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Improving the economy, efficiency, and integrity of Lebanon's public procurement using MAPS

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Lebanon made a critical step toward modernizing and strengthening its public procurement system with the recently completed Methodology for the Assessment of Procurement Systems (MAPS) Exercise.

The Government of Lebanon made a commitment to strengthen and modernize its public procurement system in April 2018 and reiterated that commitment in August 2020 after the Beirut explosion as a guarantee for international support and aid for reconstruction and long-term recovery.



In Lebanon, public procurement accounts for approximately \$3.4 billion USD (nearly 20% of the central government expenditures and 6.5%



of GDP). Despite the size of its market, the country's public procurement system falls far short of reaching international best practices and standards. Results from the MAPS exercise show that Lebanon does not meet 120 out of

the 210 indicators. Some of the gaps identified are a legal framework from 1959 that does not reflect international standards and guidelines; a weak institutional framework with overlapping mandates; inexistent policy and regulatory functions; a weak and inefficient complaints review mechanism; weak capacity with no professionalization of public purchasers; lack of clear guidance and monitoring; and a lack of e-procurement or central facility to publish notices or access tender documents.

Although the results from the exercise are startling, the process brought together over 80 stakeholders and, for the first time in Lebanon, civil society was included in discussions on public procurement. The assessment has also been an optimal tool to engage in dialogue about public procurement reforms and to mobilize financing. Some of the key lessons learned are (i) assessing a public procurement system is a long process and all stakeholders involved need to be aware of the timeline - in Lebanon, it has taken more than 18 months; (ii) teams need to budget for the exercise keeping in mind the long timeline; and (iii) the counterpart needs to be committed, technically strong, and well-connected.

The exercise has also revealed lessons that might be of help to strengthen future assessments. For instance, (i) develop a clear template with guidelines to ensure a standardized report; (ii) develop two MAPS assessments - a simplified assessment for countries that are in the early stages of development (e.g. Lebanon) and a more elaborate



assessment (such as the current version) for countries that are further along in their journey toward a modern public procurement system; (iii) compile a manual of

journey toward a modern public procurement system, (iii) compile a manual of potential solutions – in Lebanon, the issue of complaint mechanisms came up and it would have been useful to be able to share an already compiled manual of solutions other countries have adopted, and; (iv) develop a communication manual with suggested language for countries to use about public procurement, the MAPS exercise, and reforms in general.

The team would also like to suggest that the World Bank undertakes more research on public procurement from the economic and good governance perspectives. While conducting research for this assessment, the team often had to rely on papers published from other institutions, which suggests an opportunity for the Bank to disseminate more knowledge and lessons learned.

The MAPS exercise in Lebanon has been very successful. Although the country still has much to do to strengthen and modernize its public procurement system, there is now a clear path forward. Lebanon has recently received additional funding to develop a strategy and action plan and the World Bank public procurement team will continue providing support.

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Photo 1. MAPS Methodology

Photo 2. Discussing the draft Public Procurement Law, Sept 2020

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