International Water Management Institute

Al Murunah

Project Brief

Problem Statement

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is the most water-scarce region in the world, and the agriculture sector is by far the largest water user. Agriculture plays a vital role in MENA economies and is the backbone of rural labour markets. Water scarcity, which is compounded by land degradation, therefore poses major political economy challenges. It negatively affects food production, livelihoods – particularly for rural women, low-income households, youth, and refugees – and the wider environment. Climate change exacerbates these problems, especially via aridification and increasingly frequent and intense droughts, heatwaves, windstorms, and floods. Ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions to address these challenges requires strong collaboration between stakeholders at the national and local levels.

The central premise of Al Murunah ('flexibility' in Arabic) is that appropriately and collaboratively designed Resilient Nature-Based Water Solutions (RNBWS) can enhance water and food security in agricultural areas of MENA, thereby increasing the resilience of rural households and communities. RNBWS are integrated nature-based and agricultural water management solutions. Broadly speaking, these combined interventions can enhance water availability (including via improvements in quality) and reduce agricultural water demand or otherwise increase its productivity.

Currently there are several key barriers to implementation of RNBWS in the MENA region:

- Knowledge gaps on their effectiveness and experience deficits in their implementation; and
- Technical, social, and economic obstacles.

As a result, communities and institutions, including market actors, have insufficient capacities and skills to implement RNBWS, as well as limited innovation space to finance and upscale them.

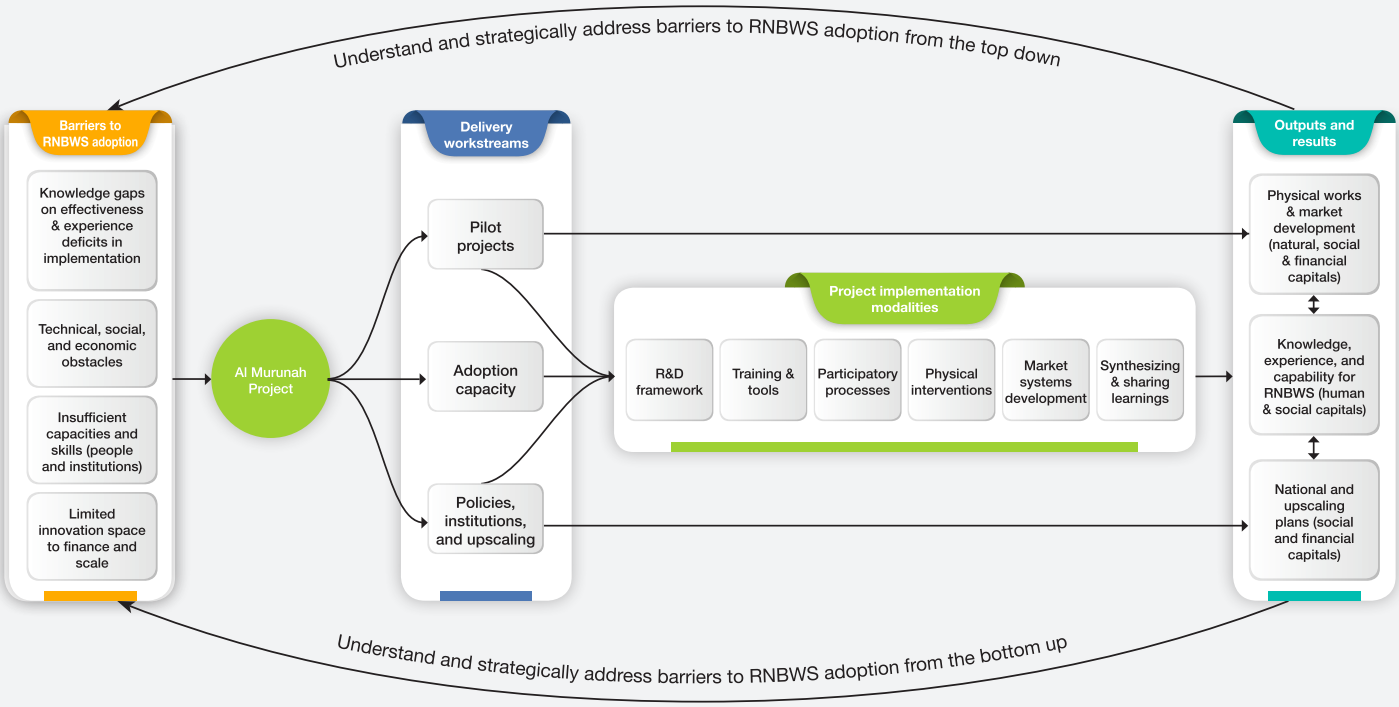
Project Summary

The primary goals of Al Murunah are to address these barriers and facilitate widespread and context-appropriate adoption of RNBWS in the MENA region by 1.) demonstrating their effectiveness, and 2.) strengthening, empowering, and catalyzing national capacities for their implementation.

Al Murunah will meet these goals through participatory implementation of a pilot RNBWS project in each country; capability building – awareness raising and training to improve understanding of RNBWS, and development of technical and information tools to support institutions in their deployment; and supporting national level planning and upscaling proposals.

Pilots will be undertaken in:

- Abu Matamir (Beheira Governorate), Egypt;
- Wadi Seer (Greater Amman Municipality), Jordan;
- Baalbek District (Baalbek-Hermel Governorate), Lebanon; and
- Wadi Al-Fara'a (Tubas Governorate), Occupied Palestinian Territories.



Key Strategies

Pilot projects

The pilots are test cases to demonstrate the effectiveness of RNBWS in addressing water scarcity. The integrated interventions will be rooted in cutting-edge agro- and ecological water management techniques and understanding of local market systems. They are being selected and designed, and will be implemented and assessed, through rigorous participatory processes including a focus on the equitable involvement of women.

Pilots will focus the project's efforts around capability building and market interactions. Collaboration on pilots between local communities and national stakeholders – and technical experts from IWMI, IUCN, and local partners – will strengthen, empower, and catalyze national capacities for wider adoption of RNBWS. This includes through supporting and informing proposals to upscale them.

Egypt - mixed cultivation farm in the Nile Delta

Jordan, Wadi Seer – spring flow, diversion channels, and valley background (Photo credit: IUCN ROWA)

Lebanon, Qaa – groundwater irrigated farm on slopes

Occupied Palestinian Territories, Ras Fara'a – groundwater irrigated cucumber farm with rangelands in the background

Engagement across project levels

Each country has a National Project Advisory Committee (NPAC) with members from core central government agencies – ministries of water, environment, and agriculture – a civil society organization, and a gender expert. Their role focuses on project oversight, including ensuring its connections to national policy and institutional processes and priorities.

NPACs have requested the formation of Task Forces to bridge the national to local levels through collaboration on the pilot to achieve sustainable outcomes and support knowledge transfer. They will also support development of tools and undertake training.

Finally, Al Murunah will partner with local community organizations (governmental, quasi-governmental, and non-governmental) for planning and delivery of pilot projects.

Gender-transformative action and learning

At each level, women and men will be involved in the project. Accordingly, the project will initiate gender-transformative social processes through both bottom-up and top-down approaches. The community organizations will ensure equitable representation and involvement of women and vulnerable groups in the design and implementation of the integrated interventions. Also, they will be involved in awareness raising of the Task Forces and NPACs. The top-down component includes capability building for gender mainstreaming in RNBWS implementation and wider policy contexts.

In concert, this approach will strengthen the agency of rural women and other vulnerable people, and it will build the capability of national and sub-national stakeholders to mainstream gender matters in wider application of RNBWS approaches.

Project Partners

Al Murunah is a five-year project (2021-2026) funded by the Government of the United Kingdom through the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO). The International Water Management Institution (IWMI) is leading the project in partnership with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). National focal points and local partners are:

- **Egypt** – Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation; Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE)
- **Jordan** – Ministry of Water and Irrigation
- **Lebanon** – Ministry of Energy and Water; Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL)
- **Occupied Palestinian Territories** – Environment Quality Authority; Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG)

IWMI International Water Management Institute

UK International Development Partnership | Progress | Prosperity

IUCN

HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN MINISTRY OF WATER AND IRRIGATION

LEBANESE REPUBLIC MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND WATER

State of Palestine Environment Quality Authority