



Water integrity risks in Lebanon – Priorities for action

Lebanon's water resources are under stress due to increasing demand and pollution that results from a growing population, rapid urban and economic growth, as well as the impacts of a changing climate. Water integrity and good governance are needed to reduce risks to sustainable and equitable development in the country.

A national assessment in Lebanon 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 | Key integrity risks stem from a poor participatory processes in policy making; absence of legislation regulating distribution of water and of studies on water requirements for users; weak enforcement of existing laws regulating the water sector; out-dated laws and lack of operational decrees for the implementation of existing laws; and understaffed ministries. These are compounded by inequality in law enforcement against different persons; weak legal prosecution and lack of accountability mechanisms and interference by politicians in water projects.

Planning and Budgeting | A major risk area lies in the allocation of funds both between projects and between national and local governments. Additional risks include: political standoffs over the national budget; lack of scientific data/reliance on old data; low levels of participatory approach; a slow bureaucratic system which encourages people to resort to bribery to speed up the process; lack of transparency in obtaining and using funds; and lack of accountability.

Enforcement of Regulations | Integrity risks permeate the failure to enforce water pollution laws, well drilling permits and abstraction limitations in the country. Similar problems are found across each issue: lack of enforcement and implementa-

tion existing environmental and water laws; lack of inspections and control of water resources; and poor coordination between relevant ministries. This results in the use of illegal wells and over-abstraction of water resources.

Human Resources Management | Nepotism during recruitment or payments made in exchange for promotions and transfers are both common in the administrations of all ministries and undermine the efficient operations of the government. This also results in demotivated employees, inefficiency/low quality work and poor growth in human capital. These risks are exacerbated by low salaries and benefits especially compared to international organizations and private companies. Few qualified personnel applying to the public service vacancies as there are better paid jobs elsewhere. There is a lack of training, of specific job description and of financial resources for capacity development.

Procurement and Tendering | The main integrity risks include bribery to influence awarding of contracts. This is made possible by a lack of transparency in the bidding process. Bribery or kickbacks also conceal poor performance of contractors and substandard work. Standardised and tailored criteria specifically can be selected to favour a particular contractor. There are also a number of important integrity risks seen in the payment for services, particularly for illegal water connections. Employees in water management bodies are often bribed to connect customers without billing them or having them appear on the official network. Illegal connections are made both by citizens and water tankers in rural and urban areas alike.



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These risks are caused by selective enforcement of laws i.e. certain people being held to account and not others. There are no accountability mechanisms for citizens or public employees e.g. a penalty system in case of violations. Political connections

and protection and the power of the tribal systems in some rural areas do not allow the security forces to cut off the water. There is also a lack of knowledge among citizens of their rights and responsibilities.

Recommendations for improving national water governance

1. Facilitate increased stakeholder participation, through actions such as consultation-, town- and site-meetings.
2. Reduce the bureaucratic chain of processes in decision making.
3. Engage lower level staff members in decision-making and planning to promote sense of professional responsibility, and provide avenues for staff to advocate change where needed.
4. Develop a common language and communication within and between institutions and systems for information exchange.
5. Evaluate the capacity of current legal frameworks to limit corruption, promote reforms, resolutions or methods for improving compliance where needed.
6. Create mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the function and work of water sector organizations.
7. Delineate responsibilities of ministries and government bodies clearly to avoid any overlap of roles and responsibilities related to different areas of water management and service provision.

Access the full report at www.watergovernance.org

The Regional Capacity Building Programme on Water Integrity

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