



COVID-19 AND THE TUNISIAN NATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION AUTHORITY RESPONSE

The COVID -19 pandemic represents an unprecedented challenge to the Tunisian National Anti-Corruption Authority (INLUCC). A mix of factors have shaped INLUCC’s response and evince serious efforts to forestall too large emergency responses to COVID-19.

In deed It’s an unrivalled health crisis, which is testing the Anti-Corruption commissions all over the world to respond.

As Corruption threats continue to evolve during the crisis, INLUCC was at peak preparedness and developed an Anti-Corruption Toolkit to promote transparency, accountability and curb corruption which took several forms during the pandemic.

The Components of the Anti-Corruption Toolkit COVID-19:

The Hotline:



It’s an adequate and secure reporting channels for whistleblowers

It's intended to whistle blow the most common forms of Corruption during the pandemic. This tool is involving citizens within the Anti-Corruption process during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 Response Center:



It was established to track offenses related to monopolization, price manipulation of medicinal substances and basic foods, overlap in distribution paths of goods, favoritism in the distribution of subsidy materials and mainly irregularities in public procurement and urgent contract.

Citizens are manifesting a strong civic participation. They are carrying out their role of watchdog to protect public values during the crisis and INLUCC is managing carefully the received Corruption cases.

In deed The assigned working group classifies the reported cases received via the Hotline then transfers reports to the competent authorities, mainly the Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Health, which have a legal power to impose administrative sanctions on offenders or criminal sanctions by

referring the case to the public prosecutor's office in coordination with the INLUCC.

This crisis is reshaping decisions and strategies to protect life and saving resources from corruption which is taking unusual forms during the quarantine:

Example:

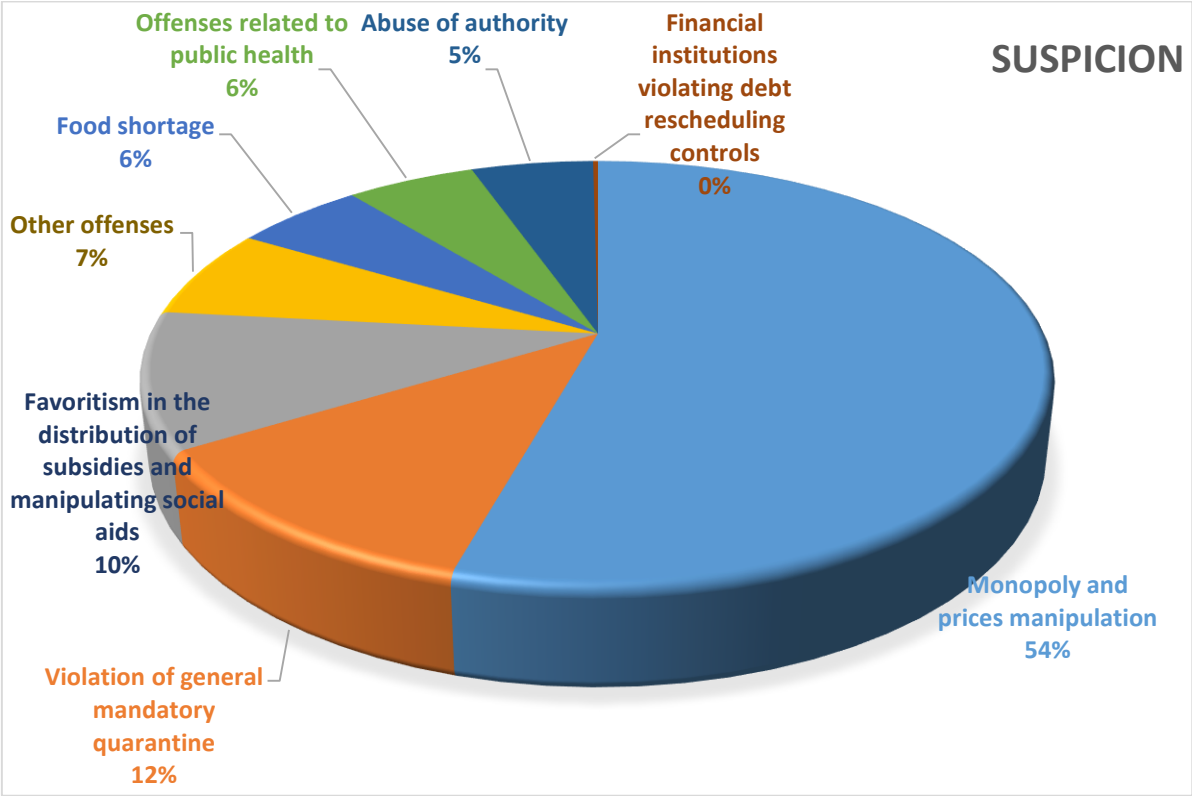
- ✓ Cutting down almost 200 Oak trees in the area of Aïn Sallam, Aïn Draham –Jandouba-. It is a “horrendous crime” perpetrated against the whole country.

Oak trees present an inestimable value and are considered as a symbol of strength. These specific trees are distinguished by their longevity, which is over 300 years old. Therefore, they are considered to be a national heritage especially since these natural forest resources are limited in Tunisia, they only cover around 8,000 hectares in the governorate of Jendouba and nearly 350 hectares in the governorate of Béja.

2A mayor had used his power to extort citizens benefiting from social aid during the COVID-19 general lockdown and force them to pay a sum of money to obtain aid funds, in addition to favoritism in their distribution.

- ✓ Increase the cost of health services in private clinics.
- ✓ Irregularities in urgent contact during the pandemic.

Total Number of Alerts/ Complaints Received by INLUCC During the Pandemic « COVID-19 »: **11728 Complaint**



The pie chart of reported cases with the percentage compared to the total number of suspicion Corruption cases received by the Tunisian National Anti-Corruption Authority.

Recommendations:

Anti-Corruption Recommendations:

- 1) The acceleration the issuance of the application decrees related to laws on anti-corruption matters:
 - a- The reporting of corruption cases and the protection of whistle-blowers ACT,
 - b -The access to information,
 - c- The declaration of assets and interests and combating illicit enrichment and conflicts of interest.

2) Strengthening mechanisms for protecting whistle-blowers in the private sector.

3) The implementation of the OPEN-GOV and E-GOVERNEMENT systems to support transparency, facilitate services, simplify administrative procedures in the public service, and reduce bureaucracy.

4) The Support of control systems in order to ensure more effective monitoring and auditing processes.

Recommendations on Public Procurement:

1) The supreme body of public procurement, as well as the Follow-up and Review Authority and the National Observatory of Deals must disseminate their reports.

2) exclusion of economic actors who breach of its obligations and integrity principles from participation in public procurement in accordance with provisions of the Decree n° 2016-498 of April 8, 2016.

3) Review cases of resorting to agreements or complementary deals to tighten their terms and procedures.

4) Implementation of a public procurement risk map for better management.

5) Enhancing Good governance principals in public procurement.

Recommendations on Health Sector:

1) The establishment of an IT system at pharmacies of public health institutions to avoid mismanagement of medicines.

2) The establishment of a monitoring system that deals with transactions carried out by the central pharmacy and informing the state's monitoring structures of these operations, including the names of companies, materials, quantities, prices and supply to verify the conformity between invoices and the customs declaration in order to reduce false or misleading filing data.

3) All public purchases of medicines and medical supplies must be made via TUNEPS (Tunisia on line E-Procurement System).

4) Purchases Centralization of hospital supplies through the «TUNEPS» system.

5) Disciplined management of health waste, especially hazardous medical waste (injection, dressings, and chemical waste)

INLUCC Institutional Radio (Integrity Radio)

The Integrity Radio has been established by INLUCC to spread Anti-Corruption culture. During the crisis the Integrity Radio is consolidating a new phase linked to the promotion of the principles of Good Governance and transparency.



Business Continuity Management Plan:

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted the Tunisian National Anti-Corruption Authority to reflect and even question the ability of its management model of whether or not it's reliable to operate and provide the minimum service necessary to satisfy citizens in a crisis situation?

INLUCC has assessed its level of maturity to operate in an exceptional situation in order to develop and implement a Business Continuity Management Plan to allow it to manage its missions and activities.

Conclusion:

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, INLUCC has faced the ethical dimension in its process. It has discovered that the Corrupt practices went beyond the economic dimension to threaten lives.

The coronavirus pandemic will likely have a transformative impact on multiple dimensions of Governance that should be prepared to respond quickly to curb all Corruption practices. Thus, rapid and effective response will mitigate the impacts of the crisis on the economy and fasten its recovery.

INLUCC is shining a spotlight on how citizen is a vector of change during COVID 19 crisis and its aftermath.