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**PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN IMPLEMENTING THE REGIONAL INITIATIVE
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MECHANISM TO MONITOR THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT
GOALS RELATED TO WATER AND SANITATION
IN THE ARAB REGION (MDG+ INITIATIVE)**

Summary

The regional initiative for the development of a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to water and sanitation in the Arab region (MDG+ Initiative) is an outcome of a series of resolutions adopted by the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC) requesting ESCWA to lead the establishment of a regional coordination mechanism for improved monitoring and reporting on water supply and sanitation indicators in consultation with the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA), the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE), the Arab Water Council (AWC), the Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Because the rationale behind the current MDG indicators on water and sanitation are directly related to improving public health and reducing the spread of disease, they fall short of clarifying the level and quality of water and sanitation services accessible to the population. Resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and Human Rights Council in 2010 recognized access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right. That right should be monitored against the criteria of availability, quality, acceptability, accessibility and affordability. There was a need to develop additional region-specific indicators that more accurately reflect the status and accessibility of water supply and sanitation services in Arab countries.

Additional region-specific indicators were proposed by ESCWA, after which AMWC approved them and mandated ESCWA to coordinate follow-up. The Commission prepared a project document and finalized a financing agreement with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. The project is being implemented by ESCWA and ACWUA in consultation with an Advisory Board, and aims to establish and institutionalize a regional mechanism for monitoring and reporting on access to water supply and sanitation services in the Arab region. The purpose is to develop a knowledge platform that provides reliable data, information and analysis regarding the accessibility and the level and quality of water supply and sanitation services in Arab countries. It is anticipated that the additional regional indicators will feed into biennial reports on progress towards the MDG targets related to water and sanitation beginning in 2013.

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Introduction

1. The development commitments expressed at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002 led to the formulation and adoption of eight development goals, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Progress towards achieving MDGs by 2015 is monitored and reported upon through a series of targets and associated indicators. Goal 7 on ensuring environmental sustainability includes three indicators related to water, two of which are used to monitor access to drinking water and sanitation (Target 7.C). They are listed in the table below:

MDG 7: Ensuring environmental sustainability	
Target 7.A	Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources
	Indicator 7.5 Proportion of total water resources used
Target 7.C	Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation*
	Indicator 7.8 Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source
	Indicator 7.9 Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility

* Achievements are computed on the basis of the original access figures of the base year of 1990.

2. The importance of universal access to improved water supply sources and sanitation facilities was reaffirmed by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 64/292 of 28 July 2010 and Human Rights Council resolution 15/9 of 30 September 2010. Both resolutions recognized access to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right.

3. The Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) serves as the institutionalized mechanisms for monitoring Target 7.C on access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. Of the estimated 357 million people in the Arab region, approximately 63 million (18 per cent) do not have access to improved drinking water sources, and 83 million (23 per cent) do not have access to improved sanitation facilities.¹ Although some Arab countries have already achieved, or are on track to achieve, the water supply and sanitation targets by 2015, others still face major challenges which have generally been attributed to insufficient investment and weak institutional capacity. However, deeper analysis shows that access to water supply and sanitation services in the Arab region is much more limited than those figures reveal, due to the reasons highlighted below.

4. At first glance, the MDG indicators on water and sanitation appear to measure access to water and sanitation services. However, a closer look into the different categories that define "improved water supply sources" and "improved sanitation facilities" reveals that the indicators are directly related to improving public health and reducing the risk of the spread of disease. The indicators do not clarify the level and quality of water and sanitation services accessed by the population. For example, while an estimated 82 per cent of the population in the Arab region has access to improved water sources,² this does not mean that their access is regular or reliable, or that the quality of water supplied is adequate for drinking. The indicators related to Target 7.C primarily measure access to infrastructure, rather than the actual quality and continuity of water supply and sanitation services. Additional region-specific indicators were needed to more appropriately reflect the delivery of water supply and sanitation services in Arab countries. Those additional indicators can also be used to measure progress on improving access to clean drinking water and sanitation services. Moreover, achieving the goal of universal access to safe water and sanitation within the context of human rights will remain a development goal beyond 2015.

¹ Based on data from 2010, available from the JMP database: <http://www.wssinfo.org/data-estimates/table/>.

² Ibid.

I. BACKGROUND AND MANDATE

5. The regional initiative for the development of a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the MDGs related to water and sanitation in the Arab Region (MDG+ Initiative) is an outcome of a series of resolutions adopted by the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC) requesting ESCWA to lead the establishment of a regional coordination mechanism for improved monitoring and reporting on water supply and sanitation indicators in the Arab region in consultation with the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA), the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE), the Arab Water Council (AWC) and the Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED).

6. At its ninth session in March 2011, ESCWA Committee on Water Resources endorsed the MDG+ Initiative and called on ESCWA “to seek the mobilization of resources in support of the implementation of the MDG+ Initiative including for capacity building, the collection of data, the calculation of indicators and knowledge management”.

7. Based on a set of criteria and an intergovernmental consultations process involving Arab Governments and institutions, the additional agreed upon MDG+ indicators are listed in the table below.

Water supply	Sanitation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water consumption • Continuity of supply • Water quality • Distance to source • Tariff structure • Affordability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treated quantity • Treatment type • Reuse • Reuse type • Tariff structure • Affordability

8. The additional indicators for monitoring water supply examine water consumption, continuity of supply, water quality, distance to the water supply source and the financial burden of access. The additional indicators for sanitation clarify the degree of environmental protection provided and include the level of wastewater treatment, type of treatment, wastewater reuse and the financial burden of access. Efforts were made to consider indicators for water supply and sanitation in a comparable manner; common types of indicators are reflected for both water supply and sanitation, although the methodology for collecting supporting information would reflect the characteristics of each sector. That is intended to facilitate the process of dissemination and training on the indicators and provide ministries and water operators with a new set of comparable information on water supply and sanitation services that can be used in integrated planning and decision-making on investment and service provision.

9. After the additional indicators were developed by ESCWA, discussed with partners and approved by the Technical Scientific Advisory Committee of the AMWC, a comprehensive and unified methodology and format was needed to facilitate the collection and compilation of the primary and secondary data. At its second session held in Cairo on 2 July 2010, AMWC issued a resolution that invited “ESCWA in coordination with ACWUA, CEDARE, WHO, AWC, and RAED to prepare a template based on unified indicators and criteria for the implementation of the water and sanitation MDG and to forward the template to the Technical Secretariat of the Council no later than October 30, 2010”.³

10. Subsequently, ESCWA submitted the indicators and questionnaire template to the Technical Secretariat of AMWC and finalized the template based on the comments of the Council. The Arab Heads of State at the second Arab Economic Social and Development Summit held in Sharm El-Sheikh (19 January 2011), recognized “the preparation of a unified template of indicators and standards for water supply and sanitation in cooperation with Arab, regional and international organizations” within the context of the efforts of Arab countries to achieve MDGs.

³ AMWC, session 2, resolution 18, item 1.

11. ESCWA formally presented the unified template to the Technical Scientific Advisory Committee during its fourth session on 24-26 April 2011. The unified template was later approved by AMWC during its third session held on 15-16 June 2011, and AMWC also requested that all Arab countries nominate national focal points to facilitate the coordination with ESCWA and other partners on data collection and analysis leading to the preparation of the first progress report on the achievements of Arab countries on the additional indicators in accordance with the approved template. The Council invited ESCWA, ACWUA, CEDARE, AWC and RAED “to contact regional and international funding agencies . . . to secure funding for the implementation of activities related to the provision of an information system and the building capacity of national focal points and other activities related to the preparation of the first report . . . on water supply and sanitation in the Arab region . . . based on the indicators and standards mentioned in the adopted unified template”.⁴

12. The MDG+ Initiative thus responds to the request to establish a new monitoring and reporting scheme for water supply and sanitation in the Arab region as articulated by Arab Governments through the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit and AMWC. As detailed in the resolution, ESCWA is responsible for establishing and operationalizing the Initiative, which will be implemented in partnership with ACWUA and in collaboration with CEDARE, AWC, RAED and WHO under the auspices of AMWC.

II. MDG+ INITIATIVE

A. ADDED VALUE OF ADDITIONAL INDICATORS

13. Classifications of improved and unimproved water supply and sanitation facilities have been used in JMP, and are outlined in the table below.⁵

Improved water supply	Unimproved water supply
(a) House connection (b) Standpipe (c) Tube-well (d) Protected water source including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dug well; • Spring; (e) Rainwater collection.	(a) Unprotected water source including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring; • Dug well; (b) Surface water; (c) Tanker water; (d) Bottled water.*
Improved sanitation facilities	Unimproved sanitation facilities
(a) Flush or pour-flush connected to one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piped sewerage system; • Septic tank; • Pit latrine; (b) Pit latrine with slab; (c) Ventilated improved pit latrine (VIP); (d) Composting toilet.	(a) Shared facilities of any type; (b) Use of the following facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flush or pour-flush not connected to sewer, septic tank or pit latrine; • Pit latrine without slab/open pit; • Bucket latrines; • Hanging toilet or hanging latrine; (c) No facilities

* Bottled water is considered an improved source of drinking water only when there is a secondary source of improved water for other uses, such as personal hygiene and cooking.

⁴ AMWC, session 3, resolution 35, item 2.

⁵ Available from www.wssinfo.org/definitions-methods/watsan-categories/.

14. The added value of the additional indicators is that they monitor the quality of services and the protection of the environment. Below is a brief description of the additional indicators that expand upon the basic JMP classifications.

1. *Water supply*

15. *Water consumption* measures total water consumption in litres per person per day (lpd). The indicator reflects the relationship between available freshwater and domestic demand, and the need to develop new or reallocate existing water sources for domestic use. Water consumption quantities vary widely between the different Arab countries and between urban and rural regions within the same country. For example, average drinking water consumption in Mauritania was estimated at 53 lpd in 2008,⁶ and at 235 lpd in Saudi Arabia in 2006.⁷ In rural areas domestic water consumption may be as low as 10 lpd in Mauritania and 100 liters in Saudi Arabia.

16. *Continuity of supply* classifies the level of service consumers receive, ranging between continuous and intermittent. There are four subcategories of intermittent supply, namely: 3-4 days of supply per week, once weekly, biweekly or less than biweekly. The indicator can indirectly map the need for supplemental water supply at the household level, or the need for in-house water storage structures, both of which impose an additional financial burden and can have a detrimental impact on water quality. The situation in some Arab countries is acute; in Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, the Sudan, Yemen and other countries, water supply is mostly intermittent. It is likely that increasing demand from growing urban populations and limited water resources are contributing factors in those cases. Mapping water delivery to consumers and its consumption could trigger utilities to investigate the reasons for the low service level, which could result from low production capacities, operational inefficiencies, or other interlinked factors.

17. *Water quality* measures the proportion of the population using water from a house connection or stand pipe that has been disinfected at the water source. Many Arab countries rely on centralized treatment plants and long distribution networks to serve consumers. Major cities are supplied with water directly from sources that are considered of good quality, although disinfection equipment are often not operated due to financial or technical difficulties. The indicator does not require measuring the impacts of the disinfection process at the consumer end due to the high costs of testing, and it is assumed that disinfection at the water source provides adequate protection for consumers. That is already a big improvement over the current practice where no information on water quality is monitored or reported. Of course, more data on water quality would be useful, but the added value of the additional information must be weighed against the associated costs. Within the overall objective to clarify the safety of the water supply, the proposed indicator serves the purpose at a minimal cost.

18. *Distance to source* measures the proportion of the population in rural areas that obtains water from a source located no more than 500 m from their home, and the proportion of the population in urban areas that can obtain water in 30 minutes or less. The indicator highlights the need to develop additional water sources in rural areas or invest in additional water distribution networks. The information provided by this indicator is crucial to inform decision makers of the need to reprioritize investment within the water and sanitation sector.

19. *Tariff structure* distinguishes between flat and volumetric tariff structures, to clarify affordability and, when combined with other technical data on leakages, explain water use efficiency and water production and consumption levels. Such information could have a profound role in shaping national policies on cost

⁶ Caroline Van Den Berg and Alexander Danilenko, 2011, *The IBNET Water Supply and Sanitation Performance Blue Book*, Washington D.C.: World Bank, p. 94.

⁷ Walid A. Abderrahman, 2006, "Water Management in Arriyadh", *International Journal of Water Resources Development*, 22(2): 281.

recovery of water supply services. The indicator can signal, according to the type of tariff used, the financial sustainability of the utilities providing water services. Volumetric tariffs discourage excessive use of water and thus promote water conservation. Variants of volumetric water tariffs are common in many Arab countries.

20. *Affordability* measures the cost of water in proportion to income. It is the ratio of the average monthly cost of water supply to the average monthly household income. In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly reaffirmed that access to water is a human right, and that services to meet basic water and sanitation needs must be affordable for the poorest sections of society. In developing countries, the poor are often not connected to the public water network and thus pay a higher share of their income for a lower quantity and often lower quality of water. Affordability for low-income households could become a significant issue in some Arab countries where higher tariffs could be introduced to offset the cost of operating and maintaining water utilities or to finance the rehabilitation of existing water infrastructure or the construction of new water infrastructure.

2. Sanitation

21. *Treated quantity* measures the quantity of treated wastewater and indirectly provides valuable information on the pollution load on the environment from the direct disposal of untreated wastewater. The aim is to quantify domestic wastewater generated from a certain coverage area, which usually ranges between 80 and 90 per cent of the consumed water. Given the high cost (capital, operation and maintenance) associated with wastewater collection and treatment, the level of wastewater services varies widely between the different Arab countries. Higher levels of wastewater collection and treatment result from financial capacity in addition to national environmental laws and the institutional and administrative capacities of the water sector.

22. *Treatment type* complements the information provided by the previous indicator in that it distinguishes between various treatment levels and clarifies the residual environmental risk associated with the reuse or disposal of treated wastewater. To avoid the difficulty of quantifying the level of treatment through the use of discharge and effluent concentration limits, the indicator measures the treatment level in a qualitative manner using the general standard levels of wastewater treatment; namely, primary (physical), secondary (physical and biological), and tertiary (physical, biological and chemical). Due to the range of economic and environmental conditions in Arab countries, the extent of connection to wastewater treatment plants and the level of treatment vary significantly. Generally, coverage of sewerage systems and wastewater treatment is largely limited to capital cities. Secondary and tertiary treatment plants have been installed in some of the major cities of some countries; while in other countries, the use of onsite wastewater disposal facilities like septic tanks and cesspits is common practice. Although treatment plants that have been installed in some countries were designed to produce effluent of a secondary level of quality, rapid population growth and delays in securing funds for new construction have caused treatment plans to be overloaded and to produce lower-quality effluent.

23. *Reuse* aims to quantify the amount of treated wastewater being used for different purposes. For the purpose of environmental protection, it is important to clarify the volume of wastewater reuse in relation to the types of reuse. Due to the high cost of wastewater-related infrastructure, both for collection and treatment, many countries adopt a phased approach to wastewater projects that usually begins with the collection sewers. Later, when more funding has been secured, they move on to treatment facilities. In some cases projects involving the construction of the sewerage system are accompanied by some type of treatment. Funding restrictions on water and wastewater projects are increasing, which reflect environmental protection policies to a large extent. Although many Arab countries either officially ban the use of raw wastewater, or have severe restrictions on the use of treated wastewater, violations are common especially for irrigation. Although the indicator provides important information on the potential environmental impact of wastewater disposal, it also highlights that treated wastewater can be a reliable water source that needs to be incorporated within the overall management of water resources, especially in the water-scarce Arab region.

24. *Reuse type* aims to map the fate of collected domestic wastewater. There are several common uses of collected wastewater, whether treated or not, most notably for irrigation. The indicator includes the possible alternative uses of collected wastewater including intentional or unintentional groundwater recharge, domestic, or other uses. Clarifying the reuse type and disposal method of collected wastewater helps planners and decision makers to prioritize investment on the basis of environmental policies and strategies. It must be emphasized that, in many cases, treated wastewater is a reliable and growing water source that can be incorporated within the overall water budget to meet some of the growing water demand for irrigation and industrial uses, thus relieving some pressure on valuable freshwater resources. Technical and managerial capacity in the area of wastewater reuse varies between Arab countries with Jordan, Tunisia and some Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries showing competency. Reuse of untreated wastewater for irrigation dominates all other uses and in the absence of strict monitoring, crop restrictions are not usually respected.

25. *Tariff structure* measures the proportion of the population connected to a sewer network and billed through either a flat or a volumetric rate based on water consumption. The flat tariff structure does not provide adequate incentives for water saving, resulting in increased generation of domestic wastewater. Besides putting stress on the existing scarce water resources, flat tariff structures also result in increased wastewater and require additional funding for infrastructure or lead to pollution and adverse environmental impacts.

26. *Affordability* clarifies the ability of an average household to obtain wastewater services, which is usually expressed as the incurred cost of the service as a percentage of the monthly income (based on national household budget surveys). When combining the data on income with those on tariff structure, a clear picture of the financial burden on households emerges. The indicator can show the affordability of basic sanitation services, especially for the poorest segment of society. A comparison between international standards and sanitation service charges as a percentage of income will show if the cost is excessive. The issue of affordability is important especially when seeking to connect the poorer segments of society to sanitation services while maintaining adequate levels of cost recovery.

B. OBJECTIVES

27. The direct objective of the project is to establish and institutionalize a regional mechanism for monitoring and reporting on access to water supply and sanitation services in Arab countries based on the regional context and in view of developing a knowledge platform that provides reliable data, information and analysis on the level and quality of access to water supply and sanitation services in Arab countries.

28. The information generated and disseminated from that platform will serve as a basis for informed decision-making on the needs, priorities and targets to realize the human right to water and sanitation in the Arab region. The outcome of the project will also inform national, regional and international policy dialogue and planning discussions on the adoption of regionally sensitive approaches to development targets in a post-MDG environment.

29. Given that the MDG+ project funded by SIDA is the operational tool of the MDG+ Initiative, which has been adopted and approved by AMWC, the overall development objective of the project can thus be formulated as follows: by 2015, water and sanitation policy in the Arab region is informed by reliable data, information and analysis based on a set of region-specific indicators endorsed by Arab Governments.

C. EXPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

30. The project intends to achieve the above direct objective and development objective through the following expected accomplishments:

(a) **Enhance regional and national monitoring capacity** in the area of data collection, management and monitoring on the MDG+ indicators on water supply and sanitation, through three complementary subcomponents:

- (i) An institutional component including the following:
 - a. Nominate National Focal Points, who will also chair the National Monitoring Teams;
 - b. Establish National Monitoring Teams;
 - c. Identify Vice-Chair of the National Monitoring Team (ACWUA representative);
 - d. Establish the Advisory Board to follow up the implementation of the project.
- (ii) A training component including the following:
 - a. Develop methodologies for data collection, management and analysis;
 - b. Prepare training materials;
 - c. Hold several regional coordination, training and follow-up workshops.
- (iii) A technical assistance component including the following:
 - a. Provide advisory services and support to National Monitoring Teams;
 - b. Provide on-the-job training through intraregional exchanges.

(b) **Establish a regional data management platform** to be used as a reliable tool to manage the collected data and support regular reporting on progress achieved on the level, quality and type of access to water supply and sanitation services in Arab countries;

(c) **Institutionalize the regional monitoring programme** that contributes to water and sanitation policymaking through a monitoring mechanism implemented at the regional and national levels and formalized through the submission of the biennial progress reports to AMWC;

(d) **Strengthen regional dialogue** through a series of meetings that engage a variety of stakeholders in the debate regarding the formulation and findings of MDG+ indicators within the context of the Arab region, and which contribute to the global policy debate on the preparation and adoption of development objectives in a post-MDG environment after 2015. The following activities will be conducted:

- (i) Organize a regional seminar to discuss lessons learned and exchange experiences on MDG+ indicators and preliminary findings with selected members of the National Monitoring Teams and regional stakeholders involved in the collection and compilation of information related to the MDG+ indicators;
- (ii) Prepare and disseminate project briefs and a brochure at national, regional and international forums about the MDG+ Initiative;
- (iii) Organize an expert group meeting to discuss the MDG+ indicators, findings and lessons learned;
- (iv) Organize a high-level meeting on the MDG+ indicators in a post-MDG environment. The meeting would involve high-level representatives of Governments and civil society organizations engaged in water as it relates to MDGs and the post-2015 development agenda. The purpose of the meeting would be to exchange and review lesson learned, to exchange policy recommendations and proposals for a post-MDG framework on water supply and sanitation based on the outcomes of the previous expert group meeting and to solidify institutional mechanisms and processes to ensure the sustainability of the regional mechanism for the implementation of the MDG+ Initiative beyond project completion.

D. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

31. The project will increase the capacity of concerned stakeholders to understand and assess the state of access to water supply and sanitation in the Arab region based on a set of region-specific indicators. In doing so, the following outputs will be produced:

(a) Two regional monitoring reports on the MDG+ indicators will be published under the auspices of AMWC in 2013 and 2015. The reports will be made available in Arabic and English and in hard copy and electronic formats. Similar to the approach adopted in JMP reports, the indicators, both basic and additional, will be presented as national aggregates for each country in addition to disaggregated figures for urban and rural areas;

(b) During the course of the project, eight project progress reports on the MDG+ Initiative will be submitted to AMWC and its associated bodies to inform Arab Governments on the implementation of the initiative. Two of those progress reports will consist of the regional monitoring reports noted above;

(c) National Monitoring Teams will be established along with a regional data management platform for compiling data, calculating indicators and contributing to the national and regional reports on the MDG+ indicators during the course of this project and beyond;

(d) An MDG+ Unit will be established at ACWUA, which will be responsible for providing technical assistance; coordinating with counterparts, operationalizing the regional data management platform; producing biennial regional progress reports and pursuing the sustainability of the initiative following project completion;

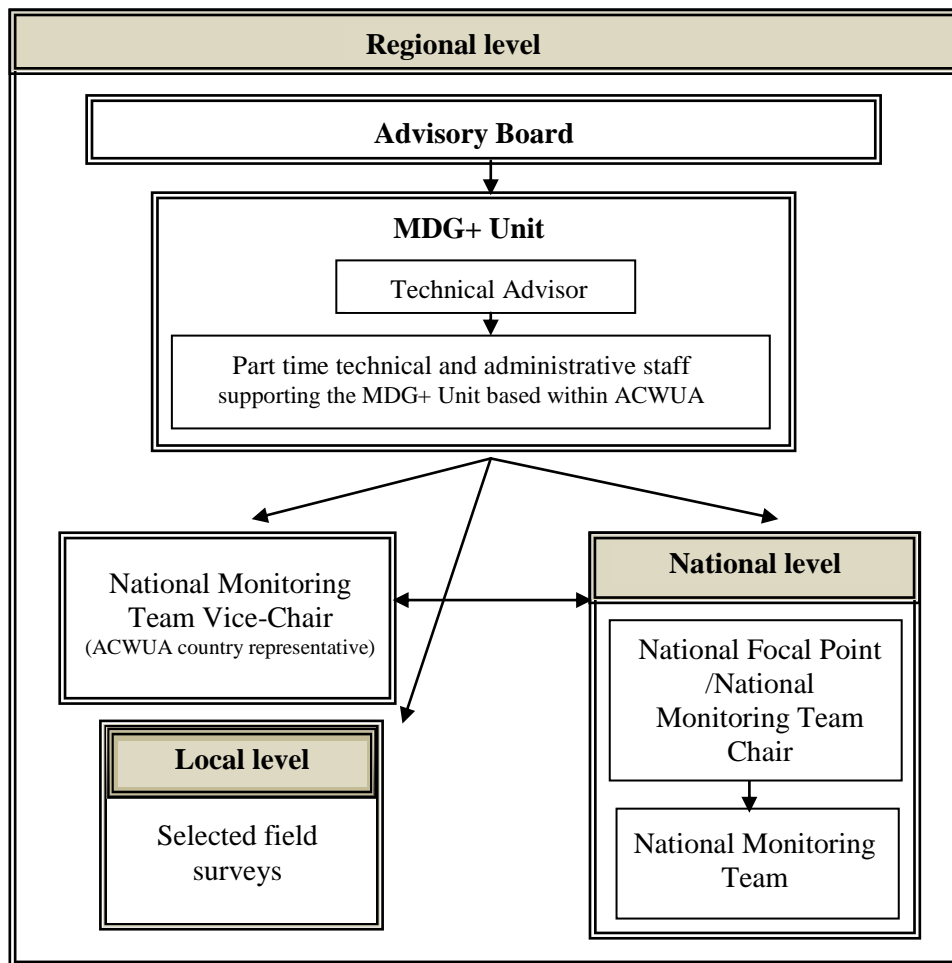
(e) A website will be launched and brochure will be published in both Arabic and English;

(f) Ministerial resolutions issued by Arab Governments will recognize the project and its outputs.

E. DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

32. The data management system of the MDG+ Initiative will perform selective validation field surveys at the national, regional and local levels. An illustration of the structure of the data management system is provided below.

Institutional structure of the data management system



1. The national level

33. As stipulated in the resolution of AMWC, each Arab country should nominate a National Focal Point to coordinate and follow up the implementation of the project activities at the national level. The Focal Point will serve as the chair of the National Monitoring Team that will be responsible for the collection of indicators related to the regional monitoring programme at the country level and thus the completion of the MDG+ questionnaire template.

34. The country-level representative (ACWUA country representative in each Arab country that is a member of ACWUA) will serve as the Vice-Chair of the National Monitoring Team. Through the MDG+ Unit, ACWUA will help to identify representatives of water utilities to serve as Vice-Chair of the National Monitoring Team in ESCWA member countries that are not members of ACWUA in consultation with the National Focal Point. The decision will be formalized by the ACWUA Board of Directors.

35. The National Monitoring Teams will need to institutionalize the monitoring programme at the national level, and ensure inter-agency coordination and cooperation through regular meetings and joint preparation of the official MDG+ questionnaire template. Arab countries need to create and support the institutional setting and allocate an appropriate budget for the monitoring teams to enable its success.

2. The regional level

36. An Advisory Board will be established and be composed of designated representatives from institutions included in the resolutions of AMWC related to the MDG+ Initiative, namely the League of Arab States, ESCWA, ACWUA, CEDARE, AWC, RAED and WHO. The Advisory Board will support the elaboration, implementation and dissemination of information on the MDG+ indicators and findings and discuss strategic approaches for examining and raising awareness about the findings of the initiative and lessons learned. The Advisory Board will meet regularly on the sidelines of meetings of the AMWC Technical Scientific Advisory Committee.

37. At the regional level, an MDG+ Unit will be based at ACUWA in Amman, as part of the ACWUA organizational hierarchy. The unit will be staffed as follows:

(a) A Technical Advisor who would report to ACWUA, and receive technical support from ESCWA on substantive matters;

(b) Part-time technical and administrative staff would also support the unit in Amman (part-time information technology specialist, part-time secretary, part-time financial officer/procurement officer), who would report to the Technical Advisor.

38. The MDG+ Unit will be responsible for the following:

(a) Coordinating and communicating with National Monitoring Teams; collecting, compiling and analysing questionnaire templates and field surveys, with technical support from ESCWA;

(b) Providing technical assistance and support to National Monitoring Teams;

(c) Establishing, operating and managing the regional data management platform;

(d) Preparing and publishing the regular reports on the MDG+ indicators in electronic and hard copy in Arabic and English, on the basis of quantitative and qualitative information, with technical support from ESCWA;

(e) Supporting the submission of the regular progress reports to AMWC and its associated bodies and assisting in the dissemination of information on the initiative and reporting findings to national, regional and global forums;

(f) Ensuring the sustainability of the MDG+ Initiative beyond the 2015 project end date. The MDG+ Unit will prepare a funding plan and associated proposals for that purpose. That will include consulting with regional stakeholders and potential donors interested in supporting the continued use and collection of the MDG+ indicators within the context of development planning and the monitoring of region-specific development goals related to the water sector beyond 2015. The project Advisory Board will assist the MDG+ Unit in that effort.

3. The local level - validation field surveys

39. The official data gathered from the MDG+ questionnaire template completed by the National Monitoring Teams will be complemented by representative field surveys conducted in selected areas of some countries. The field surveys will provide local-level insights against which the official data received from Governments can be compared and analysed. Only four to six countries will be selected by the Advisory Board in consultation with National Focal Points to implement the field surveys. The Advisory Board members and institutions will be invited to conduct the field surveys based on their outreach in local institution and non-governmental organizations in targeted communities, or to identify suitable counterparts

to conduct the surveys. The surveys will provide qualitative narratives that complement the official quantitative data collected through the National Monitoring Teams, and will be used to inform and elaborate the two regional MDG+ monitoring reports that will be issued during the course of the project.

F. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS ACHIEVED

40. A project agreement to finance the implementation of the MDG+ Initiative was concluded with SIDA in December 2011. The MDG+ questionnaire template was finalized and approved by AMWC. A memorandum of understanding was signed by ESCWA and ACWUA to jointly implement the MDG+ project, and on that basis, ACWUA is currently establishing the MDG+ Unit and recruiting the Technical Advisor. Although AMWC has reaffirmed the need for countries to name National Focal Points in two consecutive resolutions, only 13 Arab countries have done so. Those countries are Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Yemen.

III. NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

41. Given that the MDG+ Initiative has obtained the needed funding for its implementation, it is preferable that all member countries of the League of Arab States participate in order to encompass the entire region. Because of the limited timeline of the project in relation to its expected accomplishments, the project could start the implementation phase with the 13 countries that have already nominated National Focal Points. Efforts will continue to engage the remaining Arab countries. They will be included in the project as soon as they nominate a National Focal Point, whose work at the national level is considered essential to the project. Finalizing the recruitment of the MDG+ Technical Advisor at ACWUA is the first step into institutionalizing the MDG+ Unit and the monitoring programme. During the coming months, the training manual will be finalized and workshops will be held to train the National Focal Points and key members within the National Monitoring Teams. According to the project timeline, the first regional progress report on the MDG+ Initiative is expected to be issued in 2013. With dedicated commitments from the National Focal Points and the National Monitoring Teams, and the right technical assistance from ACWUA and ESCWA, the deadline can still be met by the end of 2013.

42. It is recommended that ESCWA Committee on Water Resources, at its tenth session, adopt a recommendation that supports the MDG-related resolutions of AMWC and calls upon ESCWA member countries to exert the needed efforts to realize the objectives of the MDG+ Initiative. More specifically, water ministries in member countries that have not named their National Focal Points are requested to do so as soon as possible so that the project encompasses all ESCWA member countries. Water authorities are also requested to provide support to National Focal Points and the Monitoring Team and allocate sufficient budgets to ensure adequate and reliable data collection, processing and analysis at the national level. The project implementation institutions, namely ESCWA and ACWUA, are requested to expedite the preparation of the training manual and training workshops and provide adequate support and assistance to the country teams.
