

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## FINAL EVALUATION REPORT



**Extra-budgetary project: *Establishing a Regional Mechanism for Improved Monitoring and Reporting on Access to Water Supply and Sanitation Services in the Arab Region (MDG+ Initiative)***

**Report submitted by Nahed Freij, December 2016**

### The Project

“Establishing a Regional Mechanism for Improved Monitoring and Reporting on Access to Water Supply and Sanitation Services in the Arab Region (MDG+ Initiative)” is a five-year extra-budgetary project funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and executed by ESCWA’s Sustainable Development Policies Division (SSPD), Water Resources Section (WRS). The project was implemented in partnership with the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA), and in collaboration with the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE), the Arab Water Council (AWC), the Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED), the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC) of the League of Arab States (LAS), and the World Health Organization (WHO). The project aims were threefold: 1) to foster a regional approach for water and sanitation indicators, 2) to establish an institutional mechanism to facilitate cooperation and communication on the issue, and 3) to inform a regional policy perspective to foster dialogue. It aimed to realize four Expected Accomplishments (EAs):

- A. Enhanced regional and national monitoring capacity** – in the areas of data collection, management and monitoring on the MDG+ indicators on water supply and sanitation.
- B. Established regional data management platform** – to be used as a reliable tool to manage the data collected and support regular reporting on progress achieved on access, as well as the level, quality and type of access, to water supply and sanitation services in the Arab Region.
- C. Institutionalized regional monitoring programme** – that contributes to water and sanitation policy-making through a monitoring mechanism implemented at the regional and national levels and formalized through the submission of the biennial progress reports to the AMWC.
- D. Strengthened regional dialogue** – enhanced through a series of meetings that engage a variety of stakeholders in debate regarding the formulation and findings of the MDG+ indicators within the Arab regional context, and which contributes to the global policy debate on the preparation and adoption of development objectives in a post-MDG environment after 2015.

This end-of-cycle evaluation of the project covers the duration of the project from December 2011 to its completion in December 2016. It is undertaken in line with ESCWA’s Evaluation Policy 2014 and development best practice for transparency, and seeks to assess the overall achievement of the project objectives and intended goal, and consolidate the main findings,

challenges, best practices and lessons learnt of this project. As such, the evaluation addresses four DAC criteria: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability. To the extent possible, the evaluation adopted a gender and rights-based lens to assess the extent to which the project promoted human rights and gender equality and to measure the efforts made to integrate a gender and human rights perspective in all stages of the project.

Participatory and collaborative evaluation approaches were adopted in undertaking the evaluation, which took place between November 1<sup>st</sup> and December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016. Qualitative research methodologies were selected and were comprised of desk review of documentation, individual and collective interviews, and observation of the project's final High Level Meeting (HLM), which took place in Amman, Jordan. The evaluator applied nonrandom purposive sampling in undertaking the evaluation to gain inputs and perspectives of direct and indirect project stakeholders. Moreover, gender considerations were maintained to ensure representative participation of informants by sex when relevant and possible.

## **Main Findings and Conclusions**

1. The initiative is a direct response to priorities of the Arab region and to the priorities of the AMWC within the LAS. During implementation, the initiative's objectives, indicators and monitoring remained valid with regards to the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. The participation of women and national women machineries in the project's activities were limited at the beginning but grew laudably over time.
3. The evaluation finds strong evidence that regional and national monitoring capacity was effectively enhanced through the MDG+ Initiative. A regional and national monitoring mechanism was established and capacities in monitoring and data management of water and sanitation services were increased.
4. The establishment of a regional data management platform was progressively realized.
5. The initiative effectively institutionalized the regional monitoring mechanism. A national and regional monitoring programme was established and institutionalized for the duration of the project and 18 Arab countries engaged in the monitoring programme.
6. The initiative contributed to strengthened regional and national dialogue regarding the formulation and findings of the MDG+ indicators within the Arab regional context.
7. The initiative contributed to informing the 2030 Agenda while also supporting Arab countries in their preparation towards water related Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets.
8. The initiative made efficient utilization of resources.
9. Project activities and outputs were largely achieved on time. The time extension proved to be a valuable opportunity for stronger regional conceptualization and consultation regarding the potential linkages between the MDG+ Initiative and the water-related SDGs.

10. The initiative achieved several sustainable results and benefits. It increased the region's capacity to monitor the MDG+ indicators, and established a regional institutional framework that is regionally owned.

## **Main Recommendations**

All interviewed participants and regional stakeholders that took part in the High Level Meeting (HLM) expressed interest in further follow-up phases of the initiative. The following recommendations are proposed:

1. The project team to consider supporting a transitional initiative to support the region's engagement in the SDG process and maintain partnerships and institutional frameworks and connections established through the MDG+ Initiative, while expanding it as needed.
2. Project partners must consider greater dissemination of the outcomes and findings of the MDG+ Initiative on water-related indicators to better inform decision-making in Arab States. This can also include supporting the production of policy briefs with national level insights on the water-related indicators to inform the development of national policies and strategies in the region.
3. Project partners are encouraged to pursue enhanced networking and the exchange of experience and knowledge among the various National Monitoring Teams (NMTs). Project partners should promote the engagement of national women machineries and civil society organizations in monitoring and reporting SDG indicators at regional and country levels. This could be achieved by including them in NMTs, for example.
4. ESCWA is advised to continue to coordinate with the MDG+ regional platform at several levels and encouraged to convey its concerns and comments to the MDG+ regional platform on the methodologies to calculate SDG indicators, and to link the platform with global monitoring counterparts. Further, ESCWA may coordinate with the platform to support capacity building at the regional and national levels and to look for further financial support to support data collection and analysis on water-related indicators.