

**Arab Partnership Programme Fund (APPF) and
Arab Partnership Economic Facility – Country Impact Fund (CIF)**

Short Subject Matter Guidance Note

Supporting the Fight Against Corruption

The Challenge of Corruption in Public Life

Corruption is often defined as *‘the misuse of public or corporate trust for private gain’*. What this tends to mean in practice is the draining of public funds to support the goals, lifestyles and aims of the few and their families and cronies, at the expense of the wider public.

Significant levels of corruption over time have a number of serious affects on citizens, especially poor citizens, and the political process.

In the first instance money lost to corruption is a drain on state resources and means that the poor, above all, lose out on the provision of public goods such as health and education services and infrastructure. A further significant impact is that corruption tends, over time, to undermine the legitimacy of the state as the majority of citizens realise their taxes and state assets are only at the service of the few. This can lead to social unrest. In the MENA region the abuse of state power through the narrow channelling of resources was and is a key driver for the political upheavals of the Arab Spring.

The Causes of Corruption are Complex

Given the pervasive nature and complexity of corruption we must recognise that addressing it is complex; there are no magic bullets. The most commonly identified proximate causes can be summarised as follows:

- Lack of transparency and access to information. This, for example, includes issues around state budgets, state procurement and state owned enterprises. The military budget and / or natural resource revenue can be of particular concern.
- Insufficient internal accountability mechanisms including weak political opposition, the extensive powers of the executive, weak judiciary and weak civil society movements.
- Weak and / or restricted press and media that have very weak incentives to undertake the kind of investigative journalism that can help put the break on corruption.

What Programmes Will Help in the Fight Against Corruption?

One important lesson that we have learnt is that unless a government is serious about tackling the challenges of corruption there is only a limited amount of success that civil society, the press, civil servants and the judiciary will have rooting out the problem.

Some of the following actions may be helpful:

- Raising the issue of corruption at the highest political levels. Supporting reformers in government and civil society to establish wide and publicly visible programmes to improve ethics in public life and promote political and financial transparency.
- Promoting initiatives that entrench public accountability such as, where there is significant natural resource wealth, supporting the country to join up with and participate in the EITI initiative.
- Supporting the public service to reform the budget processes toward greater transparency, at both the national and at the regional or governorate levels; reforming public procurement towards using professional and transparent mechanisms. And promoting greater transparency and professionalism at the national revenue service etc..
- Support the judiciary to strengthen and use robust legal systems to identify and track down offenders. Many countries have such laws, but they may be weakly upheld.
- Influencing the IFIs, and the EU etc to ensure that anti corruption measures are mainstreamed in their programmes and promoting high ethical standards amongst the private sector

Where to go for Good Practice and More Information

There are many open and free web resources that can help both raise understanding about fighting corruption generally and help explain what are the specific issues that are prevalent in a particular country.

The ***U4 Anti Corruption Resource Centre*** (www.U4.no) has a wealth of information about corruption issues and also runs an “expert answer” service. We have recently asked about corruption in the MENA region (specifically Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia and Libya) and the answer can be found on the above sight under the title: “Corruption Trends in the Middle East and North Africa Region 2007 – 2011”.

Other sources of information include;

Transparency International:

http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/qcb/2010

The World Bank: http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/sc_country.asp

Freedom House: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=15>