



Northern Africa:

Water, Climate and Development Programme for Africa

Water security for development



Northern Africa's water sector faces massive challenges in its efforts to sustain and secure its limited water resources in the face of climate change impacts. These challenges stem mainly from the imbalance between increasing demand for and decreasing supply of water. The integrated water resources management (IWRM) approach is not well established in the region.

There are two major transboundary systems: the Northern Sahara Aquifer System (SASS¹) and the Medjerda River basin shared among Algeria, Libya and Tunisia and between Algeria and Tunisia, respectively. Non-renewable water resources in the SASS cover a total area of over one million km². Over the last 50 years, groundwater over-exploitation has increased fourfold, from 0.6 billion m³ in 1950 to 2.5 billion m³ in 2000, causing a dramatic draw-down of water levels and degradation of water and soils in the basin. Climate change impacts are likely to exacerbate these developments through increased salinity and deterioration of water quantity and quality, thereby hastening desertification. Agriculture, which is the major source of water consumption in the SASS, is based on a highly labour-intensive yet fragile oasis system that is central to the local economy and culture.

The Water, Climate and Development Programme

In November 2010 the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) adopted a decision recommending that the Global Water Partnership (GWP) and partners operationalise the Water, Climate and Development Programme (WACDEP).

WACDEP aims to integrate water security and climate resilience into development planning processes, build climate resilience, and help countries adapt to a new climate regime through increased investments in water security. The 5-year programme, which is implemented in eight countries, four transboundary river basins and one shared aquifer, runs from May 2011 to April 2016.

The goal of WACDEP in North Africa is to promote water as a key part of sustainable local and national development in Tunisia and in the SASS basin, and to contribute to climate change adaptation for economic growth and human security.

The programme foresees additional activities addressing the entire North Africa region as part of a wider Mediterranean agenda.

¹ SASS = Système Aquifère du Sahara Septentrional

WACDEP activities are being implemented at three levels: the transboundary level focuses on the SASS shared groundwater basin; the national level focuses on Tunisia; and the sub-national (local) level focuses on the irrigated perimeter of Bssissi in Gabès, located in the south-east of the country.

WACDEP activities are integrated and directly contribute to ongoing processes. At the national level, the programme is linked to the preparation of the Water Strategy 'Eau 2050' and to processes for national and sub-national development plans.

At the transboundary level, WACDEP works in synergy with the SASS programme conducted by the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), which aims to elaborate recommendations on development options and on finding a common vision in the basin. In addition, the knowledge gained of transboundary water management is expected to contribute to future initiatives in the Medjerda River basin.

WACDEP is operationally aligned with the Mediterranean Component of the European Union's Water Initiative and the GEF MAP UNEP (Global Environmental Facility, Mediterranean Action Plan, United Nations Environment Programme) Climate Variability and Change Programme to support integrated coastal zone management, and other collaborations are already planned.



Expected outcomes

- Water security and climate resilience integrated into development planning and decision-making processes in Tunisia and the SASS.
- Enhanced capacities of partnerships, institutions and stakeholders to integrate water security and climate resilience in development planning and decision-making processes.
- No/low regret investment and financing documents for water security, climate resilience and development formulated and shared with relevant governmental institutions. In addition, fundable projects for water security, climate resilience, and development defined and shared with development banks.
- Water resources management and climate resilience integrated through a participatory approach in the irrigated perimeter of Bssissi (Gabès).

Activities undertaken and progress

- Engaged in discussions with OSS and established collaboration agreement on joint activities in SASS and Tunisia.
- WACDEP launched at workshop with participants from key organisations and institutions.

- Awareness raised on climate change resilience and vulnerability among high-level decision makers.
- Data collection and analysis conducted on climate change and water security.
- Agreements formalised with ministerial departments and national organisations on data provision.
- Pilot project in Bssissi (Gabès) identified and prepared in cooperation with water users' association representatives.
- Country team established and work plan for supporting Tunisia prepared.

Financing management

Initial funding is provided through GWP's financing partners. AMCOW and GWP are committed to building the funding base by engaging additional partners. The Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (Danida) are the main financial partners of the programme. The entire WACDEP programme is expected to cost EUR 12.7 million. In North Africa, the programme is expected to cost EUR 920 000 including regional activities and activities in Tunisia.

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