



Water integrity risks in the MENA Region – Priorities for action

National assessments conducted in Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia clearly show that each face integrity risks and share a number of common challenges. This brief offers insights for policy makers on the priority areas to support capacity development to enhance integrity and improve water governance in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) Region.

Water scarcity in the MENA region is a result of both physical shortage and governance issues. Institutional integrity — the adherence to the principles of transparency, accountability, and participation, based on core values of honesty, equity and professionalism — is critical to ensure effective governance of water. Risks posed by low levels of integrity in water institutions can threaten human dignity and health, stunt economic growth and slow needed investments going into the water sector. Targeted actions to reduce water integrity risks are needed across the MENA region, the following recommendations point out where to start.

Key recommendations

- Evaluate water governance processes at the national level** to identify inefficiencies, excessive bureaucracy and accountability gaps.
- Propose measures to streamline bureaucracy** to improve efficiency, reduce accountability gaps and improve definition of roles between authorities.
- Form independent agencies** to regulate, monitor and oversee integrity, transparency and accountability in water institutions.
- Harmonize legal frameworks** to clearly delineate roles and mandates of the different agencies, ministries and government bodies in the implementation of laws to avoid overlap and clarify any confusion over responsibilities.
- Carry out comprehensive accountability assessments** periodically to provide the basis for action plans at the local and national level.
- Invest in capacity building** with the proper institutions to establish and oversee fair, transparent and robust tendering procedures in the water sector. This includes special training courses for jurists and legislators on water related integrity risks.
- Focus on corporate governance development of water managing institutions.** Integrity Management Plans aiming at ensuring impartiality as a core value in all management processes should be enacted inline with capacity development interventions. Impartiality and fair treatment should cover external relations (e.g. with water users and service customers) and internal staff management (e.g. recruitment and promotion)
- Build functional systems to incentivize integrity** of leadership and register complaints for violations in water sector institutions. Voluntary peer-support networks for employees may be a component in this.
- Create transparent web-based procedures for water governance processes** where applicable, especially for licensing of wells and groundwater abstraction. Open-access datasets about water quality should be established and updated.
- Promote measurable actions to increase access to high-ranking positions for female employees in the water sector** (through mechanisms such as quotas) and measures to expand the role of women in decision-making processes in government and water organizations.



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Targeting effective capacity development

This research identified specific capacity gaps that must be addressed to reduce integrity risks. Priority areas for capacity building to reduce corruption risk and enhance integrity across the region include:

- Policy making
- Legislation and regulation
- Planning and budgeting
- Enforcement of regulations
- Human resources management
- Procurement and public works
- Payment for services

Measures to enhance integrity and build capacity within key institutions at all levels should prioritize the following areas for each of the following major stakeholder groups (civil society, managers, national officials, senior leadership).

Civil Society

Educate civil society on their rights, roles and responsibilities to:

- Engage in policy making, budgeting and planning processes
- Understand access to information laws, relevant water legislation and water licensing processes
- Perform community monitoring and evaluation of water projects

Mid-level Managers

Provide training and improved oversight to managers in:

- Financial analysis of projects
- Monitoring and control procedures in contract management and procurement
- Control of illegal connections
- Customer complaint mechanisms
- Use of performance indicators

Public Officials at National Level

Develop mechanisms for better transparency and accountability in:

- Planning and budgeting in water services
- Recruitment processes
- Performance evaluation of employees

High-level Decision-makers

Review and develop measures for transparency and accountability for water governance, with focus on:

- Public administration
- Compliance with legal provisions
- Application of anti-corruption tools and use of indicators to monitor and measure corruption

The table presents a summary of the specific weaknesses identified for key stakeholder groups targeted by the programme (civil society, public officials/water managers, and high level decision makers) that can pose risks for breaches of integrity in the water sector.

Detailed capacity needs per country and target group and national policy recommendations for improving water governance can be found in the full report available at www.waterrgovernance.org

| Civil Society |
|---|
| Sub-categories: Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Citizens Associations, Farmers, Media |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low participation by civil society, lack of transparency in policy formulation, absence of formal Water User Associations and weak advocacy/watchdog skills among media, and NGOs • Insufficient awareness among citizens on their rights and responsibilities related to water, illegal water connections and tampering with meter readings • Breach of water licensing regulations by farmers, including illegal wells and tampering with meters, leading to over abstraction • Little experience among media in reporting on water and corruption, and questionable independence of media • Low of women from dialogue about water |

| Mid-level Water Managers and Public Officials |
|---|
| Sub-categories: Utility Operators, Private Contractors, Regional and Local Authorities; as well as Regulators, Planners, Controllers, and Anti-corruption professionals at the National Level |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A closed culture based on patronage networks, resulting in preferential treatment of contractors and inflated prices in tendering and procurement processes • Poor human resource management: Overstaffing, low staff integrity, insufficient job descriptions • Nepotism in recruitment processes leading to appointment of non-qualified personnel • Women are sometimes not respected as equals and their work, ideas and contribution are overlooked or downplayed • Poor customer service of water authorities • Lack of accountability mechanisms and weak coordination between government bodies • Unclear budgeting, planning, budget allocation and budget management • Lack of feasibility studies for projects • Little transparency and low public involvement in decision-making |

| High-level Decision-makers |
|---|
| Sub-categories: Members of Parliament, Director Generals at Line Ministries, Heads of Anti-corruption Agencies, Auditor Generals etc. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of transparency in formulating policies • Unclear basis for allocation of water rights between different uses • Weak monitoring of implementation of legislation and weak inspectorates • Partisan capture of seats due to patronage, bribing of communities/regions to gain political support and putting their own vested interests before the public interest • Lack of knowledge of corruption e.g. where it occurs, impacts on public bodies and how to prevent and manage it • Exclusion of women from high-level positions |



Photo: iStock

The Regional Capacity Building Programme on Water Integrity

With financial support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the UNDP Water Governance Facility at SIWI (WGF) is implementing a Regional Capacity Building Programme on Water Integrity for the MENA region from 2014 to 2017 in collaboration with Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) and International Union for Conservation of Nature – Regional Office of Western Asia (IUCN ROWA). The Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network (AWARENET) is a supporting partner of the programme. In December 2014 the programme was politically recognised by the member states of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

The programme is implemented in Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia in cooperation with the following national partners in each country:

- Jordan: Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST)
- Lebanon: Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at the American University of Beirut (AUB)
- Morocco: Al-Akhwayn University in Ifrane (AUI)
- Palestine: Al-Quds University (AQU)
- Tunisia: Centre for Water Research and Technologies (CERTe)

The overall objective of the programme is to develop the capacities of water stakeholder groups at different governance levels in the MENA region. It aims to improve transparency and accountability practices in water resources management with focus on achieving the specific objectives shown below with four target stakeholder groups:

- Foster high-level political dialogue and raise awareness on water integrity with High Level Decision Makers.
- Engage National Policy-makers and Managers to increase their knowledge of tools to combat illicit practices e.g. patronage/nepotism/cronyism, improve information flows and communication between decision-makers at different

governance levels.

- Enable Mid-Level Managers and Operational staff and other public workers to apply integrity in their daily work and prevent corruption by promoting good practices and implementing integrity and compliance mechanisms.
- Support Civil Society actors and local leaders to demand transparency and ensure accountability in the management of water resources and services.

The programme's contribution to the regional stability and socio-economic development is formally recognized under the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean and it is labelled as a priority project in the Water Strategy in the Western Mediterranean under the framework of the 5+5 Initiative for the Western Mediterranean.

This brief is based upon the report Water Integrity in the Middle East and North Africa Region: Synthesis Report of Water Integrity Risks Assessments in Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia. The contents of this report and its recommendations do not necessarily reflect the positions of Sida, and the national project partner institutions.

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The UNDP Water Governance Facility at SIWI (WGF)

The UNDP Water Governance Facility at SIWI (WGF) is a collaboration between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI). The WGF provides strategic water governance support to low- and middle-income countries to advance socially equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically efficient management of water resources and water and sanitation

services. The ultimate aim is to improve lives and livelihoods and reduce poverty, inequalities and exclusion. The WGF forms part of the UNDP Water and Ocean Governance Programme (WOGP) and receives financial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

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