

**National report on  
Monitoring progress and promotion of water demand management policies**

**SYRIA**

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## **I- The main challenges confronted by water sector**

Challenges mean the matters that require drawing up of policies or changing existing policies as water policy, agriculture policy, demography policy, hence, the main challenges in water sector:

**1- Provision of safe drinking water as a response to increasing demand:** taking into consideration that the population of Syria is redoubling every 22-25 years, while the matter which intensifies the problem is the existence of heterogeneous distribution of water availability in Syrian water basins, and unbalanced distribution of localities, it means irrelevant distribution with the population. This situation simply led to intensive pressures on water resources, consequently, to imbalance in water equation.

In order to overcome these challenges, a list of procedures should be crackdown as:

- Adopting and implementing a suitable, realistic, disciplinary, and applicable demographic policy.
- Depending on regional planning in national development plans.

**2- Using economic tools:** for implementing water demand management policy, in order to reduce demands, and reserve the money of increasing supply, the matter which need a real turn point in the political, socio-economic considerations.

**3- Insuring food security and water security in parallel:** it is acknowledged that food security is consider one of the stakes of agriculture policy in Syria, in practical, food security could be achieved on the account of water security, the matter which threatens the sustainability of agricultural development on long term.

In order to overcome this challenge it is necessary to review the development and economic priorities, and to create radical changes in agricultural policy, the crucial matter which need taking intrepid decision at the governmental level.

**4- Poverty eradication:** the relations between poverty and population is complicated and have many-sided, this relation could be more deep in agriculture sector, since poverty may lead most of poor farmers to increase their pressures on natural, fragile resources in order to survive. The illegal random settlements nationwide is one phenomenon which originated from poverty, hence, the eradication of the poverty is one of the main challenges.

**5- Non-enforcement of laws and legislations:** which is one of the main obstacles confronted the protection of the environment and the implementation of sustainable development.

It is manifested in iillegal connections to water networks as a result of illegal housing and, discharging of liquid and solid waste in surrounding environment and water recipient bodies.

## **II- The main long-term targets of the 10<sup>th</sup> five-year plan**

### **The future prospective for irrigation sector:**

#### **1. horizontal extension:**

- In the field of land reclamation:

The 10<sup>th</sup> five year plan determined the principle to extend in the new reclaimed areas in view of continuous water supply; accordingly concentration will be to increase reclaimed

areas in the Euphrates basin as there is unexploited water, in addition to Tigris & Khabour basin in view of possibility to ensure waters from Tigris River to return balance to ground water.

- In the field of dams:

Achievement should be done to study the possibility of erection dams in all places of water prospective as the coastal and Euphrates basins.

## 2- Vertical extension:

The sector plan aimed to accelerate the programs to transfer into modern irrigation for the remaining area amounting about 1219 thousand ha, which will be executed within 10 years commencing in 2006 with a reduction of water consumption for the irrigated hectare from 12800 to 8000 m<sup>3</sup>/year

## The future prospective for the Drinking Water Supply and Sewage Sector

It is planned for the drinking water supply and sewage sector to develop such as to achieve by 2020 the following targets:

- Percentage population with access to sustainable and safe drinking water is 99% in urban areas and 90% in rural areas.
- Cost recovery for operation and maintenance for drinking water supply and sewage services.
- Financial independence in the management of drinking water supply and sewage establishments.
- Water demand management.
- Reduction of physical and administrative losses
- Reuse of sewage water in other production sectors.
- Autonomy in administrative decision making.
- Decentralization in the implementation of executive decisions
- Decisions based on socio- economic appraisals and environmental impact assessments
- Cooperation with the private sector in the performance of tasks of the establishments.

### **III- The main obstacles confronted the implementation of objectives**

- Lack of coordination between concerned ministries in the integrated management of water resources which has a negative impact on the sustainability of drinking water sources.
- Technical and administrative weaknesses in the skills and competence of existing human resources which may not be qualified to take decisions at the lowest administrative level
- Waste of drinking water due to lack of awareness of people as to the importance and need to preserve this precious resource which is caused by the reduced water tariff fees.
- Lack of awareness of people as to the importance of the sewage sector and its role in preserving water resources from contamination in addition to protecting them from disease.

### **IV- Indicators for Follow- up**

The 10<sup>th</sup> five- year plan may be followed- up by the following indicators:

- Percentage of people served by drinking water supply & sewage networks
- Percentage of people served by wastewater treatment plants
- Number of cases of water- born diseases resulting from water pollution (diarrhea ...)

- Percentage of people migrating from urban to rural areas which were serviced by drinking
- water and sewage treatment.
- Physical & administrative losses in water networks
- Cost recovery as a percentage of operation and maintenance
- Cost recovery as a percentage of operation and maintenance and investments
- Customers' satisfaction on provided services
- Water consumption per capita per day
- Percentage of water demand management projects to water supply projects
- Percentage of trained persons in the upper administrative levels
- Percentage of trainees in the technical level
- Bills' payments collection efficiency

**In conclusion, there are some issues which need to be tackled:**

- Syria has not addressed seriously the most important factor that is putting the highest pressure on the country's water resources, namely the population growth rate which considered amongst the highest in the world
- Many contradictory policy issues need to be settled, as government policy for encouraging farmers to invest in modern on-farm irrigation technologies is at odd with the government irrigation tariff policies which do not provide incentives to farmers to conserve water since the operation and maintenance charge for the public surface water irrigation schemes is a flat fee based on field size and unrelated to actual water consumption
- Communication and information systems are essential to bring the message of water demand management to the end users. long term investment programmes to transfer knowledge on actual crop water needs and the development and adaptation to higher value and less water intensive cropping patterns from research centers to farmers need to be implemented

In this context, policy makers play an important role. Actually they have to legitimate their water strategy introducing allocative efficiency measures at a rate that is socially and politically acceptable.

Institutions have to answer to the challenges coming from the water crisis which risk of compromising economic development and the welfare of the population.

It is only the fair distribution of the resources; conservative consumption by users, raising awareness can change a scenario when water is becoming a factor of territorial unbalance and social inequality.