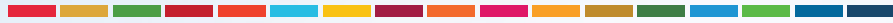


WATER ACTION DECADE 2018-2028

WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



ARAB REGION ENGAGEMENT



WATER ACTION DECADE
2018-2028



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WATER ACTION DECADE
2018-2028



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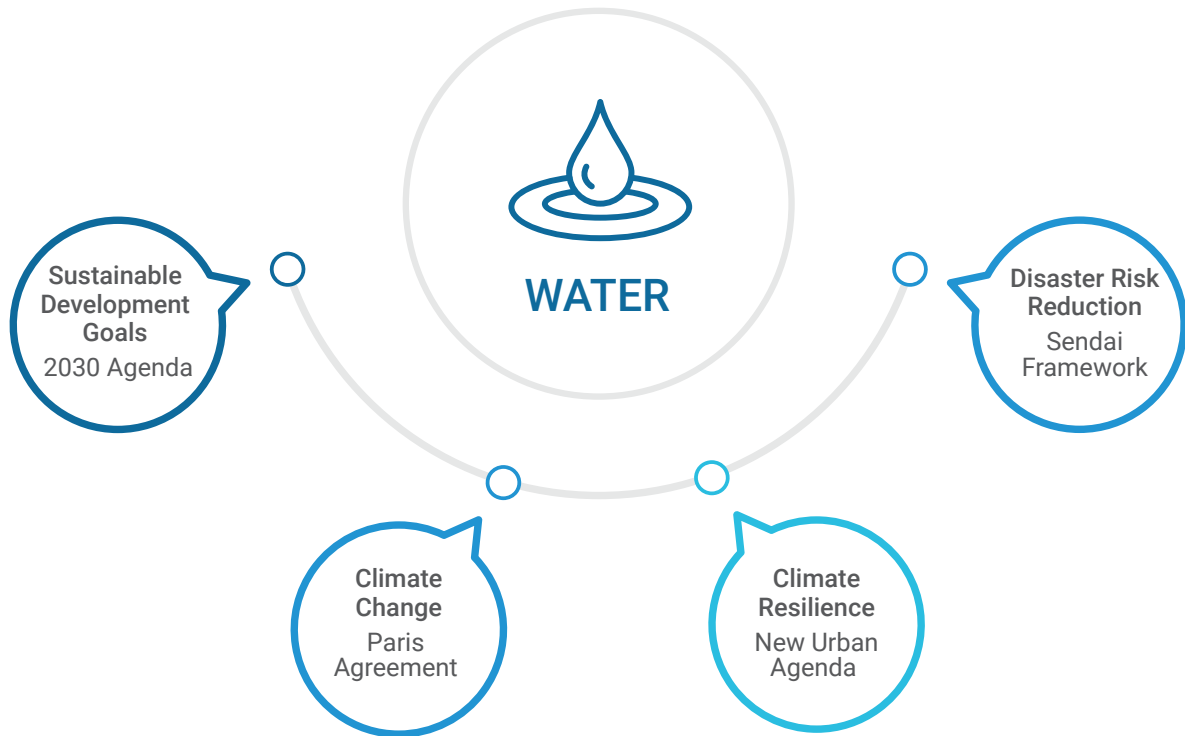
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WHY A WATER ACTION DECADE?



Water issues are addressed in four landmark agreements adopted in 2015 and 2016 that are guiding global efforts to achieve sustainable development, namely the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the New Urban Agenda. The central role of water is recognized as a connector and key element to each of these global agendas.

The *International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development*, commonly referred to as the Water Action Decade, pursues an integrated approach incorporating water consideration in efforts to achieve sustainable development. It recognises that this should be pursued through global processes as well as regional and national collaborative actions aimed at achieving social, economic and environmental goals.



GLOBAL WATER ACTION DECADE MANDATE



In December 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/71/222 proclaiming the period 2018 to 2028 The International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development. The Decade promotes water as a pillar to achieve the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It seeks to do so through cooperation, partnerships and mobilizing action, including through capacity building.

United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/71/222

Proclaims the period from 2018 to 2028 the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, to commence on World Water Day, 22 March 2018, and terminate on World Water Day, 22 March 2028;

Requests the Secretary-General, with the support of UN-Water, the specialized agencies, the regional commissions and other entities of the United Nations system to facilitate the implementation of the Decade;

Encourages Member States, relevant United Nations bodies, the specialized agencies, the regional commissions and other organizations of the United Nations system, as well as other relevant partners, including the private sector, to contribute to the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028 to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Water Action Decade Objectives

- Advance sustainable development and integrated water resources management (IWRM) for the achievement of social, economic and environmental objectives;
- Energize implementation and promotion of existing programmes and projects; and
- Mobilize action, cooperation and partnerships at all levels to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



REGIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE WATER ACTION DECADE

The Arab region is water scarce with a high dependency on groundwater and desalination.

The aim of the Water Action Decade to prioritize water for sustainable development is thus well-received by Arab States. This is demonstrated by recommendations and positions adopted by Arab States in intergovernmental and regional forums, including by the Arab Ministerial Water Council, the ESCWA Committee on Water Resources and in regional consultations on water.

ESCWA Committee on Water Resources

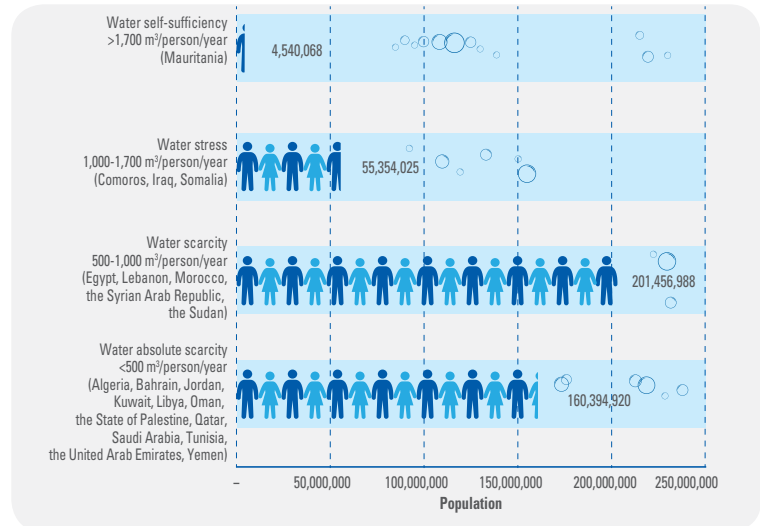
ESCWA Committee on Water Resources at its twelfth session (Amman, March 2017) adopted a recommendation asking ESCWA to:

- Support the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018-2028,
- Finance member State participation in its activities; and
- Assist member States ensure progress in achieving the water-related SDGs.

Arab Ministerial Water Council

The Arab Ministerial Water Council at its 10th Session (Kuwait, May 2018) adopted a resolution that “Encourages Arab States and stakeholders to share their best practices and efforts to advance the water-related dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by drawing upon resources related to the International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development (2018-2028), and disseminating their activities on the Water Action Decade knowledge platform (www.wateractiondecade.org).”

Total renewable water resources available per capita/year in Arab States



Arab Priorities on Water for Sustainable Development:

- Strengthen IWRM – through enhanced efficiency, conservation and water use and productivity, etc.
- Enhancing cooperation on shared water resources – based on the principles of international water laws and rules
- Climate change adaptation and natural disaster risk reduction – through financial resources and actions to support adaptation and mitigation
- Access: to water services for all – so that no one is left behind

Source: ESCWA, LAS. *Outcome Document of the Regional Preparatory Meeting on Water Issues for the 2018 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and High-Level Political Forum (Beirut, March 2018), as endorsed by the Arab Ministerial Water Council (Kuwait, May 2018).*

GLOBAL WATER ACTION DECADE MANDATE



UN-Water Task Force on the Water Action Decade: This UN-Water task force was established in 2017 to support the United Nations Secretary-General in the formulation and implementation of the Decade Action Plan. The United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH) chairs the task force, which includes representatives from ESCWA, FAO, GWP, IAHS, IFAD, UNCBD

Secretariat, UNDESA, UN Environment, UNESCO, UN-HABITAT, Water.org, Women for Water, and WWF.

Launch: The Water Action Decade was launched as part of the 2018 World Water Day celebrations during an event led by the President of the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly and featured high-level participation, including that of the United Nations Secretary-General.

Decade Action Plan: The United Nations Secretary-General presented his Action Plan for implementing the Water Action Decade at the launch of the Decade in 2018. The Action Plan clusters activities into four work streams:

- Facilitating access and exchange of knowledge and good practices;
- Improving knowledge generation and dissemination;
- Pursuing advocacy, networking and partnerships;
- Strengthening communication action.

Follow-up and Review: Regular exchange is undertaken with member States and among implementing partners in support of the Action Plan. This includes planning for the midterm review of the Decade, which will take place during the United Nations High-Level Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action (New York, 22-24 March 2023).

Global and regional preparatory meetings that will feed preparations for this midterm comprehensive review, will provide avenues for exchange of progress achieved, lessons learned, and challenges affecting the achievement of water-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The midterm review outcomes will then be used to inform work to be pursued during the second half of the Decade.

Duration: World Water Day, 22 March 2018 to World Water Day, 22 March 2028.

WATER ACTION DECADE MILESTONES

2016

- 22 December: A draft resolution entitled “International Decade for Action, Water for Sustainable Development’, 2018-2028” is proposed by member States to the UNGA in its 71st session.

2017

- 7 February: UNGA adopts Resolution A/RES/71/222 at its 71st session proclaiming 2018- 2028 International Decade for Action: “Water for Sustainable Development”.
- Establishment of the UN-Water Task Force on Decade Implementation.
- UN Secretary-General’s Action Plan: Sets out the objectives of the decade, the main work streams, operational set-up and success criteria.

2018

- 22 March: Launch of the Water Action Decade “Water for Sustainable Development 2018-2028” (New York).
- 27 March: High-level Event on interlinkages between water and climate action highlighted the role of the Decade in providing a platform for global cooperation.
- 20-21 June: First international conference to discuss way forward with the decade implementation (Dushanbe, Tajikistan).

2019

- 25 September: High-level Event on “Transformative Water Actions to Accelerate Global Achievement of Climate Change related Goals” UN Headquarters, New York); to present water actions aimed at accelerating the achievement of climate change-related goals and targets.
- September: UN-Water Policy Brief on Climate change and water: prepared by UN Water to inform discussions at the Summit.
- 13 November: Side event on the preparatory Process towards the 2023 United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the Decade (New York).

2020

- 18-20 June: Second International High-Level Conference on the Water Action Decade which theme focus on “Catalyzing water action and partnership at the local, national, regional and global levels.” (Dushanbe, Tajikistan).

2021

- Tbd: One-day High-Level meeting to be convened by the President of the United Nations General Assembly to promote the implementation of water-related goals and targets of the 2030

Agenda, the High-level political Forum on Sustainable Development and the Decade (New York).

- Q-4: Organisation of Arab regional preparatory meetings for the Midterm Comprehensive Review.

2022

- tbd: Regional and thematic preparatory meetings for the Midterm Comprehensive Review.
- Preparation of report to assess progress in the implementation of the first half of the Decade, including the Plan of Action.

2023

- 22-24 March: UN Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, (New York, UN HQ) as adopted by the UN GA resolution (A/C.2/73/L.24/Rev.1) at its 73rd session.

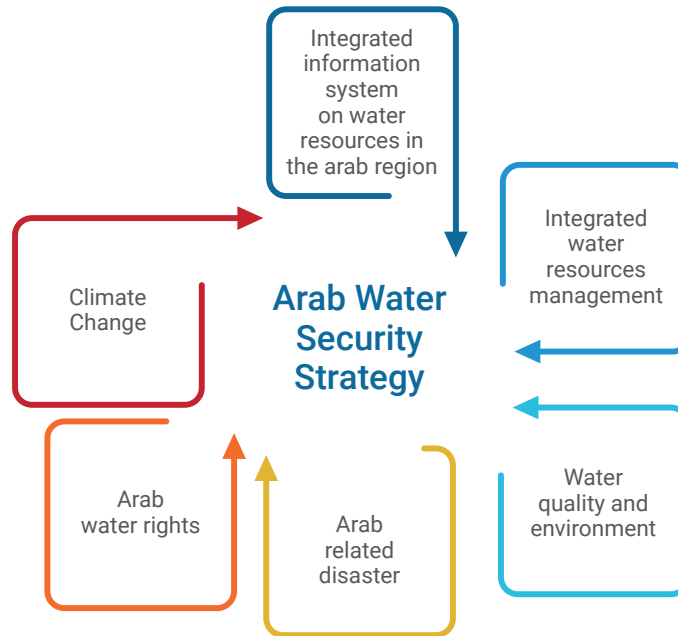
2028

- 22 March: End of the Decade.

ARAB WATER SECURITY STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



The Arab Ministerial Water Council adopted the Arab Strategy for Water Security in the Arab Region to Meet the Challenges and Future Needs for Sustainable Development 2010-2030, which was reviewed in June 2019. The review identifies the current regional priorities for pursuing water security for sustainable development in the Arab region based on six pillars of work, as well as an additional pillar focused on monitoring and implementation. This review serves as the basis for regional action and coordination on water for sustainable development in the Arab region.

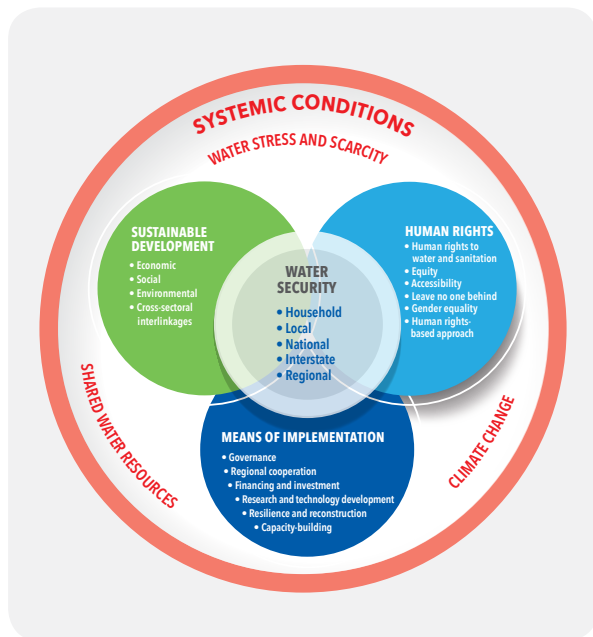


Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



FRAMING WATER SECURITY CONCEPTS FROM AN ARAB REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Conceptual Framework for Water Security in the Arab region



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



A conceptual framework for understanding water security from an Arab region perspective was developed by ESCWA to

support the implementation of the water-related SDGs. The framework is based on the premise that the main water challenges facing the region are related to water scarcity and water stress, shared water resources and the impacts of climate change on water resources.

This water security framework is grounded in a human rights-based approach to water that acknowledges the centrality of water to achieve the three dimensions of Sustainable Development. The framework identifies means of implementation (MoI) to address Arab region water related priorities to support the achievement of water security. These include measures to improve water governance, regional cooperation, research and technology development and financing for water projects. The framework also highlights the importance of reconstruction and responding to the needs of vulnerable communities in the Arab region.

Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus

The achievement of water, energy and food security is highly interdependent. Addressing these interlinkages presents special challenges in the Arab region given the great disparities in access to resources, water scarcity and the limited availability of arable land. Many Arab countries rely heavily on energy intensive processes in availing water and wastewater services notably through deep groundwater pumping, desalination and wastewater treatment. Similarly, while the agricultural sector plays a major role in food security and employment in rural areas, it consumes almost 80 per cent of fresh water resources available across the Arab region while contributing no more than 7 per cent of the GDP. Integrated approaches are needed to sustainably manage natural resources to achieve water security for sustainable development in the Arab region.

WATER SUPPLY

The Arab region is not on track to achieve SDG 6.1 aimed at achieving universal and equitable access to safe, affordable drinking water for all. The UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme estimates the number of people lacking access to basic water supply services in the Arab region to be 47.5 million (2017 figures).

Intermittency of water supply: The global indicator framework lacks a dedicated indicator on water supply intermittency, although this is an important component of SDG 6.1. In many parts of the Arab region, household connectivity to piped networks does not imply access to a continuous supply of water nor a supply of clean water that is safe for drinking. In Jordan, for example, 97% of the population receives piped water through the network only once a week. Water shortages are compensated by alternative off-network supplies provided by the private sector, which raises concerns regarding the affordability and quality of purchased water.

Affordability of Water Supply: The human rights to water and sanitation place obligations on States to ensure affordable water services for all. Around 20% of the population across the Arab region spend more than 2-3% of their household expenditure on WASH services (UN-Water, 2018). In the Arab region, this is particularly pronounced in off-network communities in Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. These populations rely on standpipes, water tankers and bottled water, and pay higher fees for water than counterparts connected to water networks.

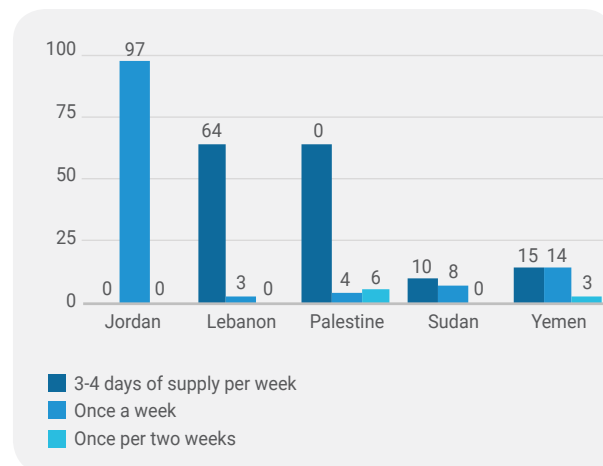
Percentage of the population facing water scarcity: SDG 6.4 aims to half the percentage of people suffering from water scarcity. However, indicator methodologies adopted under SDG 6.4 focus on water resource scarcity rather than the water scarcity faced by people. Efforts to adopt a third indicator under this target may thus be reopened for consideration if a suitable methodology is formulated.

Internally displaced in Sudan fleeing regions affected by drought



Source: Arab Network for Environment and Development (2011).

Proportion of the population facing intermittent piped water supply



Source: ESCWA, *Moving towards the SDGs in the Arab Region* (2016).

SANITATION

More than 80% of the Arab population was found to have access to at least basic sanitation services in 2017 (JMP, 2019). Nevertheless, the region suffers large disparities in access to sanitation services among Arab States and between urban and rural areas within the same country.

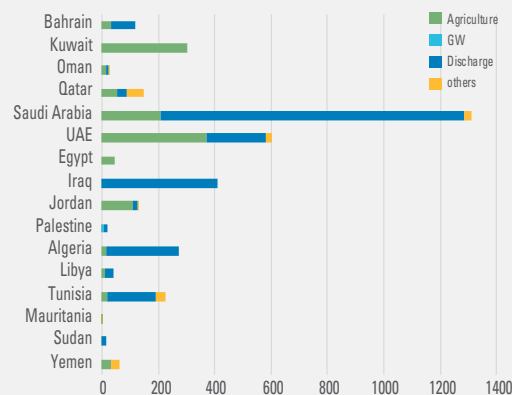
Indeed, the number of people in Arab States lacking access to basic sanitation services in 2017 was estimated in at 70.5 million, with an estimated 25 million people still practicing open defecation across the region for the same year (JMP, 2019).

The main sanitation and wastewater management challenges facing the region are the limited connection to sewerage networks and wastewater treatment facilities and the use of off-network sanitation systems and septic tanks that hinder the efficient collection and treatment of wastewater. This limits opportunities for treated wastewater reuse to offset water supply shortages.

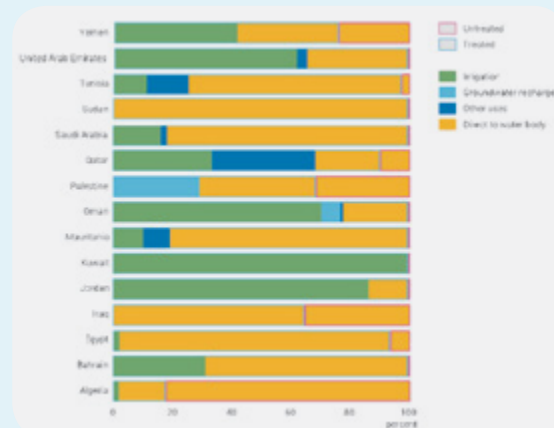
Nevertheless, improvements in wastewater treatment and reuse have been achieved in many parts of the Arab region. GCC countries and other Arab States such as Jordan, Tunisia and, to a lesser extent, Egypt and Iraq are treating most of their collected wastewater to safe levels. However, only a quarter of the safely treated wastewater across the Arab region is reused, mainly for irrigation and groundwater recharge. The remaining is discharged to surface watercourses or the sea.

Reuse of treated wastewater: While significant potential for treated wastewater treatment reuse exists in the Arab region, the SDG 6.3 target aimed at “increasing recycling and safe reuse globally” lacks an indicator to monitor the change in the scale and degree of treated wastewater reuse. Arab States, however, have engaged in monitoring wastewater treatment and reuse and lessons learned from this regional experience has been drawn upon to inform global monitoring and reporting wastewater treatment and reuse.

Regional Monitoring on wastewater treatment and reuse informing global reporting frameworks



Source: MDG+ Initiative Report (2016).



Source: Global SDG6 Synthesis Report (2018)

ADVANCING REGIONAL WORK ON THE NEXUS

Water-Energy Nexus

An Arab region capacity building program was implemented to enhance capacity of decision makers and service providers in integrating water, energy and food nexus in national development plans and policies, as well as for the operationalization of these interlinkages at the local, national and regional levels. Knowledge and tools acquired during this program were built upon to formulate and test pilot projects in three selected Arab States, the outcomes of which have demonstrated the efficiency of integrating water and energy sector concerns in optimizing resource use and maximizing returns.

Water-Food Nexus

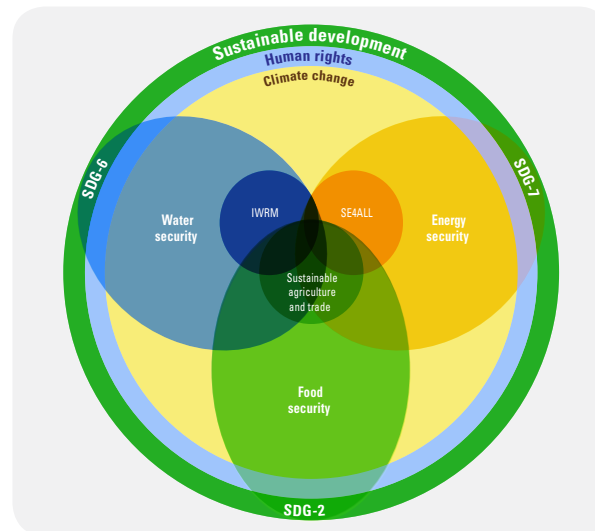
The Arab region launched a coordination mechanism between the water and agriculture sectors during the first joint meeting of Arab ministers of agriculture and water in the context of the 2019 Land and Water days (Cairo, March 2019) co-organized by the LAS, ESCWA, FAO and AOAD. The meeting resulted in the 2019 Cairo Declaration (March 2019) which calls upon Arab governments and partners to harmonize policies across both sectors and enhance the region's response to the impacts of climate change, land degradation, and water scarcity and contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

ESCWA is also implementing a training program to promote food and water security in the Arab region through improved and coordinated policy design, strategy development and programme implementation. The program activities involve the strengthening of national and regional knowledge base, capacity development and support for greater regional cooperation.

Arab Region Water-Energy Nexus Priorities

- Knowledge and awareness-raising;
- Increasing policy coherence;
- Examining the water-energy security nexus;
- Increasing efficiency;
- Informing technology choices;
- Promoting renewable energy;
- Addressing climate change and natural disasters.

Water-Energy-Food Security Nexus



Source: ESCWA Water Development Report 6: The Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus in the Arab Region (2015)

INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (IWRM)

Monitoring IWRM Implementation (SDG 6.5.1)

The UNEP-DHI Partnership-Center on Water and Environment, the custodian agency responsible for SDG 6.5.1 monitoring, collaborates with ESCWA to prepare regional reports for the Arab region on IWRM implementation. Regional analysis draws upon information obtained from the survey questionnaires submitted by Arab States within the framework of the global monitoring and reporting on indicator 6.5.1, as well as additional feedback and analysis provided by officials, experts and stakeholders in the region. The first Arab regional report was issued in 2019.

The report highlights progress achieved on four IWRM dimensions, namely enabling environment (IWRM based policies, laws and plans), institutions and participation, management instruments and financing and identifies the main challenges facing IWRM implementation in the Arab region. These include fragmented water mandates across institutions, centralized governance systems, and insufficient investments in sustainable water infrastructure.

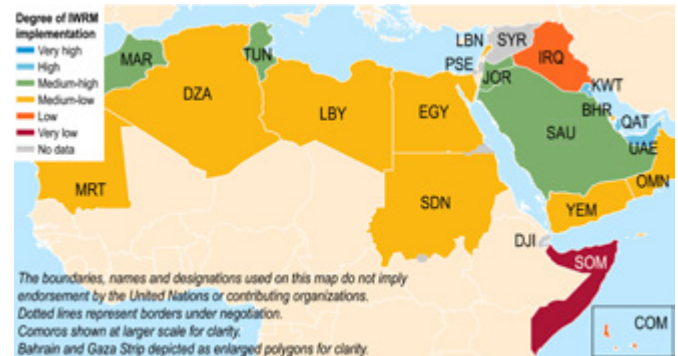
Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network (AWARENET)

AWARENET is a network of research institutes, training centres, and experts engaged in the application of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) concepts in the Arab region. ESCWA is hosting AWARENET secretariat since 2002. The network serves as a platform for the development of tools and capacity building material and delivery of training on IWRM related topics. Information regarding opportunities for research collaboration and participation in global and regional events is regularly disseminated throughout the network.

The network also fosters exchange and engagement in joint activities through thematic working groups on IWRM monitoring, water footprints, water integrity, and climate change. AWARENET working group on SDG 6.5.1 has contributed to the review of the Arab regional baseline progress report on IWRM and provided success stories and lessons learned regarding challenges and opportunities in implementing IWRM concepts and principles at the local level.

awarenet.info

Degree of IWRM Implementation in the Arab region



Source: Arab regional report for SDG indicator 6.5.1 on IWRM implementation



SHARED WATER RESOURCES

More than 60% of freshwater resources available in Arab States originate from outside the Arab region. Out of the 22 Arab States, 14 countries rely on surface water resources that originate from outside their borders and 21 countries share at least one transboundary groundwater aquifer. Despite this strong dependence on external waters, the scope and degree of transboundary water cooperation needs improvement to reduce the potential risk of conflict and water security challenges.

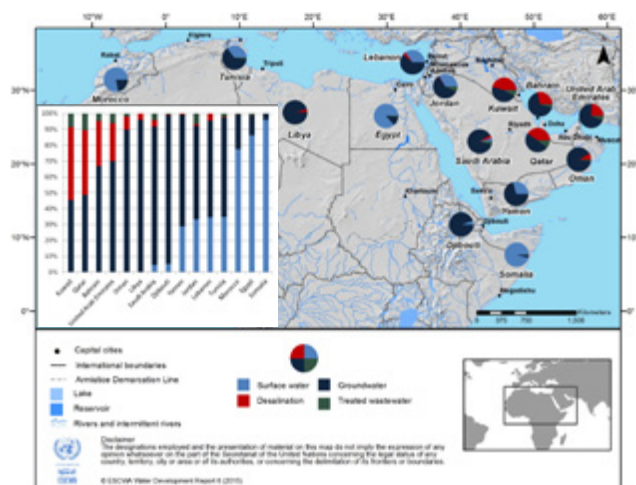
Supporting Progress on Transboundary Water Cooperation

ESCWA and the League of Arab States collaborate on the implementation of regional training workshops aimed at strengthening the capacity of Arab States to engage in transboundary water cooperation based on resolutions adopted by the Arab Ministerial Water Council. This is complemented by workshops and expert group meetings organized by the UNECE and other partners in support of the United Nations Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. These forums provide a platform to discuss international water law as well as means to improve shared water resources management at all levels.

Monitoring progress on international water cooperation

ESCWA is also engaged in follow-up and review of progress in implementing SDG 6.5.2 on operational arrangements for transboundary cooperation at the Arab regional level through the generation of regional SDG indicator 6.5.2 reports based on data collected within the framework of global monitoring and reporting on this indicator. The first report was issued in 2018 and includes baseline information on transboundary water cooperation in countries that have completed the survey. Despite the relatively low response rate from the first reporting exercise from Arab countries (9 out of 22), the baseline report highlights lessons learned and means for improving reporting in future monitoring phases. Consequently, custodian agencies acknowledge the importance of partnerships building with regional organizations in view of ensuring closer assistance to countries in working on the indicator.

Surface and groundwater resources in the Arab region



Source: ESCWA Water Development Report 6: The Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus in the Arab Region (2015).

ARAB REGIONAL PROGRESS ON TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION (SDG 6.5.2)

SDG 6.5.2 aims to monitor progress in “Establishing operational arrangements among riparian states for transboundary water cooperation.” This indicator supports target 6.5 aimed at improved water cooperation. Challenges facing progress on this indicator include instability, conflict and occupation affecting parts of the region, upstream development of shared surface waters, the limited number of studies pursued on transboundary groundwater aquifers that constitute the majority of transboundary freshwater resources in the region, and the need to strengthen financial, technological and human resources for improved management, monitoring and reporting.

Transboundary groundwater cooperation



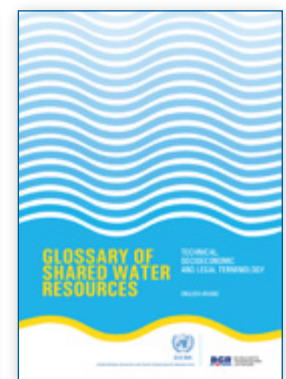
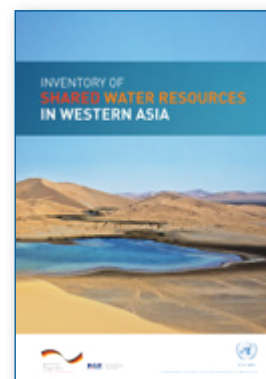
Source: ESCWA, Arab Regional Baseline for SDG Indicator 6.5.2 (2018)

Transboundary surface water cooperation



Enhancing Understanding Shared Water Resources

The *Inventory of Shared Water Resources in Western Asia* prepared by ESCWA and the German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) consolidates and enhances knowledge and understanding of the state of transboundary surface and groundwater resources in Western Asia. It is complemented by an Arabic-English glossary of terms that provides terminology and definitions of terms used in the area of shared water resources management.



CLIMATE AND WATER

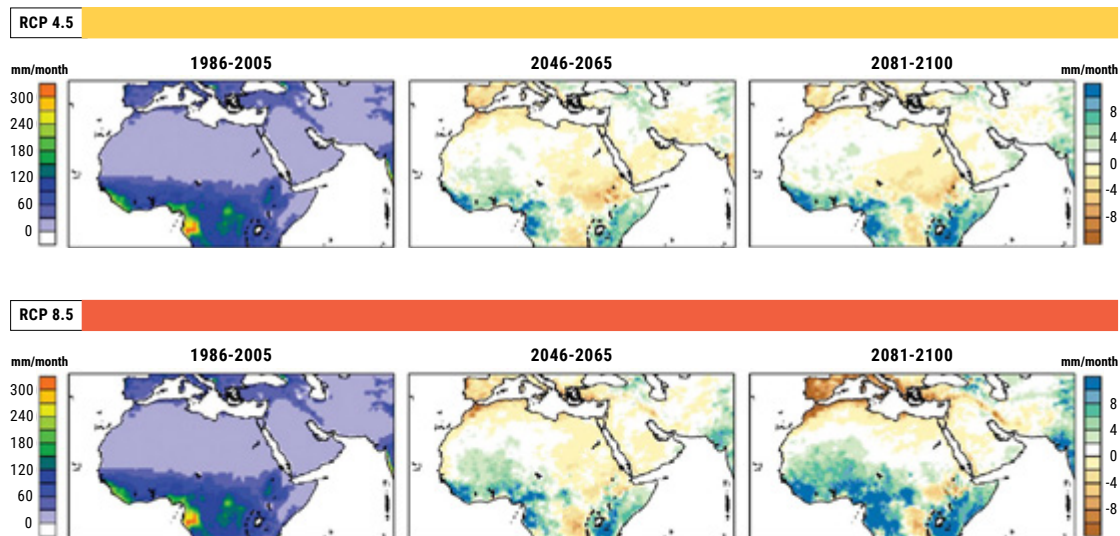
The Arab region is considered among the most vulnerable to climate change. Average mean temperatures are projected to increase by 4-5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century, while precipitation is expected to become more volatile, largely due to an increasing frequency and intensity of extreme climate events. Most climate related disasters recorded in Arab countries are of hydrometeorological nature (droughts, floods, storm surges, etc). These impacts are exacerbating challenges facing the sustainable management of the already scarce water resources.



The Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR) was launched in 2010 at the request of Arab States. The regional climate and hydrological modelling projections generated under RICCAR were also used to inform an integrated vulnerability assessment to climate change in five key sectors: water, ecosystems, agriculture, human settlements and people.

Analysis conducted under RICCAR, implemented with United Nations organizations, League of Arab States and international partners was based on a common and uniform methodological framework applied across the region to support discussion and exchange among stakeholders and inform policy dialogue on climate change in the Arab region.

Mean change in annual precipitation (mm/month) for mid-and end-century for moderate (RCP 4.5) and business as usual (RCP 8.5) projections compared to the reference period.



CLIMATE CHANGE AND WATER AVAILABILITY

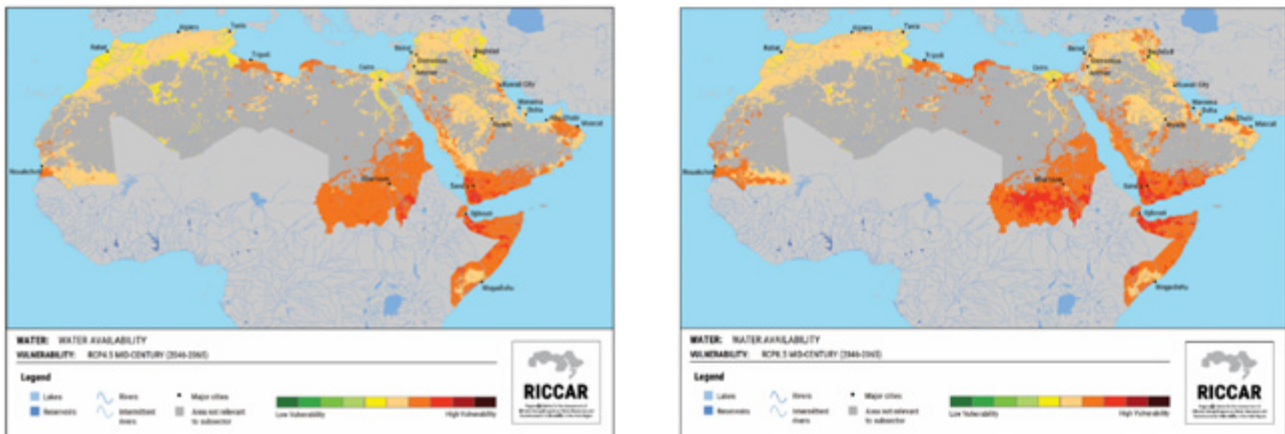
Climate and hydrological modelling outcomes

Projections indicate an increase in mean average temperature over the Arab region by 1.5 to 2.3°C for moderate climate change scenario (RCP 4.5), and ranging from 3.2 to 4.8°C under business as usual scenario (RCP 8.5). Although precipitation trends are largely decreasing over the Arab region, some parts are expected to exhibit an increase in the intensity and volume of precipitation (ESCWA, 2017).

Vulnerability of water to climate change

RICCAR outcomes highlighted areas where water availability is facing highest vulnerability to the impacts of climate change as the Upper Nile valley, south western Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa. The remaining areas studied suggest moderate vulnerability.

Water availability vulnerability assessment – Mid-century (2046-2065) for moderate (RCP 4.5) and business-as-usual (RCP 8.5) climate change scenarios



Source: ESCWA et al., Arab Climate Change Assessment Report – Main Report, RICCAR

CLIMATE CHANGE ASSESSMENT AND ADAPTATION USING IWRM TOOLS

Regional training modules were developed for capacity building on climate change adaptation using IWRM tools in five key sectors namely agriculture, environment, health, human settlements and economic development. Analysis in the modules were informed by climate and hydrological modelling outcomes generated under RICCAR, and prepared with regional partners.

Five sectoral modules for capacity development on climate change adaptation using IWRM tools

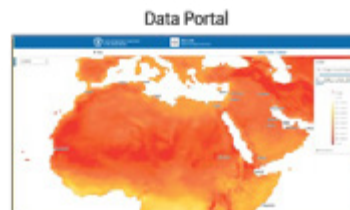


Arab Climate Outlook Forum (ArabCOF)

ESCWA and the WMO supported the establishment of an Arab Climate Outlook Forum (ArabCOF) which fosters exchange and consensus building on seasonal forecasts and climate predictions among Arab States through a network of Arab Meteorological Services.

RICCAR Regional Knowledge Hub (RKH)

Access to Arab regional knowledge and analysis related to climate change generated under RICCAR is supported by an electronic interactive platform, the RICCAR Regional Knowledge Hub (RKH) which was launched in 2018 and is hosted by ESCWA. The RKH consists of a website (repository for knowledge resources, training material and information on trainings and meetings) and a data portal components (includes all geospatial datasets and modelling outputs and incorporates functionalities to facilitate data search and manipulation).



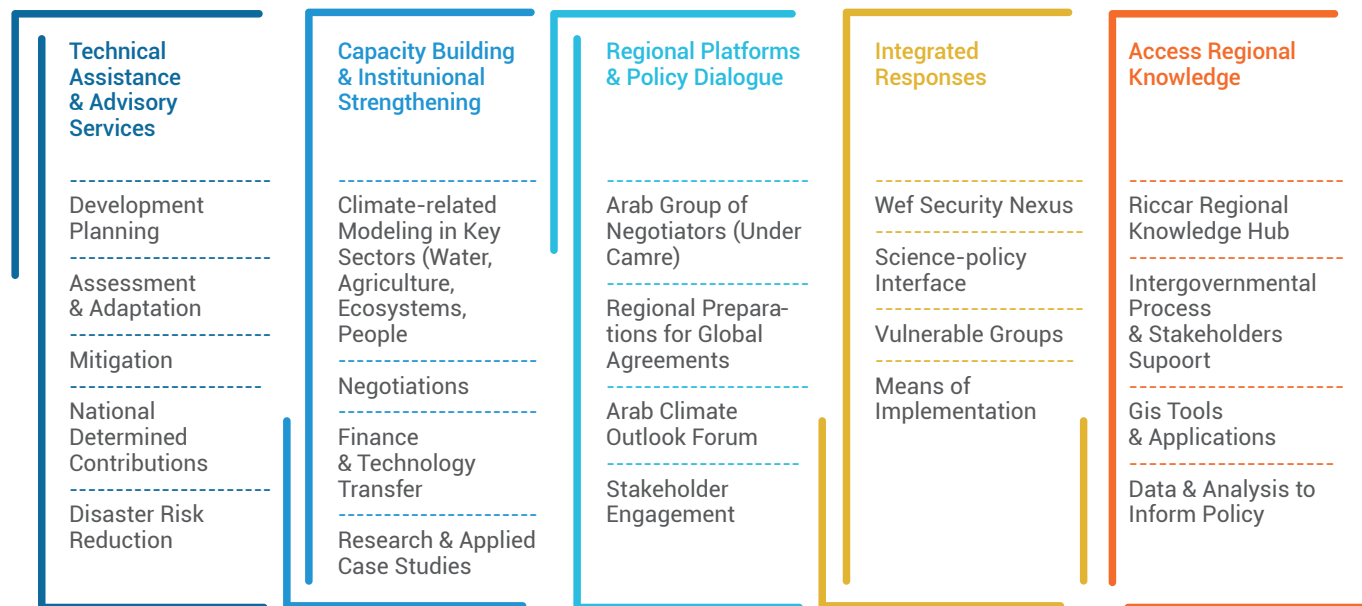
www.riccar.org

ARAB CENTRE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE POLICIES

ESCWA climate support through technical assistance and capacity development services culminated in the establishment of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies (ACCCP) in response to Arab member states request through resolution 329 (XXX) adopted at ESCWA's 30th session in 2018. The Centre consolidates ESCWA work on climate change under a common umbrella.

The ACCCP aims to strengthen the capacity of Arab States in better understanding and addressing climate change implications for sustainable development. This includes assessments of climate change impacts on water and water-dependent sectors, adaptation and disaster risk reduction, mitigation, as well as technical and capacity building support to climate negotiators, climate finance, technology and tools for climate analysis.

Pillars of Work





WATER ACTION DECADE
2018-2028

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unescwa.org