



Water integrity risks in Jordan – Priorities for action

Jordan is one of the three most water scarce countries in the world. While the government is currently undergoing a process of governance reform to enhance transparency, accountability and participation, it still faces numerous challenges to address risks in the water sector.

The national assessment in Jordan investigated water integrity risks in several major areas: policy making, legislation and regulation; planning and budgeting; enforcement; human resource management and procurement. A summary of the findings, and key recommendations are presented in this brief.

Policy Making, Legislation and Regulation | One main risk area relates to the weak participation of stakeholders and transparency in the allocation of water rights. Further areas include oversight and monitoring, law enforcement and an unclear system of penalties and fees. Deficiencies in these areas can contribute to conditions that encourage illegal actions.

Planning and Budgeting | In budgeting, some key risks include unbalanced allocation between projects and districts due to: undue influence of politicians and powerful individuals; collusion between public officials; and deliberate over-budgeting by consultants and contractors to increase the value of planned projects. Funds may also be misused to appoint consultants and staff who are supported by those with power. Another related risk is the absence of good technical and financial feasibility studies of planned projects. In some cases, such studies are conducted in a biased way to favour certain regions, consultants or companies.

Enforcement of Regulations | The largest risks for breaches of integrity occur in the water licencing process. This can entail the content of the licences and a lack of punishment for violations. Water licencing in Jordan is a complicated process, which requires a large number of documents and involves many steps. Bribery to facilitate and speed up the processing of paper work is

a regular integrity risk. Those with licenses may also deliberately damage the water meter or use the water for other purposes than approved e.g. selling water to other users, and go unreported. Integrity risks also exist in enforcement of water licences, where inspectors wilfully ignore illegal actions taking place around the wells in exchange for some form of favour or compensation. There are also integrity risks in the trading mechanisms and well rental procedures. The absence of clear rental procedures can lead to arrangements being made with family members of public authorities for private profits or the pumping more water than the amount stipulated in the rental agreement.

Human Resources Management | Political interference, favouritism and nepotism in recruitment can lead to overstuffed and under capacitated institutions. Staff without sufficient technical understanding and awareness on internal procedures create vulnerabilities for corruption by those who exploit their lack of knowledge. Biased recruitment processes may also deter qualified persons from applying for jobs, or make it difficult to retain them due to low job satisfaction, poor working environment and absence of incentives for good performance. Unethical behaviour of staff is another risk area. This can involve theft of money, goods or equipment from the workplace; cover up of underperformance by falsifying documents; using utility assets for private purposes; collusion between meter readers and customers to undercharge or ignore illegal connections; collusion with clients to submit false or inflated invoices. Absence of clear job descriptions, which serve as basis for the employees to be held accountable for their performance, is another clear risk area.



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Procurement and Tendering | While the rules for procurement and tendering procedures demand transparency, accountability and high professionalism in all stages of the contracting cycle, the actual process is often subject to integrity risks. These include: skewed bid specifications and standards which favour particular contractors and reduce competition; inaccurate esti-

mations of bills of quantities; conflict of interest and corruption in the tender evaluation and awarding process; external pressures to influence the contract award; weak supervision; substantial changes in contract conditions to allow more time or increase the contract value for the contractor; the use of false or duplicate invoicing for works executed or services offered.

Recommendations for improving national water governance

1. Assess optimal solutions to for citizen to access policy and regulation documents and materials.
2. Actively work to raise awareness of all stakeholders, especially the private sector and general public, of their rights to participate in the policy making process, planning, monitoring and evaluating water related projects.
3. For independent agencies to regulate, monitor and oversee water institutions in terms of integrity, transparency and accountability.
4. Take action to improve harmonization of legal frameworks that pertain to water management
5. Review and assess current division of roles and responsibilities between different agencies, identify accountability gaps or unclear mandates between authorities. Ensure clear descriptions for all agencies responsibilities and mechanisms for communication and coordination as needed.
6. Strengthen and improve linkages between the integrity institutions, water sector organizations and external auditing organizations institutions.
7. Staff are trained and capacity is built in good water governance and in accountability and transparency during policy making, planning, budget allocation and management, feasibility studies, recruitment, licensing, etc.
8. Assess regulation and oversight of procurement and contract management, and use of codes for conduct and/or integrity clauses in contracts within water sector organizations. Where absent or non-functioning, install mechanisms for improved oversight.
9. Develop and enforce incentive systems for staff performance in water sector, and enforce penalties for violators of laws and regulations.

Access the full report at www.watergovernance.org

The Regional Capacity Building Programme on Water Integrity

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