



Water integrity risks in Palestine – Priorities for action

Access to safe and sufficient drinking water is a critical problem for many people in Palestine. Water shortage, high population growth, weak infrastructure and fragmentation of water institutions pose major challenges to the water sector. Improving integrity and effective governance is crucial to sustain human development in the country.

A national assessment in Palestine 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 | A majority of integrity risks result from the lack of communication between different actors especially the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA), Water Sector Regulatory Council (WSRC), Environment Quality Authority (EQA), Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and Ministry of Local Government (MoLG). This has resulted in weak allocation of responsibilities on water resources and inconsistency between actors in licensing procedures, due to favouritism, especially in the issuance of new licenses for agricultural wells in the main areas controlled by Palestinians.

Planning and Budgeting | Insufficient internal controls and lack of integrity within civil society organisations, farmers associations and line ministries have led to weak accountability. Furthermore, the lack of monitoring of the treated wastewater quality, coupled with lack of incentives to use treated wastewater, has created a feeling of resentment among water users.

Enforcement of Regulations | Law enforcement is weak, especially of the Water Law (2014). This law was passed by the president to resolve the conflicting functions of the PWA, regulation, planning and implementation. Risks are high because more time is needed for the effects to materialise. The following factors contribute to this: (1) the WSRC is not yet active, (2) the pro-

posed bulk utility might not materialise, and (3) the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLA) remains frozen. Other risks are the lack of clarity in taxes, issuance of permits and provided services. This is because the articles on water taxation system are unclear and creates a sense of dissatisfaction among different users.

Human Resources Management | One risk area concerns unclear requirements for capacity development. This results in duplication of efforts and wastage of time and money. Crucial aspects for training e.g. water integrity, are not on the agenda. At the operational level a lack of sufficient technical skills might also affect the overall performance of the water sector. A second risk area concerns unbalanced gender composition and career opportunities in the water sector. A third area of risk concerns the lack of rewards or incentives for employees working in governmental water institutions such as local government units, bulk utilities and water providers, as opposed to staff of NGOs.

Procurement and Tendering | One major area of integrity risk is the unclear tariff systems for domestic and agricultural water use. For domestic use there should be a fixed administrative ratio in the tariff system for the different administrative regions. The absence of comprehensive planning related to pricing, and water and wastewater management lead to lower levels of enforcement. This indirectly undermines the trust between the service providers and end users.



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Recommendations for improving national water governance

1. Encourage all relevant water sector organizations to develop integrity management action plans, as well as the capacity of their staff for proper plan implementation. The needs-assessment for capacity development should be done with staff participation and decided through interactive deliberations with leadership.
2. Increase support to capacity development for civil society organisations and media in water integrity.
3. Initiate mandatory training for relevant jurists and legislators on related integrity risks in the water/environmental sector.
4. Specify quotas for high-ranking female employees for the water sector.
5. Take measures to increase inclusion of women in the decision-making process and provide targeted programmes to develop professional capacity of female staff.
6. Establish incentive mechanisms to uphold professional integrity and provide recognition or reward for high performing staff.
7. Create voluntary, peer-support networks for employees to act on and establish integrity principles in a safe space.
8. Initiate active complaint systems with unified procedures for evaluation.
9. Maximise access and transparency of relevant financial documents and budgets to the public.
10. Ensure open-access datasets on water quality are updated regularly and as accurate as possible.
11. Enlist a task force of experts on water integrity to review the penalty and enforcement systems for corruption and environmental infractions and recommend actions to improve enforcement and compliance.
12. Conduct a comprehensive review of relevant water law articles to assess overlaps, deficiencies or irregularities that prevent their implementation and enforcement.
13. Initiate public awareness campaigns in conjunction with reforms, measures and actions to improve integrity in water management.
14. Develop harmonized and fair financial procedures for the pricing and tariff allocation for water purchased and extracted from different sources, and make information on this process and its results available to the public.
15. Increase support to develop household rainwater harvesting systems to meet the expected water crisis. This would enable accountable citizenship measures.
16. Increase frequency of stakeholder consultation workshops on water rights and integrity to a fortnightly basis.
17. Carry out comprehensive accountability assessments periodically.

Access the full report at www.watergovernance.org

The Regional Capacity Building Programme on Water Integrity

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