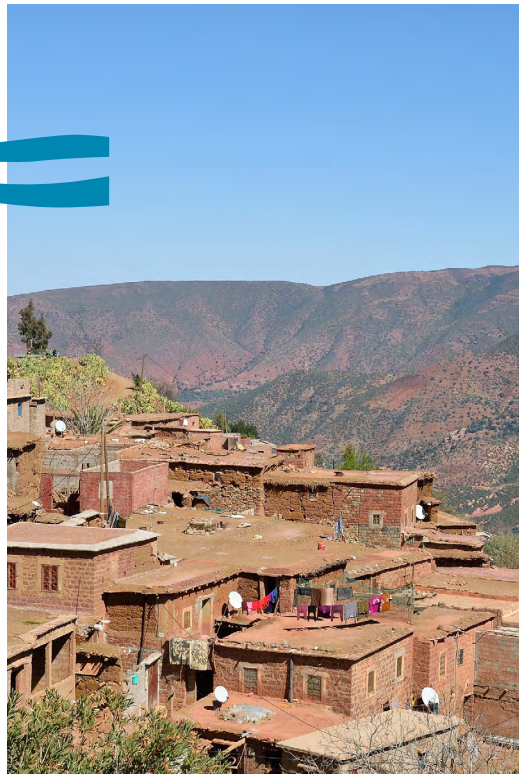

POLICY BRIEF

Water integrity risks in Morocco – Priorities for action

The Moroccan government has multiplied efforts in recent years to counteract mismanagement and corrupt practices, including in the water sector. Despite these efforts, resources lost to corruption are considerable and still pose major challenges to effective governance of water in the country.

A national assessment in Morocco investigated water integrity risks in several major areas: policy making, legislation and regulation; planning and budgeting; enforcement; human resource management and procurement. A summary of the findings, and key recommendations are presented in this brief.

Policy Making, Legislation and Regulation | One main risk areas in terms of integrity concerns the water law of 1995, which did not address traditional uses of water. Stakeholders were not fully consulted in its making. The relationship between the current law and tribal and communal rights has thus not been resolved. Another risk area is that River Basin Authorities (RBAs) do not have the physical capability to enforce the law and lack a presence outside the cities. The problem is exacerbated by contradictions in terms of mandates of the RBAs and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), which represents the leading water users, and a lack of coordination and communication between the RBAs and actors at the field level such as e.g. farmers and Water Users Associations (WUAs).

Planning and Budgeting | A number of risks from a general lack of presence on the ground and insufficient capacity of RBAs to coordinate actions and enforce regulations. In major programmes such as the Plan Maroc Vert, a primary agricultural policy meant to provide subsidies and grants to farmers to modernize farming equipment and techniques do not consult and inform the public well enough. Complex processes make it difficult for small farmers to access grants, and many feel resources are diverted instead instead to large agricultural producers.

Enforcement of Regulations | A general lack of capacity to enforce policies and licences results in the digging of illegal wells, which ultimately threaten to deplete the aquifers. This is mainly done by farmers who are unaware of the laws governing wells. Education and support for applications for licences and stricter regulation on unsanctioned withdrawals are needed. Many farmers, particularly those holding tribal title, refuse to meter their water withdrawals for fear of being forced to limit their use.

Human Resources Management | The main integrity risk area related to human resource management is the practice of favouritism among the MoA, local officials and agricultural supply firms, in the provision of farming education and training to some farmers. This manifests through preferential arrangements with associates, allies and friends and is caused by political party capture of some local Provincial Directorate of Agriculture (DPA) offices. At present, the farmers being served by the DPA cannot evaluate the service. There is no ombudsman service and there is no political oversight through constituency services by parliamentarians on the DPA, so the level of accountability is still weak. However, farmers are becoming increasingly empowered by their associations, NGOs, and the growing freedom of speech in the country.

Procurement and Tendering | A common risk area in all water related agencies is the tendering process and the writing of tenders to favour certain bidders over others. Bid specifications are skewed to disadvantage certain firms in favour of others in water related contracting. This commonly also leads to overpayment for public goods by the contracting agency through negotiation

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with service providers. The primary issues do not stem from the legal frameworks, which are generally adequate, but instead on their implementation and enforcement.

Recommendations for improving national water governance

The following are the general recommendations collected during the assessment:

1. Conduct awareness raising campaigns for institutions and the general public on water integrity in all related governance processes.
2. Facilitate communication and coordination between the Ministry of Agriculture, River Basin Associations and Water User Associations to develop improved between local authorities and water users.
3. Create transparent online procedures for all water governance processes, especially provision of well licenses.
4. Evaluate the institutional culture of all RBAs and implement response measures where needed.
5. Develop and implement concrete measures to increase participation of women in decision-making.
6. Utilize WUAs as information conduits for tribal communities and enable them to direct their concerns to RBAs, MoA and MoI officials.
7. Conducted studies on inter-basin transfers to enable maximised returns on water.
8. Carry out a GIS survey of all the illegal wells and provide a possibility for amnesty, registration and regulation for existing illegal wells where prudent.
9. Consider adding a field service and action unit in each River Basin Association.
10. Create forums that allow DPA officials to express issues directly to WUA representatives.

Access the full report at www.watergovernance.org

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. The programme is implemented in Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia in cooperation with the following national partners: Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST), Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at the American University of Beirut (AUB), Al-Akhawayn University in Ifrane (AUI), Al-Quds University (AQU) and the Centre for Water Research and Technologies (CERTE)

Disclaimer: This policy brief is based upon a collective assessment facilitated by the Al-Akhawayn University in Ifrane (AUI), Morroco. It has been edited by the Stockholm International Water Institute. The views presented do not necessarily reflect those of AUI or the programme financier, the government of Sweden.

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