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JUSTICE & RULE OF LAW

Beyond digitisation: Lebanon's judicial data deficit

A Baabda pilot to make court reform measurable

Beyond digitisation: Lebanon's judicial data deficit

SmartGov Policy Paper · 2026

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3RF	Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (EU, United Nations, World Bank)
AI	artificial intelligence
CEPEJ	European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice
EU	European Union
GDP	gross domestic product
IECMS	Integrated Electronic Case Management System (Rwanda)
MAITA	Ministry of State for Technology and Artificial Intelligence
OGERO	Lebanon's public telecommunications operator
OMSAR	Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform
UJITS	Unified Judicial Information and Telecommunication System (Ukraine)
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WJP	World Justice Project

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Executive summary

Lebanon's judicial reform debate has entered a decisive phase. Parliament adopted a judicial reform law on 31 July 2025; the European Union welcomed it while urging further comprehensive rule-of-law reform. At the same time, parliamentary discussions on a proposed general amnesty law point to a related pressure: unresolved cases, prolonged detention and overcrowded prisons. Both debates rest on caseloads the courts cannot currently measure. Public attention has focused mainly on independence, caseload and detention pressure. A quieter but essential question has received less attention: whether the state can see what is happening inside its own courts. Without baseline data on caseloads, processing times, workload and case outcomes, reform claims remain difficult to verify.

The first reform question is therefore not only “how can Lebanon digitise the courts?” It is “what information does Lebanon need to manage court reform?” This policy paper proposes that entry point: a court-data pilot in Baabda. The purpose is not to create another technology project. It is to build the information infrastructure needed to diagnose delays, manage workload, protect privacy, communicate progress and prepare a national standard.

Within a year, the pilot can give Lebanon its first verifiable reform baseline: six aggregate indicators published without personal or judge-level data, and the tested standard a national rollout needs. Lead responsibility sits with the Ministry of Justice, the Higher Judicial Council and Baabda court leadership. Predictable dispute resolution is part of restoring economic confidence; public court statistics are a direct, verifiable contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 16.

KEY FINDINGS

- Lebanon's reform debate turns on a question it cannot yet answer: can it measure how its courts work? Court information is reform infrastructure, not a technical afterthought.
- A commercial dispute takes 721 days and 30.8% of the claim value to resolve, and more than 80% of detainees are held without a final judgment, yet no current public series records caseloads, delays or outcomes.
- The fix is a disciplined court-data pilot in Baabda: one minimum dataset, one workflow map, one public dashboard, one evaluation: information first, software second.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Start with information, not software.
- Create a Judicial Data Pilot Steering Group.
- Publish aggregate indicators only.
- Pilot in Baabda before any national build.
- Treat judges and clerks as co-designers.
- Build a national standard from the tested pilot.

Why court data is a reform infrastructure

Judicial reform is often discussed through laws, appointments, independence guarantees, resources and backlog. These issues matter. Parliament's judicial reform law of 31 July 2025, welcomed by the European Union alongside its call for broader rule-of-law reform, is the latest expression of that debate (Council of the European Union, 2025). But reform also depends on an administrative capacity that is easier to overlook: the ability to measure what happens inside courts.

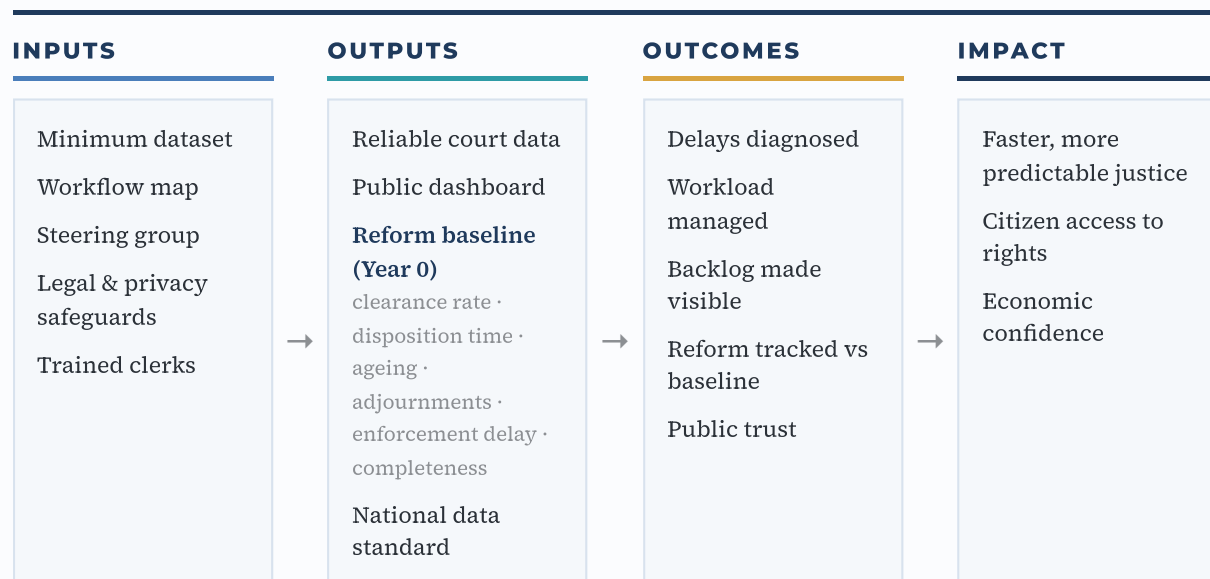
Public access to Lebanese court data remains limited, fragmented and difficult to use. Policymakers and court users cannot easily distinguish temporary pressure from structural backlog. Reform debates rely on assumptions rather than baselines when court data are unavailable. Backlog becomes a general complaint instead of a measurable problem. Workload remains an internal concern instead of a management indicator. Public trust becomes harder to build because citizens cannot see whether reforms are improving service delivery.

Court information is therefore not a secondary technical layer. It is a reform infrastructure. It allows institutions to diagnose problems, test solutions, allocate resources and explain progress. A country can buy software, scan files or launch a portal and still lack usable data. Digitisation becomes meaningful only when it improves the state's ability to decide, act and explain.

FIGURE

Figure 1. Results chain: from court data to reform outcomes

Inputs to impact; the reform baseline is the pilot's central output



Note: The reform baseline is the pilot's central output — first-year readings set “Year 0”, and each later quarter is measured against it. The chain reaches impact only if each stage holds; procuring software without the data layer stops it at “outputs”.

Source: Author's elaboration, drawing on phased-reform experience in Ukraine, Georgia and Rwanda.

Lebanon ranks 108th of 142 countries in the World Justice Project's 2024 Rule of Law Index, with weak performance on civil and criminal justice indicators. This reflects a wider information problem: public court-performance data remain limited, dated and difficult to use as a reform-management baseline.

108/142WJP RULE OF LAW INDEX
2024**>80%**DETAINEES WITHOUT
FINAL JUDGMENT**2009/10**LAST PUBLIC COURT-
WORK SERIES

Read as a diagnosis, the deficit has three layers. The symptoms are measurable and severe: the delays, backlog and detention figures set out below. The causes are administrative and, in principle, observable: where in the process cases stall, how often they are adjourned and why, and how long expert reports and enforcement take. The third layer is the deepest: today almost none of this is recorded, so the causes cannot be confirmed and the symptoms cannot be sized. The rest of this chapter works through each layer.

The Ministry of Justice publishes court-work statistics on its official website, but the available public series appears to stop at the 2009/10 judicial year (Ministry of Justice, 2026a). The page provides figures on incoming, resolved and remaining cases by governorate, but it does not present a regularly updated, standardised court-performance dataset that can support current diagnosis of backlog, delay or workload.

To size the deficit with non-advocacy sources: on the criminal side, official Internal Security Forces figures reported in 2024–2025 put roughly 8 500 people in detention facilities built for about 4 760, of whom only around 1 100 had been sentenced, the remainder awaiting a judicial decision, with pre-trial detainees estimated at over 80% of the prison population (Internal Security Forces, 2025; UNODC, 2025). These are the visible downstream symptoms of a system that cannot yet measure its own caseload. The absence of a current, standardised court-performance series is therefore not a data-cleanliness problem; it is the reason backlog can only be described, not managed.

BOX 1

The human cost of unmeasured backlog

Occupancy nationally runs at roughly 200–250% of capacity, exceeding 300% in 2025. Roumieh, designed for about 1 200, holds close to 4 000; Qobbeh in Tripoli, built for 320, has at times exceeded 1 000, some 88% of them in pre-trial detention. These are the visible downstream costs of caseloads that no current dataset can size (Internal Security Forces, 2025; UNODC, 2025).

The civil and commercial side carries at least as much weight, and it is where the economic stakes concentrate. A large but uncounted volume of property, inheritance, tenancy, labour, commercial and debt-recovery disputes moves through Lebanese courts, yet no current public series records how many are filed, pending or resolved, or how long each case type takes. The comparative data that do exist point to a serious problem: Lebanon scored 0.36 out of 1.0 on the absence of improper government influence in civil justice, ranking 95th of 128 economies and last in its region (EU/Lebanon 3RF, 2023, citing World Justice Project data), while resolving a commercial dispute took 721 days (World Bank, 2020); the cost and comparator figures are set out in Chapter 7. For citizens, this means inheritance, property and tenancy claims frozen for years; for investors, it raises the perceived risk of every contract. Measuring civil caseloads is therefore not an administrative nicety; it is where court data most directly meet economic confidence.

BOX 2

Data sources and limitations

This paper draws on published institutional sources: the World Bank's archived Doing Business dataset, the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) efficiency measures, the EU/Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) Functional Review, and official Internal Security Forces and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) figures. Several are dated (the Doing Business framework was discontinued in 2021) and are used as order-of-magnitude signals, not current baselines. Comparative figures are drawn from the same source wherever possible, and cross-source comparisons are flagged as such. Where Lebanese court-performance data do not exist, that absence is reported as a finding rather than filled with estimates.

Some records may also remain paper-based, held across registries, chambers or internal files, or exist without standardised formats or public access. This deficit creates four governance problems, set out overleaf.

Weak diagnosis

Policymakers cannot identify whether delays come from filing volume, notification procedures, expert reports, adjournments, staffing gaps, uneven case distribution or enforcement difficulties.

Weak management

Without consistent data, workload allocation, procedural reform and staffing decisions depend heavily on institutional memory, anecdote or ad hoc reporting.

Weak accountability

Citizens do not need access to private case files, but they should be able to see whether courts are reducing backlog, how long common case types take and whether reforms are improving service delivery.

Weak economic predictability

Businesses and investors need confidence that disputes can be resolved within a reasonable time; when court performance is opaque, legal risk rises. Chapter 7 examines these costs.

Access to justice, inclusion and the Sustainable Development Goals

Court delay is not felt equally. Its heaviest costs fall on those least able to absorb them: litigants who cannot sustain years of proceedings, workers in wage and labour disputes, tenants and smallholders in property claims, women facing gender-based violence or pursuing inheritance or maintenance, migrant workers with little recourse, and the more than 80% of detainees held without a final judgment. Well-resourced parties can wait, settle privately or use influence; poorer users cannot, and delay effectively prices them out of justice.

The data deficit hides precisely these disparities. Because caseloads are not disaggregated (by case type, sex of the parties, legal-aid status or duration), the system cannot see who waits longest or who abandons claims altogether. A reform baseline that records these dimensions would make inequitable access visible for the first time, and allow it to be addressed.

This also anchors the pilot in Sustainable Development Goal 16: access to justice for all, effective and accountable institutions, and public access to information (United Nations, 2015). Measuring court performance is a direct, verifiable contribution to those commitments, and a means of demonstrating progress against them.



Starting with a nationwide digital system is not necessarily realistic in Lebanon's current institutional context. It would risk building the reform on assumptions rather than tested institutional experience. Lebanon has limited practical evidence on how court data can be collected, structured, governed, analysed and used across real judicial workflows. A first national pilot would help generate this evidence before wider scale-up. Without such a pilot, a nationwide system could easily be overdesigned to satisfy reform expectations while remaining difficult to implement, maintain or use in practice.

Baabda offers a practical pilot setting because it reflects many of the pressures facing Lebanon's courts: high caseloads, backlog challenges, paper-based workflows and limited visibility over the causes of delay. Starting there would allow reform actors to test their hypothesis before a national scale-up. Against the other candidate courts, Baabda's profile fits a pilot. Beirut's Palace of Justice carries the country's highest political visibility, the worst condition for quiet learning; smaller courts would be easier hosts but unrepresentative of the caseload a national system must handle.

Baabda's Justice Palace is the seat of Mount Lebanon's judiciary: its first-instance chambers hear cases from the Baabda, Aley and Chouf districts, with the governorate's remaining chambers sitting in Jdeideh, and it houses appellate chambers, enforcement and the public prosecution on one site (Ministry of Justice, 2026b). It serves the country's most populous governorate, which together with Beirut holds around half of Lebanon's population (Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon, 2018), under the same paper-based, resource-constrained conditions the pilot is designed to work within.

The pilot's purpose would be to test whether a limited, reliable court dataset can make delay, workload and case movement visible enough to support better management. This would make the reform practical rather than abstract. A pilot approach also reduces implementation risk. Lebanon does not yet have all the legal, administrative, technical and governance conditions needed for immediate national rollout. Testing the model in Baabda would allow the judiciary and relevant public authorities to identify what works, what fails and what safeguards are needed before expanding to other courts.

Greece's open justice reforms offer a useful comparative reference. Through its Open Government Partnership commitments, Greece has linked court modernisation to open data, anonymised court decisions and improved access to judicial information (Open Government Partnership, n.d.). For Lebanon, the relevance is not the direct transfer of the Greek model. It is the sequencing: judicial data reform needs governance rules, privacy safeguards and clear institutional responsibilities before it can be scaled nationally.

If properly documented, the Baabda pilot can become the basis for a national model. It can help define standard court-data categories, common backlog and delay indicators, data-quality rules, privacy safeguards, staff training needs and institutional responsibilities. Other courts would not need to copy Baabda mechanically, but they could adapt a tested model to their own caseloads, staffing levels and infrastructure.

The pilot is a policy choice rather than a preference: four alternatives are weighed against explicit criteria below. Within the pilot option, Baabda is preferred on caseload representativeness, existing reform activity there (including the Warwar rehabilitation centre opened in Baabda in 2025) and replicability.

Weighing the options

Before committing to a single path, it is worth setting the pilot against the realistic alternatives, including doing nothing. Four options present themselves; they are assessed below against feasibility, speed to first results, risk of failure and learning value (Table 1).

Table 1. Weighing the reform options

Option	Feasibility	Speed to results	Risk of failure	Learning value
A. Status quo: no measurement	n.a.	None	High: reform proceeds blind	None
B. National case-management system first	Low: cost and coordination heavy	Slow	High: all-or-nothing build	Low: little tested before scale
C. Court-data pilot in Baabda (recommended)	High: one court, defined scope	Fast: first indicators within a year	Low: contained and reversible	High: produces a tested standard
D. National statistics mandate, no pilot	Medium: reporting rule only	Medium	Medium: poor data if process unfixed	Low: data without process reform

Source: Authors' elaboration.

On these criteria the Baabda pilot is the strongest option. The status quo leaves reform unmeasured; a national build repeats the all-at-once approach that Ukraine had to unwind into a phased rollout; and a statistics mandate without process reform simply digitises a flawed record. A law-and-standards track is not a rival: its first, court-scoped slice can run alongside the pilot, so the two become a sequence. The pilot trades slower national coverage for low risk, fast learning and reliable data. Uniquely, it also produces the standard the other options assume but never build.

Lessons from comparable reforms

The reforming economies benchmarked in this paper did not digitise all at once, and their experience offers transferable lessons for Lebanon rather than a model to copy.

BOX 3

Reform in practice: Ukraine and Rwanda

Ukraine. The Unified Judicial Information and Telecommunication System (UJITS), covering electronic filing, case tracking and remote hearings, could not be switched on nationally at once. Parliament legislated a gradual rollout, and the first subsystems went live only in stages.

Rwanda. From a largely paper-based base, the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) became a single shared platform linking the police, prosecution, judiciary, corrections, the bar and bailiffs, from filing to execution. The gain came from standardising data and process first, not from buying software.

Georgia's post-transition reforms and the slower experience of high-backlog systems such as Greece point the same way: technology helps only where the underlying data and process are fixed first.

Lessons for Lebanon. Four points transfer directly to Lebanon: phase before scaling (pilot, then national); fix data and process before procuring software; establish central ownership across justice institutions; and protect data quality through the transition rather than digitising a flawed record.

The pilot should begin with a minimum dataset: small enough to collect reliably and rich enough to support decision making.

BOX 4**Three layers of court data: internal, aggregate, public**

Three layers should be kept distinct: the internal case-management record used to run and diagnose the court; the aggregate indicators derived from it for reform baselines and public accountability; and the public-transparency layer, which is aggregate-only and never includes personal identifiers or judge-level data. The access tier tagged against each field in Table 2 reflects this: Internal (administrative use only), Aggregate (may feed published aggregate indicators, never at row level), or Restricted (never published; access logged).

Personal identifiers (names, addresses, national identification numbers) are excluded from the dataset; if ever required internally, they are Restricted and access-logged. Only the aggregate indicators in the public dashboard are published. Party attributes are collected as coded categories under the privacy protocol and never appear at case level in any public output.

The dataset's value lies in the analytical outputs it feeds into the reform baseline: case types ranked from longest to shortest processing time; access-to-justice breakdowns disaggregated by sex, age, nationality and legal-aid status of the parties, compiled as aggregate statistics to make inequitable delay visible; judge- and chamber-level workload indicators, introduced in a second phase once definitions and trust are established, used by court leadership, the Higher Judicial Council and the Judicial Inspection Authority for internal management and accountability, and never published; adjournment causes ranked by recorded frequency; and enforcement delay by case type. These outputs form the substance of the year-zero baseline set out below.

Table 2. Minimum dataset and access tiers

Field	Purpose	Access tier
case number	Unique case identifier for tracking	INTERNAL
case type	Classify caseload; feeds pending-by-type	AGGREGATE
party attributes	Sex, age band, nationality and legal-aid status, recorded as coded categories; feeds access-to-justice breakdowns	AGGREGATE
filing date	Start point for age and clearance	AGGREGATE
court and chamber	Aggregation and workload dimension	AGGREGATE
assigned judge or panel	Internal workload management only	RESTRICTED
procedural stage	Locate the case within the process	AGGREGATE
next scheduled action	Operational follow-up	INTERNAL
hearing date	Scheduling and delay tracking	INTERNAL
adjournment status	Feeds adjournment-frequency indicator	AGGREGATE
reason for adjournment	Feeds recorded reasons (aggregate)	AGGREGATE
expert report status	Identify a common delay source	AGGREGATE
notification status	Identify a common delay source	AGGREGATE
current case status	Active, pending and closed counts	AGGREGATE
closure date	Disposition-time calculation	AGGREGATE
ruling status	Aggregate outcome counts, not merits	AGGREGATE
enforcement status	Enforcement-delay indicator	AGGREGATE
date of last update	Data-quality and audit trail	INTERNAL

Source: Authors' elaboration.

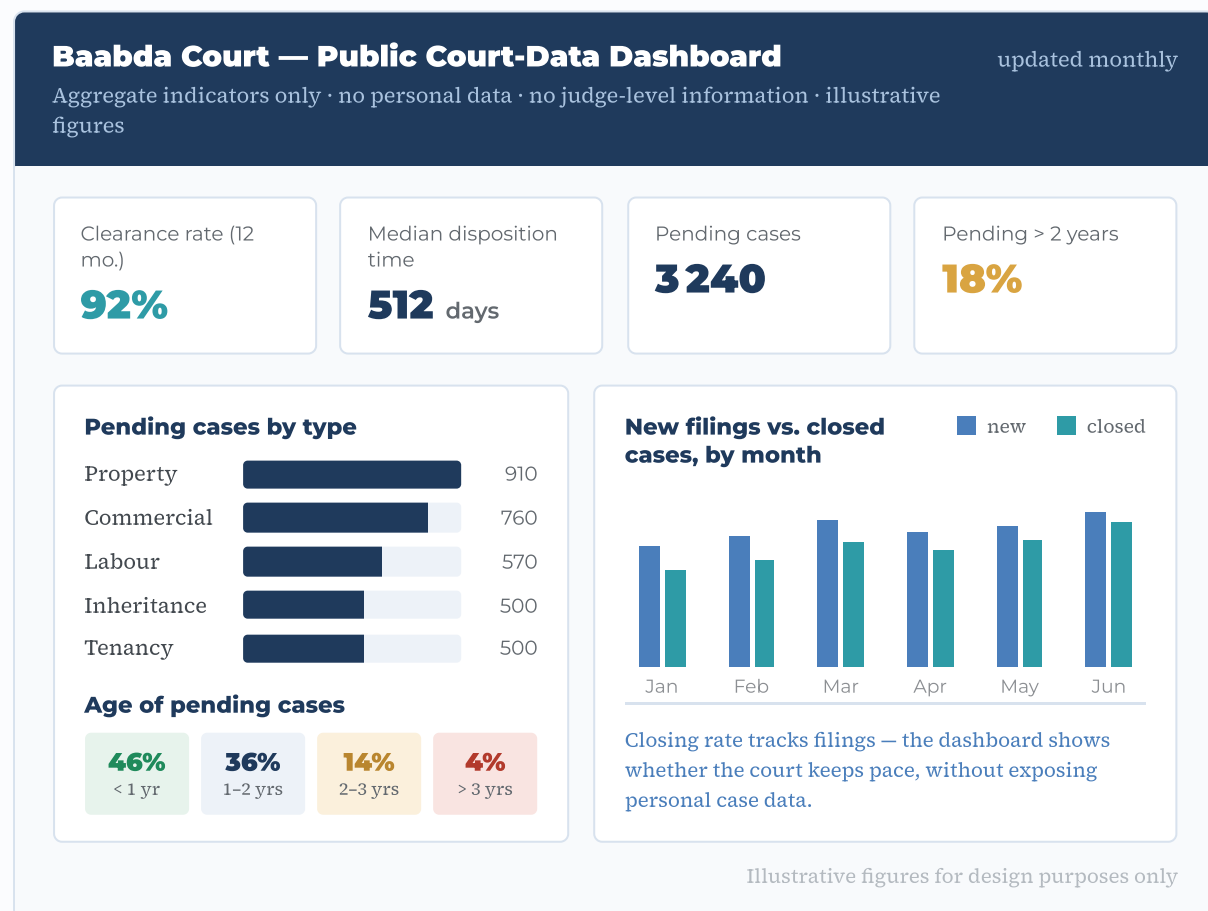
The proposed dashboard indicators should draw on recognised court-efficiency measures used by CEPEJ, including incoming cases, resolved cases, pending cases, clearance rate, disposition time and the age of unresolved cases (CEPEJ, 2024). The public dashboard should therefore publish aggregate indicators only, including:

- pending cases by case type
- average and median processing time
- clearance rate
- adjournment frequency and main recorded reasons
- percentage of records with missing key data
- new filings and closed cases per month
- age of pending cases
- share of cases older than one, two or three years
- average time between procedural steps
- enforcement delay indicators, where available

The dashboard should not publish personal case information, judge-level rankings or sensitive disputes. Its purpose is institutional transparency, not individualised blame. Trust will depend as much on what the pilot chooses not to publish as on what it makes visible.

FIGURE

Figure 2. Illustrative public dashboard



Aggregate indicators only, with no personal or judge-level data. Source: Authors' elaboration; values are illustrative.

The pilot should also produce a workflow map. It should trace a case from filing to closure and, where relevant, enforcement. The map should show each step, responsible actor, required document, approval point, waiting period and source of delay. Data show where problems appear. Workflow analysis helps explain why they occur (Figure 3).

FIGURE

Figure 3. Case flow from filing to enforcement — where delay accumulates

Illustrative first-instance civil case. Each step maps to fields in the minimum dataset; amber steps are the recurring sources of delay.



Where backlog forms: the waiting periods between steps — especially service, expert reports, repeated adjournments and enforcement — are unmeasured today.

Dataset fields captured along the way

filing date · court & chamber · procedural stage · notification status · expert report status · adjournment status & reason · hearing date · ruling status · closure date · enforcement status — these turn each waiting period above into a measurable indicator.

 recurring delay point standard step

Illustrative — for design purposes

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Reform baseline and key indicators

The pilot's first year of data should be treated as the reform baseline: the “year zero” against which all later progress is measured. Six indicators serve as the core key performance indicators: clearance rate (cases closed relative to cases filed), median disposition time, the share of pending cases older than two and three years, adjournment frequency, enforcement delay and data completeness. Baabda's opening readings set the baseline; each subsequent quarter is measured against it, and the direction of travel, not a single snapshot, is what signals whether reform is working.

Framing the indicators as a baseline changes what the pilot can claim. It converts reform from a narrative into a measurable proposition: rather than asserting that courts are improving, the pilot can show whether clearance rates are rising, disposition times falling and the oldest cases clearing. It also gives the eventual national roll-out a tested yardstick, so scale-up is judged against evidence rather than optimism. This is the baseline shown, with illustrative values, in Figure 2 and placed at the centre of the results chain in Figure 1.

A Baabda court-data pilot cannot be delivered through software alone. It needs an institutional model that links each infrastructure requirement to a responsible actor. The purpose is not to create another coordination structure, but to make the pilot usable, secure and ready for replication. The pilot should be built around six connected requirements:

Table 3. Infrastructure requirements and institutional roles

Requirement	Responsible actor(s)	Key output
Judicial ownership and governance	Ministry of Justice, Higher Judicial Council, Baabda court leadership; Steering Group	Approved mandate; validated dataset and privacy rules
Institutional digital alignment	OMSAR (simplification); MAITA (digital standards, hosting, AI advisory); Prime Minister's Office; Ministry of Finance	Alignment with national systems; sustainable funding
Data and workflow standards	Pilot team and Steering Group	Data dictionary; case classification; missing-data rules
Technical, connectivity and cybersecurity	Ministry of Telecommunications, OGERO; cybersecurity and data-protection experts	Secure hosting, access controls, audit logs, backups
Legal and privacy safeguards	Legal review (first phase)	Legal basis; publication limits; anonymisation rules
Human capacity and public communication	Court staff; judges, clerks and lawyers as co-designers	Training; adoption; a clear public dashboard

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Judicial ownership and governance

The Ministry of Justice, the Higher Judicial Council and Baabda court leadership can approve the pilot mandate, define its scope and protect its institutional purpose. Their role is to ensure that the pilot is understood as a reform-management tool, not as a mechanism for public blame.

A small Judicial Data Pilot Steering Group should oversee implementation. It should include judicial, administrative, technical, legal and civil-society expertise. Its role should be to approve the minimum dataset, validate privacy rules, review data quality, resolve implementation obstacles and prepare the scale-up model.

The governance model should also define the decision chain: who enters data, who audits, who approves publication and who responds to complaints or errors. Without this chain, the pilot may produce data without clear responsibility.

Institutional digital alignment

The Baabda pilot should connect to Lebanon's wider digital-transformation framework: the Digital Transformation Strategy 2020–2030, whose implementation plan prioritises simplifying judicial operations (OMSAR, 2022). This does not mean waiting for a full national platform. It means designing the pilot so it can later integrate with national systems.

To keep their mandates distinct, the pilot should draw on the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform (OMSAR) for administrative simplification, process mapping, service-redesign standards and donor coordination, and on the Ministry of State for Technology and Artificial Intelligence (MAITA) for advisory support on national digital standards, hosting architecture, data governance and artificial-intelligence safeguards. MAITA's statutory mandate was still pending at the time of writing, so its role remains advisory until confirmed.

The Prime Minister's Office may be needed where cross-government authority is required. For instance, the Ministry of Finance's involvement is needed early if the pilot requires budget lines, procurement approval or maintenance funding. A court-data pilot will not be sustainable if it depends only on short-term donor support.

How the pilot is financed should be settled at authorisation, and the safeguards differ by route. If the government funds it, the pilot's costs should appear as an identifiable line in the budget law: a visible allocation, however small, converts the pilot from a project into an institutional commitment. If donors fund it, sustainability must be designed in from the start.

SmartGov's mapping of Lebanon's interoperability efforts found that a decade of donor-financed e-government platforms repeatedly failed to survive project closure despite full funding (SmartGov, 2022). Three safeguards follow: government co-ownership from day one, with full institutional buy-in alongside recurrent maintenance and staffing costs committed before any system is built; procurement restricted to maintainable, open-standard tools; and a scheduled handover that moves budget responsibility to the state before donor funding ends.

The pilot should avoid the two pitfalls most consistently observed in fragile-context court-data reform: digitising poor-quality or inconsistent data and workflows, which simply encodes existing dysfunction; and launching an over-ambitious national platform before institutional readiness and secured stakeholder buy-in. A third, local risk is isolation: a useful Baabda tool that cannot connect to national systems. The right sequence guards against all three: test the pilot first, define the standard second and scale nationally third.

Data and workflow standards

The pilot should begin with a minimum dataset and a shared data dictionary. These should define the case-flow information to be collected, the meaning of key terms and the rules for recording missing or incomplete information. Court staff should know which fields are mandatory, which are optional, which require verification and how errors should be corrected. Poor data quality should be treated as a finding, not hidden as a failure.

The infrastructure model should also support the workflow map developed under the pilot. This means assigning responsibility for each data point, setting rules for incomplete records and ensuring that workflow findings can inform process simplification before wider scale-up.

Technical, connectivity and cybersecurity infrastructure

The court will also need secure workstations, scanning capacity where needed, reliable connectivity, electricity backup, secure hosting, role-based access controls, audit logs, backup systems and basic technical support. The Ministry of Telecommunications and OGERO should be consulted on connectivity, network reliability and operational resilience. Cybersecurity and data-protection expertise should be involved from the beginning to define access rights, logging, hosting requirements, vendor obligations and incident-response procedures.

The technical design should be modular. It should not depend on expensive custom systems if a structured database and dashboard can meet the pilot's first-year needs. The system should be built so that other courts can later adopt the same data model.

Legal and privacy safeguards

The first-phase legal review needs to cover electronic records, digital signatures, digital notifications, retention periods, correction rights, privacy, access to information and restrictions on sensitive case categories; its substance and the three-layer publication rule it must confirm are set out under “Legal basis and data protection” below.

Human capacity and public communication

Court staff need training, time and support. The pilot cannot assume that clerks can absorb new data-entry tasks without additional capacity. Training has to cover data fields, definitions, privacy rules, correction procedures, dashboard logic and cybersecurity basics.

Judges, clerks and lawyers should be treated as co-designers. Their involvement will help identify operational risks, reduce resistance and improve data quality. If the pilot is perceived as surveillance, it will face resistance. If it is framed as a tool to reduce duplication and make workload visible, it is more likely to gain acceptance.

The public dashboard should be clear to non-specialists. It should explain each indicator, the update frequency and the limits of the data. It should also make clear that the dashboard does not show guilt, innocence, legal merit, judicial reasoning or personal case details. It shows administrative movement through the court system.

The pilot should therefore be designed as a governance model, not only a technical project. Its success will depend on whether Lebanon can connect judicial ownership, administrative reform capacity, digital standards, secure infrastructure, legal safeguards, staff adoption and public communication into one workable model.

Legal basis and data protection

Publishing court data requires a clear legal footing, and Lebanon's framework is only partial. Personal data are governed principally by Law 81/2018 (Republic of Lebanon, 2018), but the law creates no independent data-protection authority (the Ministry of Economy and Trade is the de facto overseer), and it does not squarely regulate automated processing or the publication of judicial data. The pilot should therefore not assume a permissive default.

It needs an explicit legal basis for what it publishes, grounded in the three-layer distinction this paper draws: aggregate, non-identifying indicators carry low privacy risk and may be published; the underlying case-level record stays internal and access-logged; and personal identifiers are excluded from any public output. A short legal review in the first phase should confirm the basis for aggregate publication, set anonymisation and retention rules, and define who may access the internal record and under what controls, established before data are collected, not after they are published.

Co-creation with civil society and court users

The pilot should be designed with, not only for, the people who use the courts. Beyond the judges and clerks who operate the system, three constituencies belong in the design: the bar associations and legal-aid organisations that see delay from the litigant's side; civil-society and transparency groups that can help define which public indicators are meaningful; and the court users and journalists who will read the dashboard. Involving them early improves the indicators, builds a public constituency for the reform, and aligns the pilot with open-government practice, in which reforms are co-created with civil society rather than announced to it.

In practice this means a consultative role in defining the minimum dataset and dashboard, a published feedback channel once indicators are live, and periodic review of whether the data answer the questions users have. Framed this way, the pilot can be advanced as a concrete open-government commitment, with public milestones against which progress can be tracked.



The main barriers are political, institutional and operational. Technology is only one part of the challenge.

- **Political resistance.** Some actors may resist visibility because it limits discretion or exposes institutional weaknesses. The sources of this resistance, and the design safeguards against them, are examined in the political economy section below.
- **Institutional fragmentation.** Justice institutions may not share one data standard. Different courts may classify cases or status updates differently. The pilot should therefore produce standard terms and templates that other courts can use.
- **Operational constraints.** Many files may be incomplete or paper-based, and staff may need to review files before entering data. The mitigation is Phase 5's starting scope: active and recently closed cases only, not the historical archive.
- **Technical constraints.** Courts may face unreliable electricity, weak connectivity, old equipment and limited cybersecurity capacity. The system can work around these constraints by including low-connectivity procedures, backup power, data backup and simple user interfaces.
- **Legal uncertainty.** Unclear rules on electronic records, digital notifications, privacy and data publication can delay reform; the first-phase legal review addresses this.
- **Financial pressure.** Lebanon's fiscal crisis limits public investment. The pilot should therefore be low-cost, modular and maintainable, and should avoid tools that cannot be supported after donor funding ends.
- **Trust concerns.** Lawyers may fear that incomplete data will mislead the public, and citizens may distrust official dashboards that appear selective. Co-design, a published methodology, clear limitations and independent evaluation reduce these risks; professional fears of individual blame are addressed in the political economy section below.

Data integrity and the risk of gaming

Any indicator that is published will be managed to. Once clearance rates and disposition times are public, the incentive is to improve the numbers rather than the service: closing easy cases first, reclassifying or mis-recording, or leaving hard cases out of the count. Left unaddressed, gaming would turn a transparency tool into a distortion.

Three safeguards limit this. Indicators are reported as a balanced set rather than a single headline, so improving one at the expense of another is visible: clearance rate is read alongside the ageing of the oldest cases and data completeness. Data completeness is itself a published indicator, so under-recording shows up rather than hiding. And periodic independent validation, spot-checking a sample of records against source files, keeps the underlying data honest. The aim is a system in which the easiest way to improve the numbers is to improve the courts.

The political economy of measurement

The pilot's deepest risk is not technical but political. Measuring court performance redistributes information, and information is power. Publishing delay, backlog and enforcement data creates accountability where opacity previously protected several interests: officials whose responsibility for delay becomes traceable, actors who benefit from slow or selective justice, and institutions used to guarding their own records. In a system shaped by confessional balance and patronage, transparency can be read as a threat rather than a reform.

Three sources of resistance should be anticipated and designed against. Professional discomfort: judges and staff may fear that data will be used to blame individuals, which is why the pilot publishes no judge-level metrics: public indicators remain system diagnostics, while internal judge-level indicators flow only through the judiciary's own management and inspection channels. Institutional turf: ministries and councils may contest ownership of the data, which a clear mandate and a single steering group are meant to settle. And political interest: those who benefit from unpredictability may resist a public record. The pilot's defence is its narrow scope and its constituency: by starting in one court and publishing only aggregates useful to citizens and businesses, it creates a visible public interest in continuation that is harder to reverse than a purely internal reform.

Judicial delay affects more than court users. It shapes economic behaviour. For citizens, delay can mean unresolved rental disputes, blocked inheritance claims, prolonged labour cases, repeated court visits, higher lawyer fees, transport costs and lost working days. It can also weaken confidence that rights can be enforced through formal institutions.

For businesses, delay affects contract enforcement, debt recovery, dispute resolution and cash flow. When legal claims take years to resolve, firms may raise prices, avoid formal contracts, rely on informal enforcement or avoid transactions that carry legal risk.

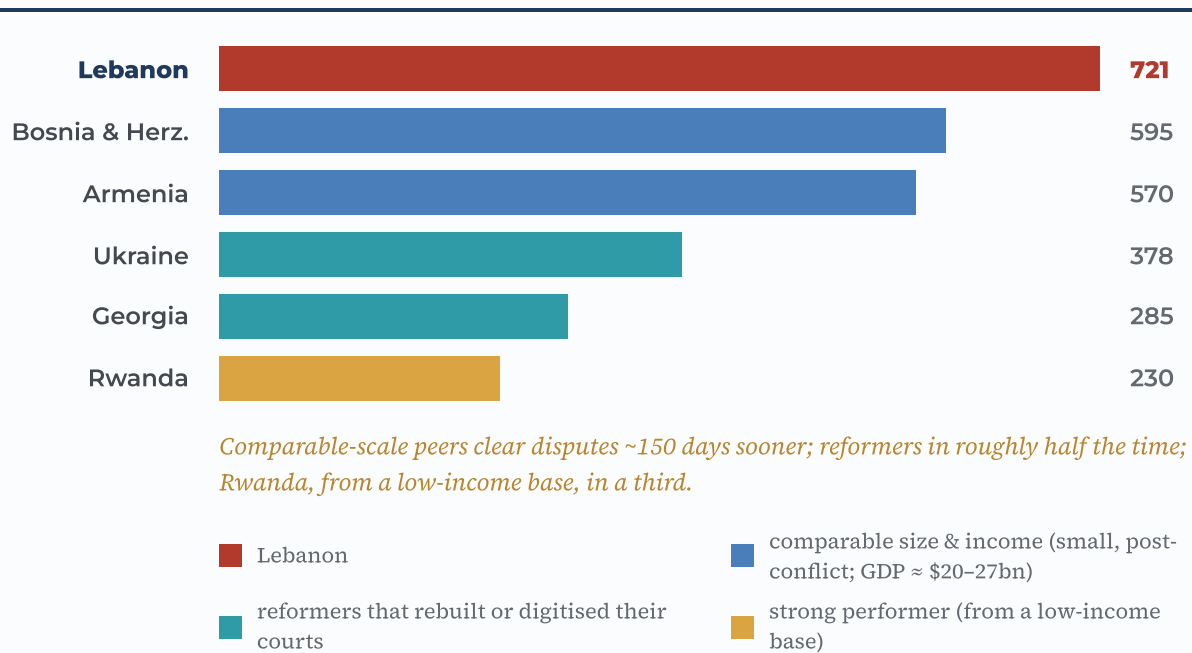
This concern is reflected in the World Bank's archived Doing Business framework, which assessed contract enforcement through the time and cost of resolving a commercial dispute in a local first-instance court, as well as the quality of judicial processes (World Bank, 2020). Although the Doing Business report has since been discontinued, the framework remains useful for showing why court efficiency matters for business predictability and investment risk.

For scale, the same World Bank framework recorded 721 days and a cost of 30.8% of the claim value to resolve a commercial dispute in a Lebanese first-instance court, against 510 days in Morocco, 378 days in Ukraine (which digitised its courts and opened judicial data while at war) and 285 days in Georgia after its post-transition court reforms (all World Bank, 2020), with Lebanon scoring 6.5 out of 18 on the quality of judicial processes. These figures are dated and the framework was later discontinued, so they should be read as an order-of-magnitude signal rather than a current baseline; that is precisely the measurement gap this paper argues a court-data pilot should close (Figure 4).

FIGURE

Figure 4. Days to resolve a commercial dispute in a first-instance court

World Bank Doing Business 2020 · lower is better · Lebanon against comparable-scale, reforming and strong-performing economies



Source: Authors' elaboration, based on data from World Bank Doing Business 2020. Country selection and design by SmartGov.

For foreign investors, court predictability is part of the investment climate. Investors do not expect disputes to disappear. They do expect transparent procedures, reasonable timelines and enforceable outcomes. Slow or opaque court processes can therefore increase perceived risk.

The cost is not only financial. A party that expects a case to take years may use litigation strategically to postpone payment, pressure a weaker party or avoid compliance. This may weaken trust in contracts and institutions. The state also pays a cost: slow justice can increase frustration, reduce compliance and create pressure for exceptional measures, including amnesty debates linked to unresolved cases, prolonged detention and prison overcrowding (Lebanese Parliament, 2026a; 2026b). On the criminal side, that cost is counted in years of pre-trial detention and prisons running at 200–250% of capacity, the same unmeasured backlog seen from the human side.

Court data will not solve Lebanon's economic crisis or restore investor confidence by itself. It can, however, reduce one form of uncertainty. It can show where delay occurs and help institutions target reform with evidence.



The roadmap should translate the pilot's reform logic into sequenced decisions, responsibilities and outputs. It sequences the work so that authorisation, data standards, privacy rules and institutional ownership are in place before any system is built. The pilot should follow a phased roadmap, with each phase producing a practical output before the next phase begins. Indicatively, Phases 1–3 occupy the first four months, Phases 4–6 run to month ten, putting the first public indicators inside year one, and Phases 7–8 complete the pilot in its second year.

Table 4. Implementation phases

Phase	Focus	Output
1	Authorisation and diagnostic	Mandate; stakeholder map; legal review note; diagnostic report
2	Workflow mapping	Workflow map; bottleneck list; simplification opportunities
3	Minimum dataset design	Data dictionary; classification template; privacy protocol
4	Technical setup	Internal data system; access-control matrix; risk note
5	Data entry and validation	Validated dataset; data-quality report
6	Public dashboard	Public dashboard; methodology note; user guide
7	Evaluation	Evaluation report; revised pilot model
8	National scale-up package	National court-data standard; scale-up plan

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Phase 1. Authorisation and diagnostic

The Ministry of Justice, Higher Judicial Council and Baabda court leadership should approve the pilot mandate. The steering group should be formed, and the pilot team should review existing records, systems and legal constraints.

OUTPUT Pilot mandate, stakeholder map, legal review note and diagnostic report.

Phase 2. Workflow mapping

The pilot team should map the case journey from filing to closure and enforcement with judges, clerks, lawyers and court administrators.

OUTPUT Workflow map, bottleneck list and process simplification opportunities.

Phase 3. Minimum dataset design

The steering group should approve the minimum dataset, case categories, status definitions, privacy rules and publication limits.

OUTPUT Data dictionary, case classification template and privacy protocol.

Phase 4. Technical setup

The technical team should install or adapt the database, configure access rights, create backup procedures, set audit logs and test the dashboard structure.

OUTPUT Working internal data system, access control matrix and technical risk note.

Phase 5. Data entry and validation

The pilot should begin with active cases and selected recently closed cases. Staff should enter data, flag missing fields and validate records with supervisors.

OUTPUT Validated pilot dataset and data-quality report.

Phase 6. Public dashboard

The first public dashboard should publish modest aggregate indicators. It should prioritise accuracy, clarity and trust over scope.

OUTPUT Public dashboard, methodology note and user guide.

Phase 7. Evaluation

An independent or semi-independent evaluation should assess data quality, staff workload, user value, institutional acceptance, cost and readiness for replication.

Verifiable success criteria

To hold the pilot to its own standard, evaluation should apply pre-declared, verifiable success criteria and a go/no-go gate before any national scale-up. Illustrative thresholds: at least 90% of active cases entered with no more than 5% missing mandatory fields; a defined ceiling on data-entry burden per case; the public dashboard live for two consecutive quarters with a published methodology; and no unresolved privacy or security incident. Meeting the thresholds triggers scale-up; missing them triggers a documented revision-and-retry rather than expansion, with an independent reviewer verifying the result against the baseline, in the spirit of Open Government Partnership reporting.

OUTPUT Evaluation report and revised pilot model.

Phase 8. National scale-up package

The final phase should prepare replication materials, including the data dictionary, workflow method, training materials, procurement specifications, governance templates and legal recommendations.

OUTPUT National court-data standard and scale-up plan.

Priority and ownership. Of the eight recommendations below, the first five are near-term (first 6–12 months) and the last three are structural, extending beyond the pilot. Lead responsibility for the near-term tier sits with the Ministry of Justice, the Higher Judicial Council and Baabda court leadership, supported by the Steering Group.

R1 Start with information, not software. Define the court information needed to manage reform before choosing tools. **NEAR-TERM**

R2 Use Baabda as a controlled pilot. Test the minimum dataset, workflow map, privacy safeguards and dashboard before national scale-up. **NEAR-TERM**

R3 Create a Judicial Data Pilot Steering Group. Include judicial, administrative, technical, legal and civil-society expertise. **NEAR-TERM**

R4 Treat judges and clerks as co-designers. They should help define indicators, risks and operational rules. **NEAR-TERM**

R5 Publish aggregate indicators only. Do not publish personal data, sensitive case information or judge-level rankings. **NEAR-TERM**

R6 Simplify procedures before digitising them. Use the workflow map to identify unnecessary duplication and avoidable delays. **STRUCTURAL**

R7 Build a national standard from the pilot. The main output should be a replicable model: data dictionary, workflow method, dashboard template, training package and governance rules. **STRUCTURAL**

R8 Link court data to economic confidence without overclaiming. Predictable dispute resolution is part of economic recovery, but court data alone cannot restore confidence. **STRUCTURAL**

Making reform visible

Lebanon's judicial reform debate now combines questions of independence, capacity, caseload pressure and economic confidence. Whether the country reforms judicial governance or reaches for amnesty to relieve immediate burdens, neither path can be steered or verified without the data infrastructure to measure what changes in practice. Every year without that baseline is another year in which backlog can only be described, not managed, and reform claimed, not shown.

The goal is not to digitise dysfunction. A court can move from paper to screens and still lack the information needed to understand delay, manage workload or explain progress to the public. Meaningful digitisation begins when institutions can produce reliable, comparable and usable data.

This is why the Baabda pilot matters. Against the realistic alternatives, it is the only option that produces tested evidence at low risk, and its first year gives Lebanon a reform baseline that turns progress from a claim into a measurable proposition. Its deepest obstacle is political rather than technical, and its design answers that directly: aggregate indicators only, no personal or judge-level data, and judges and clerks as co-designers.

The beneficiaries are concrete: litigants priced out of justice by delay, businesses that need enforceable contracts, and institutions that need evidence to defend their own reforms. Lebanon can start measuring court performance without first solving every judicial reform challenge. What it cannot afford is another reform cycle that cannot be verified.

The next move is administrative: a pilot mandate approved by the Ministry of Justice, the Higher Judicial Council and Baabda court leadership. Everything else this paper proposes follows from that decision.

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