LEBANON (Country Case Study)

A. Background

1. Which UNCT members have collaborated on this case study?
   - ...
   - ...
   - ...

2. Which national partners (governmental and non-governmental) were involved in developing this case study and how?
   - ...
   - ...
   - ...

3. Does the case study illustrate one or several phases or levels?
   - Adapting SDG 16
   - Implementing SDG 16
   - Monitoring & Reporting on SDG 16
   - National level
   - Regional level
   - Local level

B. Case Study

OPTION 2 (self-structured, covering elements under 4.-7. above)

Modern Lebanese history has been marked by conflict as well as political and institutional instability, which has typically stymied reform efforts. Despite the prevailing instability, the past 15 years have witnessed significant progress with regard to legal equality, especially through the protection of the rights of the most vulnerable (SGBV victims, migrants, etc) – although much work remains to be done. One example of progress is how the Internal Security Forces (ISF) embarked on a major reform under its new Strategic Plan 2018-2022 (Strategic Plan), which demonstrates the tangible changes an institution can make to promote legal equality in spite of cultural, legal, and institutional challenges. The Strategic Plan illustrates Lebanon’s efforts to offer greater legal protection to all persons on its territory as it aims to transform the ISF from a police force to a police service. This indicates a major shift for the ISF as it was driven by military culture and organized by a top-down leadership model. An improved legal framework (i.e. domestic violence, torture, and enforced disappearance laws) and ratification of international conventions (i.e. OP-CAT) in the past 15 years has offered new avenues of legal protection.

The Strategic Plan is the outcome of a reform process initiated in 2008 that further demonstrates an increasing protection approach to police service. For instance, LGBTQ persons are reportedly no longer a target of ISF operations. The ISF’s efforts to work within the rule of law reflects both an evolving culture within the organization and progress made by the judiciary to ensure the legal framework is enforced. Indeed, a feature of the past 10 years is the judiciary’s unprecedented application of the new legal framework to protect the rights of the most vulnerable. While currently limited in scope, these advancements must be encouraged in order to address the criminalization of vulnerability (street children, migrants lacking legal documents, etc).

Remarkably, the Strategic Plan was drafted to take effect instantly upon approval. Its key components, like the instituting of community policing in ISF stations and strengthening of internal oversight mechanisms, are currently being implemented just one year into its mandate. The immediate implementation of a Strategy that aligns with newly-protected rights is a good practice that other security institutions can mimic. While the new legal framework offers tools to ensure legal equality, many emphasized the need for the Executive to rapidly implement measures to effectuate legal
equality. In other words, the Legislature and Judiciary have taken important steps that should be emulated by the Executive, as illustrated by the Plan, in moving towards legal equality.

The accountability pillar, which is currently being implemented, of the Strategic Plan requires internal oversight bodies being granted sufficient autonomy in order to investigate cases of ISF personnel committing human rights violations. The ISF’s readiness to invite external oversight by independent institutions, like the judiciary, further indicates its emphasis on accountability. The ISF’s establishing of a self-accountability system can be considered a good practice and is one other institutions should emulate.

Lastly, the ISF was able to develop a strategy with its personnel’s buy-in as a result of broad internal consultations at all levels of the institution. This effort is noteworthy because the absence of an informed debate amongst the public, within institutions, and also between institutions and the population reportedly impede the realization of legal equality in Lebanon.

While Lebanon has yet to establish a proper national mechanism to report on Goal 16, the new legal framework offers the opportunity to report on all SDG 16 targets. The Strategic Plan indicates political will and openness to reform and shall enable Lebanon to report on several Goal 16 indicators (notably: 16.1.1; 16.1.3; 16.3.2; 16.5.1; 16.5.2; 16.6.2; and 16.10.1). Implementing Goal 16 represents an opportunity to open debate amongst institutions and the public on the type of security and justice people want, for institutions to respond actively to such demand, and for Lebanon to achieve, eventually, legal equality.

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