

Executive Summary of the water sector Corruption Risk Management Initiative

Introduction

The Water Sector Corruption Risk Management Initiative was carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with support from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), and the General Directorate of Governance and Corruption Prevention at the Presidency of Government. This initiative falls within the framework of similar initiatives, including various sectors within the Tunisian state (health, military health, and transportation). In this context, and pursuant to two decisions by the Minister of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries, a steering committee for the Initiative and a national task force have been created.

The Initiative's tasks were carried out by the task force, which received technical support from UNDP experts in keeping with the Program's methodology on "Sectoral Corruption Risk Management." The work covered the areas of groundwater extraction license, and the financial concessions granted to investment projects related to water economy.

I. Corruption risk assessment in the area of groundwater extraction license

The task force developed a map of the procedures and decision points related to this area. They then identified the types of possible deviations that might occur on the level of administrative decisions at each point and evaluated the likelihood of their occurrence and the resulting outcomes.

1. Setting the decision points:

The area was broken down into 49 decision points arranged according to the various stages in which the application for the license is processed, and during which potential deviations might lead to acts of corruption. The decision points are distributed among the administrative bodies responsible for them as follows:

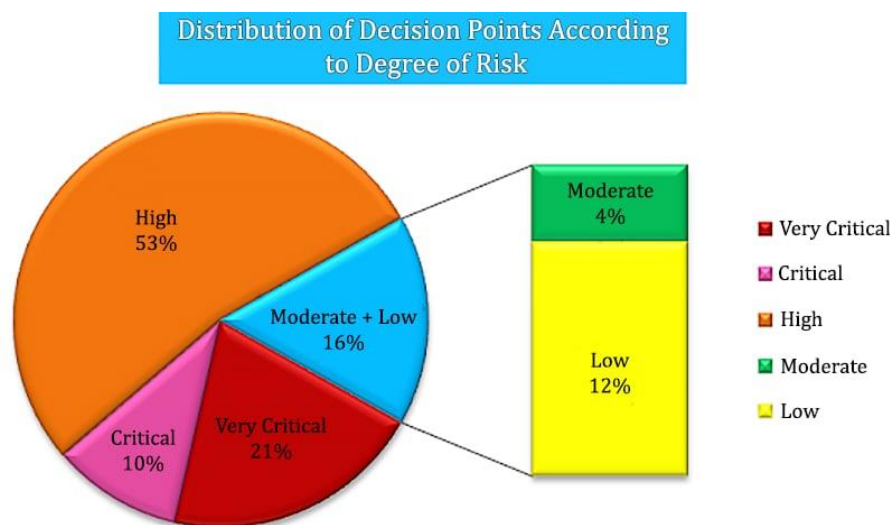
- At the central level: 26
- At the regional level: 23

2. Assessing corruption risks around decision points:

During this phase, potential corruption risks around each decision point were assessed by determining the likelihood that deviations would occur depending on the incentives and restrains produced by the internal and external environment, and determining their impact in various areas if they did occur. This process yielded the following results:

Assessing the level of risk	Very critical	Critical	High	Moderate	Low	Total
No. of decision points according to the level of risk	10	5	25	3	6	49

We note that the number of decision points fraught with a level of corruption risk from high to very critical comes to 84% of the total points, while the remaining 16% were evaluated as being low or moderate.



3. Assessing the likelihood of deviant decisions:

The likelihood of a deviation leading to corruption around each of the decision points was assessed by weighing the incentives that would increase the chances of its occurring against the restrains that would reduce them. According to this methodology, the assessment made it possible to identify various incentives for committing an act of corruption in this first area, the most important of which are:

- ◀ Financial difficulties and the absence of legal means of increasing income.

- ◀ Administrative obstacles, especially the large number of applications, the lack of human resources and the complexity of the related administrative procedures (lack of an online application, non-digitization of the administrative documents, lack of information about the components of the license file and the necessary procedures, lack of procedures guide and job descriptions).
- ◀ The weakness of the control and oversight system, which has led to the belief that one can commit corrupt acts without being held accountable.
- ◀ Taking refuge in influential social and trade union connections.

As for the constraints that would curb deviant administrative decisions, the most important of them are as follows:

- ◀ The existence of policies and procedures that sanction corrupt actions.
- ◀ Enforcing the law in the event that a corrupt act is shown to have been committed.
- ◀ The existence of a channel for reporting corruption and a mechanism for protecting whistleblowers.

4. Assessing the impact of a deviant decisions:

The occurrence of acts of corruption around the decision points that have been identified results in a number of negative effects in several areas, the most important of which are:

- ◀ Harm to the public service, which undermines the credibility of the administration and deepens the crisis of confidence.
- ◀ Damage to the reputation of public servants.
- ◀ Depletion of water resources and deteriorating water quality.
- ◀ Favouritism and inequality among applicants to the license.

II. Corruption risk assessment in the area of the financial concessions granted to investment projects related to water economy

Same as in the first area, the task force drew up a map of procedures and decision points in the field of financial concessions, identified the types of potential deviant administrative decisions associated with each of them, and assessed the likelihood of their occurring and the resulting impact.

1. Setting decision points:

This field was broken down into 71 decision points arranged according to the various stages through which an application for financial concessions may pass. These decision points are distributed among the administrative levels as follows:

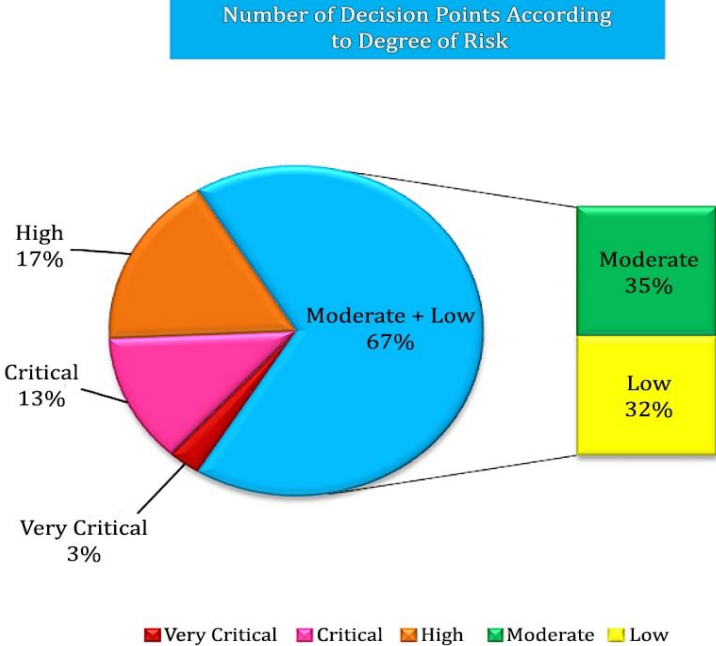
- At the central level: 04
- At the regional level: 67

2. Assessing corruption risks around decision points:

At this stage, the risks around the identified decision points were assessed by measuring likelihood and impact based on the same methodology applied in the first area. This process yielded the following results:

Assessing level of risk	Very critical	Critical	High	Moderate	Low	Total
No. decision points according to the level of risk	2	9	12	25	23	71

We note that the number of decision points fraught with a level of risk ranging from high to very critical represents 33% of the total, while the number of decision points fraught with a degree of risk ranging from low to moderate make up 67%.



3. Assessing the likelihood of deviant decisions:

There are potential drivers for deviations in administrative decisions in this area, the most important of which are:

- ◀ Political and trade union affiliations in addition to family or social relationships that constitute pressures to commit acts of corruption.
- ◀ Financial difficulties resulting especially from disruption of the career path and the desire to achieve additional financial returns.
- ◀ Administrative obstacles, especially the absence of an integrated digital application, the lack of interconnection among the existing applications, and pressures exerted by superiors.
- ◀ The unstable economic situation.

The constraints that may curb deviations in administrative decisions are most particularly:

- ◀ The existence of policies and procedures that punish corrupt acts.
- ◀ Enforcement of the law in the event that corrupt acts are proven to have been committed.
- ◀ The existence of a channel for reporting corruption and a mechanism for protecting whistleblowers.
- ◀ Concerns for one's reputation and personal integrity.
- ◀ The belief that corrupt acts are not feasible due the presence of internal control systems.

4. Assessing the impact of a deviant decisions:

Various effects of corruption have been identified in this area, the most important of which are:

- ◀ Harm to public service, which undermines the credibility of the administration and deepens the crisis of confidence.
- ◀ Damage to the reputation of public servants.
- ◀ Disruption of investment and additional financial burdens on investors.
- ◀ Waste of public funds by granting concessions to worthless investments.
- ◀ Discrimination and inequality among applicants.

III. Toward an executive plan to prevent corruption in the two selected areas

Based on the results of the assessment, the task force proposed a set of treatment mechanisms and corrective measures to reduce the risks of corruption in the two selected areas within the framework of an executive plan consisting of four pillars:

- ◀ Simplifying and standardizing procedures and establishing a national digital system.
- ◀ Addressing the phenomenon of the illegal wells.
- ◀ capacity building.
- ◀ Strengthening the role of governance and oversight systems.

Pillar 1 - Simplifying and standardizing procedures and establishing a national digital system:

This component includes a number of activities related primarily to a review of related legislative and regulatory texts. The aim being to simplify administrative procedures and prepare simplified procedures manuals, in addition to developing a digital system and linking it to other systems.

1. Simplifying administrative procedures

Reviewing number of related legislative and regulatory texts (decrees, decisions, and circulars) that have been identified with the aim of:

- ◀ Standardizing the procedures and documents required for decision-making and ensuring transparency in their approval.
- ◀ Shortening the time periods required to handle applications.
- ◀ Making information available to those requesting services in order to ensure transparency and openness.
- ◀ Ensuring fairness to the service recipients and clearly specifying the responsibility of the service providers.
- ◀ Regulating and facilitating the work of concerned committees (the technical committee charged with advising on the applications for groundwater extraction license, and the committee on assignment of financial concessions).

2. Developing standardized and comprehensive procedures manuals

- ◀ Drafting a simplified and standardized procedural guide and preparing Job description for each public servant involved in the process of assigning licenses for groundwater extraction, based on a previous consultation with the concerned stakeholders, and providing training in their use.
- ◀ Preparing an evaluation guide to assess the projects submitted by investors requesting financial concession.
- ◀ Developing a reference evaluation guide to be utilized in evaluating the projects in coordination with the regional departments of the Agricultural Investments Promotion Agency, specifying the approved technical criteria, and preparing a detailed list of the required documents.

3. Developing a digital system

This activity includes establishing a centralized digital system to be adopted for assisting in decision-making and enabling those requesting services to follow up on their requests and applications. They may also carry out an experimental simulation to obtain a result by entering their data on the digital platform. This solution will allow to enhance the administrative processing of the applications, and it is expected to speed up processing times by nearly 40 percent. It will also provide an interactive environment and promote transparency and equal opportunities among those dealing with the administration in the two selected areas.

Pilar 2: Addressing the phenomenon of the illegal wells to reduce the depletion of water resources

A number of corrective measures were proposed to combat the phenomenon of illegal wells. These measures were then classified into three main intervention axes: addressing the status of existing illegal wells, minimizing the chances to have new ones, and communication and awareness raising activities.

1. Addressing the situation of existing illegal wells:

In this context, it has been proposed that a number of workshops be organized at the regional level to discuss this phenomenon, to present the outputs of related

plans and to identify possible technical solutions while taking all aspects, especially social ones, into account. Based on the workshops' outcomes, a draft national charter between the relevant stakeholders will be developed, followed by a draft legal text setting the retained options and their implementation mechanisms.

2. [Limiting the digging of new illegal wells:](#)

It was proposed to amend related legal texts, in addition to a number of activities aiming to enhance oversight mechanisms benefitting from the outputs of the above-mentioned digital solution. Besides, the task force suggested providing support to establish civil society structures to help limiting the phenomenon (such as councils for the disposal of groundwater tables).

3. [Strengthening the communication and raising awareness:](#)

It was proposed that awareness-raising activities be organized with farmers and drilling contractors on the importance of water resources and the duty to preserve them, and to remind them of the need to report all violations. In addition, meetings with farmers and civil society are to be set to regularize the situation of existing illegal wells.

[Pillar 3: Training and capacity building](#)

The proposed activities within this pillar are related to building the capacities of the civil servants handling related tasks and improving their performance through programs designed to enhance their technical and operational capabilities, in addition to their communication skills.

[Pillar 4: Strengthening the role of governance and oversight systems](#)

The related suggested activities will allow to support all the activities proposed in the previous pillars, including:

- ◀ Building the capacities of the governance units at the central and regional levels and within public institutions with regard to proposing, following up and coordinating corruption prevention policies utilizing specialized and innovative methodologies.
- ◀ Supporting the relevant inspection and oversight bodies at the central and regional levels and within public institutions in developing audit programs,

following up on them and evaluating their results, in addition to utilizing technology and international standards in conducting oversight tasks.

- ◀ Increasing the effectiveness of access to information system by strengthening the capacities of the unit in charge of this aspect within the Ministry and supporting coordination mechanisms with similar units at the regional level and in public institutions.
- ◀ Supporting coordination, cooperation and consultation between all the aforementioned bodies, and between them and the relevant stakeholders in the administration, the private sector and civil society.
- ◀ Conducting trainings for the employees of the aforementioned bodies on the methodology of “Sectoral Corruption Risk Management”, including monitoring, supporting and following up on the implementation of plans to reduce the associated risks.