

# Policy Brief

May 2019

## The Socioeconomic Status



### Key Messages

The Taskforce on Socioeconomics highlights the following key messages for policymakers:

- ❖ **The gaps in the social and economic status across riparian countries, between urban and rural areas, and across provinces and governorates indicate where greater attention and intervention are required at various levels of governance - sub-national, national, and regional.** Socio-economic disparities are strongly linked with inequality, and with causative risks to stability and growth. Social and economic areas with high levels of disparity include education, unemployment, poverty, affordable access to improved water sources and sanitation, gender equity, and economic opportunities for youth. Different development strategies are required in addressing the urban-rural gap.
- ❖ **Riparian countries share many common concerns and challenges in the management of water resources and services.** Climate change and its effects on hydrology, water quality and pollution, and water governance are identified as the highest threats to water availability. There is a high convergence of identified issues with large direct and indirect interdependency across riparian countries, particularly between Iraq and Turkey. The main issues for direct interdependency are regional stability, common development plans, flood and drought mitigation; while for indirect interdependency are trade relations, refugees, migration, food security, and national security. Water scarcity exacerbates rural poverty and renders communities more vulnerable to migration and terrorism activities, affecting regional stability and growth.

### Further Steps

Experts from Country Partners have made recommendations towards potential activities and areas for further collaboration. These include:

- Increasing visits and technical exchanges among riparian countries to discuss challenges, exchange of ideas and information, and to facilitate learning.
- Foster informal meetings to communicate the interdependence of riparian countries and the importance of collaboration.
- Synchronize the development plans of the Basin countries to regional growth perspective.
- Build better linkages between task force socioeconomics and other task forces.
- Define common objectives for the next Programme of collaboration using Multi Criteria Analysis
- Undertake investment prioritization for various management options and their social and economic impacts.
- The lens of gender equity and youth should be comprehensively integrated into the design of the collaboration framework. More effort should be invested in generating selected indicators on gender and youth that would best fit the objectives of the project.

In the Euphrates-Tigris basin, water is seen to be the key to peace, stability, and prosperity in the riparian communities. The country partners would like to underscore the importance of riparian countries coming together to communicate the benefits of collaboration and how this will bring about the benefits of water resources and services to the region.

## REPORTING ON THE BASIN SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

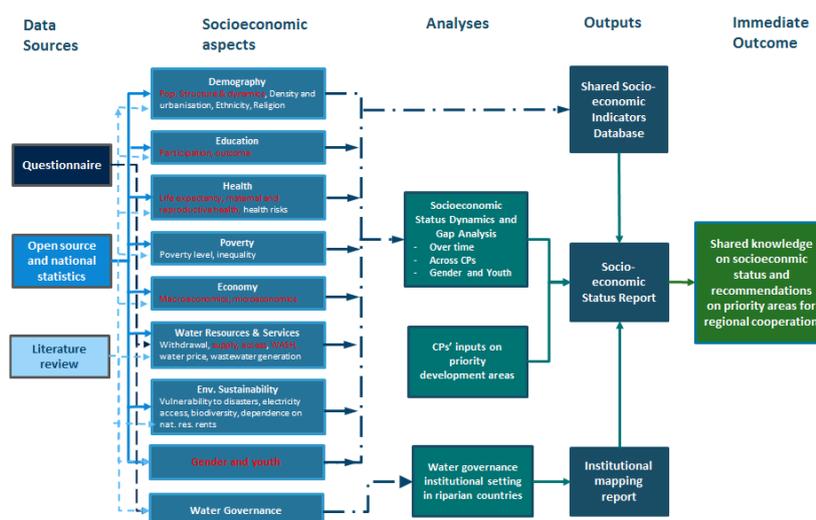
### INTRODUCTION

The riparian countries recognize that collaboration in managing the water resources of the Euphrates-Tigris Basin is indispensable to achieving peace, stability, and prosperity in the region. Population growth, urbanization, economic development and climate change, combined with difficult security conditions, have intensified water scarcity issues and created immense challenges around how to best manage and allocate water resources to meet various development goals in the region. Collaboration among riparian countries provides not only a broader perspective of sustainable growth in the region, but also more opportunities in finding solutions and joint resources to address common challenges.

The Socioeconomics Taskforce (TF-S) within the Collaborative Programme Euphrates and Tigris (CPET) contributes to the efforts of riparian countries

in improving dialogue and building trust that enable collaborative activities in water resource management. The mandate of the TF-S was to develop tools and perform analyses that can adequately assess the overall socio-economic status within the Euphrates and Tigris region. The TF-S provided a conducive medium through which discussion and sharing of available social and economic data and information could promote a common understanding of regional disparities and encourage collaborative actions to improve the situation. TF-S produced three main outputs:

1. A report entitled the Socioeconomic Status of Euphrates Tigris Region;
2. An institutional mapping report
3. A shared database of social and economic indicators, with the other two main outputs included as attachments. Please see the below chart for the Methodological framework for TF-S. Any text in red denotes data that was gender disaggregated upon collection.



Methodological Framework for the Task Force Socioeconomics

### STUDY FINDINGS

#### The Institutional Mapping Report

The Institutional Mapping Report aimed to share the latest available information on the water governance landscape of each riparian country within the Euphrates-Tigris region. This covered both national governmental and non-governmental water actors and their responsibilities in water management functions at various administrative levels; the main national water related policies and regulations; and bilateral agreements. There were four main findings:

1. The riparian countries all have a similar institutional structure for water governance
2. There has been a slow shift toward a higher engagement of non-governmental actors in water governance

3. Existing water policies and regulations of riparian countries cover a broad range of water related issues and yet continue to reflect a centralized decision-making process. A more participatory, decentralized decision-making process could potentially improve planning, monitoring, and the efficiency and effectiveness of water resources management
4. Despite several bilateral legal documents on water issues, the meaningful and sustainable implementation of these documents by riparian countries still proves to be a challenge.

#### The Shared Database of Social and Economic Indicators

The shared database of social and economic indicators collates 115 indicators at the country level, and seven indicators at the governorate / province level. The *Socioeconomic Status of Euphrates Tigris*

Region report provides a common baseline of social and economic development across the riparian countries based on several key aspects, i.e. demography, education, health, poverty, economy, water resources, services, and biodiversity. It also explores how socio-economic status may be linked to the availability, quality, access to, and governance of water resources and services in the riparian areas.

### Demography

The demography of the riparian countries is quite similar, characterized by a fast-growing population - 2.5-4.45 times, with a tripling in population density over the last 50 years. The gender ratio has remained stable. There is a high proportion of pre-working age; 40% in Syria and Iraq, and 25% in Turkey. At the governorate / provincial level there is a large range in terms of population size (from 76,724 people in Bayburt to 7,057,736 people in Baghdad), density (from 11.22 to 1,549.45 people per km<sup>2</sup>) and growth in the region (4.74% decline in Missan and 16.73% growth in Kirkuk). These differences demonstrate that different strategies to address growth and inequality may be required in the region.

### Education

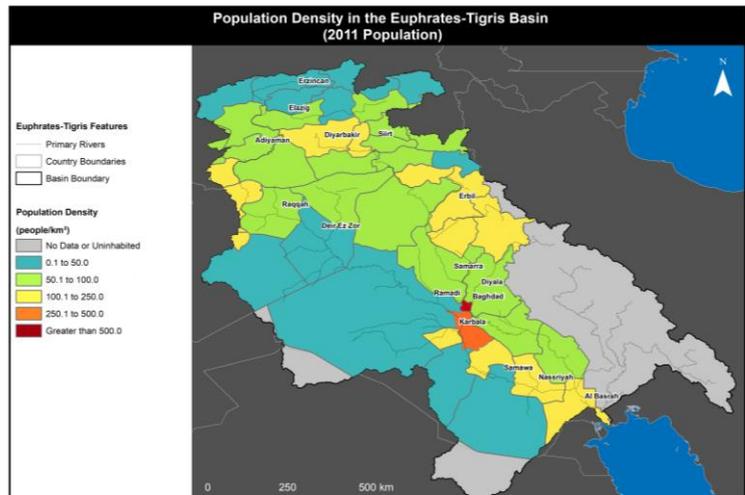
The effects of crises in the region are visible on the educational status of riparian countries and gender disparity in educational status, assessed in terms of seven gender-disaggregated measures regarding gross enrolment in primary education and secondary education, and adult literacy rate. Before the crises, Iraq and Syria had a similar increasing trend and levelling in gender disparity is seen across riparian countries at primary schools, and to a lesser degree at secondary schools. Gender disparity is also observed in both measures as the status of girls are lower than boys and a higher gender disparity is observed in secondary school.

### Health

The crises also had visible effects on health status indicators. The data shows a longer life expectancy at birth for females and more convergence in the life expectancy across riparian countries for female than that for male. Declining mortality rates in general for all riparian countries in the last 50 years show an improvement of health status. However, female fertility rates show declining trends only for Syria and Turkey, while the rates remain relatively unchanged for Iraq.

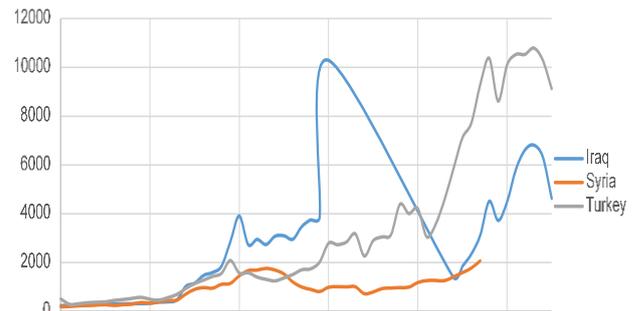
### Economy

Although all riparian countries have experienced substantial economic growth, as seen from GDP indicators, there is clearly a high discrepancy of economic progress. In general, Syria has experienced a very slow growth, while Iraq's economy experienced disturbances from wars. Over the last 50 years, Iraq has grown its GDP the most (51.75 times) while Turkey has grown its GDP per capita the most (17.33



Population Density in 2011 in the basin countries at a sub-national level.

times). Unemployment figures have declined for Iraq to 8.3%, remain stable at 8.8% for Turkey and increased to 14.9% for Syria in 2011. The data can be very different at the governorate or province level. Unemployment data at the sub national level at the Euphrates Tigris shows that unemployment rates range from 7.47% to 27.82% in the period of 2004-2008. Nevertheless, the comparability of the data is restricted by differences in the granularity (the regional scale) and available observation years.



Population Density in 2011 in the basin countries at a sub-national level.

### Poverty

The Euphrates-Tigris countries face stark disparities in poverty levels at the national level as well as between urban and rural areas. World Bank data from 2007 shows that Syria has a very high poverty level (35.2%) while Turkey has the lowest level (8.4%) at the national level. Nevertheless, Turkey has a much higher disparities between urban and rural poverty; its rural poverty is 4 times higher than its urban poverty. The data at the province level for Turkey also shows that poverty in female-headed households is higher than for male-headed ones, and it is worse in rural areas.

### Water Resources and Services

The status of water resources and services in the region provides a mixed picture. The countries have similar patterns of sectoral freshwater withdrawal and generally have made substantial progress in improving the access to drinking water and sanitation at the national level as well as narrowing the gap between rural and urban areas. For drinking water, Turkey has made most progress at the national level (from 86.2%

to 100%) while Iraq has made most progress in rural areas (from 39.1% to 70.1%). Syria has a high level of national access to water (88.3%), though there was substantial disparity of access between city centres and rural areas in 2006. For sanitation, Iraq has made most progress at the national level (from 75% to 85.6%) and in rural areas (57.5% to 83.8%). Nevertheless, Iraq still has a lower level of access compared to other riparian countries, although the gap is smaller in rural areas.

**The findings from the socioeconomic questionnaires highlight some key issues:**

- There is a lower affordability of water in rural areas.
- In terms of priority in sectoral water use, country experts put the highest priority on drinking water at all levels, followed by agriculture, health, and crisis management (droughts, floods, etc.)
- Hydrology and climate change, water quality and pollution, and water governance issues are seen as the threats to water availability.
- There is a high convergence of water issues with large direct and indirect interdependency across riparian countries, particularly between Iraq and Turkey. The main issues for direct interdependency are regional stability, common development plans, flood and drought mitigation; while for indirect interdependency are trade relations, refugees, migration, food security, and national security.
- Water scarcity exacerbates rural poverty and makes communities more vulnerable to migration; which ultimately affect regional stability and growth.

**Biodiversity**

The GEF Benefit Index (GBI) is used as a measure of the status of biodiversity in riparian countries. The GBI shows the potential of a country to generate global environmental benefits in biodiversity. GBI data in 2005 and 2008 demonstrate that Turkey has the highest GBI index and improved its status to 6.23% during that period; Iraq and Syria have experienced a decline to 0.93% and 0.087%. This illustrates their challenges in biodiversity conservation.

**Gender Equality**

Gender roles in water supply services at household level were assessed through adult women's responsibility in collecting water for households from beyond the premises. In agricultural water management, women's contribution to various agricultural work, livestock, and water management have been assessed in Syria. In general, women have a lesser role in marketing agricultural produce. The average time to collect water in Iraq is 30 minutes, and the longest is 92 minutes. Iraq has a national capacity development for women in relevant ministries, but less

so at a farm level. Turkey has initiated a programme to support female entrepreneurship in rural areas, including those in agriculture.

**Youth**

The vulnerability of young people is captured through their economic opportunities. Young people in Iraq and Syria have smaller average educational attainment in the Arab region; this is a barrier to enter the labour market. Crises impose educational losses and reduce employment opportunities. Many of young people in the region work in informal sector, where lower job stability and poorer working conditions prevail.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The assessment of the social and economic status of riparian countries shows the variability within Euphrates-Tigris region in terms of demography (population size, density, and growth). There are notably different gaps across social and economic aspects. At the national level, there are areas in which riparian countries have made progress (education, health, GDP, trades, access to improved water sources, and sanitation); areas where there is less discrepancy across the country, such as mortality rate under 5; and areas with challenges such as adult literacy, unemployment, female fertility, biodiversity conservation, gender inequality in all social and economic measures except life expectancy at birth, and economic opportunities for young people. At the governorate / province level, or between urban and rural areas, there are still inequalities or disparities in educational participation, poverty rate, access to improved water sources and sanitation, and gender roles in water supply services.

The assessment also provides some insight about the effect of crises and political instability to the wellbeing of the region. It provides insights into riparian countries regarding target areas and where resources should be allocated. Many identified factors represent common challenges for the countries, which they can collaboratively address to the stability of the region. Country Partners jointly recognize that increasingly complex situations in the region necessitate more cooperation to address rising disparities in various social and economic aspects to mitigate risks of regional instability. In this context, Country Partners would like to highlight the importance of riparian countries getting together and exploring the benefits to the region of collaborative water resources and services management. Water is seen to be the key to peace, stability and prosperity in the region.