percent disagreed, that the complaint unit provided them with information about the complaint’s progress. Only 13 percent agreed that they had received the required information regarding the progress of the complaint. The Gaza Strip phone survey has fairly different results. In the Gaza Strip, a total of 66 percent of complainants agreed or strongly agreed that the complaint unit provided them with required information on the progress of their complaint, while 34 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Complainants in the West Bank were much less satisfied than those in the Gaza Strip about being informed of the results of their complaint. In the West Bank, only 26.1 percent of complainants said they were informed of results, and only 4.3 percent felt that the complaint handling had been processed in a reasonable amount of time. In the Gaza Strip, however, 62.7 percent of phone respondents said they were informed of the results of their complaint, and 54.2 percent were satisfied with timeliness of the process.

Box 4.4. Complaint Resolution through One-Stop Shops in Ramallah Municipality

Ramallah Municipality is one of four municipal governments in the Palestinian Territories that established “one-stop shops” in 2006. It handles about 100 government services; the most frequently used are paying municipal fees and obtaining permits and licenses. The tracking and reporting of service requests and transactions is computerized. Citizens filing service requests can check the status of their cases online using computer kiosks located in the municipality office. This process will soon allow citizens to check the status of their requests online from any location. The shop also conducts customer satisfaction surveys: three have already been completed.

The municipality established a complaint handling unit in May 2014 to replace its informal system with a formal, effective complaint handling mechanism. Although the unit is small, with only two full-time staff, other departments assist them in investigating and responding to complaints. For example, the engineering department deals with complaints related to property borders, encroachments, and building code violations, among other issues. The municipality’s complaint handling unit has developed a computerized tracking system. The unit’s presence as well as the rights of citizens to submit complaints has been advertised in newspapers and magazines, on billboards; in brochures; and in public places, including the one-stop shop.

The complaint handling unit receives about 500–600 complaints per year, by phone, on standardized forms, or as letters of complaint. Complaints are entered into a computerized database—the complaint handling mechanism’s management information system—which includes 15 customized templates to record various types of complaints. Depending on the nature of the grievance, the complaint handling unit refers it to the relevant government department. It can be flagged “urgent.” The department responsible unit for investigating and resolving the complaint has 2–3 days to respond to the unit, indicating how long the redressal action is expected to take. If no response is received, the unit sends the department a reminder. If there is still

(continued)

Box 4.4. Continued

no response, the unit alerts the mayor. If the complaint is submitted at the one-stop shop, the complainant is given a receipt.

The complaint handling unit produces monthly reports with separate sections on formal and informal complaints. It compiles statistics that include the status of complaints and their resolution. The unit plans to link the complaint handling mechanism's management information system to geographic information systems in order to improve analysis. The unit also conducts random spot checks 2–3 times a month to see if complaints are being satisfactorily resolved.

Complainants in the Gaza Strip were much more satisfied with outcomes of their complaints than those in the West Bank. The West Bank phone survey showed that only 17.4 percent of respondents were satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, while in the Gaza Strip, satisfaction among citizens was almost three times as high: 51 percent of complainants expressed satisfaction with the result of their complaint—17 percent were very satisfied, and 34 percent were satisfied.

Coordination and cooperation

Complaint unit staff seems to cooperate and communicate well with other departments when investigating complaints. Staff have also been cooperating with the Directorate General of Complaints by, for example, providing inputs to improve the complaint management system.

Currently, no complaint officers exist below the ministry level. Existing focal points for complaint handling in regional offices do not have clearly defined responsibilities or reporting requirements, so while they do contribute to complaint handling efforts, their role is not formalized.

Municipalities with citizen service centers at the local government level often appear to have well-functioning complaint handling mechanisms (box 4.4), creating opportunities for potential synergies.

Palestinian Land Authority

Communications and awareness-raising

Awareness levels of the complaint unit and of procedures to submit complaints to the Palestinian Land Authority is lower in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip. Overall awareness levels of the Palestinian Land Authority complaint unit in the West Bank are low: only 41.5 percent of face-to-face respondents knew of it. In the Gaza Strip, however, 64.9 percent of respondents were aware of its existence. Similarly, not all West Bank citizens are well-informed about the complaint handling process: fewer than half (44 percent) of face-to-face survey respondents in the West Bank agreed that they knew about the procedure for submitting complaints. In the Gaza Strip, 88 percent of the respondents were aware of the process.

The Palestinian Land Authority provided information about the existence of the complaint unit to fewer than half of the survey respondents. Other sources of information, such as NGOs, former complainants, and friends, dominated. In the West Bank, only 13 percent of phone respondents knew of the complaint unit through the ministry. In the Gaza Strip, 41 percent knew about it through the ministry—either by contacting it or through their website or publications. However, it is important to note that the phone surveys for the Palestinian Land Authority had very small samples: eight respondents for the phone survey in the West Bank and 40 in the Gaza Strip. Fewer than half of the face-to-face survey respondents across the Palestinian Territories knew of the complaint unit through contact with the ministry, its website, or its publications.

In both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, over half of face-to-face respondents indicated that the information about procedures to submit a complaint originated from the Palestinian Land Authority, whether by a phone call, a Palestinian Land Authority employee, or the Palestinian Land Authority's website or publications. The main other source of information was former complainants: 40 percent in the West Bank, 37.5 percent in the Gaza Strip (AMAN 2016: 115–116).

B. Channels for grievance uptake

While West Bank complainants have resorted to in-person visits and writing letters to the ministry to submit their complaints, Gaza Strip complainants tend to use email and fax. Results of the West Bank telephone

survey regarding access channels reveal that half of the respondents submitted their grievance by visiting the Palestinian Land Authority and bringing a letter they had written with them, and the remaining half by visiting the authority and filling out an official complaint form. In the Gaza Strip, 23 percent of survey respondents submitted complaints by email and 23 percent by fax, which means that almost half did not submit their complaint in person. Eighteen percent submitted their own letter at a visit to the authority, 13 percent submitted their grievance through an NGO or private institution, and 13 percent by telephone.

Complainants in the Gaza Strip are much more willing to file complaints with the Palestinian Land Authority than those in the West Bank. In the West Bank, 60.4 percent of face-to-face survey respondents agreed that they would file a complaint with the Palestinian Land Authority if they had a problem. In the Gaza Strip, 79.4 percent of the survey respondents said that they would file a complaint if necessary. In the West Bank, the main reasons indicated by respondents who were not willing to file a complaint to the Palestinian Land Authority were highly bureaucratic procedures (37 percent), the conviction that personal relations are necessary to reach a favorable outcome (25 percent), and overall lack of confidence in government performance (21 percent). In the Gaza Strip, essential reasons cited were previous experiences of friends or acquaintances (23 percent), an overall lack of confidence in government performance (21 percent), a conviction that personal connections are needed (20 percent), a belief that filing a complaint with an NGO would be more effective (20 percent), and the impression that procedures are too bureaucratic (18 percent).

Many citizens, it would seem, do not trust the Palestinian Land Authority's complaint handling mechanism and therefore do not approach their settlement offices for assistance or to report their grievances despite the huge numbers of citizens using Palestinian Land Authority services and the fact that valuation procedures have led to hundreds of complaints. This mistrust in the system is suggested by the comparatively low number of grievances received by the complaint unit: 17 in 2013 and 20 in 2014.

Citizens turn to third parties for help. In the West Bank, 29.4 percent of face-to-face survey respondents submitted complaints to parties other than the Palestinian Land Authority's complaint unit; in the Gaza Strip, 22.2 percent

did the same. In the West Bank, half of the respondents did so because they were unaware of the complaint unit; half sought to avoid the bureaucracy. In the Gaza Strip, 60 percent of respondents who submitted complaints to parties other than the Palestinian Land Authority's complaint unit did so because they were unaware of the unit's existence; 40 percent were trying to save time and effort—they believed that submitting a grievance to the Palestinian Land Authority complaint unit would involve a heavily bureaucratic process.

Consistency and quality

Citizens seem generally satisfied with complaint unit staff behavior. Among respondents interviewed by phone in the West Bank, 75 percent agreed or strongly agreed that their treatment by the complaint unit employees was respectful, neutral, and nondiscriminatory. Seventy percent of respondents in the Gaza Strip agreed or strongly agreed that they had received fair treatment.

Satisfaction rates among citizens regarding access to the complaint unit and communications about the progress and results of complaints are fairly positive. Among West Bank phone survey respondents, 62.5 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they found it easy to reach the complaint unit and inquire about complaint handling procedures. Half of the respondents claimed that the complaint unit had provided them with sufficient information regarding the progress of their complaint. In the Gaza Strip, 57.5 percent of phone survey respondents agreed (35 percent) or strongly agreed (22.5 percent) that it was easy to access the complaint unit to follow up on their complaints. Respondents who disagreed cited as reasons that the process of searching for their file took too long (44 percent), staff was unavailable (25 percent), and the staff was not prepared to provide them with information regarding their complaint (19 percent). In the Gaza Strip, 67.5 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the complaint unit had provided them with sufficient information for answering their inquiry regarding complaint handling.

Satisfaction levels with the outcomes of the grievance procedure, communications regarding results, and timeframes are lower in the West Bank than in the Gaza Strip. Only 37.5 percent of phone respondents in the West Bank indicated that they were satisfied with the results of their complaint. In the Gaza Strip, a much higher proportion of respondents expressed satisfaction—32.5 percent were very satisfied, and 27.5 percent were satisfied. Similarly, only 37.5 percent of West Bank phone survey respondents said

they were informed of the results of their complaint versus 64.1 percent of Gaza Strip respondents. Finally, one out of two respondents in the West Bank phone survey was dissatisfied with the timeliness of the grievance procedure; and 65 percent of phone survey respondents in the Gaza Strip agreed that the Palestinian Land Authority complaint unit addressed complaints in a reasonable amount of time.

Almost all of the complaints received by the complaint unit are resolved.

Out of 17 complaints received in 2013, 14 were resolved. Twenty complaints were received in 2014, and all of them were resolved.

Capacity building

One key barrier to the effectiveness of the Palestinian Land Authority complaint unit is a shortage of human resources. The unit depends on a single employee to manage all of the complaints in addition to other tasks. As a result, most complaints are transferred to the chairman's office of the land authority to be solved. There is no separate physical office within the Palestinian Land Authority to receive complainants.

Coordination and cooperation

The primary issue that the Palestinian Land Authority must solve regarding coordination involves focal points for complaints at levels lower than the Palestinian Land Authority complaint unit. Settlement offices do not currently have complaint focal points despite the fact that they are the first point of contact for most citizens. Complaint focal points would enable the authority to capture many more complaints because the actual count of complaints only reflects those received by the complaint unit, not those received by the chairman's office or a field office.

The relationship between the Palestinian Land Authority complaint unit and municipalities could be clarified. Many complaints can affect municipalities given that they are related to land use, buildings, and property registration.

Coordination and cooperation can be improved within the Palestinian Land Authority. In particular, departments that receive citizen complaints, such as the surveying, control, internal audit, and public relations departments, should know how to react and transfer grievances to the complaint unit.

Ministry of Health

Communications and awareness-raising

Awareness levels of the Ministry of Health's complaint unit and of procedures to submit complaints is higher in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. While only 44.7 percent of face-to-face survey respondents in the West Bank were aware of the Ministry of Health complaint unit, 68.4 percent of respondents in the Gaza Strip knew of it.

Fewer than half of the respondents learned about the complaint unit from an official ministry source. Regarding sources of knowledge about the complaint unit, 33 percent of the face-to-face respondents in the West Bank said they learned about the complaint unit by contacting the ministry, 25 percent through a previous complainant, 17 percent through a friend, 14 percent through the ministry's website or publications, and 11 percent through an NGO or private body. In the Gaza Strip, 28 percent of respondents knew of the complaint unit by contacting the ministry, 24 percent through NGOs and private institutions, 21 percent through previous complainants, 17 percent from friends, and 10 percent from the ministry's website and publications. It therefore appears that the ministry is by no means the primary source of information regarding the complaint unit. The results of the phone survey, which only included interviews with actual complainants, show similar trends: 45 percent of respondents in the West Bank and 42 percent in the Gaza Strip knew of the complaint unit through a friend.

At least two-thirds of respondents knew about the procedures to file a complaint with the Ministry of Health complaint unit, and while information about procedures has been primarily shared through personal contacts, the ministry has also played a key role in the dissemination of this knowledge. Approximately two-thirds of face-to-face survey respondents in the West Bank agreed (35 percent) or strongly agreed (32 percent) that they understood the procedures to file a complaint. In the West Bank, 37 percent of respondents learned about the procedures from previous complainants, 33.3 percent from the ministry's website or from its publications, 18.5 percent by calling the ministry, and 7.4 percent from a ministry employee. In the Gaza Strip, 86 percent of face-to-face survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they had previous knowledge of complaint procedures. Forty percent said they knew by contacting the ministry on the phone, 36

percent through an employee at the ministry, and 16 percent through the ministry website or its publications (AMAN 2016: 134–135).

Channels for grievance uptake

Most citizens file complaints in writing—either by personal letter or dedicated ministry form. In the West Bank, 48 percent of phone survey respondents had submitted a personal letter of complaint at the ministry, 28 percent filled out a dedicated complaint form at the ministry, 12 percent submitted a complaint by fax, and 12 percent by other means. In the Gaza Strip, 38 percent filed a personal letter of complaint, 21 percent used the form at the ministry, 21 percent used email, and 17 percent submitted their complaint by fax.

Complaints filed with parties other than the complaint unit and the reluctance among some to submit complaints to it suggest that citizens do not yet fully trust the Ministry of Health’s complaint unit. In the West Bank, over half (54.3 percent) of face-to-face survey respondents agreed that they would submit a complaint to the ministry’s complaint unit if they were faced with a problem. In the Gaza Strip, 57.9 percent of complainants said they would file a complaint to the complaint unit if needed. At the same time, 32.8 percent of complainants interviewed by phone in the West Bank and 66.7 percent in the Gaza Strip said that they had filed their complaints through parties other than the ministry’s complaint unit. The main reasons given by West Bank respondents were: a lack of confidence in the government’s performance and professionalism (47 percent); they were seeking support, backing, and legal advice (26 percent); they perceived the process to be highly bureaucratic (16 percent); and they were unaware of the complaint unit (11 percent). Gaza Strip complainants gave reasons such as: the need for external advice (33 percent), a lack of trust (27 percent), a desire to avoid the bureaucracy (27 percent); and a lack of awareness of the complaint unit (13 percent). In the West Bank, 42.9 percent of face-to-face survey respondents filed complaints through parties other than the complaint unit, but in these cases, the main reason indicated for getting external help was that they were seeking support, backing, and legal advice (47 percent); 40 percent indicated a lack of awareness of the complaint unit. In the Gaza Strip, 48.1 percent of face-to-face survey respondents said they filed their complaint somewhere other than at the Ministry of Health complaint unit. They too cited seeking support and legal/technical advice as the main reason (54 percent).

Consistency and quality

Treatment of complainants seems satisfactory, although a number of respondents did not directly interact with complaint unit staff. The West Bank phone survey revealed that 43.1 percent of respondents did not meet any complaint unit employee in the process of submitting their complaint. Of the remaining, 44.8 percent strongly agreed or agreed that they were treated in a fair and nondiscriminatory manner; 12.1 percent strongly disagreed or disagreed. In the Gaza Strip, 58.3 percent of phone survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were treated respectfully, neutrally, and without discrimination. For approximately two-thirds of the dissatisfied Gaza Strip respondents, the main reason indicated was a perception of unfair treatment that privileged some complainants over others. Thirty-three percent felt they had been discriminated against based on their gender.

Following up on complaints is not easy. Only 53.3 percent of phone survey respondents in the West Bank and 54.2 percent in the Gaza Strip found it easy to access the complaint unit to follow up on their complaints. In the West Bank, 44 percent of respondents cited a lack of readiness among complaint unit employees to provide them with information as the main difficulty. Another 25 percent said the employee simply had no new information regarding the status of the complaint, and 16 percent said the search for their file took too long. In the Gaza Strip, those who disagreed indicated the same reasons as in the West Bank: 27.3 percent cited the employee's lack of readiness to provide information on the complaint, 27.3 percent complained about the time it took to retrieve their file, 18.1 percent mentioned an absence of updated information, and 27.3 percent said the employee was not present. In the West Bank, 31 percent of phone survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had received sufficient information from the complaint unit regarding the progress of their complaint. In the Gaza Strip, the rate was higher, with 58.3 percent of respondents saying they were satisfied with the quantity of information they received from the unit regarding their complaint.

Satisfaction levels with outcomes, timeliness, and quality of communication are insufficient in the West Bank. In the West Bank, only 12.3 percent of phone survey respondents were satisfied with the outcome of the grievance process; 50 percent said they intended to appeal. Dissatisfaction with outcomes appears to be related to the time it takes to address complaints:

only 24.2 percent of respondents in the West Bank felt that their complaint had been handled in a reasonable time. Communication about the results also played a role: only 24.1 percent of respondents in the West Bank were informed of the outcome of their complaint. In the Gaza Strip, 79.2 percent of respondents were satisfied with the results of their complaint, only 14.3 percent of dissatisfied complainants were considering an appeal, 58.3 percent were satisfied with timeframes, and 66.7 percent said they were informed of the result of their complaint.

Data provided by the Ministry of Health regarding outcomes showed that almost all complaints were accepted (over 95 percent). In 2014, all 86 complaints received by the complaint unit were resolved, and ministry officials said that most complaints are resolved quickly due to their urgent character—e.g., patient treatment.

Capacity building

The Ministry of Health complaint unit has four employees who use the management information system to help analyze trends in Ministry of Health performance and problem areas.

Coordination and cooperation

Coordination between the Ministry of Health's complaint unit and sub-ministry levels is limited. Most complaints are received and resolved at hospitals, health care centers, and other front-line health care providers. They do not go to the complaint unit and are thus not tracked—complaints are captured by the ministry database only if they are not resolved at the health care facility and therefore received by the complaint unit.

There is no formal complaint handling mechanism at the service-provider level. Except for the Ramallah Medical Complex (see box 4.5), there is no dedicated person or system for dealing with complaints at the service-provider level. The complaint unit therefore has little information about the complaints handled and resolved by front-line health care providers.

Other departments of the Ministry of Health are generally cooperative about handling complaints. About 90 percent of the complaints received by the complaint unit come from within the Ministry of Health; the remaining 10 percent are referred from outside the ministry, for instance by the

Box 4.5. Improved Customer Relations Leads to Improved Service Provision: Complaint Handling at the Palestinian Medical Complex in Ramallah

In the Palestinian Territories, deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, restrictions on movement, and limitations on the importation of medical equipment and medicines prevent the development of a universally accessible, affordable, and responsive health care system. The Palestinian Medical Complex (PMC), comprising five hospitals in Ramallah, provides a wide range of services, including neonatal care, maternity care, internal medicine, pediatrics, general surgery, and cardiovascular surgery. The PMC has made great strides in providing quality health services to its patients by adopting measures such as establishing a culture of continuous improvement, adopting patient safety goals;^a and rolling out a responsive complaint handling system and a patient satisfaction assessment.

In 2013, PMC leadership created a complaint handling system to increase patient and family satisfaction with the health services provided by the hospital. It was based on the Patient Safety Primary Initiative Criteria established by the World Health Organization (2008) and the Quality Council Meetings in the Palestinian Medical Complex. Prior to 2013, complaints were handled informally, without any documentation or data analysis, which often resulted in no corrective action being taken and sometimes led to altercations with patients and their families.

In 2013, the PMC adopted a Patient and Relatives Complaints Policy, which emphasized the right of patients and their families to express their complaints and dissatisfaction. The policy specifies complaint collection and resolution procedures as well as staff roles and responsibilities. As a result, complaints are now received on standardized forms, face-to-face, or in complaints boxes prominently placed inside the PMC. Staff was provided training to assist patients and their families in filing complaints and submitting suggestions. A complaint management module, which is part of the hospital's management information system, was developed to allow management to track and monitor the resolution of complaints. The PMC's Head of the Complaints

(continued)

Box 4.5. Continued

Department and Quality Unit administers the complaint system with the support of a Patients' Rights and Ethics Committee. Together, they are responsible for receiving and responding to all complaints and suggestions, analyzing and reporting on them, and following-up with relevant departments to ensure that appropriate corrective procedures are adopted.

The successful implementation of these reforms have resulted in high patient satisfaction, reduction in the number of complaints, and better quality health services. This is illustrated through the results of a patient survey in 2015 in which 89 percent of respondents rated medical care and nursing as excellent or very good, and 70 percent rated food and catering services as excellent or very good.

The key success factors of the complaint handling system are committed management; decentralized decision making; a strong belief in the rights of patients and their families to voice their concerns; and the adoption of the ten-point Your Rights and Responsibilities Charter,^b a written policy on complaints that was widely disseminated to all hospital staff and implemented; an emphasis on further learning about the needs of staff and patients after analyzing complaints received and taking corrective actions; continuous follow up on all complaints; and constant communication with complainants.

a. These safety goals were established by the Joint Commission of Accreditation and the World Health Organization.

b. Patients are asked to sign the charter, which introduces their ten rights: the right to receive treatment, the right to receive appropriate medication and to continue it, approval based on awareness and understanding, respect for the dignity and privacy of patients, confidentiality, the right to ask the identity of the service provider, the right to ask for additional consultation on the patient's situation, and the right to access information and medical records.

Independent Commission on Human Rights. The Minister of Health views complaint handling as a high priority. Almost all of the recommendations offered to the Minister of Health by the complaint unit are approved. The ministry's complaint unit staff also participated in the workshops and consultations to develop the complaint management system for the Directorate General of Complaints.

Directorate General of Complaints

Communications and awareness-raising

The Directorate General of Complaints (DGC) has demonstrated great enthusiasm for the added value of the complaint management system and plans to create communications materials about it. The DGC has produced videos for potential complainants explaining how the system works and what the entire process looks like, allowing citizens to be fully informed before they submit a complaint. A full-fledged communication campaign is planned for when the complaint management system is ready to launch.

Channels for grievance uptake

The complaint management system will diversify the range of channels for grievance uptake. The DGC used to receive only a few complaints because most went directly to the complaint units and ministry staff. However, the new system will allow complaint units to accept complaints online, which is expected to contribute to the capture of a wider range of complaints.

Consistency and quality

To a significant extent, the DGC's provision of guidelines to all ministries has standardized complaint handling in the Palestinian Authority, and the operationalization of the complaint management system should significantly improve the transparency, public access, efficiency, and effectiveness of complaint handling. The complaint management system will be the cornerstone of the DGC effort to strengthen complaint handling over the next couple of years.

However, apart from rolling out the complaint management system, there is no current strategic plan for the DGC with a specific timeline. Identification of priority areas may be required to establish a clearer institutional vision for the directorate.

The complaint management system is expected to ease the communication of status updates for complainants. After being assigned a unique identification code by email, a complainant will be able to log into the system and see the status of their complaint. Internal users of the system will be able to see exactly where in the ministry's workflow the complaint is. The DGC is optimistic that this will reduce delays in complaint processing. The complaint management system will generate automatic "flags" or alerts if

any step in the workflow is taking longer than the allotted time. In the past, complaints could languish and no one would know where the complaint was or why it had stalled. Ministers will now have a dashboard view to see the status of complaints.

The complaint management system will also allow citizens to voice their opinions about the software. It will include a brief user satisfaction survey to receive immediate feedback from users regarding their experience with the system.

Capacity building

To date, donor support appears to have been critical to the DGC's activities in terms of capacity. USAID, for example, provided support that led to the terms of reference for the complaint management system. Democratic Control of Armed Forces, an international organization based in Geneva, provided assistance in diagnosing the existing legal framework for complaint handling mechanisms and helped develop amended bylaws for strengthening the DGC (DCAF 2014). Each of the DGC's two sections has one officer and one secretary—it is a very small organization despite its significant responsibilities. Sometimes, because they are so short-staffed, the DGC must rely on students and volunteers. The launch of the complaint management system will greatly exacerbate the problem of its limited internal capacity and resources—financial and human—to handle all of its responsibilities.

The DGC's reporting and recommendations could be strengthened. In light of the existing regulation's limits, the DGC submitted amended bylaws to the Prime Minister's Office, but over a year since their submission, the executive has yet to act on them. Furthermore, the DGC can play a strong role in building the capacity of ministry complaint unit staff.

Cooperation and coordination

Hopefully, the complaint management system will allow for a more streamlined handling of complaints across ministries. A progressive phasing-out of ministry complaint handling mechanism databases is planned to allow for all ministries to eventually use the complaint management system. Ministry complaint unit databases are currently being migrated into the system, which will use keywords and drop-down menus to help direct the complaint to the correct government unit for submission.

However, there may be a degree of resistance to the new system. Several ministries, such as the Ministry of Interior, have their own management information systems for complaints and may be hesitant to adopt the new system. In order to function effectively and be accepted, the new system must be adapted to the various ministries. The system will make the ministries transparent to the DGC regarding complaint processing, and how the ministries will feel about being micromanaged in this way is still unknown.

5. Suggestions for Improvement

Activities undertaken for this technical assistance helped identify several areas in the existing complaint handling processes of the Directorate General of Complaints (DGC), the four ministries, and the Palestinian Land Authority that need to be improved. These recommendations are summarized below in two parts: (i) cross-cutting areas for improvement relevant to all ministries; and (ii) ministry-specific suggestions, some of which overlap to emphasize nuances and discussions. All entities requested additional staff, equipment, furniture, and cars, which would facilitate better performance. The suggestions below exclude these requests and focus instead on the complaint management process and actions that ministries can take over the next 1–2 years to strengthen their complaint handling mechanisms. It is evident from the survey that citizens lack trust in the ministry complaint handling mechanisms. The steps outlined below will help begin the process of building trust and confidence among citizens. Given the evident resource constraints—both financial and human—it will be key to prioritize these areas, mobilize internal and external resources from within the ministry and from development partners, and then implement relevant actions. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education example (box 4.3) clearly indicates that complaint units can take internal actions. Similarly, lessons can be learned from the complaint handling mechanism of the Ramallah Medical Complex (box 4.5), which can be scaled up easily. Such commendable initiatives should be further encouraged.

Cross-Cutting Areas for Improvement

Perception and clarity of roles. The dual accountability of the complaint unit to the minister and the DGC frequently creates conflict. Complaint units are often neglected by other ministry departments. Buy-in by senior management, as is the case with the Ministry of Social Development (formerly called the Ministry of Social Affairs) and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, can empower complaint units and allow them to compete for internal funds. In addition, clarifying the complaint unit's roles and responsibilities relative to other ministry departments and the DGC could improve coordination efforts and position it to play a supportive rather than an oversight role.

Structure and coordination of complaint handling mechanism. The complaint unit plays a coordinating role and must collaborate with other departments and subministerial levels to resolve complaints. Instructions should be issued to all ministry departments to ensure this collaboration and to systematically forward complaints to the complaint unit. In addition, focal points for the complaint handling mechanism need to be designated at lower levels. The complaint unit needs to proactively coordinate with other public, private, and nonprofit institutions that receive complaints, such as NGOs and ombudsman, with the goal of making it easier for citizens to redress their grievances.

Business processes. Each ministry should adapt and customize the DGC-issued generic guidelines according to their programs, complaint categories, resolution timeframes, and workflows—which should first be mapped out. The guidelines should enumerate standard operating procedures for each stage of the complaint management process, such as sorting and processing (logging of complaints); acknowledgement and follow-up (receipt and progress updates); verification, investigation, and taking action, including mechanisms for escalation; and finally, feedback from the users of the complaint handling mechanism and the public at large. These procedures would assign clear responsibilities of complaint handling to existing officials, especially at the regional directorates, regarding how to receive, log, monitor, and track complaints, and they would include templates or checklists for all staff handling complaints. Through this technical assistance, the Ministry of Social Development (formerly called the Ministry of Social Affairs), has created a set of ministry-specific guidelines and the Ministry of Health is currently doing the same.

Receipts for complaint. Most complaints are received face-to-face and only recorded if they are provided in written form as stipulated in the Regulation on Complaints. Steps should be taken to diversify complaint uptake channels—email and fax are popular channels for submitting complaints in the Gaza Strip—and to record all complaints, regardless of whether they were communicated verbally, in writing, or online through social media. Attempts should also be made to capture complaints received at lower levels or by other ministry departments. The complaint management system should be finalized and rolled out as soon as possible.

Monitoring and analysis. The capacity of the DGC and complaint units to analyze complaint data and trends should be enhanced so the unit can generate high quality reports, which would allow senior management to use the complaint handling mechanism as a performance management tool. Indicators that measure resolution rates, average resolution times, and complainant satisfaction rates—preferably disaggregated by governorate and gender—would allow for benchmarking. The inclusion of an indicator on average resolution times by ministry would allow the DGC to publicize and enforce stipulated timeframes for complaint resolution.

Communication. In most cases, complaints are not acknowledged, or the resolution is not communicated to complainants. All complaint units should inform complainants of actions taken. If not satisfied, the complainant should be notified of appeal procedures. Materials should explain eligibility criteria for different ministry programs, how and where to submit complaints for beneficiaries, the appeals process, and how to track complaints, among other topics.

Citizen awareness and facilitation. It is evident from the survey findings that most citizens—even some complainants—are unaware of the existence of the complaints unit, contact points, complaint handling processes, and/or appeals procedures. Those who knew about the complaint unit and its processes, especially women, learned about it through friends, relatives, or other complainants, which reinforces the need for an information campaign to enhance awareness of the complaint handling mechanism among all citizens, including persons with disabilities or low levels of education. The most popular recommendation by survey respondents to improve performance and effectiveness of complaint units in West Bank and Gaza Strip was to “conduct awareness programs for citizens regarding procedures of filing

complaints.” Proactive outreach to citizens and users of the services provided by ministries would promote citizen awareness about the complaint handling mechanism. Furthermore, staff can facilitate the submission of a complaint by communicating about the complaint handling mechanism that is in place or by assisting users with the process. Developing and implementing a media plan, accompanied by the necessary communications material and activities at both the DGC and ministry levels, will make the complaint handling mechanism more citizen-centric.

Capacity building. The survey revealed that there was high demand from staff for training around complaint handling processes, communication, case management, data entry, the complaint management system, customer service protocols, data reporting and analyses, and human rights, among other issues. Creating a pool of locally available master trainers on the complaint handling mechanism who can conduct just-in-time trainings would be useful. Documenting best practices in complaints handling from the field and sharing them with staff would also help. The DGC, in collaboration with other complaint units and possibly the Independent Commission for Citizens’ Rights, is best positioned to lead the training activities. In addition, ministry staff do not always share a unified concept regarding complaints and, as a result, some complaints are never registered. Training on the complaint handling mechanism could bring staff together on the same page.

Complaint satisfaction. A significant number of surveyed complainants were not satisfied with the resolution of their complaint, and due to a lack of trust and the belief that they needed connections (*wasta*), they were not willing to appeal. Periodic rapid satisfaction surveys conducted by the DGC or the concerned ministries would help build trust in the state among citizens. The complaint management system captures the phone numbers of most beneficiaries, which should make it easy to conduct periodic complainant and beneficiary satisfaction surveys. The system would also allow citizens to easily follow up on their complaints, a process that is currently time-consuming and frustrating.

Specific Recommendations for the Ministry of Social Development

- **Appoint focal points for the complaint handling mechanism within regional offices.**
- **Capture as many complaints as possible in the existing management information system**, especially those received through social media. Make the module available to pilot directorates so that they can also enter complaints directly. Issue instructions to other departments to forward complaints to the complaint unit. This will help identify repeated complaints—i.e., the same complaint being submitted at various levels—which will, in turn, save staff time and increase efficiency. Consider harmonizing the Ministry of Social Development’s complaint handling mechanism module with the complaint management system when it is ready to be rolled out.
- **Train staff, especially social workers, on complaint handling mechanism processes** based on the recently developed manual on the complaint handling mechanism specific to the Ministry of Social Development.
- **Improve reporting and analysis of complaints** by enhancing the capacity of staff in the complaints unit and the focal points in the regional offices.
- **Monitor the quality of complaint resolution by capturing complainant and beneficiary satisfaction** with the complaint handling mechanism.
- **Remodel offices, to the extent that funds permit, to create a reception area for visitors** in all remaining regional directorates, as was done for the pilot directorates of Jenin and Abu Dees and the ministry’s complaint unit.
- **Develop and implement a media plan to make the complaint handling mechanism visible**—internally, within the Ministry of Social Development, and externally, to citizens. Distribute recently created brochures and posters to regional offices.

- **Launch an awareness campaign** in the pilot regional directorates of Jenin and Abu Dees that can be expanded in phases to the remaining directorates.
- **Adapt communications materials to remove barriers to access for segments of the population with low education levels**, and disseminate information to the public in a manner accessible to all, regardless of educational background.
- **Ensure that complainants receive high-quality customer service and the necessary privacy** when they submit a written complaint in person at the ministry and that they are informed about next steps.
- **Modify the management information system for complaints to allow for complaint tracking**, clearly indicating the current stage of the complaint and actions taken. Facilitate access to this information by complainants.

Specific Recommendations for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education

- **Appoint focal points for complaint handling** at the regional directorate either in the internal audit units or elsewhere as well as at the university level.
- **Issue clear instructions to refer and/or report all complaints received in other departments and at other levels—e.g., regional directorates—to the complaint unit.**
- **Develop a media plan, an awareness campaign, and communications materials** to increase awareness about the complaint handling mechanism with a special focus on providing effective communications materials for citizens regardless of their educational background and on discussing gender sensitivity and the rights of complainants among staff.

- **Adopt, customize, and strengthen the complaint management system, and capture as many complaints as possible.** Most of the complaints are resolved at the school level and are therefore not tracked by the complaint unit. Capturing the lower-level complaints would facilitate more a comprehensive analysis, which could then be used by management as a tool to identify problem areas and improve performance.
- **Include higher education institutions in the complaint handling mechanism.**
- **Develop a complaint handling mechanism manual specific to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education** that addresses education-specific issues, such as complaints related to teacher recruitment and student registration in schools and universities.
- **Train staff involved in complaint handling at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.**

Specific Recommendations for the Ministry of Local Government

- **Customize existing DCG guidelines for the Ministry of Local Government and its programs.** These procedures would assign clear responsibilities of complaint handling to existing ministry staff, especially in the regional offices, and they would include templates and checklists for all staff handling complaints. The procedures should be incorporated into a manual to be shared with all ministry staff who might receive a complaint.
- **Develop an overarching framework for basic complaint handling systems and standard operating procedures that can be shared with other municipalities,** especially village councils and joint service councils. Complaints received by the ministry relate to other local government units, so they are often more complicated and require longer resolution times. The framework should include a process by which all calls and communications regarding complaints that require any follow-up action and/or investigation are passed to the complaint unit for entry into the management information system.

- **Strengthen or, where necessary, establish complaint handling mechanisms in municipalities** with citizen service centers. Share and disseminate lessons from municipalities with functioning complaint handling mechanisms. Establish complaint handling mechanisms where local government units do not have citizen service centers by embedding them in all local government projects.
- **Sensitize senior managers** about the importance of complaint handling, and encourage them to act on the complaint unit's recommendations. The survey clearly pointed out that many more complainants approach other parties with regard to the Ministry of Local Government compared with other ministries.
- **Designate focal points for the complaint handling mechanism in regional offices and local government units.**
- **Adopt the complaint management system and attempt to capture all complaints received directly by ministry staff in writing or, to the extent possible, verbally.**
- **Develop a media plan to increase awareness of the complaint handling mechanism.** Relaunch an outreach campaign like the 2012 one that was supported by the Belgian Technical Cooperation, with updated communications material to inform people about how to submit complaints.
- **Create training materials, and train all ministry and local government unit staff** involved in complaint handling—preferably through joint trainings. The trainings should be centered on the staff manual for dealing with complaints and should promote customer-oriented and fair treatment of complainants, regardless of their gender.
- **Explore opportunities for the complaint unit to provide legal assistance to complainants,** possibly through partnerships with existing NGOs, and provide specialized legal trainings to complaint unit staff so they can handle complaints related to legal aspects of local government.

Specific Recommendations for the Palestinian Land Authority

- **Sensitize senior staff on complaint handling** through information sessions. This will help provide space for the complaint unit to operate and improve coordination with other Palestinian Land Authority departments—e.g., so that complaints received by other departments would be referred to the complaint unit.
- **Increase staff in the one-person complaint unit.**
- **Identify focal points for the complaint handling mechanism in all field and settlement offices.**
- **Develop and share standard procedures** to record and monitor complaints received in field offices. Clarify the relationship between the Palestinian Land Authority complaint unit and settlement offices, municipalities, and other Palestinian Land Authority departments with regard to complaint handling.
- **Build capacity for complaint unit staff,** particularly about legal issues related to land management.
- **Adopt the complaint management system.**
- **Develop a media and communications strategy** that targets both internal (Palestinian Land Authority staff) and external (citizens at large) audiences. Improve the Palestinian Land Authority website by, for example, adding a mention of the complaint unit and methods of reaching it and by publishing the Palestinian Land Authority's organizational structure.

Specific Recommendations for the Ministry of Health

- **Expand the role of the complaint unit** from one of receiving complaints and establishing committees to one of coordinating and monitoring complaint handling mechanisms in all health facilities, investigating complaints, and conducting spot checks. Assign a person to deal with complaints at all health facilities. Lessons from the complaint handling mechanism of the Ramallah Medical Complex (box 4.5) should be integrated.
- **Complete the development of and implement Ministry of Health-specific guidelines for the complaint handling mechanism** that build on existing DGC guidelines—e.g., taking into account the frequent urgency of the complaints, privacy issues related to health care, among other suggestions.
- **Adopt the complaint management system and capture as many complaints as possible** from the complaint units in Nablus and Ramallah, hospitals, health care centers, and facilities. Most complaints resolved at these levels are not tracked by the ministry complaint unit. Doing so would facilitate a more comprehensive analysis of complaints, which could then be used as a tool by management to identify problem areas and improve performance.
- **Expand the number of uptake channels for complaints** to include the Internet—e.g., social media.
- **Create a media plan and communications materials** to launch an information campaign that promotes awareness about the complaint handling mechanism and its processes. Communications materials about the ministry's complaint unit and the procedures to submit complaints are non-existent. They should also inform beneficiaries and complainants of their entitlements with regard to legal advice.
- **Train relevant ministry staff** involved in handling complaints.

Specific Recommendations for the Directorate General of Complaints

- **Roll out the complaint handling mechanism to all ministries** after making ministry-specific adjustments in a phased manner. The complaint management system will be the cornerstone of the DGC effort to strengthen complaint handling and will establish a much-needed electronic link between the complaint databases of the various ministries. An information campaign will be necessary to make the public and concerned ministry staff aware of the complaint management system and how to use it. Manuals, other guidance materials, and training will be necessary if the system is to be effectively used by staff.
- **Coordinate the development of training material** on topics such as case management, the complaint management system, customer service protocols, and data reporting and analyses. In collaboration with ministry complaint units, organize workshops and sessions about complaint handling mechanisms.
- **Follow up to get approval of amended bylaws to the existing regulation on complaints.** This would strengthen the DGC's ability to ensure that the complaint units are able to resolve complaints in a timely manner; coordinate the resolution of complaints that involve more than one ministry; and further clarify the roles of complaint units, making it easier for citizens to submit complaints. One frequently repeated issue is that complaints are not considered official until they are submitted in writing. The existing regulation should relax this requirement.
- **Publish periodic reports, preferably annually, stating the performance of all ministries regarding the resolution of complaints.** These reports should contain information on aspects such as resolution rates, average resolution times, success stories, and complainant satisfaction scores to foster confidence and trust in ministries by citizens.

6. Next Steps

Given the World Bank's institutional mandate on grievance redress, the Palestinian Authority's commitment and efforts to address complaints from citizens, and the progress already made in the current technical assistance, a strong case can be made to continue supporting the efforts of the Directorate General of Complaints (DGC) to strengthen the country's complaint handling mechanism rather than taking a project-by-project approach. An integrated approach toward strengthening the Palestinian Authority's complaint handling mechanism is likely to result in cost savings, greater efficiency and effectiveness, and better implementation of the World Bank institutional mandate on grievance redress.

There is a great deal of client interest among the concerned ministries and the DGC regarding the technical assistance, reflected in the ministry-specific action plans generated by it. Follow-up efforts conducted as part of a second phase of the technical assistance would help support the target ministries and the DGC to pilot recommendations from the assessments and expand activities to additional ministries. The February 2016 mission included presentations to several development partners, and a few of them—the British Council, Agence Française de Développement, and the United States Agency for International Development—expressed interest in the complaint handling area. Subject to availability of funds, some possible activities to consider in the second phase of this technical assistance include:

- A technical assessment of and support to strengthen and roll-out the complaint management system, which is currently being developed by the DGC in-house.
- Refinement of work flows for complaint handling in target ministries.
- Sensitization of senior management of all target ministries regarding complaint handling mechanisms.

- Technical and, to the extent possible, financial support to target ministries to implement the suggestions for improvement and their action plans.
- Capacity development of complaint unit staff to improve the management of citizen complaints and to use management information system for complaints.
- Development of communications material—internal for ministry staff and external for complaint handling mechanism users—for the remaining ministries.
- Expansion of strengthening activities for the complaint handling mechanism to an additional five ministries, subject to the availability of funds.

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Appendix A. Survey Instruments

Opinion Poll on Status of Complaint Units— Face-to-Face Survey Instrument*

Demographic Data

Age: _____

Educational Level:

1. Illiterate
2. Primary education
3. Preparatory education
4. Secondary education
5. College/institute
6. Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)
7. Master's degree and/or Ph.D.

Work Status:

1. Employed
2. Unemployed
3. Housewife
4. Student
5. Retired
6. Unable to work

Work Sector

(worker only)

1. Public/government sector
2. Private sector
3. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)
4. UNRWA
5. International Institutions

Monthly average income: _____ NIS

Part 1: Interview with a client filing a complaint

S1_1—How did you know about the complaint unit in the ministry?

1. Called the ministry
2. Through a friend
3. Ministry's electronic website or brochure
4. Previous complainant
5. Through a private institution or NGO
6. Other (please specify): _____

S1_2—Have you filed your complaint to another party before heading to the ministry?

1. Yes
2. No

If your answer is No, skip to question S1_3.

S1_2a—Why did you file your complaint to another party?

1. Did not know about the ministry's complaint unit.
2. Do not trust the performance and professionalism of government institutions
3. To decrease the time needed for the bureaucratic process
4. Asking for support and legal advice
5. Other (please specify): _____

* Survey instruments were designed by AMAN and Qiyas in consultation with the World Bank team.

S1_2b—With whom did you file your complaint?

1. Complainants unit at the council of ministers
2. Private institutions/Human Rights Commission/NGO
3. Member of Parliament
4. State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau
5. Anti-Corruption Commission
6. Other (please specify): _____

S1_3—Do you agree with the statement: You have previous information about the procedures for filing a complaint?

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. No opinion

If your answer is disagree or strongly disagree, skip to question S1_4.

S1_3a—How did you know about the procedures for filing a complaint?

1. Called the ministry
7. Ministry's electronic website or brochure
2. An employee inside the ministry
3. Previous complainant
4. Other (please specify): _____

S1_3b—Did you ask for help from any of the ministry's employees or officials before visiting the ministry?

1. Yes
2. No
3. No opinion

S1_4—Did you seek help from an employee or an official from outside the ministry to follow up on your complaint?

1. Yes
2. No
3. No opinion

S1_5—If your answer to the previous question is yes, why did you seek help?

1. To shorten time, bureaucracy, and procedures
2. Do not trust the performance and professionalism of the complaint handling unit and/or the ministry
3. Asking for support and legal advice
4. Following recommendation of a previous complainant
5. Other (please specify): _____

S1_6—If you are not satisfied with the result of your complaint, will you appeal the decision?

1. Yes
2. No
3. No opinion

S1_6a—If the answer is no, why not?

1. Do not believe that result could be improved
2. Procedures for filing complaints and follow up and slow/time-consuming
3. Do not believe there is no need for mediation
4. Other (please specify): _____

**Part 2: Interview with client asking for service,
not to file a complaint, and who has
never filed a complaint with the ministry.**

S2_1—Do you know about the complaint unit of the ministry?

1. Yes
2. No

S2_2—If you encounter a problem with the ministry regarding a service you requested or a right you are entitled to, would you file a complaint with the complaint unit?

1. Yes
2. No
3. No opinion

S2_3—Have you ever had a problem receiving service from the ministry and resorted to a party other than the ministry's complaint unit for recourse?

1. Yes
2. No
3. No opinion

S2_3a—If the answer is yes, was the complaint handled/solved?

1. Yes
2. No
3. No opinion

S2_3b—If the answer is no, did you seek help from an employee or an official from outside the ministry to follow up on the complaint before visiting the ministry

1. Yes
2. No
3. No opinion

S2_3c—Has your complaint been resolved?

1. Yes
2. No
3. No opinion

S2_4—If you do not want to file a complaint with the ministry, would you file it with another party?

1. Yes
2. No
3. No opinion

S2_4a—If yes, with what party?

1. Complainants Unit at the Council of Ministers
2. Private institution
3. Member of Parliament
4. State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau
5. Anti-Corruption Commission
6. Ask for help from an official
7. Other (please specify): _____

S2_5— If you do not want to file a complaint with the ministry, why not?

1. Do not trust performance of government
2. Believe there is a need of mediation
3. Complaints filing and follow-up procedures are slow
4. A recommendation from a friend who previously filed a complaint
5. Filing a complaint with a private, independent institution is more effective
6. Other (please specify): _____
7. No opinion

Citizens' Opinion Poll on Status of Complaint Units **Questionnaire for Telephone Interview with Complainant**

General Information

Questionnaire No. _____

Researcher No. _____

District: _____

Ministry: _____

Place of Residence:

1. City
2. Village/town
3. Camp

Gender:

1. Male
2. Female

1—How do you know about the complaint unit in the ministry?

1. Called the ministry
2. Through a friend
3. Ministry's electronic website or brochure
4. Previous complainant
5. Through a private institution or NGO
6. Other (please specify): _____

2—How did you file your complaint to the ministry?

1. Visited the ministry and filed a complaint form.
2. Visited the ministry and submitted it in writing (but not in a complaint form)
3. Faxed a letter of complaint to the ministry
4. Emailed a letter of complaint to the ministry
5. Filed complaint by telephone
6. Sent complaint through a private institution or NGO
7. Other (please specify): _____

3—Have you filed your complaint to another party before heading to the ministry?

1. Yes
2. No

3_1—If your answer is yes, why?

1. Did not know about the ministry's complaint unit
2. Do not trust the performance and professionalism of government institutions
3. To decrease the time needed for the bureaucratic process
4. Asking for support and legal advice
5. Other (please specify): _____

4—Do you agree with the statement: The complaints unit clearly informed you of the procedures and follow-up mechanisms involved in filing a complaint.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. No opinion

4_1—If the answer is disagree or strongly disagree, why?

1. Complaints form is difficult
2. No form provided for filing the complaint
3. Employee of complaint unit was uncooperative
4. Location for filing complaints in unsuitable
5. Other (please specify): _____

**5—Do you agree with the statement:
The unit team treated you respectfully,
neutrally, and without discrimination?**

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. No opinion

**5_1—If the answer is disagree or
strongly disagree, why?**

1. Complaints unit offers information
and pays more attention to other
complainants
2. Gender-based discrimination
3. Complaints not handled in proper
order (line is not respected)
4. Other (please specify): _____

**6—Do you agree with the statement:
It was easy to reach the complaint unit
and inquire about the procedures for
complaint handling**

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. No opinion
6. Other (please specify): _____

**6_1— If the answer is disagree or
strongly disagree, why?**

1. Took a long time to find the complaint
unit
2. Unit employee not prepared to offer
information about the complaint
3. Unit employee lacked updated
information on the status of the
complaint
4. The specialized employee is
frequently not in the office
5. Must be personally present at the
ministry to follow up on a complaint
6. Other (please specify): _____

**7—Do you agree with the statement:
The complaint unit provided you with
all information about your inquiry of
handling a complaint?**

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. No opinion

**8—Do you agree with the statement:
Your complaint was handled in a
reasonable time?**

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. No opinion

**9—Do you agree with the statement:
The unit employee informed you of the
result of the complaint?**

1. Yes
2. No

**9_1—If the answer is yes, how were
you informed?**

1. In writing
2. Orally, in person
3. By telephone
4. By email

**10—If the answer is no, when you
revisited the unit, was it easy to find
your file and receive a quick response?**

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly disagree
5. No opinion

**11—Did you ask any ministry employee
or official to follow-up on your
complaint?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. No opinion

12—Did you seek help from an employee or an official from outside the ministry to follow up on your complaint?

1. Yes
2. No
3. No opinion

13—In general, are you satisfied with the result of your complaint?

1. Strongly satisfied
2. Satisfied
3. Dissatisfied
4. Strongly dissatisfied
5. No opinion

14—If you are not satisfied with the result of your complaint, do you plan to appeal the decision?

1. Yes
2. No
3. No opinion

14_1—If no, this is because:

1. You do not trust improving the results
2. Procedures of appeal are complicated
3. I believe there is a need for mediation to have the appeal succeed
4. Other (please specify): _____

15—If a problem relating to the ministry's services reoccurs, would you file it with the complaint unit?

1. Yes
2. No
3. I do not know

15_1—If the answer is no, why, not?

1. Dissatisfied with result of complaint
2. Filing and follow-up procedures for complaints are slow
3. Complaints unit does not take its role seriously
4. Other (please specify): _____

16—If you encounter another problem and do not wish to file your complaint with the ministry, to whom would you direct your complaint?

1. Complainants unit of the Council of Ministers
2. Private institutions/Human Rights Commission/NGO
3. Member of Parliament]
4. State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau
5. Anti-Corruption Commission
6. I ask for help from an official
7. Other (please specify): _____

17—What actions would you recommend to improve the complaint unit's performance and effectiveness?

1. Increase number of employees in the unit
2. Facilitate complaint-filing procedures
3. Conduct awareness programs for citizens regarding complaint-filing procedures
4. Adopt electronic means for filing complaints
5. Other (please specify): _____



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