Overview

The current expansion of agriculture land in Morocco and changes in water pumping technologies, coupled with a subsidy for the use of butane, are contributing to a substantial increase in groundwater depletion. With less capacity for drilling and pumping, small farmers are among those most affected by decreasing groundwater levels.

As the agriculture sector accounts for more than 85% of total water consumption in the country, Government is currently focusing its efforts on supporting the groundwater management agenda. The Ministers of Interior, Agriculture and Water have recently issued an Interministerial Circular requiring the conclusion of groundwater management agreements (contrats de nappes) on November 15, 2013 with the aim to develop mutually agreed reduction of withdrawal from threatened aquifers by main water users.

Timely action is needed to provide capacity support to groundwater contract management. An important part of the work is to have an adequate mapping of stakeholders and agree on objectives for key groups of stakeholder. Contract management should allow stakeholder involvement in decision-making and agreeing on objectives for use of groundwater. Inclusive groundwater management contract is a shift from the current top-down approach. Indeed, based on lessons learned from an initial pilot undertaken in Morocco, key elements for increasing the likelihood of successful groundwater contract management include: mapping and involving stakeholders; building trust; good communication; and transparency of the process.

Through this recipient-executed MENA MDTF-funded activity, the World Bank will support the Oum Er Rbia River Basin Agency (ABH-OER), a champion in developing bottom-up participatory approaches to water resource management, to address the challenges of groundwater management at river basin level. The expected result is the regulation of the management of two overexploited aquifers (nappes) in Oum er Rbia by agreements among stakeholder on the use of groundwater. The interventions are complementary to the ongoing water governance work in Morocco under the World Bank-supported Green Growth Development Policy Loan, as well as support by other partners such as the French Development Agency (AFD) and the German Technical Cooperation (GiZ).

This is a recipient-executed activity. It will:

- Involve the stakeholders in selecting key performance indicators for a climate risk assessment of the Oum Er Rbia Basin. These KPIs will provide information on the key vulnerabilities in the Basin on key sectors (e.g. irrigation and energy production). For this purpose, a climate risk assessment will be conducted followed by consultations with key stakeholders to select the indicators. Once the KPIs are agreed, then a more in-depth
analysis will be conducted to identify trade-offs and help facilitating discussions among users.

- Design and establish inclusive groundwater management contracts for aquifers in the Oum er Rbia Basin. Stakeholders are being consulted in selecting two strategic aquifers and support in the consultation for the development of content for each contract. The World Bank team will support the ABH-OER in designing the consultative process and the draft of the agreement amongst users.

The activity has received $800,000 from the MENA MDTF.

**Deliverables**

Deliverables will include:

- An analytical report on the current climate risk assessment in the Oum Er Rbia Basin;
- Training, workshops and consultations on climate risk assessment and on improved management of water to reduce demand, including through groundwater contract management, with at least 15% female participation;
- The design and development of agreement (groundwater contract management) among stakeholders in the use of the groundwater resource;
- An analytical report on lessons learned on the participatory design of groundwater contract management and assessment of current and projected vulnerability (climate risk) of the Oum Er Rbia Basin. The report with focus on main sectors, likely energy, drinking water and irrigation.

**Beneficiaries and Expected Results**

Target beneficiaries include farmers (particularly smaller scale farmers), the Ministry of Water, ABH-OER, and the Regional Agricultural Development Office (Office régional de mise en valeur agricole).