



# Water, Growth and Stability

MENA World Café 2016 Issue Papers

August 2016

This document is printed in limited numbers to minimize the environmental impact of REC's processes and contribute to climate neutrality. Partners of Water SUM project are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and to avoid asking for additional copies. Most Project documents are available on the internet at <http://www.watersum.rec.org/>

## MENA World Café 2016 Issue Paper

### Governing water for sustainable growth (Group 1)

#### Brief problem description:

Water demand in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region constantly increases due to population growth, agriculture and industry development, and other water uses. The limited water resources are unable to satisfy human needs and the gap between the demand and supply is increasing, which becomes an important limitation for the social and economic development of the region.

Although considerable progress has been made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the targets to achieve improved access to key basic services until 2015 has not been fully reached. MENA region remains among the most water-stressed in the world and the negative trends are accelerated by political instabilities and climate change. Implementation of the new Sustainable Development Goals at national level and achievement of coherence between sectoral policies will be a new challenge.

The Water Governance issues in the MENA region are various, but mostly common for its countries. The key issues can be grouped in the following topics:

- Institutional skills in applying the IWRM approach and adaptation to climate change;
- Understanding how impacts of policy instruments in water management can affect the economy and growth;
- Social sensitivity regarding the water allocation between economic sectors;
- Limited application of the holistic multi-sectorial approach in water policies;
- Difficult transboundary cooperation on shared watercourse, especially in conflict areas;
- Insufficient joint research actions and knowledge share.

To overcome these challenges, many countries are in process of restructuring institutions involved in water and environmental governance, introducing stakeholder involvement practices and decentralization of water sector. In recent years, significant progress has been made in the region in terms of improved regional/transboundary cooperation.

#### Objective:

Define needs for good water governance in the MENA region.

#### Expected outcomes:

1. List of challenges for good water governance at all levels;
2. Recommendations for further strengthening water governance and improvement integrated water management in the MENA region;
3. List of ideas how MENA countries can contribute to meet water related SDGs

#### Key messages – Strengthening water governance:

1. MENA countries can contribute to meet water related SDGs
2. Good water governance at all levels is a precondition for sustainable growth
3. MENA water resources are affected by climate change, regional cooperation is seen as a solution
4. Dialogue and common understanding on shared water resources accelerates adaption of an integrated approach for managing regional water resources.

## Water related mitigation and adaptation measures to climate change for sustainable growth (Group 2)

### Brief problem description:

Article 2 of the UNFCCC refers to the dangerous human influences on climate, in terms of whether they would allow ecosystems to adapt, ensure that food production is not threatened and chart a path of sustainable economic development. Global, national and local level measures are needed to combat the adverse impacts of climate change induced damages.

In Arab region as well as MENA region, climate change is expected to affect the quantity and quality of the region's water resources. Previous studies have reported that regions with already scarce water resources, such as MENA region, will suffer even more from water scarcity. Previous regional and local studies of past weather records already show an increase in mean temperatures, and in the magnitude and frequency of extreme temperatures.

Increasing temperatures, coupled with changing precipitation patterns, are expected to decrease surface water availability, and, acting on top of other stresses, increase water scarcity in the Arab region. In addition, the region population continues to grow and there are greater than ever demands on its water supply. Current water usage exceeds available water rights and groundwater wells are being exploited at unsustainable rates.

Adverse impacts of climate change will negatively affect progress toward development in a number of key areas including agriculture and food security, water resources, public health, climate-related disaster risk management and natural resources management. The Government of the region should take these impacts into account in all its national planning efforts. In addition, it is anticipated that climate change will constrain the ability of developing countries to reach their poverty reduction and sustainable development objectives under the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The achievement of the MDG targets will depend on effective planning for managing climate risks.

Adaptation measures will be carried out by individuals as well as by communities, who will be supported by governments. Government interventions are necessary in many MENA countries as many communities and sectors of the economy do not have the necessary financial and technical resources to carry out activities that would facilitate adequate adaptation. The type of interventions will depend on national circumstances, but would necessarily include: integration of appropriate risk-reduction strategies with other sectoral policy initiatives, sustainable development planning, disaster prevention and management, integrated coastal zone management, health care planning, land-use planning, zoning, building codes, regulations, legislations, health education programmes, health monitoring and surveillance, solid and liquid waste management, use of traditional knowledge and coping mechanisms. Support from external sources, in the form of funding, technology, cooperation and pooling of resources, either through existing bilateral and multilateral mechanisms or new areas will become important.

A number of constraints exist with regards to ensuring resiliency of the MDGs in the context of emerging climate change pressures. Within this context Arab Region needs to face various important issues, such as: weak capacities of national agencies, local authorities and vulnerable communities to develop coping mechanisms and strategies on adaptation and risk management; lack of tools and systems to enable appropriate planning and implementation of climate change adaptation; and a general lack of information on technological adaptation and sustainable development. These issues will be discussed in the World Café 2016 roundtable discussion "**Water related mitigation and adaptation measures to**

**climate change for sustainable growth (Group 2)** change exacerbate the region's natural water scarcity and widen the gap between supply and demand.

**Objective:**

Discuss water related mitigation and adaptation measures to climate change in the MENA region

**Expected outcomes:**

1. Suggestions for improvement and sharing knowledge and information on water related mitigation and adaptation measures in the MENA region
2. Identified gaps at national and regional level to contribute and achieve goals of the new climate agreement
3. Advices for financing possibilities of water related mitigation and adaptation measures?

**Key messages – Strengthening water governance:**

5. Climate change over the past half-century has already affected water sector and its related sectors and will have increasing effects on them in the future.
6. Adaptation options and strategies are reported unevenly in the national communications. Few of them report explicitly adaptive capacity determinants
7. In the MENA region, funding for adaptation studies and projects comes predominantly from international sources, in particular the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), the World Bank, and the International Development Bank
8. More research is required to reduce current uncertainties about the climate-change impacts on water sector and its related sector and on people and to improve knowledge about management and policy measures for adaptation. Nevertheless, despite the limitations of current knowledge, climate change is progressing too quickly to postpone adaptation action pending the outcomes of future studies.
9. MENA countries can take action to reduce their vulnerability to climate change
10. MENA countries can take steps to reduce climate change impacts and build resilience.
11. Social and technical barriers limit the implementation of adaptation and mitigation practices in the MENA Region.
12. There are a number of funding resources that are available through the financial mechanism of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol and from bilateral partners to implement activities that would enable countries in MENA region to enhance their adaptive capacity and to strengthen adaptation to climate change in the long run.

## Water Security (Group 3)

### Brief problem description:

Water security, at any level from the household to the global, means that every person has access to enough safe water at affordable cost to lead a clean, healthy, and productive life, while ensuring that the natural environment is protected and enhanced (GWP definition). To achieve water security, seven 'main challenges' should be considered, as suggested in WWF2 'Water Security in the 21st Century' declaration: (1) meeting basic needs; (2) securing food supply; (3) protecting ecosystems; (4) sharing water resources; (5) managing risks; (6) valuing water and (7) governing water wisely.

MENA is the driest and most water-scarce region in the world, and this is increasingly affecting the economic and social development of most MENA countries. Thus, water security in MENA region was, already is, and should increasingly be in the focus of political decision making in the region and globally. At the same time, MENA countries share common features in the structure of local governance that reflect the legacy of the Ottoman and French colonial administrations: usually local government systems in MENA countries are largely centralized hierarchy systems with some deconcentrated features. Water sector institutional setting is centralised and managed mostly at the national level with little local stakeholder or civil society participation, resulting in ineffective, fragmented structures. Moreover, rapid urbanization, population growth and climate change exacerbate the region's natural water scarcity and widen the gap between supply and demand.

### Objective:

Discuss water security in MENA region, with special emphasize on local water issues and capacity of local self-governments and communities to contribute water security planning.

### Expected outcomes:

4. How to encourage local communities to work together?
5. How to promote local environmental governance?
6. What local communities can do to improve water security?

### Key messages – Strengthening water governance:

1. MENA countries can contribute to meet new water related SDGs;
2. Local communities can improve water security;
3. Capacity building programs at the local level are of crucial importance;
4. Local communities in MENA countries need develop and improve their capability for mutual cooperation in order to promote local environmental governance;
5. Modalities for fostering dialogue and building trust between decision makers should be improved.