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Iraq - Integrated Water Resources Management of Greater Zab River Basin - Kurdistan

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After decades of conflict, the autonomous region of Kurdistan in northern Iraq has found the stability that is essential for its economic development. Water resources shared with its Turkish and Iranian neighbours upstream and the Iraqi Government downstream are keys to this development : the good quality arable land can be irrigated, hydropower has definite potential, the industrial capacities of the region should be strengthened and its natural areas and rich archaeological heritage should see significant tourism development.

Faced with this growth, it is crucial to adequately understand the situation regarding water resources to ensure harmonious development with respect for the environment. The integrated water resources management of the river basin is the response to current challenges in a region where access to drinking water and sanitation are far from guaranteed. The French Ministry of Finance is supporting the Kurdish government by funding an IWRM project for the Greater Zab river basin with a view to providing Kurdish institutions with territorial decision-making tools which they are currently lacking.

A French consortium involving the following companies : Canal de Provence Company, BRGM, IOWater and G2C IT is piloting this project on behalf of the Kurdish Ministry of Water Resources.

The project started in November 2010 and the first phase plans to achieve the following :

- Collect and analyze data with a view to creating a shared knowledge base in relation to water, its uses, the natural environment etc.
- Analyze the legislative and regulatory context as well as adaptation proposals ;
- Implement a water information system in order to facilitate decisions and the sharing and retrieval of data between government ministries ;
- Create a river basin management plan which includes prioritised actions ;
- To ensure the sustainability of this action plan, a skills transfer and training plan will be proposed.

The aim of the project is to initiate the collective consideration of the coordinated management of water resources at the river basin level.