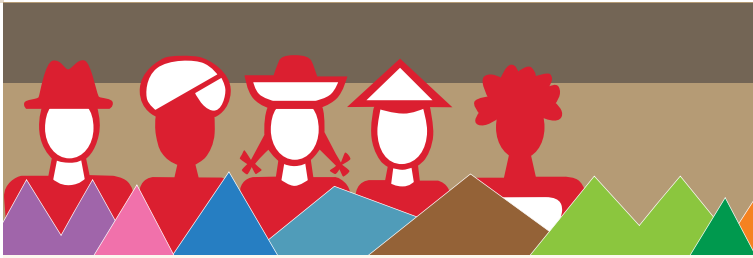


Why mountains of the Middle East and North Africa matter



Mountains of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are important for sustainable development in national, regional and global contexts. The goods and key ecosystem services provided by these mountains are vital for the sustainable development. These goods and services are under increasing pressure from urban expansion and environmental changes.

What are the issues of concern?

The key issues are climate, water resources, wildlife and biodiversity, agriculture, livestock and land use, and tourism. Others are specific issues (e.g. establishment of biosphere reserves, disasters, natural hazards and disaster risk reduction (DRR) and socio-economic and

political issues). All these issues can be addressed under 10 themes and these are (1) the effects of oil-boom economy; (2) technological development; (3) improvement in road networks; (4) political changes; (5) climate change and natural disasters; (6) epidemics; (7) impacts and threats on biodiversity; (8) expanding tourism; (9) mining activities, and (10) monitoring and research.

Current status

Supply of and demand for ecosystem services in the MENA Mountains are poorly understood and challenges faced are yet to be addressed in line with millennium development goals. MENA countries have to shift their government spending priorities to support green economy initiatives, and build capacity through training and education.

The nature of governance is an important driver of sustainable mountain development. Sustainable mountain development in the whole MENA region is extremely difficult to evaluate because there is no central hub to foster partnerships within the MENA. The present political climate in the MENA region is likely to have a negative impact on sustainable mountain development initiatives.

Policy action for the MENA mountains – and the future we want



Al Jabal al Akhbar Mountain, Oman

Protect natural resources and assist with strategies for their sustainable use to improve the socio-economic wellbeing of mountain communities.

Involve mountain communities in decision making and permit political representation to ensure best use of resources, environmental protection, and food security.

Support mountain communities to gain fair access to resources, and share benefits of their use equitably.

Strengthen and develop national and regional institutions and establish links with global institutions to address highland-lowland interactions and transboundary co-operation, support capacity building, generation

and dissemination of knowledge, technical expertise and innovation for sustainable mountain development.

Provide enabling conditions and incentives for investment in sustainable development in mountain areas and include appropriate funding in national budgets in order to enhance wellbeing and reduce disparities.

Evaluate how mountain issues were handled within the three Rio conventions and identify reasons of success and failure that can be attributed to the action plans.

Recognise the vulnerability of the mountain ecosystems in the three Rio conventions, based on the experience of the last 20 years, and recommend implementation strategies to achieve sustainable development goals.

Promote the transition of the MENA mountains' dependence from Brown Economy to Green Economy.

Identify special issues that impact MENA mountain communities such as illegal drug production, terrorism and political disputes, and establish intervention procedures at international level to alleviate these problems.

Make best use of new and existing funding mechanisms to address issues related to Sustainable Mountain Development in the MENA.

Forest Cover Data in MENA countries, 2010			
Country	Total Land Area (1000 sq km)	Total Forest Area (1000 sq km)	Percent Forest Cover
Morocco	44,630	51.31	0.11
Algeria	238,174	14.92	0.006
Tunisia	15,536	10.06	0.06
Libya	175,954	2.17	0.001
Egypt	99,545	0.7	0.0007
Jordan	8,824	0.98	0.01
Israel	2,164	1.54	0.07
Palestine territory	6,065	260	4.3
Lebanon	1023	1.37	0.13
Syria	184,051	4500	2.44
Iraq	43,737	8.25	0.02
Iran	162,855	110.75	0.07
Saudi Arabia	200,000	9.77	0.005
UAE	8,360	3.17	0.04
Oman	30,950	0.02	0.00006
Yemen	52,797	5.49	0.01

Source: Modified after <http://rainforests.mongabay.com/deforestation>