HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REGIONAL EVALUATION: ARAB STATES

This document summarizes key messages from the regional evaluation entitled “Water as cross-cutting factor in the SDGs under review at the HLPF 2019 in the Arab States.” Three regional evaluations (Africa, Arab states and Latin America and the Caribbean) aim to inform intergovernmental discussions by highlighting SDG 6 interlinkages with SDGs 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17.


Acknowledging and investing in stronger links between the SDG 6 on water and the various other water-related SDGs is an efficient and effective strategy for lifting millions of people from poverty and achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Arab Regional Strategies. Efforts to achieve SDG 6 will benefit socioeconomic development and the environment in the Arab states and will thus inherently advance progress for other SDGs, as shown in the following examples.

IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES THROUGH WATER

- The proportion of schools with access to improved drinking water services decreased between 2010 and 2016, primarily due to armed conflicts, refugee fluxes, water scarcity and insufficient financial resources. Providing reliable drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services to schools that do not have access may improve enrollment, attendance and educational outcomes in the Arab states.

REDUCING INEQUALITIES AND FOSTERING ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH WATER

- Empowering women and engaging them in decision-making improves the effectiveness of the management and use of water resources and sanitation facilities at all levels. In most Arab Least Developed Countries (LDCs), water collection responsibilities and the associated risks fall mainly on women.
- Sustainable management of water is needed to create and maintain decent jobs. Low-efficiency irrigation techniques predominate in the agriculture sector which accounts for 85% of the region’s total water use. Agriculture is the primary sector of economic growth in many states, and is critical for rural livelihoods.
- Unemployment and agricultural job losses have worsened in recent years in the Arab states; job losses remain critical in LDCs and in countries facing armed conflicts and refugee fluxes. Further, rural incomes have decreased due to reduced agricultural productivity caused by droughts, land degradation, groundwater depletion and conflict.

CREATING CLIMATE-RESILIENT COMMUNITIES THROUGH WATER

- Climate change creates risks for societies, directly through changes in water availability and climate-related hazards, and indirectly through energy and food security impacts. Improvements in freshwater quality, water use-efficiency and protection of water ecosystems will decrease Arab states’ vulnerabilities to climate change.

SUSTAINING TRANSBOUNDARY STABILITY AND PROMOTING EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONS THROUGH WATER

- 67% of renewable water resources in the Arab region cross at least one international border. The Arab Strategy for Water Security and the League of Arab States (LAS) are developing and encouraging transboundary water basin cooperation arrangements to mitigate conflict and to improve water resources management.
- Low water and wastewater tariffs in the Arab states enable overextraction and depletion of water resources, and increase pressure on the operation and maintenance of water supply and sanitation systems. Improved efficacy and equity in utility revenue mechanisms may improve water resources management and WASH services provisioning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: This document is based on a Regional Policy Paper coordinated under the auspices of the UN-Water Expert Group’s efforts on the 2030 Agenda, spearheaded by the UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP) and supported by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of Germany. Comments from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, UN Economic and Social Commission of Western Asia (ESCWA), UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science in the Arab States (CAIRO), UN-Water, and others are gratefully acknowledged.
Below are policy recommendations to better take SDG 6 into account when implementing the SDGs in review.

**ARAB STATES: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Ensuring inclusive access to education and improving educational outcomes through WASH**

**WASH Infrastructure for Education & Equity** - Improve access to WASH facilities in schools, including facilities for menstrual hygiene, especially in the LDCs and in countries facing armed conflicts and refugee fluxes.

**Adequate WASH Maintenance for Schools** - Improve cleaning and maintenance of WASH facilities in schools and include regular maintenance funding as part of schools’ recurrent budgets.

**Sustaining inclusive and productive economic growth and employment through water**

**Shared Data Frameworks** - Promote, as appropriate, the United Nations System of Environmental-Economic Accounts (SEEA) as the basis for storing, sharing and improving environmental data at the local scale. Accounts of pollutants released to the environment should be integrated in countries’ water accounts.

**Sectoral Water Use** - Improve water use-efficiency in all productive sectors, particularly in the agriculture sector. Improve access to water and economic-related data and information to support policy and decision-making.

**Disaggregated Data** - Provide valid and disaggregated information on water use and trends for the different socio-economic activities.

**Reducing inequalities through accelerated and inclusive action on SDG 6**

**Equitable Access** - Improve access to safely managed WASH services to all, including disadvantaged groups such as the poor, slum dwellers, migrants, refugees, people with disabilities, and others.

**Efficient Water Use** - Use water-efficient and high-value crop production to increase rural incomes.

**Gender Mainstreaming in Water Governance** - Promote gender mainstreaming in water governance.

**Climate-related Human & Technical Capacity** - Further develop knowledge and methods to evaluate the risks of climate-related hazards and to facilitate data exchange and knowledge sharing to inform policymakers.

**Climate-resiliency through Adaptation** - Increase water use-efficiency to respond to increasing water scarcity caused by climate change and to integrate climate change adaptation measures into national water policies and strategies.

**Promoting just and peaceful societies and accountable and inclusive institutions with effective water governance**

**Transboundary Cooperation** - Improve cooperation on shared water resources management between states.

**Institutional Capacity** - Develop institutional capacity and participatory processes and provide tools for transboundary cooperation and conflict resolution using the SDG 6.5 framework.

**WASH Governance** - Enhance WASH services, infrastructure, and procurement services and increase water utilities’ revenues through effective water governance.

**Migration & Conflict** - Address the water-related needs of internal and external refugees, displaced persons and host communities in areas affected by conflict.

**Facilitating SDG 6 achievement through strengthened Means of Implementation (MOIs)**

**Capital & Operational Investments** - Improve investment in and operational efficiency of WASH utilities.

**Utility Equity** - Structure subsidies and tariffs with the objectives of achieving equity, affordability and the appropriate level of service for each targeted group.

**Technological Innovation** - Strengthen innovation and improve the use of available efficient technologies for desalination, wastewater treatment, water reuse, and for increasing agricultural water productivity.

**Transboundary Transparency** - Improve transparency and the exchange of information and data among Arab states.