



EXTRA-BUDGETARY PROJECT FINAL EVALUATION:

Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region.

Period: January 2010 - December 2017

CASE STUDY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Final

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR), with the Sida-funded project as its main component, was launched in 2010 upon the signature of an agreement between United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the main coordinator of the project, and the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), the main financial partner. The RICCAR initiative set the overall framework and upscaled funding provided by Sida.

This evaluation, commissioned by ESCWA to an independent international evaluator focuses on the Sida-funded project as the main component of the RICCAR initiative. It covers the entire lifetime of the initiative, from January 2010 to December 2017, including the knowledge production, 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 project literature, key informant interviews with 34 respondents (of which 11 were females), and the observation of two meetings. During the participation of the evaluator at the Expert Group Meeting on "Pursuing Improved Shared Water Resources Management within the Framework of Global and Regional Agreements" in Egypt, 29-30 November 2017, the evaluator organized face to face meetings and interviews about the initiative with several participants. Methods of analysis included a reconstructed theory of change to underline the project strategy to contribute to the transformational changes expected at various levels, ESCWA's contribution analysis to the project's objective, and the use of evaluation questions. The draft report was submitted to ESCWA for its review and feedback, and the comments received were incorporated in this final version.

Conclusions

The project is very well documented and provides numerous publications, reports and useful products of high quality in addition to e-tools released for the first time for the Arab region. The project is found to be highly relevant at the regional level. It falls in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and with ESCWA's mandate to address the issues of climate change and water which are of high priority for ESCWA's Subprogramme on integrated management of natural resources for sustainable development.

The project was highly effective, as on its completion date, it had achieved most of its expected outputs: a regional knowledge hub for climate and water resource information and modeling in the Arab region is available; awareness about climate change impacts on water resources in the Arab region has been raised; geo-spatial maps are available to help convey technical material in accessible and policy relevant formats; and project information and documentation are available in hard copy form as well as through electronic and web-based media.

The project's objective was satisfactorily achieved since a consultative and integrated methodological framework was established for the region to identify the socio-economic and environmental vulnerability caused by climate change impacts on water resources, including the analysis of extreme weather events. In accordance with expectations, the project provided the member States involved

with useful information and tools to improve the success rate of predictions and projections and the study of extreme weather events and climate-related disasters. The project provided a common platform to examine and address climate change impacts on the freshwater resources and their related sectors in the Arab region by serving as the basis for dialogue, setting priorities and formulating policies regarding the adaptation to climate change at the regional level. The initiative created a new synergy for exchange of experiences and views related to the impacts of climate change on water in the Arab region between ministries, specialized institutions such as meteorological institutions and so on, and created a suitable framework for the exchange of information and knowledge on water and climate change and related issues.

Member States do not have access to the platform yet. However, ESCWA provided datasets when requested by member States. As stated by the ESCWA project coordinator: “Egypt recently received the data on an external drive during a five-day workshop conducted by ESCWA and ACSAD at the Ministry’s National Water Research Center/Water Research Institute in Cairo on 11-15 March 2018”. In addition, discussions are currently taking place with FAO to make the necessary arrangements so that full access to the platform will be available soon. In order to pave the way for the future steps, the Arab Climate Outlook Forum (ArabCOF) met in September 2017 in Beirut and in February 2018 in Cairo and the Arab Permanent Committee on Meteorology (APCM) will be meeting in April 2018. A future agreement for Phase II of the Sida project is being planned by ESCWA and Sida.

Considering its long life-cycle, since it was initially launched in 2010, the project is found to be likely sustainable at this stage on condition that a new phase is launched to: 1) take advantage of the current momentum, 2) consolidate the results already achieved (provide operational access to the regional knowledge hub and ensure its regular updating, and empower the ArabCOF), and 3) conduct additional studies such as integrated assessments and analyses of climate change and extreme events at the regional, country, basin and sector levels, and capacity building and institutional boosting activities. The project is considered to be institutionally sustainable thanks to the good ownership of the regional initiative by the policymakers of the member States involved. A further sign of sustainability is the request, and resolution adopted by ESCWA member States in 2017, to establish an Arab Climate Change Policy Center at ESCWA.

The project played a significant role in producing knowledge and information about climate change impacts on water resources available in the Arab region. Its impact is rated likely if a new phase is put in place to consolidate its achievements and to make further progress.

Gender aspects were properly addressed to some extent in the technical reports and case studies. The integrated mapping methodology included equity factors in gender as an adaptive capacity indicator. Gender equality and climate change impacts, as well as the need for a gender sensitive approach, for gender-responsive budgeting and gender perspectives in respect of sensitive levels of climate indicators were also analyzed in the context of training manuals and training events, thus helping to raise awareness in the Arab region about the gender issue. The project document and the progress reports do not refer to issues related to gender.

Key recommendations:

At the strategic level:

1. ESCWA should implement and ensure that the common platform is operational and that member States have access to it. This will allow member States to start using available knowledge and information to build their individual strategies and policies. For this, the following issues need to be addressed:

- a. ESCWA should finalize and formalize the agreement with FAO for the full implementation of the platform. For this, it is important to involve member States to formalize agreements for their specific data use and the accessibility of the platform.
 - b. ESCWA should prepare a strategy for accompanying member States and enhancing their preparedness and capacity to use and adapt the initiative's assessments, modeling, projections, results and tools for their national strategies and policies. The ESCWA coordinator pointed out that this will be part of Phase II. A proposal for the creation of a Climate Change Policy Centre was approved by member States in December 2017 and Phase II development is underway with an online consultation completed and face-to-face meetings scheduled for 30-31 May 2018.
 - c. For Phase II of the project, ESCWA should launch a wide and deep consultation with member States to identify their needs and requests to be able to continue the implementation of the project at national levels including capacity building. According to the ESCWA coordinator, the Phase II consultation is expected to include focal points designated by the member States (Egypt and Jordan already designated their focal points)
2. ESCWA should consider alternative ways to assist member States to identify sustainable strategies and fundraising, and to mobilize support for government decision makers in order to replicate similar initiatives at the national level and in order to enact a suitable regulatory and legislative framework for climate change and water security.

At the operational level:

3. The project team should take on board the theory of change approach when designing future projects, in order to define clear and realistic expected outcomes, using better adapted SMART indicators (both outcome and performance indicators).
4. The project team should include a systematic strategy for monitoring and evaluation when designing future projects. The strategy should include:
 - a. Separate budget lines for monitoring and for evaluation
 - b. Setting up a M&E system and updating it at each project extension
 - c. Results-based monitoring with national counterparts to improve the project performance and better assess the real impact on the ground
5. Where relevant, the project team should put more emphasis on gender equality and human rights issues when designing, planning and implementing future projects. Operative budgets should be worked out and set for the assessment of specific data relating to gender equality and human rights outputs and analysis.

Lessons learnt:

Some lessons generated from this evaluation could be applied in the next phase of the project and elsewhere to improve management, performance, outcome and impact. It should be noted that some lessons are based on the positive results of the project:

- The ownership of the project by member States would be enhanced if technical preparedness of member States would be planned as a key activity. This was very well reflected in the Sida project through the training workshops and consultation meetings organized within the project. This could be consolidated in Phase II with the launch of a new technical preparedness programme for member States.
- The Sida funded project within the RICCAR initiative is generating the first assessment of its kind in the Arab region as national assessments were not really comparable across the Arab States. In order to highlight this positive outcome for the member States and to further harmonize the regional and national level, it is important to conduct future regional projects with due consideration of on-going national planning and implementation activities on climate change impacts and adaptation. This will contribute to addressing institutional arrangements without duplicating existing functions.
- Assessments are essential for promoting effective monitoring and evaluation of adaptation at the national level, and providing the required technical support and resources, contribute to improving the performance and to better assessing the impact on the ground.
- Conducting mid-term evaluations, updating project documents, M&E and the logframes of the project, including the indicators, at each project extension, strengthens the performance of the project.