



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT PROJECT FINAL EVALUATION:**

Developing the capacity of the countries members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to address the water and energy nexus for achieving sustainable development goals.

Period: December 2014 - December 2017

## **CASE STUDY ASSESSMENT REPORT**

Final version (revised)

02 May 2018

**Nadia BECHRAOUI**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Evaluator would like to thank the ESCWA team for the support and advice which she received throughout the evaluation process of this project. She would also like to thank each and every individual who kindly made themselves available for interviews in the course of this evaluation procedure for the valuable information and insights which they have all openly provided, and which have significantly contributed to inform this report.

The views put forward in this report are those of the Evaluator. These views are based on the analysis of the information which was available to her and, as the product of her own conclusion, they do not necessarily represent the views of the project team, or of the ESCWA, or of any individual who has taken part in the interviewing process.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the final report of the assessment of the DA project on “Developing the capacity of the countries members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to address the water and energy nexus for achieving sustainable development goals”, designed and implemented by ESCWA

This evaluation, commissioned by ESCWA to an international independent evaluator, covers the entire lifetime of the project, from December 2014 to December 2017, and focuses on knowledge production, the engagement of stakeholders and partnerships and strategy (visioning and planning for policy influence).

The evaluation mainly assessed ESCWA’s performance across the three DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness and sustainability, based on a set of specific questions defined in the TORs intended to guide the evaluation exercise.

The findings are based on an in-depth review of all the literature relating to the project, key informant interviews (about 28 respondents of whom, 12 are female) over the telephone/skype and face-to-face meetings in the three countries visited (Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia), and during the participation of the Evaluator to the final regional policy workshop on the water-energy nexus that took place in Beirut on 11-12 December 2017. Methods of analysis included a reconstructed theory of change to underline the project strategy to create behavioral change, ESCWA’s contribution analysis to the project’s objective and the use of evaluation questions. The draft report was submitted to the StEPS for its review and feedback/comments received have been incorporated in this final version.

### Conclusions

The project is found to be highly relevant to the needs of the ESCWA region, at both the regional and the national levels. It fits in with the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and with the ESCWA mandate to promote the integrated management of natural resources for sustainable development in its member countries. It also builds upon work which the ESCWA had done at an earlier date in relation to the water-energy nexus.

The project’s effectiveness is found to be satisfactory because, by the time of its completion, all of its expected outputs were achieved: in other terms, it made available to the ESCWA member countries a series of high quality knowledge products and it brought together a large number of the region’s stakeholders on the water and energy nexus issue and engaged them on a course of debate, learning and exchange of views. Most participants (government representatives and experts) who were interviewed during the evaluation judged that the project had acted as “a catalyst” which turned the water and energy nexus concept into a center of attention for policy makers, executives and practitioners of both the water and the energy sectors in many of the ESCWA member countries, and that it had contributed to help them build on their knowledge and technical capacities. From a more operational viewpoint, the feasibility studies of the three pilot initiatives were completed and shared by the participants during the final workshop. The implementation dimension, although not part of the project design, is still to come.

The impact of the project is difficult to assess due to the following reasons: it was recently completed, it was limited in time, and its modest budget did not cover an implementation phase. The much-needed building of individual capacities proved not to be sufficient to generate significant changes at either the regional or the national levels. The pilot initiatives were a good means of translating theoretical concepts into practical concepts. However, the first signs of change identified in at least

four ESCWA member countries are likely to turn into impact if the project benefits are rapidly consolidated.

The project's design was found to tend towards gender and human-rights blindness. However, in the knowledge products reviewed, a number of references to these considerations were included. Female participation to the project's activities was very low. Despite ESCWA's active efforts to ensure parity, the ratio of women never went beyond 28%. Overall, integration of gender and human rights considerations remains weak in the project and is therefore rated "Moderately Satisfactory" (MS).

In respect of whether the project's legacy is sustainable, it is found to be satisfactory in most MCs from an institutional point of view. This achievement was due first of all to the good ownership of the nexus concept by the policymakers and to their willingness to pursue their efforts in this field. It was also due to the availability at the national level of technical capacities and of knowledge products and tools. The project's strong point lay in the way in which, in every member country, the topic of the water and energy nexus figures successfully at the top of the agenda of the decision-makers concerned; in the way in which it provided the decision makers with the tools which they will keep on needing in order to be able to push on with the nexus concept; in the way in which it contributed to the development of skills at the national level; and, finally, in the way in which it successfully established synergies with similar initiatives in the region. The dissemination of the concept on a large scale, however, was found, in the case of some member countries, to be hampered by financial constraints and/or various degrees of socio-political uncertainty. Therefore, the overall sustainability is found to be moderately likely.

A highly satisfactory ownership of the project by member countries combined with an excellent collaboration and synergy with similar regional initiatives have positively influenced the project's performance which could have been even better with a proper monitoring system and well-defined outcomes and indicators.

#### Key recommendations

1. Given the promising results achieved by the project, the project team should explore alternative options for a **follow-up project** to keep the momentum created and to:
  - support the stakeholders in securing adequate funding to ensure the implementation of their pilot project, and
  - assist member countries decision makers to scale-up or replicate similar initiatives and to enact proper regulatory and legislative frameworks in respect of the water and energy nexus concept.
2. In addition to the logframe, the project team should use the **theory of change** approach in the design of all future projects, in order to define, on a more realistic scale, what the expected accomplishments of future projects should be. As part of this, the project team should develop **SMART indicators** aimed at measuring progress in implementing the water-energy nexus concept (this refers to both outcome and performance indicators).
3. The project team should conduct **results-based monitoring** on a more regular basis, involving national counterparts on the ground who could follow directly up on the results. This would enable the project team to improve its performance and to be better informed about the actual impact of the project.

4. The project team should venture beyond simple reminders of the concepts **of gender equality and human rights** issues and give them greater visibility when planning and implementing future projects.

#### **Lessons learnt**

- Combining normative work with field applications is a good approach to influence policies and show that theoretical concepts can be successfully applied.
- It is beneficial when capacity building projects include a formal exit strategy to foster the sustainability of the project's achievements. The exit strategy could include another project or partner ready to take over and consolidate the achievements.
- When pilot initiatives are part of the project design, it is important to plan how to secure adequate funding to ensure their implementation.