

MENA Water World Café 2015 Issue Paper

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 de-concentrated 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:

- (1) How to encourage local communities to work together?
- (2) How to promote local environmental governance?
- (3) What local communities can do to improve water security?

Key messages:

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.