Context

In the coming decades, countries across the MENA region (the Middle East and North Africa) are expected to continue experiencing rapid population gains accompanied by steady energy and resource demand growth. Additionally, fossil fuel subsidies are leading to low energy prices and causing a significant rise in the demand for energy and natural resources. This leads to even greater greenhouse gas emissions and increased strains on both ecosystems and natural resources. With the signing of the global Paris Agreement on climate change and of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), MENA countries have committed themselves to develop and implement strategies to transition to a low-carbon, sustainable economy.

To date, climate change mitigation in the MENA countries has focused on increasing the proportion of renewable energies within the energy supply, with particular emphasis on supply reliability. Some countries have begun to develop funding mechanisms and implement emission mitigation activities in the energy sector as well as in other areas. However, few efforts have been made to estimate the actual impacts of these actions on the energy system and on the economy as a whole. Those climate and energy strategies that include low emission development pathways and energy system transformation still lack coherence, long-term focus, and implementing structures.

Objective

In order to improve cooperation in the MENA region, the project supports the regional and supra-regional dissemination of climate and energy policies. Project activities aim at assisting political decision-makers and relevant institutions with the systematic elaboration and implementation of integrated low emission and adaptation strategies. The project contributes to the planning of ambitious mitigation and adaptation actions of partner countries and to the integration into their respective NDC targets. Thus, the project facilitates long-term transformation to a low emission and resilient economy.

Approach

All activities are being carried out in close cooperation with the local political partners and are based on the needs and developments of the countries. The project develops applicable instruments for achieving mitigation and adaptation goals in relevant sectors and supports their implementation.

To consolidate knowledge and experience in the local structures, the project team cooperates with national institutions in selected partner countries. Close collaboration with regional organizations, e.g. the League of Arab States, also fosters transnational exchange among politics, private sector, and the civil society.

Work Areas

The project consults on climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, identifies climate-friendly technologies, promotes regional initiatives and disseminates information on effective measures in the following six areas:

Morocco and Tunisia have already developed long-term energy scenarios to support medium- and long-term energy strategies. In order to assess the impact of renewable energy expansion and increased energy efficiency on various sectors, the projects supports macroeconomic modelling in the field of low emission development strategies in these and
other countries. This enables the partners to design comprehensive strategies that consider social and economic aspects from energy aspects.

In Iran, the project supports adaptation strategies and sustainable land use in river basins and nature reserves, which are increasingly suffering from resource exploitation due to climate change. Local partners are supported in developing sustainable land use concepts in one river basin to preserve natural resources and ecosystem functions as well as to possibly reverse adverse effects.

To improve financing of climate-friendly technologies in the MENA region, the project offers technical and economic advisory regarding the use of innovative technologies, e.g. cost analysis of solar-powered water desalination. In this context, the project also finances trainings for decision-makers from the financial sector in the field of renewable energy, energy efficiency and risk analysis (Green Banking Capacity Development Initiative). This enables financial institutions to better assess project proposals, including business plans and technology concepts.

Within the framework of regional policy initiatives, the project supports the League of Arab States and its technical body, the Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RCREEE), in implementing the Pan Arab Sustainable Energy Strategy as well as in drawing up national action plans and annual reports on the extension of renewable energies and energy efficiency measures. Trainings are organized to ensure that the knowledge is anchored in local structures. First National Action Plans have already been completed (Lebanon, Sudan), and more are currently under development (Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, and Djibouti). The National Renewable Energy Action Plans represent the first strategic documents on renewable energy expansion, whose implementation can be evaluated on a regional scale in accordance with specific guidelines.

The project organizes regional trainings and knowledge exchanges on the integration of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures in the energy system. A rising proportion of renewable energy requires a more flexible electricity system, since wind and solar energy are intermittent. The project advises the Algerian national utility Sonelgaz on technical concepts and on ways to address future challenges. Regarding the flexibility of supply and demand side management as well as long-term planning of power plants, the project has organized a training workshop for the members of the Arab Union of Electricity (AUE) in Jordan. Other regional initiatives include the Global Exchange Platform on Solar Power Plants, which was founded in 2015 and will take place in 2018 for the fourth time. The platform serves as a forum for high-ranking policy makers to engage in dialogue and exchange with each other and with representatives from the private sector and research.

The project involves knowledge management to ensure the long-term benefit of successful experiences, which are portrayed and made available to other IKI projects worldwide. Thus, ten good practice cases have been selected and published online as factsheets under http://bit.ly/2r2alSY. A newsletter on German and European climate and energy policies is released quarterly for climate and energy experts in the MENA region.