



Sustainable Water Integrated Management - Support Mechanism (SWIM- SM)

Project funded by the European Union

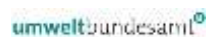
**REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF THE STATUS OF THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIES AND / OR ACTION PLANS  
FOR WASTEWATER  
NATIONAL REPORT FOR TUNISIA**

**Lot 1 (WP1) Water Governance and Mainstreaming**

**Activity 1.1.2**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**July 2013**



*.....Water is too precious to Waste*



## SUMMARY

Among the Maghreb countries, **Tunisia is the country that most suffers from most stress, a problem that is further exacerbated by a large disparity between regions.** The need to optimize the use of existing water resources has led the country to opt for the principles of water management under the Water Resources Integrated Management. **Managing the amount assigned to the Ministry of Agriculture, further led to the implementation of strategies such as water-saving irrigation or the quest for new unconventional resources. Protection of the resource, developed by the Ministry of Environment, through a strong urban sanitation policy, developed for decades.**

The result of these policies is remarkable as regards the supply of drinking water to the population (water supply has been secured for the whole national territory) as well as at the level of urban sanitation. **Only the rural sector continues to suffer a deficit in sanitation policy.**

Tunisia's water sector is organized on the basis of highly **centralized sectoral policies** in contradiction with the principles of management displayed. This translates into a multitude of strategies and sectoral programs. **New reforms**, particularly in the area of decentralization should lead the country to review its methods of water management.

**Many public bodies** (monitored by ministries) have been established to implement the management of different sectors : **SONEDE** (drinking water) , **ONAS** ( sanitation) , **National Employment Agency** ( Environmental Protection ) , **APAL** ( coastal protection ) **ANGED** (waste management ) . Other public bodies provide technical assistance to policymakers : **INS** (statistics), **CITET** (Environment technology), **CNE** (National Water Council ) , **CNDD** ( National Commission for Sustainable Development) , observatories (National Observatory Agriculture ( **ONAGRI** ) Tunisian Observatory for Environment and Sustainable Development ( **OTEDD** ) etc. as well as financial instruments ( **FODEP** for clearance ) .

Besides the two main ministries of water management and sanitation –namely the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment - other ministries are involved, through their specificity : Health ( Water Supply drinking (AEP) and sanitation) , Interior ( decentralization and local authorities ) , Finance ( investment and support for public institutions) , Regional Development (Planning) .

The involvement of departments and agencies is ensured through a thoroughly developed institutional and regulatory framework, **although in some sectors the situation leaved something to be desired, as is for instance the case of the reuse of treated wastewater or the treatment of industrial waste.** Law 75-16, whereby **the Water Code was promulgated is the basis for any regulation of water management** complemented by other more sectoral laws and decrees in effect. Developments in recent decades have resulted in a restructuring of the Water Code, currently is under way.

Intervention and implementation policies are launched under the Five-Year Plans (the XIIth Plan is currently applying) within the context of which major investment projects eventually ascribe. Tunisia receives extensive financial support from international donors (World Bank, European Union (EU), African Development Bank (ADB), the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the French Development Agency (AFD), KfW ( KfW ) , the Japanese International Cooperation Agency ( JICA ) ... ) in terms of investments for strategic and prospective studies through various programs ( investment Program in the Area of the UAE ( PISEAU ) Program national Sanitation of Popular Neighborhoods ( PNAQP ) Sector



Policy Support (PAPS ) Water Programme , the WATER National Information System ( SINEAU ) and the Tunisian Pollution Control Project network (WATER Tunisia) ( CHIP ) .

**However, an analysis of the current situation reveals a number of weaknesses in the sanitation sector, undermining a real integrated management of water resources:**

- **In rural areas, the development of sanitation is pronouncedly lagging behind vis-à-vis urban areas.** This is partly due to the lack of a clear institutional framework for sanitation in rural areas (otherwise said: who does what) , in the absence of a National Rural Sanitation Plan, defining adjusted financial and technical interventions, and secondly to a lack of information , training and user involvement.
- **In the area of reuse of treated wastewater,** displayed as a priority for new unconventional resource, **the current situation does not facilitate its development,** what with the unclear **institutional** situation and some very restrictive **standards,** the **additional costs** of treatment and routings resources, the insufficiency of **information** available to potential users and the **uncertainty about the quality** of water distributed, eventually resulting in low or no demand.
- **The situation regarding the fate of sludge from WWTP** (Wastewater Treatment wastewater) **requires a number of clarifications.** The hesitation of the State (requirements for authorization, prohibition and new authorization application in agriculture) did not facilitate the resolution of the situation. While several pilot sites have been established and although blueprints are being discussed, **a further clarification of a number of institutional issues is required, as is for instance the role of managers and users as well as their mutual relations, their fields of action and their respective scopes responsibilities.** This, however, is further conditional on the following point.
- **The problem of industrial discharges, their impact and their treatment is an essential item to be taken into account for the recovery of wastewater and sludge from WWTP.** **The institutional framework** for industrial emissions is currently **insufficient** (it should at least discharge standards by type of activity) . On the other hand **the rate of pollution charges paid by polluters is low and not conducive to a voluntary mechanism to improve the situation.** A real strategy to solve the problem related to industrial activities and water management must be established and developed quickly in order to prevent the blocking of (STEP operation, reuse of treated wastewater (Reut) sludge recycling) .
- **The position of ONAS and SONEDE (under the custody of different ministries) and their interdependence vis-à-vis the billing does not facilitate an integrated approach with regard to sanitation and water supply.** It seems desirable to make a thorough study of the fate of these two institutions and see **how it is possible to improve synergy between the two (planning, strategies, actions), so as to obtain an institutional rapprochement.**
- **Participatory management is little if any developed at all in Tunisia, as far as the water sector is concerned.** Ongoing reforms and the situation of post revolutionary transition should be utilized as an opportunity to develop this approach through decentralization and user participation. **An amendment of the basic texts** (Constitution, Water Code in



particular) **should take this dimension into account**, this being a basis for the demographic functioning of institutions.

- Other issues also have some weaknesses: **ASP and sanitation ratings do not allow recovery** for much more than perhaps the service actually rendered (hence the problems at the level of ONAS and SONEDE ); the possibility for the private sector to participate is relatively limited, hence the need for it be facilitated and indeed enhanced, thereby allowing a reduction in financial expenses of the state both in terms of investments and in terms of grants from EPA and sanitation sector; the multiplicity of strategies (there is no real national water strategy ) and sector-focused plans could be simplified for the benefit of horizontal policies , based essentially on the integrated management of water resources.

In conclusion, **the analysis of the current situation** of the water sector in Tunisia, in particular as regards sanitation, **revealed a number of areas where progress can be made, namely:**

- Participatory management with user involvement
- The decentralization of water management and sanitation
- Sanitation in the rural sector
- The reuse of wastewater and its institutional framework
- The treatment of industrial waste
- Pricing of services
- The acceleration of recovery of sewage sludge
- The context of relationships ONAS / SONEDE
- An institutional and administrative reform of local government
- Harmonization of the administrative framework for the management of water and sanitation.