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September 2025

## **Call for Proposals: Research Study on the Libyan Water resources. Governance, security as well as its use in the Libyan conflict.**

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### **Background**

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany. With more than 80 offices worldwide, KAS runs civic education programs aimed at promoting freedom, peace, and justice, based on the principles of liberal democracy and the social market economy.

Libya is experiencing an increasingly severe shortage of water resources, driven by limited natural reserves, climate change, and the absence of a unified national water management strategy. Political fragmentation has further hindered coordinated planning and investment, leaving the sector vulnerable to environmental and structural pressures.

The country relies heavily on underground aquifers, particularly the large shared basin with Tunisia and Algeria, which are largely non-renewable and require careful, cooperative governance. At the same time, irregular rainfall and extreme weather events have intensified in recent years, culminating in the 2023 Derna dam disaster, which revealed critical weaknesses in Libya's water-related infrastructure and maintenance systems.

These challenges highlight the urgent need for updated knowledge, sustainable alternatives, and resilient infrastructure capable of ensuring long-term water security. A focused study is therefore essential to assess current gaps, map key actors, and identify realistic pathways toward sustainable water resource management in Libya.

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### **Research Context**

Libya, like many countries in the region, is facing a steadily increasing shortage of water resources. This scarcity has been compounded by the absence of a unified, long-term national strategy for water management, as well as the lack of coordinated policies resulting from the prolonged political fragmentation. Climate change has further aggravated the situation, leading to irregular rainfall patterns, prolonged droughts, and extreme weather events. The 2023 Derna dam disaster stands as a stark illustration of the systemic vulnerabilities and the urgent need for comprehensive reforms.

Libya's natural water sources are limited. Beyond scarce precipitation, the country relies heavily on underground aquifers, particularly the large, shared basin extending across Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria. This dependency poses several challenges. First, shared water resources require coordinated transboundary governance—an area that remains underdeveloped. Second, much of this groundwater is non-renewable, raising critical questions about sustainability and long-term viability. These factors call for an assessment of whether Libya is exploring diversified and renewable water alternatives to reduce its dependence on finite underground reserves.

These structural challenges underline the need for modern, resilient infrastructure for water collection, treatment, and distribution across the country. However, the Derna catastrophe revealed significant weaknesses in existing systems, highlighting issues of aging infrastructure, insufficient maintenance, and limited institutional oversight.

Given this context, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive study that maps key actors, assesses current gaps in governance and infrastructure, and proposes viable pathways toward sustainable water management in Libya. The study should also examine opportunities for regional cooperation, the role of international partners, and potential solutions that enhance resilience in the face of climate change.

### **Objective**

The commissioned research paper should aim to:

- Provide an updated assessment of Libya's water resources and their sustainability.
- Identify key governance, institutional, and coordination gaps affecting water management.
- Analyse the political economy and power structures shaping the water sector, including the influence of political fragmentation, local power actors, rent-seeking behaviour, and conflict dynamics on water allocation and infrastructure control.
- Evaluate the impact of climate change and environmental risks on water availability and infrastructure.
- Examine the condition, vulnerabilities, and needs of existing water infrastructure.
- Analyse challenges and opportunities related to shared transboundary water resources.
- Explore feasible, sustainable alternatives to reduce dependence on non-renewable groundwater.
- Formulate practical policy and investment recommendations to strengthen long-term water security in Libya.

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## Key research Questions

### 1. Assess the current state of water resources in Libya

- Provide an updated overview of available water sources, including precipitation, groundwater, and shared transboundary aquifers.
- Evaluate the sustainability and depletion risks of non-renewable groundwater reserves.
- Assess major patterns of water demand across sectors and identify key inefficiencies in water use.

### 2. Analyse existing governance frameworks and institutional gaps and political economy dynamics

- Identify key institutions, mandates, overlaps, and coordination challenges at national and municipal levels.
- Assess how political, economic, and security actors influence access to and control over water infrastructure.
- Evaluate the extent to which water provision is affected by rent-seeking, local power dynamics, or the instrumentalization of water in political and conflict contexts.

### 3. Evaluate the impact of climate change on Libya's water security

- Assess trends in rainfall variability, drought frequency, and extreme weather events.
- Examine how these factors influence water availability and infrastructure resilience.

### 4. Review the condition and performance of water infrastructure

- Identify vulnerabilities in water collection, treatment, storage, and distribution systems.
- Draw lessons from events such as the 2023 Derna dam failure regarding maintenance gaps and risk management.
- Map security risks to strategic water infrastructure, including damage, sabotage, or militarization.

### 5. Map transboundary and regional water issues

- Analyze shared aquifers with Tunisia and Algeria, including governance challenges and cooperation opportunities.
- Assess risks related to over-extraction and lack of coordinated management.

#### **6. Identify alternative and sustainable water solutions**

- Explore potential diversification options such as desalination, wastewater treatment, and renewable-powered water systems.
- Consider demand-management measures that could reduce pressure on groundwater, including conservation incentives, leakage reduction, and improved irrigation practices.
- Evaluate the feasibility of such efforts in the Libyan context.

#### **7. Propose actionable policy recommendations**

- Develop realistic, evidence-based paths toward sustainable water resource management.
- Suggest institutional reforms, investment priorities, and mechanisms to strengthen accountability and transparency.
- Identify opportunities for regional or international cooperation and capacity-building.

### **Methodology**

The study should be grounded in a rigorous mixed-methods research design that combines qualitative and analytical approaches.

#### **Primary Data Collection**

- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)** with:
  - Libyan institutions
  - Municipal authorities and local governance actors
  - Civil society, community leaders, environmental experts
  - International organisations, diplomatic missions, and financial institutions
- **Field observations**, where access allows, of local water collection / treatment facilities.

#### **Secondary Sources and Documentary Review**

- Review of Libyan laws, decrees, strategies, regulatory documents, and institutional mandates.

- Analysis of existing studies, reports, academic literature, donor assessments, and technical datasets.
- Review of grid data

#### **Media and Social Media Analysis**

- Assessment of public discourse, narratives, and sector-related reporting.
- Tracking of debates on water shortages, aging infrastructure, governance issues and renewable resources

#### **Political Economy and Risk Analysis Tools**

- Stakeholder mapping
- Institutional capacity assessment
- Risk and scenario matrices

#### **Researcher Networks**

Preference will be given to applicants with proven access to networks inside Libya to facilitate meaningful local insights, consistent with KAS standards for context-grounded research.

#### **Deliverables**

- A **10,000–12,000-word research paper**, copy-edited and ready for publication.
- **Visual outputs**, such as maps, actor diagrams, or infographics.
- **Summaries or transcripts** of KIIs (for internal use).
- A **policy brief** (2–3 pages) with key recommendations.
- Contributions to **social media content** for dissemination.

#### **Timeline**

- Submission of applications by **18 December 2025**
- Final paper due by **31 March 2025**
- Dissemination activities: To be arranged Jointly with KAS

#### **Submission**

Interested researchers should submit the following documents:

- A six-page proposal including:
  - Abstract
  - Research questions
  - Methodology
  - Work plan and timeline
  - Budget outline
- An updated CV, including previous research work relevant for this project, field experience, language skills, and access to relevant networks.

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**The total amount allocated for this assignment is 10,000.00 EUR, which will be disbursed upon timely delivery of the final paper and satisfactory fulfilment of all project obligations.**

The application should be submitted by email to Mr Firas Laouini, Project Manager KAS Tunisia. Email:  
**firas.laouini@kas.de**