



Adaptation to Climate Change in the Water Sector in the MENA Region

Project Partner:	Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC) of League of Arab States (LAS) Intermediary partners: Arab Centre for the Study of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
Project Region:	Middle East and North Africa (MENA)
Project Term:	August 2011–July 2017
Project Budget:	total: EUR 7.5 million current phase: EUR 3.5 million

Context

The MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region is regularly cited as being the most precarious region in the world in terms of water security. The majority of countries in the region have access to less than 1000 m³ of renewable water resources annually per capita and can thus be characterised as water scarce, some countries even facing absolute scarcity with less than 500 m³ per capita.

Most states in the MENA region depend on shared rivers and/or aquifers to secure their water supply. What is more, about two thirds of all renewable water resources in the Arab countries originate outside the region. Despite this situation, no formal agreement for joint water management of shared resources has been approved so far. This confirms the challenges caused by the region's geographical and political characteristics, these challenges differ from those in many other large international river basins. Generally, the region has access to only few rivers and lakes, and the large rivers have their sources outside the region (e.g. Nile, Euphrates, Tigris). Making matters difficult, negotiations at the trans-regional scale are po-

litically contentious. The management of transboundary groundwater aquifers shared between Arab states has, on the other hand, benefitted from greater efforts. This has been the case since the region's acute aridity causes heavy reliance on its groundwater resources.

Growing water demand stemming from population growth and economic development as well as climate change present additional pressures on the region's limited water resources. With declining water availability, the management of shared transboundary water plays a continuously crucial role for socio-economic development as well as political relations among the respective countries.

The strengthening of coordination and cooperation between Arab states sharing water basins is one of the Arab Ministerial Council for Water's (AMWC) objectives. The council was founded in 2009 under the League of Arab States (LAS) as a response to increasing challenges in the field of water, food security and climate change. Work done by the AMWC is carried out in accordance with the Arab Strategy for Water Security, which was drafted by the Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD). The strategy was adopted in 2010 and functions as a framework for joint action between 2010–2030. One of the strategy's objectives is to promote "cooperation among Arab states for the management of shared water resources". This target has been further defined in an "Arab Countries Cross Continental Process" at the 6th World Water Forum. Its aims are stated as follows:

- 1) "by 2020 the signing of permanent agreements on shared water resources in the Arab region according to the "Arab Convention on shared ground water resources in the Arab Region" and "International Water law" and



- 2) “by 2025 reinforcing the establishment of permanent agreements between riparian Arab countries and neighbouring countries on ground and surface water resources on reasonable and equitable basis and according to International Water Law and historic agreements”.

Project

The GIZ programme ‘Adaptation to Climate Change in the Water Sector in the MENA Region’ (ACCWaM) aims to improve the capacity of water management institutions in the MENA region in adapting to climate change. By supporting its three regional partner institutions – the Ministerial Water Council (AMWC) of the Arab League (LAS), the Arab Centre for the Study of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) – ACCWaM contributes to an overall strengthening of regional water governance in the Arab region. By supporting AMWC, the project enhances the targeted improvement of shared water resource management. In addition to its focus on regional governance, ACCWaM supports the national water institutions, the private sector and civil society. This work fosters the multi-level participatory decision making process and enables a coherent and coordinated approach.

ACCWaM’s participation in the ESCWA’s ‘Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-economic vulnerability in the Arab Region’ (RICCAR) is another significant contribution to regional cooperation. This initiative is the outcome of a collaborative effort between the United Nations and the League of Arab States (LAS), including its respective specialised organisations, that responds to a request of the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC) and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the

Environment (CAMRE). RICCAR seeks to deepen understanding regarding the impact of climate change on water resources and the associated implications for socio-economic vulnerability in the Arab region. The development of vulnerability assessment capabilities as well as the implementation of an integrated mapping tool serve to stimulate cooperation among scientific institutions, knowledge exchange and data sharing. The outcomes of such assessments are meant to provide a common platform for addressing and responding to climate change impacts on freshwater resources in the Arab region. They do so by serving as the basis for dialogue, priority setting and policy formulation at the regional and national levels.

Impact

- Being ACCWaM’s partners – AMWC, ACSAD and ESCWA – are significant regional players in the water sector, their strengthening is beneficial for overall regional water governance.
- ACCWaM’s support contributes to: improved water policy making at AMWC; enhancement in the creation and sharing of regional knowledge on water and climate change with ESCWA; and to the introduction and up-scaling of innovative climate change adaptation measures in the region with ACSAD and the water ministries.
- Support for multiple stakeholders representing various levels, including national authorities, the private sector, civil society and scientific institutions in the water sector enables improved coordination and exchange.
- The backing of common regional approaches such as the Arab Strategy for Water Security and RICCAR helps intensify cooperation between the Arab states.
- ACCWaM fosters climate change adaptation in the water sector, thereby reducing the pressure on the region’s scarce water resources.

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