



UN WATER

22 MARCH WORLD WATER DAY

2019 Leaving no one behind

"The history of the Arab World is also a history of managing water. For six thousand years, societies from Iraq to Morocco have adapted to water scarcity with technical and institutional ingenuity. The world's first dams and irrigation systems were built here, allowing the rise of great civilizations.

At the dawn of the 21st century, Arab States face new challenges with water security, which is core to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Guaranteeing the water security of all Arab citizens requires renewed ingenuity and action...Meeting increasing demand for water from growing populations and economies in a time of greater economic and climate risk will be challenging. With most readily available water resources already mobilized, strengthening water security will largely rely on improving governance, and making better use of what we have.

All Arab States face these common issues... The role of each individual State remains crucial, but regional water insecurity won't be resolved by governments alone. Collaboration is needed..."

*- Executive Summary of the Action Plan for the Arab Water Security Strategy 2010-2030: A call to action
League of Arab States*

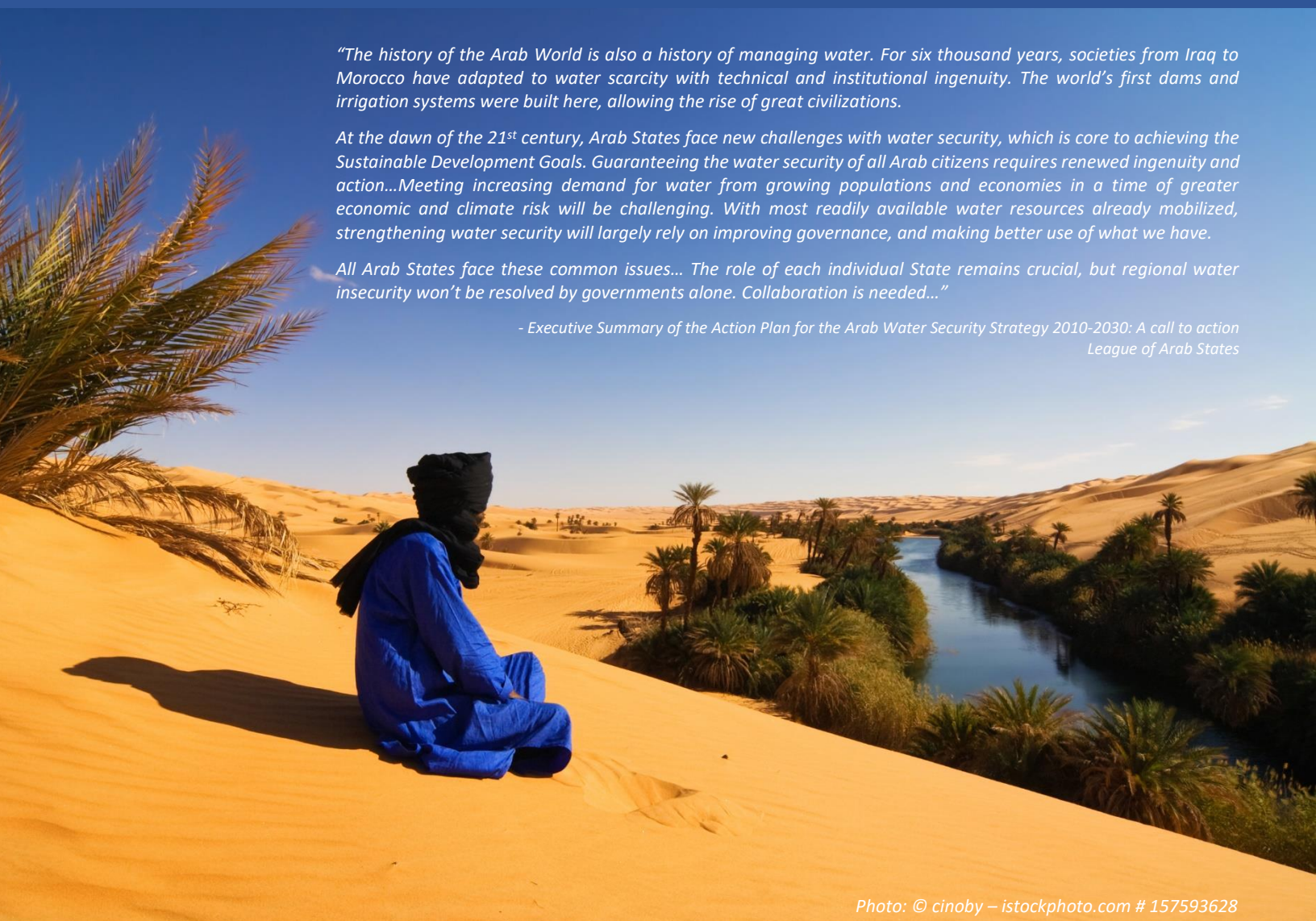


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UN WATER

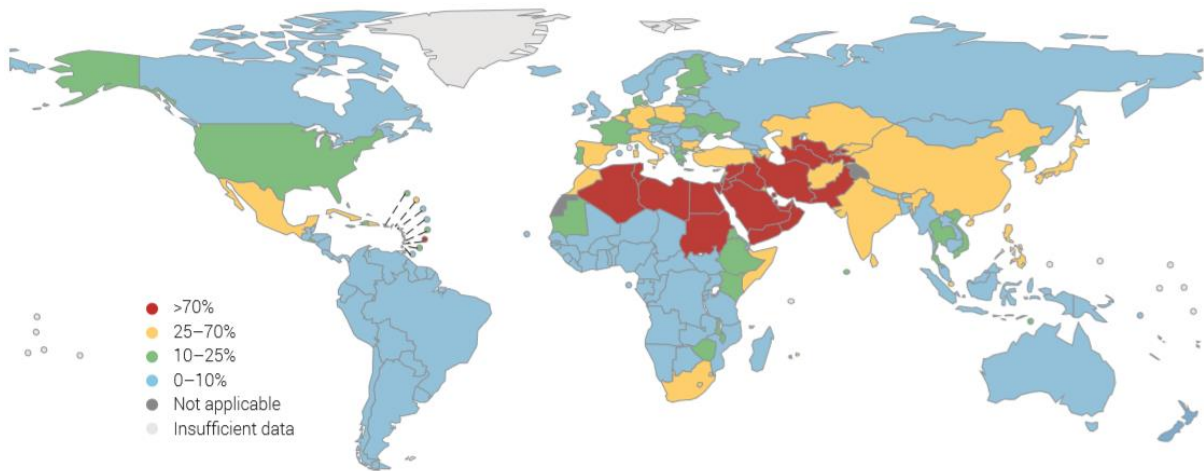
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LEAVING NO REGION BEHIND

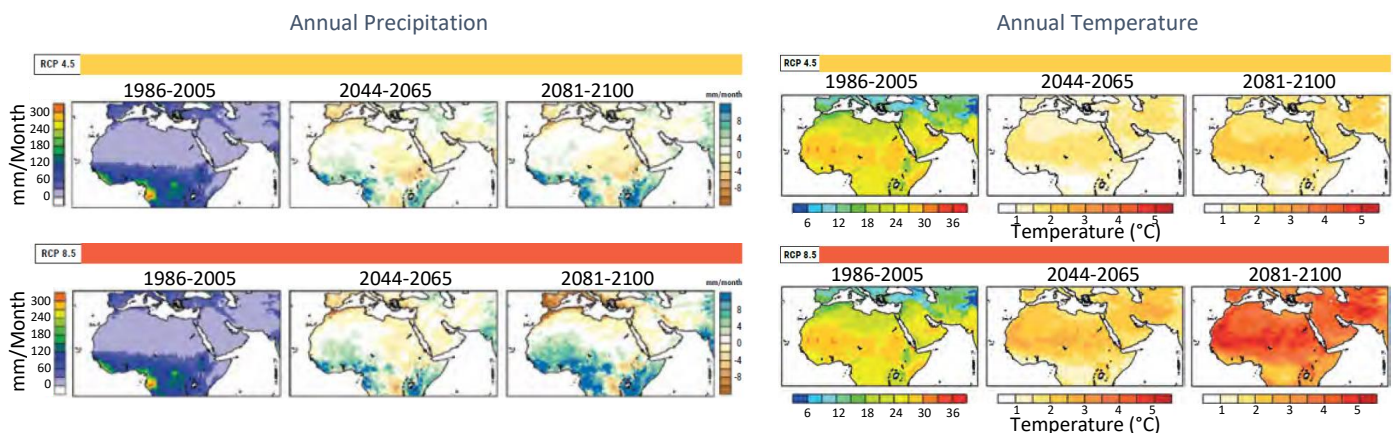
The Arab region is the most water-stressed region in the world. Total renewable water resources are just 736 m³ per person per year. Water scarcity will continue to increase due to population growth and climate change. These trends have contributed to increased groundwater depletion, loss of arable land for agricultural production, and the movement of people when water resources are insufficient to support health, welfare and livelihoods. In the entirety of the Arab region, some 51 million people (or 9% of the total population) lacked a basic drinking water service in 2015, 73% of whom lived in rural areas. Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the Arab region suffer the greatest equity gap with respect to ensuring access to basic water supply and sanitation services, particularly in rural areas, but this situation is not only limited to LDCs. Global figures often mask substantial inequities across regions, within countries, and between communities. Leaving no one behind thus includes substantially reducing the number of people facing water scarcity, as called for in SDG 6.4.

Level of Physical Water Stress^{1, 2}



The Arab region is also experiencing the adverse impacts of climate change as manifested by increased and more variable temperatures, higher fluctuations in precipitation patterns and increased occurrence of extreme events such as droughts and floods. Moderate to high vulnerability also characterizes water-dependent sectors across the Arab region, including ecosystems, food crops, livestock, cities and human health.³

Mean projected change compared to reference period under moderate and extreme scenarios (RCP 4.5 and 8.5)³



¹ WWAP, 2019. *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2019: Leaving No One Behind*.

² Physical water stress is defined here as the ratio of total freshwater withdrawn annually by all major sectors, including environmental water requirements, to the total amount of renewable freshwater resources, expressed as a percentage.

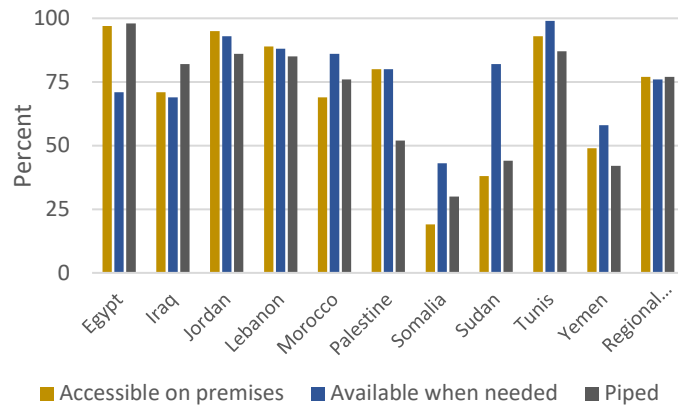
³ ESCWA et al., 2017. *RICCAR Arab Climate Change Assessment Report – Main Report*.

WATER IN THE ARAB REGION

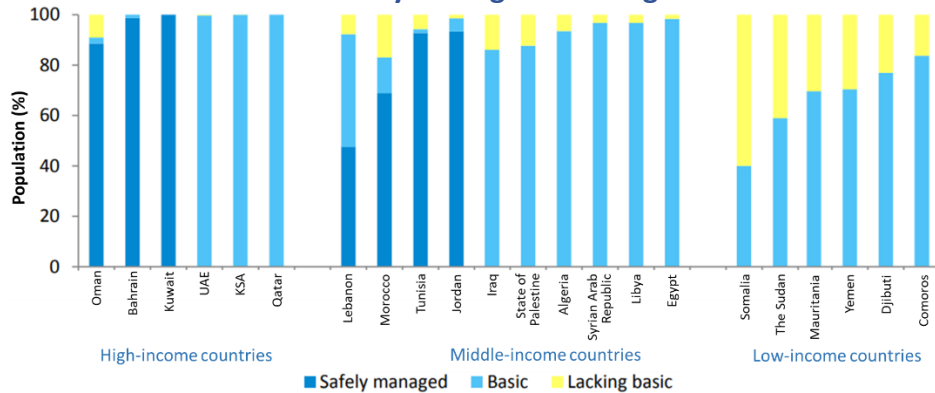
LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND IN THE ARAB REGION

The percentage of the population served with clean water supplied by piped networks to the households varies greatly among countries of the Arab region and between rural and urban areas within the same country, as does access to basic sanitation. Intermittent supply and poor quality also limit reliable and safe access to water in much of the region. High levels of internal displacement owing to conflict and violence also persist in the Arab region's LDCs, namely Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. Sudan hosts the largest number of IDPs among the Arab LDCs, with over 3.3 million at the end of 2016. Natural disasters linked to climate change impacts have resulted in the displacement of over 240,000 people across the Arab region in 2016, the vast majority of them in the Arab LDCs (98%): 123,000 in the Sudan, 70,000 in Somalia, and 36,000 in Yemen. This means that special attention must be focused on enhancing the resilience of displaced peoples to ensure that no one is left behind with respect to WASH services as per SDG 6.⁶

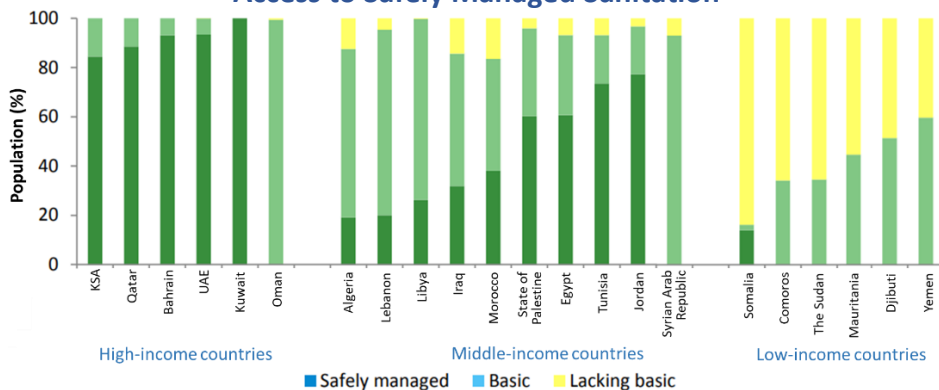
Selected Arab Countries with Water Supply Intermittency^{4,5}



Access to Safely Managed Drinking Water⁴



Access to Safely Managed Sanitation⁴



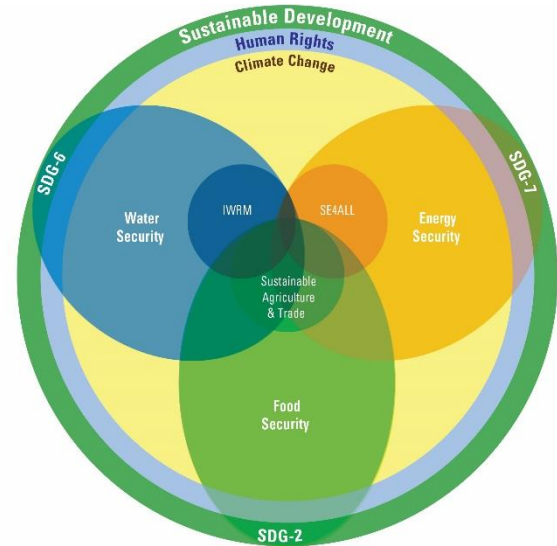
⁴ Year 2015 data based on WHO and UNICEF, 2018. *Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene: A snapshot of Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in the Arab Region.*

⁵ Accessible on premises is an improved water source located within the dwelling, yard or plot. Piped supplies include sources such as households with tap water in their dwelling, yard or plot, or public stand posts.

⁶ ESCWA/IOM, 2015. *2015 Situation Report on International Migration: Migration, Displacement and Development in a Changing Arab Region.*

Water – Energy – Food Security Nexus

The interlinkages among water, energy and food security are particularly strong in the water scarce Arab Region. Many states rely on energy intensive desalination and groundwater pumping to secure water for domestic, agricultural and industrial use. ESCWA has developed a nexus analytical framework that helps to understand those complex relationships and can be applied at various scales of analysis.⁷ The nexus is people-centered and takes a human rights-based approach to development that aims to ensure universal access to basic services, with special attention to the needs of those furthest behind.



Shared Water Resources

Fourteen of the 22 Arab States are riparian states to shared surface water basins, and around two-thirds of freshwater resources in the Arab region are sourced from rivers that are transboundary in nature. The Nile, the Tigris and the Euphrates, which are shared by Arab and non-Arab countries, account for most of the region's surface water. Arab States also rely heavily on groundwater resources. Shared aquifers are found in 21 out of the 22 Arab States and are a primary source for water in the arid to semi-arid region. Most territorially contiguous states in the Arab Region share both renewable and non-renewable aquifers. In most cases, the shared water bodies lack clear agreements regulating their management and utilization, which poses a potential source of tension and conflict among riparian countries, with clear implications for water security. This has implications for achieving SDG 6.5 targeting integrated water resources management, including through transboundary water cooperation.

Water is a Human Right and Underpins Other Human Rights

Right to Water: United Nations General Assembly resolution 64/292 (2010): "Recognizes the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right ..."

Right to Food: Human Rights Council (2008): "Reaffirms the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger."

Right to Development: Declaration on the Right to Development (1986): "States should undertake, at the national level, all necessary measures for the realization of the right to development and shall ensure, inter alia, equality of opportunity for all in their access to basic resources, education, health services, food, housing, employment and the fair distribution of income."

Arab Charter on Human Rights: Article 38: "Every person has the right to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, which ensures their well-being and a decent life, including food, clothing, housing, services and the right to a healthy environment..." and Article 39, "The measures taken by States shall include" ... "Provision of basic nutrition and safe drinking water for all..."

⁷ ESCWA, 2015. *ESCWA Water Development Report 6: The Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus in the Arab Region*.