# TECH FOR GOOD: HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY TO LOCALLY DRIVE THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

## A CASE STUDY FROM LEBANON: THE INTER-MINISTERIAL AND MUNICIPAL PLATFORM FOR ASSESSMENT, COORDINATION AND TRACKING (IMPACT)

**Carole Alsharabati**
Research Director at Siren Associates and a Professor of Political Science at
Saint Joseph University

**Sarah Zahreddine**
Researcher at Siren Associates

## Introduction: The plague of corruption

"Corruption is an insidious plague that has a wide range of corrosive effects on societies. It undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets [and] erodes the quality of life […]" (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2004). The impacts of corruption, raised by the former United Nations (UN) Secretary General Kofi Annan in his foreword to the UN Convention Against Corruption, adopted in 2004, are today widely recognised.

Defined by Transparency International as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain" (Transparency International, n.d.), combatting corruption today is a key component of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development launched in 2015, namely under the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 related to peace, justice and strong institutions (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.). Anti-corruption is intertwined with peaceful, just and inclusive societies. The role of civil society in anti-corruption is indeed further recognised in the abovementioned UN Convention that sets forth, in article 13, the "active participation of individuals and groups outside the public sector" (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2004).

In the digital era, technology has the potential to drive the fight against corruption, as Information and Communications Technology (ICT) tools can be leveraged in preventing, detecting and addressing corruption. Additionally, ICT tools have proved to be effective in anti-corruption reform by reducing unnecessary human intervention, eliminating government officials' discretion, providing access to information, and accelerating decision-making processes (Mistry & Jalal, 2012). However, for ICT tools to be effective and sustainable, their design, development and set up must be context-specific and need-driven (Adam & Fazekas, 2018).

This policy brief examines the role of technology in the fight against corruption, with a case study from Lebanon, a country long plagued by corruption. It particularly draws on the recent e-governance initiative – Inter-Ministerial and Municipal Platform for Assessment, Coordination and Tracking (IMPACT) – developed in 2020 in Lebanon to pioneer digital transformation, which has demonstrated a holistic approach to anti-corruption reform combining technology, institutional strengthening and civil society empowerment, as opposed to the prevailing anti-corruption efforts in the past that have primarily focused on legislation and strategy setting. The policy brief provides an explanatory case study to examine the underlying reasons for the success of a digital transformation initiative in low-resources settings, with the objective of capturing lessons learned and deriving policy recommendations that could be scaled to similar contexts. It should be noted that the authors of this policy brief, who were involved in the initiative subject of the case study, have employed evidence-based research methods to mitigate any potential conflict of interest between research and practice, ensuring objectivity in the brief.

The brief suggests that, in low-resource settings, technology and digital tools can be a game changer. Driven by a participatory and collective effort that brings together reformists across civil society, the private sector and public sector, technology can effectively and sustainably bring about change in terms of anti-corruption reform and good governance, despite strong resistance by the conservative establishment.

## Setting the scene in Lebanon: systemic corruption, entrenched state capture

Corruption in the public sector in Lebanon is of a systemic nature, thus hindering public service provision, eroding public trust in the state, and jeopardising the social contract. From the lens of the collective action theory (Marquette & Peiffer, 2015), corruption in Lebanon is so widespread that it has become a collective problem: it is the social norm, the rule of the game. Despite the ratification of the UN Convention Against Corruption in 2009, Lebanon ranks 150th out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index reported by Transparency International, with a score of 24 points[1] (Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index), which demonstrates a high perception of public sector corruption. Unsurprisingly, public trust in the state is drastically low. In a nationwide study conducted in 2021 as part of Siren Associates' Youth4Governance programme, three quarters of respondents stated that dealing with public administration is either hard or impossible, and almost one in three respondents reported having faced a negative incident with public administration, mainly due to negligence or corruption (Siren Youth4Governance, 2021, pp. 9-12).

Corruption in Lebanon is rooted in the prevailing political and institutional environment governed by a sectarian power-sharing system that was consolidated in the Taïf Agreement that ended the 15-year civil war in 1990. This arrangement whereby political and institutional posts are systematically distributed along confessional lines offers a conducive environment for corruption (Bahout, 2016, pp. 7-8). For instance, not only are the three highest posts in the country (i.e., the President of the Republic, the President of the Council of Ministers, and the Speaker of the Parliament) allocated on

---

[1] The Corruption Perceptions Index ranks 180 countries and territories around the world by their perceived levels of public sector corruption. The results are given on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) (Transparency International, n.d.).

a sectarian basis, seats in the Parliament and the Council of Ministers are also divided among the sects, in addition to the civil service positions in the public administration. This sectarian distribution of power and resources favours the creation of networks of clientelism serving the various sectarian groups (Merhej, 2021, p. 6) through nepotism, cronyism and patronage, which significantly increases the risk of corruption and mismanagement.

The power-sharing system gradually turned into a state capture system (World Bank, 2021, p. 24). The ruling sectarian elite transformed state institutions into strongholds that served their political interests, instruments that ensured their self-enrichment, and sustained their power through distributing spoils, embezzling public funds and resources, living off economic rents, obtaining foreign subsidies, and funding the growing public debt. This entailed a widespread dysfunctionality of the public sector, and systemic failures in the provision of public services, thus creating a vicious cycle of state failure.

This vicious cycle stems from a culture of impunity. In the aftermath of the civil war, a general amnesty law, often criticised as "amnesia law" by civil society, was adopted on 26 August 1991, to retrospectively exempt all crimes committed before 28 March 1991 – with only a few exceptions – from legal liability. The almost all-inclusive amnesty was a denial of justice, with the narrative of "no victor, no vanquished" prevailing (Saadeh, 2021). It neutralised any risk of legal proceedings against warlords who, once cleared, rapidly turned into politicians, parliamentarians and government officials holding the reins of power. The obstructions of the recent investigations into the Beirut Port blast are further clear proof of this impunity (Merhej, 2022).

Decades of endemic corruption, entrenched state capture and persistent impunity were exposed and exacerbated by the ongoing compounding crises that Lebanon is facing. People took to the streets on 17 October 2019 to call for the "fall of the regime" and demand accountability as well as civil, economic and social rights, in unprecedented nationwide protests, triggered by the WhatsApp tax imposed by the government (Lebanon's October 2019 protests weren't just about the 'WhatsApp tax', 2021). The collapse of the public sector accelerated dramatically with the failure of the banking sector and the financial and economic crisis that is ranked by the World Bank as one of the three severest economic collapses in the world since the 1850s (World Bank, 2021, p. xi). The Beirut Port blast on 4 August 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic delivered the final death blow to the social contract between the state and Lebanese society.

In the aftermath of the 2019 uprising, several measures were taken in an attempt to address the large-scale anti-corruption demands, most of which, however, remain elusive and cosmetic (Merhej, 2021). The National Anti-Corruption Strategy was adopted in 2020, alongside a law for combatting corruption in the public sector (law 175/2020). More recently, the National Anti-Corruption Commission that was envisaged by the former law was effectively established in 2022. However, it is unlikely that these measures will achieve their expected outcomes[2] (Assaf, 2022).

## Leveraging technology: a catalyst of anti-corruption reform

ICT can serve as a catalyst for anti-corruption reform. It has the potential to improve provision of public services by streamlining bureaucratic processes, eliminating unnecessary delays (Neupane, Soar, Vaidya, & Aryal, 2014), and limiting government officials' discretion through assigned roles in automated workflows and processes (Adam & Fazekas, 2018). As such, some studies suggest that the anti-corruption impact of technology is higher against petty corruption than grand corruption (Adam & Fazekas, 2021), with the former referring to corruption committed by low-rank civil servants, and the latter to that committed by high-rank public officials

[2] The two-year delay between the creation of the Anti-Corruption Commission and its actual establishment indicates by itself the lack of a conducive environment for implementation. Additionally, the commission's role is only limited to investigations, with no authority to make judgments and no disciplinary prerogatives (Assaf, 2022).

(Transparency International, Corruptionary). Technology's role in the fight against corruption can be significantly diminished in the case of grand corruption, where public officials control or co-opt key government institutions, and in particular law enforcement agencies (Onyema, Obidairo, Roy, Ayinla, & Oredola, 2019).

Technology can curb corruption by introducing two types of transparency that operate "downward" and "upward". On the one hand, ICT tools promote access to information by making data related to government activities and public services publicly available and easily accessible, which ensures that citizens are well informed to constructively engage with the public sector. On the other hand, they provide feedback, reporting and whistleblowing mechanisms through which citizens can channel their concerns and complaints and report cases to relevant decision-makers (Adam & Fazekas, 2018).

As such, by promoting both downward and upward transparency, technology empowers civil society to participate in the fight against corruption. ICT tools increase public scrutiny, as they apprise citizens on matters of public interest, but also inform anti-corruption mobilisation and advocacy efforts, thereby improving citizen participation in the public sphere, and promoting a constructive state-society relationship (Wickberg, 2013).

In Lebanon, although attempts were made to introduce digital transformation in the public sector, they remain slow and limited in terms of scope and effectiveness, with Lebanon ranking 127 out of 193 countries in the E-Government Development Index (United Nations, 2020). The Digital Transformation Strategy developed by the Office of Minister of State for Administrative Reform (OMSAR) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was adopted in 2022, after four years of being planned under three consecutive ministers. It pledges to "revive the public sector by leveraging technology as a catalyst to achieve governance, reform the public administration and curb corruption" (OMSAR, 2020, p. iii). This falls short of effective results in practice. Several strategies related to digital transformation have been conceived since 2018 by various government bodies, with little to no coordination (Chemali, 2021).

Additionally, complex bureaucracy and obsolete processes, coupled with poor access to information and transparency and a general culture of opacity in the public sector, further hinder the effective delivery of public services. The implementation of the Access to Information law (law 28/2017) remains poor and the culture of transparency has yet to be embedded as implied by the limited access to information requests by citizens and the occasional responses by public bodies.

## Opening a path out of corruption: tech-powered e-governance platform

### Inter-ministerial and municipal platform for assessment, coordination and tracking: objectives

Launched in March 2020, the Inter-Ministerial and Municipal Platform for Assessment, Coordination and Tracking (IMPACT) is the first e-governance platform in Lebanon. It connects public administrations and institutions, local authorities, civil society organizations (CSOs) and citizens. It brings together all stakeholders in comprehensive workflows, facilitates coordination among them, and allows multi-directional communication and information-sharing. It enables the collection of cross-sectoral data to inform data-driven decision-making in a country where decisions are often arbitrary. It also provides oversight agencies, media, and civil society access to information, enabling them to monitor public sector performance and provide instant feedback. It further provides key health and social services which became critical for citizens to overcome the unprecedented Lebanese crisis.

As the first e-governance platform, IMPACT is spearheaded and monitored by the Central Inspection (CI), one of the country's key oversight agencies established in 1959 under President Fouad Chehab's mandate and assigned with the missions of compliance and performance audit in the public sector (Central Inspection, n.d.). IMPACT was designed to enable the CI to monitor and track public sector activities and performance, enhancing the effectiveness of its oversight functions, and promoting accountability. It facilitated access to information for inspectors, allowing them to conduct more efficient risk analysis and inspection planning, thus moving towards a performance audit, beyond a mere compliance audit.

**Table 1.** Lebanon's Central Inspection: a catalyst of public reform

The Central Inspection was established in 1959 as part of the administrative reform launched by President Fouad Chehab, with the objective of strengthening the control mechanisms throughout the public administration to ensure efficiency and performance. As a leading oversight agency in Lebanon, the CI has a major role to play in establishing good governance in the country.

Under the overarching slogan "Oversight, Guidance and Development", the CI is entrusted with the following three key missions:

- Conducting inspections across the public administration and imposing disciplinary measures if needed (which correspond to compliance audit).
- Advising public sector institutions on the improvement of their structures and processes (which corresponds to performance audit).
- Coordinating joint actions between relevant public administrations.

The CI is an independent entity established directly under, and reporting to, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. It has an extensive jurisdiction that covers public service in Lebanon, excluding a number of independent institutions.

The CI is composed of five general inspectorates that specialise in various aspects of public service, covering the administrative, financial, engineering-related, educational, social, agricultural, and health-related dimensions. This is supported by the Information Technology (IT) unit added in 1996 to the CI's organisational structure, with the mission of implementing an integrated digital system to support the inspectorates, coordinating information-sharing across public bodies, and conducting statistical missions (Central Inspection, n.d.).

IMPACT further enabled, for the first time in the history of the oversight system in Lebanon, real-time oversight, allowing quick correction of fraudulent behaviour. For instance, following the launch of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign on IMPACT, and although the national vaccination strategy adopted by the Ministry of Public Health stipulated that beneficiaries will be selected based on priority groups and from those registered online, more than 12,000 individuals who do not meet the prioritisation criteria were vaccinated in the first two weeks. In parallel, a number of Members of Parliament and politicians received a preferential treatment, which was perceived as scandalous given that the digitisation of the campaign was presented as an effective way out of the clientelism trap. Those violations were reported, in due time, by the CI performing a real-time audit on IMPACT. Recommendations were put forward to the Ministry of Public Health to resolve this on the platform and publicly share the inventory data. The World Bank also threatened to suspend financing of the vaccination campaign. In response, the Ministry adjusted the campaign roll-out accordingly (Rozelier, 2021), thus preventing future fraud. This was crucial in a country where opacity and impunity have become the rule and where the judiciary is almost paralysed. Additionally, the platform

developers took a "governance by design" approach, building systems and processes that minimise or prevent fraud.

As ICT tools can potentially be misused to enable – rather than combat – corruption (Adam & Fazekas, 2018), the CI had the role of monitoring the digitisation initiatives to ensure that they were serving the public good and not diverted to serve political or arbitrary interests. On top of the CI's oversight, citizens, CSOs and the media had the opportunity to engage constructively with public entities and monitor their performance through IMPACT's open data website. This paved the way for enhanced democratic participation and stronger coordination for reform, but also increased public trust in state institutions.

## Inter-ministerial and municipal platform for assessment, coordination and tracking: results

In less than two years, the platform successfully connected up to 20 ministries, more than 100 public administrations and institutions, and more than 2,500 local authorities across Lebanon (municipalities and mayors), in addition to more than 50 CSOs, as well as most citizens (IMPACT, 2021). IMPACT validated technology's role as a key enabler for fair distribution of services and anti-corruption reform. For instance, to support the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine, IMPACT digitised the vaccine management system from registration, selection, appointment booking to vaccination, tracking of side effects, and e-certification. IMPACT also digitised the social protection delivery chain from application for aid and data validation to selection and payment administration as part of the social safety net programme launched in 2022 under World Bank funding in support of vulnerable households in crisis-hit Lebanon. (Tayara, 2022)

As a result of the digital innovation on IMPACT, more than 2.6 million individuals in Lebanon were vaccinated, representing around 55% of the target population (Central Inspection, 2022). The vaccine e-certificate issued on IMPACT was recognised in the European Union (EU)'s Digital COVID Certificate system in December 2021 (European Union, 2021), with Lebanon being the first Arab country to acquire this equivalence. Around 6,330 lives are estimated to have been saved as a result of the lockdown and vaccination measures, both digitised on IMPACT (Siren Analytics AI Unit, 2022). The role of IMPACT in promoting transparency and public trust in the vaccine roll-out was recognised by the World Bank, which noted that its success "created an opportunity to foster a national culture of digitalization, transparency, data sharing, and evidence-based policymaking, beyond the COVID-19 response" (Varkey, Abdallah, Haneen, Mahmassani, & Gomez-Suarez, 2022).

Indeed, IMPACT was leveraged to initiate the creation of an integrated National Social Registry. In response to the World Bank-funded cash assistance programme, around 583,000 households applied for aid online, and more than 81,000 eligible households in extreme poverty received monthly cash assistance in a fair and transparent way, with no arbitrary, clientelist or corrupt interferences (IMPACT, 2023). As per the World Bank's assessment, this was digitally implemented in line with the "highest standards of transparency and efficiency", all while ensuring "continuous and timely communication" to the public (World Bank, 2022).

Additionally, more than 100 public administrations and institutions across Lebanon were digitally assessed and audited on IMPACT (IMPACT, 2023). IMPACT introduced ICT tools in public administrations and municipalities, and supported civil servants across in using and integrating them in their daily tasks to improve and streamline processes for institutional coordination and data-sharing. It also set a precedent in the Lebanese public sector in terms of transparency and access to information by making non-confidential data available on a dedicated website.

# Sustaining reform: combatting corruption and entrenched state capture

IMPACT gained support across the board from international decision-makers who recognised it as a pioneer for e-governance, transparency and accountability in Lebanon. Some donors even conditioned their aid to Lebanon on IMPACT, such as the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) project funded by the World Bank with a first budget of 246 million dollars to be disbursed to vulnerable households. Nevertheless, effective and sustainable reform shall be internally-driven, for external actors can only claim to support anti-corruption efforts but cannot drive it (Ronceray & Sergejeff, 2020).

Internally, IMPACT was at first endorsed in ministerial decisions and government plans in recognition of its role in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, technology challenged and threatened the ruling elite capturing the state by questioning their raison d'être – namely the networks of clientelism and corruption. IMPACT therefore gradually started to be contested by Deep State actors, aiming to defend their stronghold and preserve their power. This successively occurred on the security, administrative and legal fronts, with the backup of the media disseminating disinformation.

Pressure started to rise on the security front first through accusations of data leaks, putting the credibility of the platform at stake. The country's main security agencies were activated, with the creation of four commissions composed of high-ranking officers and ministers. However, as revealed by investigation reports produced by those same security agencies, audit assessments produced by cybersecurity experts, and World Bank reviews, no data breaches occurred. IMPACT showed the highest standards of data security through a full cybersecurity strategy in compliance with ISO 27001 (Information Security Management System) guidelines.

Pressure on the legal front came next through an appeal addressed to the State Council in order to challenge the CI's right to develop its own digital platform. The State Council issued a report referring to the 1959 decree that did not, when establishing the institution, envision any technology-related activities. Such an argument does not apply since the IT sector itself did not exist at that time. The CI was also accused, in the same report, of playing an "executive" role on the IMPACT platform, as opposed to its "oversight" mission. This is not valid either, because its role on IMPACT revolved around auditing public administrations and monitoring processes on the platform to ensure compliance with laws and regulations, whereas the execution was conducted by relevant ministries.

Beyond that, the CI was challenged, on the administrative front, by the President of the Council of Ministers, who prohibited it from communicating directly with any public administration without the Presidency of Council's explicit approval. As such, the oversight agency found itself denied access to public information, while any citizen has the right, according to the Access to Information law, to request any document from any public administration, and get it within 14 days. This decision does not conform to the Access of Information and governing laws, nor is it aligned with the CI's mandate.

As these attempts failed, the Deep State escalated and activated the Court of Accounts on the ground of corruption and embezzlement of funds, an accusation which will be heavily refuted by the CI and most stakeholders working on various IMPACT projects. The IMPACT team was awarded in October 2022, by presidential decree on recommendation from the Minister of Public Health, the Lebanese Order of Merit (Second Grade) in recognition of its contribution to the COVID-19 pandemic response. The World Bank issued several aide-memoires praising the integrity, efficiency and security of the services provided on IMPACT.

Along these Deep State self-destructive episodes, media capture was unveiled. Many journalists were directed by their political patrons to issue false accusations of treason, abuse of power, or corruption. The articles and reports referred to supposedly leaked evidence which was fabricated from within. Name calling, exaggeration, logical fallacies, and divisive clichés like "western spies" and "embassy

agents" were used to disinform public opinion and intimidate the implementation teams. Serious journalists also started to delve into the case and produce reports that attempt to unveil the true games. The duel in the political arena between the game changers and the obstructors was quickly mirrored in the media.

As illustrated in the stakeholders' matrix, in a country plagued by systemic corruption, opening a path towards technology-powered reform through IMPACT interfaces with a wide range of stakeholders with varying interests and powers. Those who have most influence are those who will tend to fight against IMPACT's e-governance mission. This is why a solid theory of change is needed to succeed.

**Table 2.** Stakeholders' matrix

| | Deep State | Political parties | Civil servants | Civil society organizations | Experts and consultants |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Level of acceptance of IMPACT** | Low | Medium | Medium | Medium to high | Medium to high |
| **Motives** | Maintain the status quo, bypass systems and processes | Increase access to power and influence decision | i- Enhance administration productivity (reformism), or ii- Acquire personal gain (petty corruption) | Introduce accountability mechanisms | Develop anti-corruption strategies and policies |
| **Capacity to influence IMPACT** | High | Medium to high | Medium | Low to medium | Low |
| **Tools** | Big influence as Deep State actors have the legitimacy and mandate in addition to clientelism and patronage networks | Can influence the political agenda through broad outreach capability and electoral support | Must abide by institutional hierarchy while having control over operations, processes and bureaucracy | Rely on advocacy through communication and lobbying | Resort to science and technology |

## Outcomes and lessons learned

Despite the numerous retaliations by Deep State[3] agencies, IMPACT contributed to initiating a virtuous cycle, not only within the public administration but also within civil society, to increase public trust and encourage coalitions among champions of change, across both civil society and public entities. Several lessons can be derived from this initiative to inform sustainable and effective technology-powered anti-corruption reform.

---

[3] The concept of "Deep State" refers to a "system composed of high-level elements within the intelligence services, military, security, judiciary and organized crime" (Lofgren, M. [2016]. The Deep State: The Fall of the Constitution and the Rise of a Shadow Government. p. 5) that operates outside the realm of the official State. Often referred to as "a State within the State", it is as a shadow government with significant influence over policy and decision-making processes behind the scenes.

The design, development and set up of ICT tools must be context-specific and need-driven in order to ensure effective and sustainable solutions (Adam & Fazekas, 2018). The story of IMPACT is a customised response to the systemic nature of corruption in Lebanon, characterised by the power-sharing system and subsequent institutionalisation of clientelism and patronage.

Given the prevailing political system in Lebanon, civil society, in collaboration with experts leveraging the power of technology, played a major role in the fight against corruption. However, such a large-scale reform movement could not succeed alone even when extensively activated in the streets, as already proven by the shortcomings of the October 2019 uprising. The IMPACT experience brought several actors together, coordinating champions of change from within the administration with civil society actors. State entities and in particular oversight agencies played a key role echoing and operationalising the demands of activists and models developed by experts to effectively contribute to the fight against corruption.

Additionally, robust oversight and accountability mechanisms are crucial to instil good governance and combat corruption. IMPACT, and by extension the change it initiated, was under the umbrella of the CI to leverage the oversight prerogatives and to augment them with real-time audit capabilities. This corroborates that "without strong watchdog institutions, impunity becomes the very foundation upon which systems of corruption are built. And if impunity is not demolished, all efforts to bring an end to corruption are in vain" (Menchú, n.d.).

The collaboration between the various components of the society is therefore particularly important. IMPACT is also the fruit of an unprecedented collaboration between the public and private sectors. Developed in partnership between the CI – Lebanon's key oversight agency – and Siren Associates – a consultancy firm specialised in public sector reform –, it brought together a multidisciplinary team of civil servants, researchers, data scientists and software developers.

A participatory collective approach is a key factor of success. As reflected in the story of IMPACT, from inception to conception, "any development work cannot yield all its fruits if every citizen does not make a positive effort to contribute to it," as appropriately stated by former President of the Republic Fouad Chehab, who spearheaded administrative reform[4] during his mandate between 1958 and 1964.
Building on those lessons learned, the following policy recommendations can be set forward to drive digital transformation in Lebanon and other similar contexts, as a crucial cornerstone of the fight against corruption.

- **Build anti-corruption coalitions between the public sector and civil society:** The fight against corruption has to be a collective action, involving, alongside civil society and consultants, public administration and civil servants who are in favour of reform. Civil society cannot fight corruption alone; it needs the support of reformist civil servants within the state who have a thorough understanding of the public sector. Those civil servants will support the constructive roll-out of digital tools and echo the theory of change from within. Champions of change in the administration, oversight agencies, and civil society need to join forces. Civil servants and oversight institutions have the mandate and expertise, while civil society has the independence and mobilisation capability. Such a collective effort has the potential to boost the fight against corruption, overcome state capture by the ruling elite, and circumvent the retaliation measures taken by Deep State agencies (representing the elite).

- **Build anti-corruption coalitions between the public sector and the private sector:** A successful public sector digitisation needs a public-private coalition and joint efforts. The transfer of technology from the private sector to the public sector is instrumental in this area where innovation is key.

- **Leverage technology as an enabler of anti-corruption reform:** In countries in transition, digitisation of state processes and services, when conceived with an e-governance vision, can be a game changer to fight corruption. But this vision needs to be integrated in the system "by design", by building systems and processes that inherently prevent fraud, misuse and corruption attempts.

[4] Administrative reforms launched by Fouad Chehab were rapidly overturned following the end of his mandate.

- **Support oversight agencies:** Considering the crucial role that oversight agencies have the potential to play, in the absence of and despite political interferences and co-optation attempts, it is imperative to support them in terms of institutional strengthening and capacity-building.

- **Integrate real-time oversight and accountability mechanisms:** "Integrity by design" needs to be coupled with "real-time audit" on digital systems, which are key to prevent fraudulent and corrupt behaviour, promptly address it if it occurs, and initiate change of behaviour relatively fast towards instilling integrity and performance.

- **Leverage the transformative power of data and promote data-driven decision-making:** A data-driven approach to decision-making is crucial to ensure that decisions and policies are tailored to respond to identified needs, monitored to track impact and evaluated to inform future strategies. This is important to accompany digitisation and prevent, anticipate and counter corruption.

- **Prioritise transparency and engage the media in the coalition efforts:** Monitor the media, look for the serious media, and get them on board to support the reform and counter rumours and misinformation.

- **Be realistic and prepare for a response:** When e-governance is undertaken, the Deep State will strike back and keep resisting till the last drop, which necessitates an adequate strategy to protect digital tools and e-governance initiatives.

- **Think local:** External actors, including donors, development agencies and foreign policy instruments, cannot sustainably or effectively impose anti-corruption reforms. They rather must invest in supporting locally-driven efforts and coalitions working towards a customised theory of change.

# References

ADAM, I., & FAZEKAS, M. (2018). *Are Emerging Technologies Helping Win the Fight Against Corruption in Developing Countries?* Oxford, United Kingdom: Pathways for Prosperity Commission. Retrieved from https://pathwayscommission.bsg.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-02/ict-corruption-24feb19_final.pdf

ADAM, I., & FAZEKAS, M. (2021). Are Emerging Technologies Helping Win the Fight Against Corruption? A Review of the State of Evidence. *Elsevier Information Economics and Policy.* Retrieved from: https://pathwayscommission.bsg.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-09/are_emerging_technologies_helping_win_the_fight_against_corruption_in_developing_countries.pdf

ASSAF, C. (2022, February 2). *Activists 'cautiously optimistic' after formation of anti-corruption commission.* L'Orient Today. Retrieved from: https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1289567/activists-cautiously-optimistic-after-formation-of-anti-corruption-commission.html

BAHOUT, J. (2016). *The Unraveling of Lebanon's Taif Agreement: Limits of Sect-Based Power Sharing.* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved from: https://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_271_Bahout_Taif_Final.pdf

CENTRAL INSPECTION. (2022). تقرير سنوي عن حملة اللقاح في لبنان Yearly Report on the Vaccination Campaign in Lebanon]. Beirut: Central Inspection. Retrieved from: https://www.cib.gov.lb/sites/default/files/ %D8%AA%D9%82%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1%20%D8%B3%D9%86%D9%88%D9%8A% 20%D8%B9%D9%86%20%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B1%20%D8%AD%D9%85%D9%84%D8%A9 %20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%AD%20%D9%81%D9%8A%20 %D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%8

CENTRAL INSPECTION. (n.d.). *Role of the Central Inspection.* Central Inspection. Retrieved from: https://www.cib.gov.lb/en/دور-التفتيش-المركزي

CHEMALI, J. (2021, March 3). Lebanon's Digital Transformation Exposes Fundamental Administrative Shortcomings. *The Legal Agenda.* Retrieved from: https://english.legal-agenda.com/lebanons-digital-transformation-exposes-fundamental-administrative-shortcomings/

EUROPEAN UNION. (2021, December 10). *EU Digital COVID Certificate: European Commission adopts equivalence decision for Lebanon.* Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon. Retrieved from: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/lebanon/eu-digital-covid-certificate-european-commission-adopts-equivalence-decision_en?s=203

IMPACT. (2021). *IMPACT by CI.* Updates. Retrieved from: https://impact.cib.gov.lb/home#updates_section

IMPACT. (2023). *IMPACT by CI.* Open Data. Retrieved from: https://impact.cib.gov.lb/home#open_data_section

MISTRY, J., & JALAL, A. (2012). An Empirical Analysis of the Relationship between E-Government and Corruption. *The International Journal of Digital Accounting Research, 12,* 145-176. Retrieved from: http://uhu.es/ijdar/10.4192/1577-8517-v12_6.pdf

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. (2021, October 20). *Lebanon's October 2019 protests weren't just about the 'WhatsApp tax'.* Retrieved from: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/10/lebanons-october-2019-protests-werent-just-about-the-whatsapp-tax/

LOFGREN, M. (2016). *The Deep State: The Fall of the Constitution and the Rise of a Shadow Government.* Penguin Books.

MARQUETTE, H., & PEIFFER, C. (2015). *Corruption and Collective Action.* Developmental Leadership Program; U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Center.

MENCHÚ, R. (n.d.). *Anti-Corruption Authorities.* ACA. Retrieved from: https://www.acauthorities.org/

MERHEJ, K. (2021). *Breaking the Curse of Corruption in Lebanon.* Chatham House. Retrieved from: https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/2021-06-29-breaking-curse-corruption-lebanon-merhej.pdf

MERHEJ, K. (2022, May 10). *The Beirut Port Blast and Lebanon's Legacy of Impunity.* Italian Institute for International Political Studies. Retrieved from: https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/beirut-port-blast-and-lebanons-legacy-impunity-34960

NEUPANE, A., SOAR, J., VAIDYA, K., & ARYAL, S. (2014). *The Potential for ICT Tools to Promote Public Participation in Fighting Corruption.* IGI Global.

OMSAR. (2020). *Lebanon Digital Transformation National Strategy.* Retrieved from: https://omsar.gov.lb/Assets/DT_EN.pdf

ONYEMA, E., OBIDAIRO, S., ROY, P., AYINLA, S., & OREDOLA, H. (2019). *Anti-Corruption Agencies as Debt Recovery Agents: The Unintended Consequences of Anti-Corruption Efforts in Nigeria.* Anti-Corruption Evidence: Making Anti-Corruption Real. Retrieved from: https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/33209/1/ACE%20WP%2017%20EFCC.pdf

REPUBLIC OF LEBANON. (2020). *National Anti-Corruption Strategy.* Retrieved from: https://www.omsar.gov.lb/Assets/docs/NACS_English_-Eversion.pdf

RONCERAY, M., & SERGEJEFF, K. (2020). *Pushing on a String or Pulling Threads Together?* European Centre for Development Policy Management. Retrieved from: https://ecdpm.org/application/files/4716/5546/8618/Pushing-String-Pulling-Threads-Together-Lessons-Learned-Anti-Corruption-Efforts-European-Donors-ECDPM-Discussion-Paper-279-September-2020.pdf

ROZELIER, M. (2021). La campagne de vaccination enfin sur le droit chemin? [The Vaccination Campaign: On the Right Track at Last?]. *Le Commerce du Levant.* Retrieved from: https://www.lecommercedulevant.com/article/30254-linspection-centrale-veut-remettre-la-campagne-vaccinale-sur-le-droit-chemin

SAADEH, R. (2021). On Justice Denied: Interrogating Amnesty and Amnesia in Post-conflict Lebanon. *Yale Journal of International Affairs.* Retrieved from: https://www.yalejournal.org/publications/on-justice-denied-interrogating-amnesty-and-amnesia-in-post-conflict-lebanon

SIREN ANALYTICS AI UNIT. (2022). *Lifesaving: A Rapid Assessment of the Effectiveness of Lebanon's Covid-19 Lockdowns and Vaccination Campaign in the Fight to Control the Virus.* Siren Analytics.

SIREN YOUTH4GOVERNANCE. (2021). *From Crisis Management to Public Management: Residents' Perception of the Public Administration.* Retrieved from: https://www.youth4governance.org/ wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ Citizens_Survey_Presentation.pdf

TAYARA, G. E. (2022). *Decrypting the State.* Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center. Retrieved from: https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/86307

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL. (n.d.). *Corruption Perceptions Index.* Retrieved from: https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL. (n.d.). *Corruptionary A-Z.* Retrieved from: https://www.transparency.org/corruptionary

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL. (n.d.). *What is Corruption?* Retrieved from: https://www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption

UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS. (n.d.). *Sustainable Development Goal 16.* Retrieved from: https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME. (2004). *United Nations Convention Against Corruption.* United Nations. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/brussels/UN_Convention_Against_Corruption.pdf

UNITED NATIONS. (2020). *Country Data.* UN E-Government Knowledgebase. Retrieved from: https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/Data-Center

VARKEY, S., ABDALLAH, J., HANEEN, S., MAHMASSANI, H., & GOMEZ-SUAREZ, R. (2022). *Lebanon's COVID-19 Vaccination Digital Platform Promotes Transparency & Public Trust.* World Bank. Retrieved from: https://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/lebanons-covid-19-vaccination-digital-platform-promotes-transparency-public-trust

WICKBERG, S. (2013). *Technological Innovations to Identify and Reduce Corruption.* Transparency International. Retrieved from: https://www.transparency.org/files/content/corruptionqas/376_technological_innovations_to_identify_and_reduce_corruption.pdf

WORLD BANK. (2021). *Lebanon Economic Monitor: The Great Denial in the Deliberate Depression.* Retrieved from: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/36862/LEM%20 Economic%20Monitor%20Fall%202021.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=ya

WORLD BANK. (2022, March 14). *Lebanon Announces Payment of Cash Transfers to Extreme Poor Lebanese households under AMAN.* Retrieved from: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/03/14/lebanon-announces-payment-of-cash-transfers-to-extreme-poor-lebanese-households-under-aman