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MENAdrought Project Technical Fact Sheet

Developing drought action plans

MENAdrought is working with the governments of Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco (countries in the Middle East and North Africa [MENA] region) to develop drought action plans. The project works 'with the grain' to help agencies consider what drought impacts are most important for them to address first, from their point of view, and how to do so with the available resources, policy context and constraints they face.

About MENAdrought

Launched in 2018, the MENAdrought project empowers the governments of Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco with the tools to anticipate, prepare for, and mitigate the worst impacts of drought. The project is helping build self-reliance so the three countries can effectively manage the impacts that droughts have on water and food security, and in turn limit the social and economic damage resulting from drought.

Led by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) with support from the United States Agency for International

Development (USAID), MENAdrought pools the resources and expertise of global leaders in the field of drought monitoring, forecasting and management.

MENAdrought uses an approach based on three pillars to improve drought risk management. The pillars are: developing drought monitoring and early warning systems; conducting impact and vulnerability assessments; and elevating the importance of drought mitigation, preparedness and response.



Common structure and content of drought action plans

At a general level, the drought action plans (DAPs) drafted through the MENAdrought project share a common structure and include:

- priority impacts that are the focus for the given DAP;
- preparedness and mitigation actions associated with priority impacts that are undertaken when a country is not in a drought cycle;
- a governance framework that links the drought monitoring and policy implementation functions to hierarchies of decision-making;
- drought definitions including:
 - tiered drought classes that are based on expected return periods;
 - triggers that reflect severity, longevity and extent of drought, and tie drought early warning system outputs to response levels; and
 - response levels that reflect the resource intensity and robustness of government responses;
- drought management response actions that escalate according to response levels; and
- impact monitoring as well as policy effectiveness monitoring, evaluation, and learning.



The DAP development process

The MENAdrought team, first, worked with officials to assess the highest priority drought-related problems to address through public policy interventions. Second, they assessed the root causes of those problems. Third, they evaluated, in a structured manner, the viability, costs and benefits of various options to address those problems.

This process was undertaken through a policy analysis approach and focused on an assessment of underlying problems and the most practicable and useful manner for policy interventions to address those problems.

Policymakers focused on what was most urgent and/or important for them to address first, from their point of view, and with the available resources, personnel, knowledge and information, political context, and within extant policy and governance constructs including the mandates of member agencies. Those characteristics and constraints and their specific manifestation in each country strongly influenced the DAP development process and content.

Officials undertook the following staged policy development process:

- **Identification of core drought impacts:** officials develop and/or check long lists of core drought impacts.
- **Prioritization of impacts to address:** Officials prioritize specific core impacts for the focus of the DAP. The DAPs focus exclusively on these.
- **Assessment of root causes of priority impacts:** Officials develop problem trees whereby they articulate the root causes of the priority impacts.
- **The long list of options (interventions) to address root causes of vulnerability:** Officials developed a range of potential interventions to address the root issues.
- **Evaluation of intervention options:** Officials undertook a staged process to evaluate intervention options.
 - First, they reviewed their own legal and policy frameworks to examine alignment between potential drought management and risk reduction interventions and their own mandates.
 - Second, they categorized viable interventions as mitigations for drought, responses to drought or accepted risks.
 - Third, they scored the interventions against pre-established criteria of relevance for decision-making.

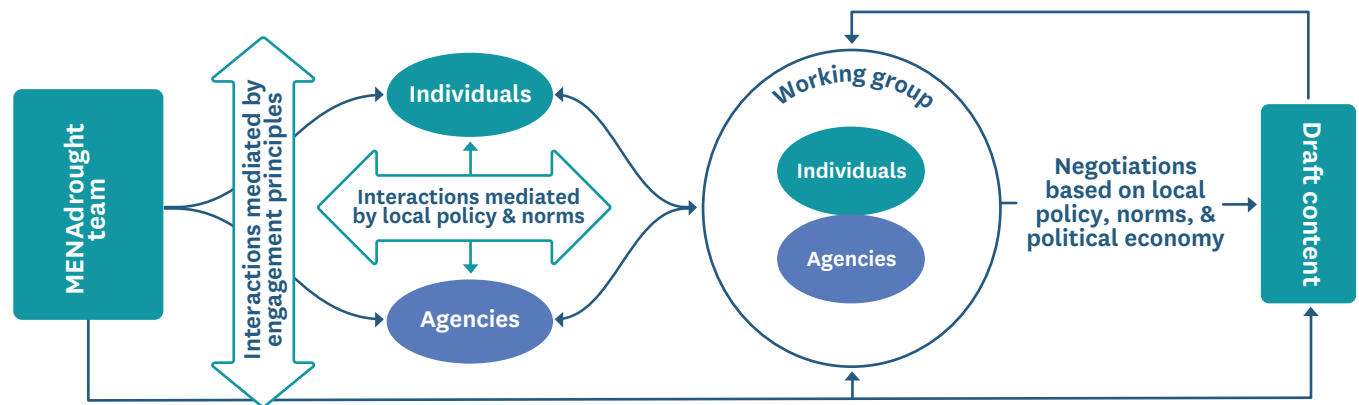
- **Iterative drafting of DAP based on the identified interventions:** Once officials scored the interventions, they based discussions on the DAP content around them.



DAP development as a negotiation process

Given these DAP development steps, and the general characteristics and constraints of policy development described above, we can consider the whole process to develop the DAPs as a series of interactions and negotiations between the MENAdrought team and individuals, agencies and within their agglomeration as a working group.

These interactions and negotiations are mediated first and foremost by local policy (inclusive of governance) and norms, and the political economy backdrop of the state. The MENAdrought team's involvement in those interactions and negotiations, in contrast, is mediated by the principles of engagement. Relevant values primarily drove advice related to policy and governance content rather than guiding the process or directly focusing specifically on shifting norms or political economy.



Partners

Primary partners: International Water Management Institute (IWMI); National Drought Mitigation Center, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute, University of Nebraska; Goddard Space Flight Center, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); and Johns Hopkins University.

National partners: Morocco – Directorate of Statistics and Strategy in the Moroccan Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development, Water and Forests; Jordan – Ministry of Water and Irrigation; and Morocco – Souss-Massa Hydrological Basin Authority.

Contact

Rachael McDonnell, Deputy Director General - Research for Development, IWMI (R.Mcdonnell@cgiar.org)

Project website: <https://menadrought.iwmi.org/>

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