Doing Things Differently

Stories about Local Water Governance in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine

Produced by EMPOWERS, a project co-funded by the European Union MEDA Water Programme

May Abu-Elseoud, Rania Al-Zoubi, Buthaina Mizyed, Firas T. Abd-Alhadi
Mona Barghout, Jean de la Harpe, Ton Schouten

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Thank you from,

May Abu-Elseoud
Rania Al-Zoubi
Buthaina Mizyed
Firas T. Abd-Alhadi
Mona Barghout
Jean de la Harpe
Ton Schouten

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Introduction

For four years the EMPOWERS Partnership tested and implemented methods and tools to improve local water governance in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine. This approach is quite a challenge and a considerable shift from how things are done now. All three countries traditionally manage their water resources from the top. Water is the responsibility of government and users are recipients. The State takes care of its citizens, like a father who knows what is best for his kids.

But in all three countries, water problems are growing. Water scarcity, water rationing and unequal distribution of water hamper food production and aggravate poverty. These problems, together with pollution of water resources, can only partially be solved through traditional government driven planning and engineering processes.

It is increasingly recognised that sharing responsibilities with users is a vital part of addressing these problems, so that there is joint identification of local water problems, shared decision making, concerted action and empowerment of users and decentralised agencies. These concepts sit easily in documents and reports, but putting them into practice is much more difficult. It challenges the traditional way that things have been done, it challenges attitudes, it challenges how people communicate and cooperate and it challenges existing institutions and networks. These are things that do not change easily. They have been there forever, for a reason.

During the fours years of the EMPOWERS project, people in villages, governorate offices and ministries have tried to shake traditional patterns, wherever they could, and tried to do things differently. This book documents their experiences, accounts and stories. Through their eyes, we look at concepts such as concerted action, empowerment, decentralisation and shared decision making. What happens to people when they are confronted with these concepts, and try to put them into practice? Why do they do what they do? Why should they change? What patterns and traditions do they find on their way? What do their neighbours and colleagues say? What did they learn about themselves and their social environment?

Local water governance is about new policies, platforms, networks and institutions. But making these work is about people. When it works, it is about people challenging the traditional way of how things 'ought to be'. These are people who do things differently; people with a bit of courage.

Some of the stories in this book are success stories that describe how interacting with the EMPOWERS project and using its tools, resulted in better development in many of the villages. But EMPOWERS is not a magic formula, and some of the stories also show that local tradition and stubborn patterns of dependency and favouritism also hamper development, no matter how well the participatory planning is done.

Generations

Members of the Omm Ayyash Cooperative Society in Jordan

Hamed and Ashraf from Kassab in Egypt

Sometimes, perhaps, this book reads like a promotion for the EMPOWERS approach. In a way it is; but the authors also realise the limitations of EMPOWERS and we hope that some of these limitations are also clearly presented. If, here and there, it reads like a public relations exercise, we apologise for that.

There is no silver bullet for solving water problems in the Middle East or anywhere else. EMPOWERS aimed to stimulate debate and learning and to design and implement an approach and tools that built on previous lessons from the region. We hope that the stories will stimulate thought, reflection and will indeed help people to learn to do things differently.

EMPOWERS

Background

Water is an increasingly scarce and contested resource around the world, and especially in the Middle East. There is general agreement that the need of the hour is for more attention to be given to properly managing water resources (i.e. systems of water governance) and less to attempting to develop and/or augment water resources. Key water governance challenges in the MENA region and elsewhere include:

- Developing institutional arrangements and/or stakeholder platforms that are able to adapt as solutions to water-related problems become increasingly complex, more stakeholders become involved and win-win options become more elusive.
- Developing and/or adapting approaches, methods and tools that improve dialogue between stakeholders horizontally at all levels and vertically between levels, aiming at greater involvement in water use and management by people at community level and their organisations.

Over a period of four years, the EMPOWERS Partnership Programme developed and piloted innovative methods, tools and technologies for improving local water governance. This section provides an overview of the approach developed by EMPOWERS and a description of pilots at the village, district and governorate levels.

The EMPOWERS Project

EMPOWERS was a four-year regional project from 2003 to 2007, piloted in Egypt, Jordan and the West Bank. The aim was to improve long-term access and rights to water for underprivileged populations in local communities, to a context of improved local water governance. Various means have been adopted to disseminate project outputs and to advocate for improved systems of local water governance that lead to more sustainable, efficient and equitable access to and use of water resources.

Unlike any other project in the region, EMPOWERS did not focus on the implementation of solutions to individual problems. Instead, it aimed to nurture the capacity of people, especially end users, to engage proactively with the challenges they face and to work with the authorities to achieve an equitable water situation in their society.

EMPOWERS was part of the EU-funded Mediterranean Regional Programme for Local Water Management (MEDA Water Programme) and was led and implemented by CARE International in partnership with the organisations listed in the acknowledgements at the front of this book.

Making strategic plans for village water resources

Problem tree for Manyal Hani in Egypt

Visioning and scenario building meeting

The EMPOWERS approach

The EMPOWERS approach to improving local water governance is built upon a participatory management cycle embedded within a process that brings people together to analyse information, develop a common vision and work together to realise it. This process is known as 'stakeholder dialogue and concerted action', meaning that people focus on their problems together and work together on actions to solve them. The process is facilitated to ensure that all voices are heard, and all interests taken into account. This process is designed to enhance local water governance to derive maximum benefits for local people without compromising the sustainability of the surrounding environment.

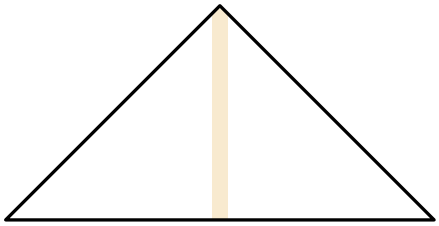
The demonstration villages were selected on the basis of critical shortages of water and/or inadequate infrastructure. Following the EMPOWERS management cycle, villagers developed a concerted strategy involving all members of the community and local officials. The first step was to agree on an attainable vision for the future of their village. In each case, this vision had at its core the inalienable right of everyone in the community to the water they need for their livelihood and health, giving due attention to women and underprivileged sections of the community.

Villagers, working with representatives of the local authorities, conducted informal research to establish a clear picture of the water situation in their communities. This highlighted the problems faced by different groups in accessing and using water resources. This process was supported by the collection, analysis and cross-checking of relevant information about water resources, infrastructure, demand and access. It identified the relevant actors for water provision and use.

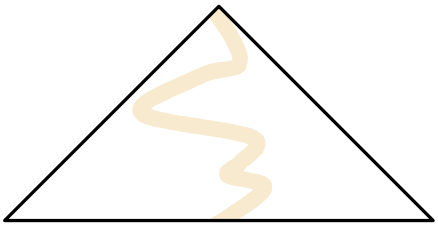
A representative cross-section of the village developed and debated their own Water Resources Strategy to guide priorities and future work for themselves and for service providers aimed at achieving their vision. The villagers practised direct control over planning and decision making, with facilitation and assistance from EMPOWERS staff. The tremendous sense of confidence and ownership this created was considered vital to the ultimate success and sustainability of the project. The strategy was detailed in plans for community water projects, and the whole process was reviewed during periods of reflection and monitoring.

Process documentation in EMPOWERS

Projects never proceed in a straight line from perceived goals to results. On the way, projects encounter difficulties and resistance from stakeholders. Projects that aim to change the ways in which stakeholders cooperate often clash with traditions and existing social patterns. Projects with goals such as improved concerted action or shared decision making shake up local power configurations and so meet resistance on the way. EMPOWERS was such a project. It aimed to improve local governance of water resources through the systematic participation of local people, in particular marginalised groups.



The plan – a straight path intervention



The actual course of the project

From the start, it was clear that this would not be easy to achieve. The project leadership decided therefore to document the processes and to keep track of the responses by stakeholders. What would be the main stumbling blocks in achieving the goals of the project? Where would stakeholders resist? Which social patterns and power configurations would stand in the way of improving local water governance? These questions would lead the process documentation in EMPOWERS.

Three process documentation specialists were recruited, one in each country. Buthaina Mizyed, in Palestine, Rania Al-Zoubi in Jordan and May Abu-Elseoud in Egypt. Their work was coordinated by Firas T. Abd-Alhadi of the Regional Information Programme. Their task would be to contact the stakeholders, people in villages, officials and partners of EMPOWERS, to document their responses to the EMPOWERS approach. Ton Schouten of IRC wrote a working paper on process documentation to guide their work. They were trained in photography, conducting

Rania Al-Zoubi

Buthaina Mizyed

May Abu-Elseoud

interviews, making videos and writing stories. In the four years of the EMPOWERS project, the three process documentation specialists recorded many long interviews and thousands of photographs and video sequences. These were used to produce many of the EMPOWERS information products.

This book is one of them. It is the result of intensive contacts and long conversations with people in villages, government staff working in the governorates and EMPOWERS project staff and of close observation of the way they interact and cooperate. The stories are a good example of what process documentation can deliver. They contain opinions, accounts of human reaction to new initiatives and they describe change processes in villages. The book looks behind the scenes of the project, it makes visible what often remains hidden behind project reports and it makes explicit what in projects is often regarded as external factors or assumptions. The stories were all written by the process documentation specialists. Firas T. Abd-Alhadi, Mona Barghout, Jean de la Harpe and Ton Schouten of IRC edited the stories to turn them into exciting and readable narratives.

The stories aim to stimulate reflection and debate of those working in the water sector on what it takes to change local water governance. It takes more than the development of tools and guidelines. It takes more than improved policies and increased capacities. It takes courageous people who start to do things differently.

Egypt

Egypt lies in the north-eastern corner of the African continent and has a total area of about 1 million km^2. It is bordered in the north by the Mediterranean Sea, in the east by the Gaza Strip, Israel and the Red Sea, in the south by Sudan and in the west by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. Its north-south extent is about 1,080 km, and its maximum east-west extent about 1,100 km. The Egyptian terrain consists of a vast desert plateau interrupted by the Nile Valley and Delta which occupy about 4 per cent of the total country area. The land surface rises on both sides of the valley reaching about 1,000 m above sea level in the east and about 800 m above sea level in the west. The highest point of the country, at Mount Catherine in Sinai, is 2,629 m above sea level and the lowest point, at the Qattara Depression in the north-west, is 133 m below mean sea level.

The majority of the country area is desert. Most of the cultivated land is close to the banks of the River Nile, its main branches and canals, and in the Nile Delta. Pasture is restricted to a narrow strip a few kilometres wide along the Mediterranean coast and its bearing capacity is quite low. There is no forest. The total cultivated area (arable land plus permanent crops) is 3.4 million ha (2002), or about 3 per cent of the total area of the country. Arable land is about 2.9 million ha, or 85 per cent of the total cultivated area, and permanent crops occupy the remaining 0.5 million ha.

Hot dry summers and mild winters characterise Egypt's climate. Rainfall is very low, irregular and unpredictable. Annual rainfall ranges between a maximum of about 200 mm in the northern coastal region to a minimum of nearly zero in the south, with an annual average of 51 mm.
The population is estimated at 78 million (2007) with an average annual growth rate of 1.8 per cent. The rural population is 58 per cent of the total population. Overall population density is 73 inhabitants/km^2. However, with 97 per cent of the population living in the Nile Valley and Delta, density is more than 1,165 inhabitants/km^2 in these areas, while in the desert it drops to 1.2 inhabitants/km^2.

The Egyptian territory comprises the following river basins:

- The Northern Interior Basin, covering 520,881 km^2 or 52 per cent of the total area of the country in the east and south-east of the country. A sub-basin of the Northern Interior Basin is the Qattara Depression.
- The Nile Basin, covering 326,751 km^2 (33 per cent) in the central part of the country in the form of a broad north-south strip.
- The Mediterranean Coast Basin, covering 65,568 km^2 (6 per cent).
- The Northeast Coast Basin, a narrow strip of 88,250 km^2 along the coast of the Red Sea (8 per cent).

The River Nile is the main source of water for Egypt, with an annual allocated flow of 55.5 km^3/yr under the Nile Waters Agreement of 1959. Internal surface water resources are estimated at 0.5 km^3/yr. This brings total actual surface water resources to 56 km^3/year. The Nubian Sandstone aquifer located under the Western Desert is considered an important groundwater source. The volume of groundwater entering the country from the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is estimated at 1 km^3/yr. Internal renewable groundwater resources are estimated at 1.3 km^3/yr, bringing total renewable groundwater resources to 2.3 km^3/yr. The main source of internal recharge is percolation from irrigation water in the Valley and the Delta. The total amount of actual renewable water resources of the country is thus 58.3 km^3/yr.

All drainage water in Upper Egypt, south of Cairo, flows back into the Nile and the irrigation canals; this amount is estimated at 4 km^3/yr. Drainage water in the Nile Delta is estimated at 14 km^3/yr. Treated domestic wastewater in 2001/02 was estimated at 2.97 km^3/yr. There are several desalination plants on the coasts of the Red Sea and the Mediterranean to provide water for seaside resorts and hotels; total production in 2002 was estimated at 100 million m^3. Estimates of the potential of non-renewable groundwater in the eastern and western deserts, mainly from the Nubian Sandstone aquifer, vary from 3.8 km^3/yr to 0.6 km^3/yr; the latter estimate is defined as an indicator of exploitability over a period of time, where the time is not given.
Total water withdrawal in 2000 was estimated at 68.3 km^3. This included 59 km^3 for agriculture (86 per cent), 5.3 km^3 for domestic use (8 per cent) and 4.0 km^3 for industry (6 per cent). Apart from that, 4.0 km^3 were used for navigation and hydropower.

Groundwater extraction in 2000 was 7.043 km^3 comprising:
- 6.127 km^3 from the Nile Basin (seepage waters),
- 0.825 km^3 from the eastern and western deserts, i.e. mainly the Nubian Sandstone aquifer,
- 0.091 km^3 from shallow wells in Sinai and on the north-western coast.

Reuse of agricultural drainage water, returned to the rivers, in irrigation amounted to 4.84 km^3/yr in 2001/02. Of the 2.97 km^3/yr of treated wastewater, 1.5 km^3/yr is reused for irrigation, while the rest is pumped into main drains where it mixes with drainage water and is then used for irrigation. Treated wastewater is usually used for landscape irrigation of trees in urban areas and along roads.

Egypt has a high per capita availability of water but demand approaches or exceeds the amounts available because of low irrigation efficiency in most areas. Not only is it almost entirely dependent on water originating from outside the country, but many farmers are also dependent on the efficiency of others, especially since they receive most of their water from drainage.

At national level, the main stakeholders are the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation (MWRI), Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (MALR), Ministry of Industry and Mineral Wealth (MIMW), Ministry of Housing, Utilities and New Communities (MHUNC), Ministry of Health and Population (MHP), Ministry of Environmental Affairs (MEA), Ministry of Interior (MI),

and Ministry of Local Government (MLG). Other stakeholders include governmental agencies and authorities, non-governmental organisations, donors, research institutes, universities, and training institutes.

The Government has indicated its intent to shift from its role as the central (or sole) actor in developing and managing water supply systems, towards promoting participatory approaches in which water users will play an active role in the management of irrigation systems and cost sharing. Important institutional and legislative measures have been taken recently to promote the establishment of sustainable participatory irrigation management (PIM) associations. However, despite these measures, the development of water users' associations (WUAs) as effective partners in irrigation management remains at an early stage. The concept of PIM is not yet effectively operational for a variety of economic, financial and institutional reasons.

While most settlers recognise the importance of WUAs in the equitable distribution of available water, successful introduction has been made more difficult by uneven water availability, either due to design shortcomings or to lax enforcement of rules against excess abstraction by front-end water users. This has acted as a disincentive to the successful operation of WUAs in many instances.

Beni Suef

Beni Suef is one of the poorest governorates in Egypt which makes it an ideal ground for applying the pro-poor strategies adopted by EMPOWERS. Beni Suef's population in 2002 was 2,112,000, which constitutes 3.2% of Egypt's population. The total area of Beni Suef Governorate is 10,954 km^2. It is located at the northern end of the Nile Valley to the South of Cairo.

The village of Kassab is within the jurisdiction of Ehnasia district and has five satellite communities. It is located 30 km south-east of Ehnasia City and 23 km south-west of Beni Suef City. From the west, it is bordered by Ehnasia City, while Masharqa village and Maseed are on its eastern borders. Nowera lies at the northern borders of Kassab while Shobak and Masharqa are on its southern borders. 90% of Kassab's inhabitants are farmers and the area of its land is about 1,006 feddans (a feddan is slightly larger than an acre and about 0.42 of a hectare).

The village of Masharqa is 25 km from Beni Suef and 5 km from Ehnasia City. Masharqa has four satellite communities, and is flanked by El Maseed and Qella to the east, Shobak and Towa to the south and Ehnasia and Abdelsamad to the west. The village is 1,797 feddans in size and is home to 3,956 citizens, 90% of whom work in agriculture.

It depends on the people themselves

Masharqa village is one of the oldest villages of Ehnasia district in Beni Suef. The history of village families dates back more than 200 years. Masharqa was under Beni Suef Governorate supervision until 1880. It was then transferred to the supervision of Ehnasia district. In the 1930s, Masharqa became a mother village with its own independent administration. The name "Masharqa" is derived from the fact that the families that settled in the village came from the Arabian Peninsula in the East or "El Sharq".

Masharqa is 25 km from Beni Suef City and 5 km from Ehnasia City. It has an area of 965 feddans (about 1,000 acres) and is inhabited by 4,500 citizens. Low income community members in the village do not have a piped water connection inside their houses. They therefore rely on borrowing water from their neighbours.

Map of the Masharqa village drawn by residents

Farmers no longer use manual irrigation systems as they have irrigation pumps. This has meant that women contribute less time to irrigation as it takes only two to three hours with the use of the pumps. Irrigation is a problem for farmers with land at the end of the canal since farmers at the beginning of the canal take more than their allocation and there is not enough water to reach the end of the canal. An Irrigation Improvement Project (IIP) was implemented in Masharqa three years ago. However, the project was not implemented properly and some farmers are still experiencing problems.

A tile drainage system was installed in the village 25 years ago and for the past three years has been under rehabilitation.

Some of the population have septic tanks where they dump liquid waste, but others do not have tanks. There are problems with a high water table due to a lack of modern sanitation systems and to the filling of a lake to the west of Masharqa village as part of another project.

The village has an agricultural cooperative, agricultural unit, two schools, community local development association, a youth centre, and a local unit. The local unit is outside the village but it still supports the village in many issues, especially water problems. The village does not have an active water users' association, and so has no representative body to ensure that the village benefits from the Irrigation Improvement Project. Also based in the village, is a Bahhar, the Ministry of Irrigation representative responsible for controlling the water levels in Towa Irrigation Canal. He also receives irrigation complaints and manages them by communicating problems to the district engineer or to the agricultural extension workers who then convey them to the agricultural unit and the higher district level.

80% of Masharqans are farmers with 60% being landowners and 20% being tenants. The other 15% of the working population are government employees and 5% are technicians who travel to work in the Gulf States. The inhabitants of village satellites are marginalised and have the lowest incomes.

What are Community Development Associations (CDAs)?

In Egypt Community Development Associations are non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are usually formed in the village by the community. They are established under the supervision of the Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs. The main purpose of these associations is to represent the community and provide services for them in collaboration with the mayor of the village, the formal governmental authority.

Community Development Association with no role

The Masharqa Community Development Association (CDA) was founded in 1964. Despite the good intentions of its founding members, the CDA has not succeeded in providing proper services in the community, except for some short-lived events such as a sewing project for girls. There were many reasons for the failure to initiate and provide community services, of which the most significant was that the people in the community development association did not make time to serve the community. Some said that they came from wealthy families and they wanted a position on the association without understanding what the real purpose should be. In 2003, things changed. A new Board was formed with enthusiastic younger people who had the potential to get projects going. Their problem was that they lacked experience and did not know how to make things happen. This was when EMPOWERS came to the village. This was a good opportunity for EMPOWERS to provide support.

A vision is worth more than money

From the outset the EMPOWERS project stressed the idea of working as a team where all members of the community, poor and rich, men and women would participate together. Some people thought that EMPOWERS was bringing money, and that they would "just go to the EMPOWERS meetings till they get the money". Soon, however, people realised that EMPOWERS and its projects is not about money. It is about solving problems where everyone comes together to formulate a vision for the village about what they would like to see in the future. Soon people saw that the vision they were developing was more important than getting small amounts of money for small things.

In training sessions they started by identifying their water problems. Then they prioritised the problems and, with the help of farmers' and women's groups, they collected data to inform their discussions.

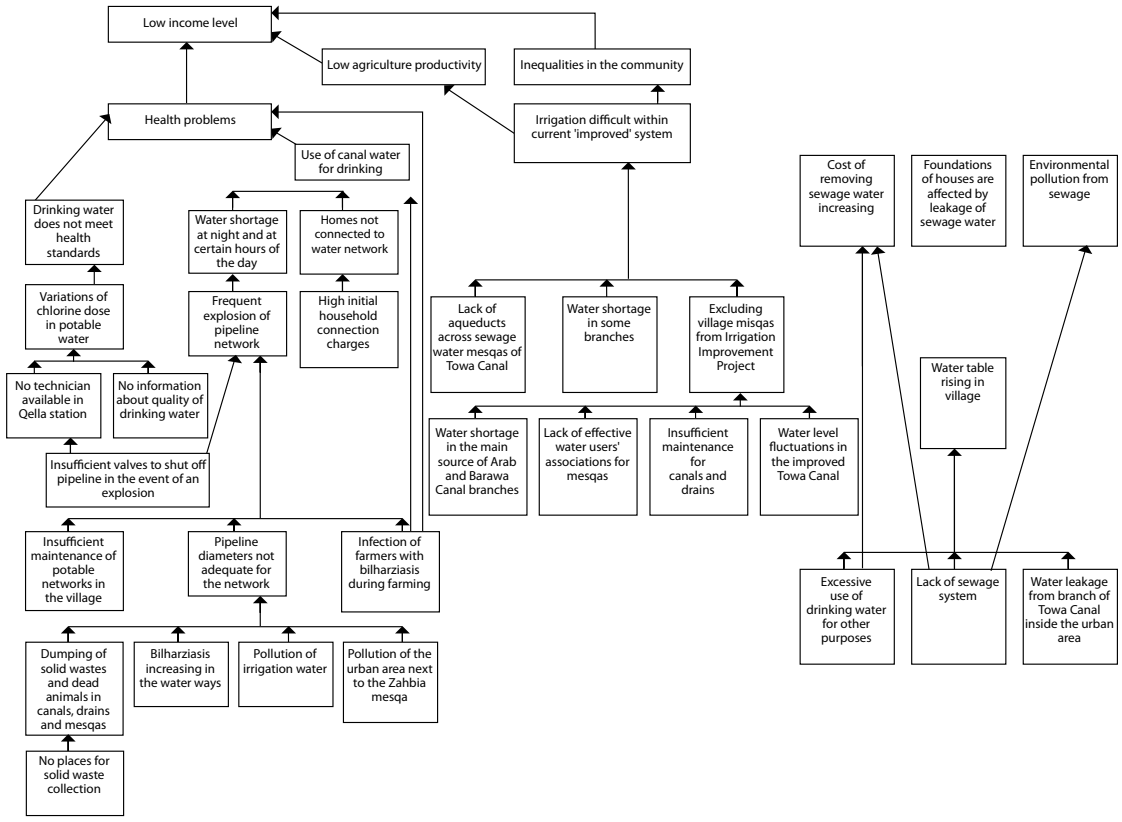


Figure 1: Water problem tree for Masharqa village

All the stakeholders in the water sector came together to develop the vision. The stakeholders included governmental officials, CDA members, community leaders and community members.

Here is their vision:

Masharqa's Vision

- By the year 2015, the percentage of people in the village and hamlets who are connected to the drinking water network shall be increased to 75%.
- Water availability per capita shall be 60 litres per day instead of the current average of 51 litres.
- 100% of village people shall be connected to the sewerage system and 60% of those shall have an environmentally safe sanitary system.
- The percentage of land suffering from a shortage of irrigation water shall be reduced to 50%.
- Pollution of sub-surface water will be minimised; garbage will be dumped outside the residential area.

Stakeholders were trained on how to develop scenarios and strategies for solving their water problems. EMPOWERS gave them an opportunity to plan and implement a pilot project to practice and apply what they had learnt.

Making a big stride towards collective interests

The training built the capacity of local people, and helped them to develop themselves. The people of Masharqa made a big stride towards understanding their society, understanding the problems they faced and improving their ability to improve their lives. They started to look at the collective interests of the village rather than at individual interests. They started to work together to address these collective interests.

Masharqa's village CDA members with EMPOWERS field coordinator during a workshop

They asked themselves, "What is the most important thing we can do for the entire community?"

National identity cards

Many people in the village did not have a national identity (ID) card, without which there is little a person can do. Helping the community to get national ID cards would therefore be a very important service. They decided this would be the first activity the revived Masharqa Community Development Association would undertake after the EMPOWERS training.

Bringing ID cards to the people

The members of the association worked with representatives of the Interior Ministry and the local unit of the Governorate. They organised for a special mobile unit to come the village to issue cards. This meant that community members did not have to go to different government offices in Beni Suef City to apply for and obtain their ID cards. This was especially important for people who were too poor or too sick to travel.

Village members standing in front of the CDA door to present their papers for the Egyptian national ID card

A village in a state of activity

The association is also involved in many other activities to help the community. They started a bread distribution system, formed a committee to manage a new tractor (an EMPOWERS pilot project), and collected donations to buy school supplies and clothing for families who could not afford these goods. During the Holy Month of Ramadan they distributed meals and bags of food.

The village seems to be in a state of tremendous activity and optimism with CDA involving many people in many activities. One of the EMPOWERS facilitators talked about what happened in the village. "It depends on the people themselves and what they want to do. In this village they took the essence of EMPOWERS and are applying it all over."

CDA members attribute the current success of the CDA and the village rehabilitation to the EMPOWERS work. "It created a group of enthusiastic women and men who are eager to serve their community. They are planning to do that in a practical and efficient manner."

Speaking to a stranger

A few weeks ago, a French woman came to visit the villages to see how women are addressing their problems. Usually during such visits, women in the villages do not talk, especially to a stranger. They are very polite but they are silent. We took the French woman around to show her some of the things that had been done in the villages. I knew things would be different when we started, but I was not expecting what I saw. The women's groups were very strong. The women spoke out with such confidence about what they had done and why they were doing it. They spoke about the management cycle and how they used it to do things. They also spoke about sustainability. I felt there was a big change of attitude, a change of behaviour. Actually, it was a whole change of mentality because the women had become totally independent. They were equals and they were talking about the Community Development Association with a real sense of ownership.

The last time the EMPOWERS team visited the village they found that the Community Development Association had formed a solid waste collection system and also developed a plan to plant trees on the sides of the streets.

Masharqa village is a real example of empowerment of members of a community to act for their own development.

May Abu-Elseoud

Governmental official Eman's empowerment

People tend to accuse government officials of being too bureaucratic. But sometimes they are just used to working in a certain way. They want to make a change, but cannot identify what would make the difference. This is a story about a government official who discovered the kind of change that would make a difference. It is about Eman Ismail, a woman engineer who is the manager of the Irrigation Directorate of Beni Suef Governorate. She has an important position. She decides how irrigation water is allocated in the whole of the Beni Suef Governorate.

Engineer Eman Ismail, Manager at the Irrigation Directorate of Beni Suef Governorate

When Eman first heard of the EMPOWERS project, she was very reluctant to cooperate with the project team. She had attended many development project meetings and her experiences had been negative. The development projects had failed to serve the community.

Eman Ismail showing the EMPOWERS field coordinator an irrigation map of the villages where EMPOWERS works

The EMPOWERS team convinced Eman to attend some project meetings before making any judgements. She started to attend some training sessions that introduced EMPOWERS methodologies and approaches to involve stakeholders in project activities. She saw that the training encouraged community participation and coordination between stakeholders. She also saw the persistent attempts to enable the poorest of the poor and to strengthen women participation. This impressed her. She believed that community participation was an important element to solve many irrigation problems, but before the training, she was not sure how to make participation work in practice.

After the training, Eman spoke about the importance of dialogue between the government and the people. She told a story of how villagers asked the directorate to help them remove clay from one of the streams to ease the water movement. The directorate responded to their request, but when the clay was removed, it was left on the road. The road became blocked so while one problem was solved the villagers were faced with another problem. They contacted Eman to help them remove the clay. She was able to follow up on the problem and talk to the team who had dumped the clay on the road. She said that the ongoing dialogue helped her to keep in touch with what was going on. It helped her to solve even the smallest day-to-day problems that normally the directorate would not know about.

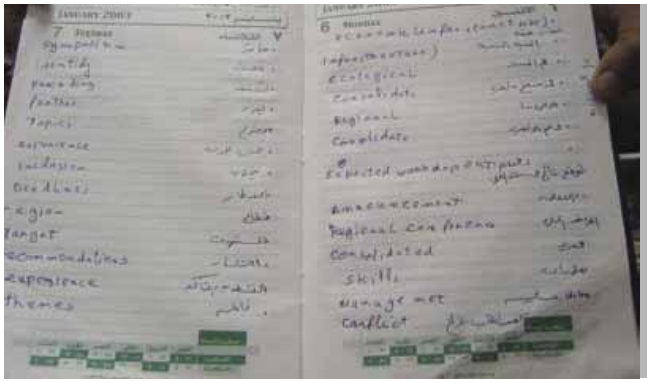
Today, Eman has become a strong supporter and active promoter of the EMPOWERS approach. Amongst governmental officials, she has become the farmers' contact person and she advocates for farmers whenever there are irrigation problems.

Eman explains that identifying problems, developing scenarios and finding solutions through the EMPOWERS approach is useful in all aspects of her life, not just for water problems. She uses the EMPOWERS approach and principles in her office and in her home. In her office, they used the problem tree to identify and prioritise administrative problems amongst the employees. It was a chance for employees to express the difficulties they encounter and to share opinions about them. They listed all their problems and agreed on which problems they should solve first. Eman was surprised at the type of problems that came out in the exercise and how easy it was to address them. For example, one of the newly hired employees said that he had been sharing a colleague's desk for three months. Eman did not know about this and neither did most of the staff. The first step was to get their colleague a desk. It was a simple problem and could be solved very quickly, but without knowing about it, nothing had been done. The problem tree was a good way of communicating problems.

Eman also developed a problem tree at home with her children for the family's financial planning. The children wanted to buy different items, but had a limited amount of money. They each listed their needs and problems and used the problem tree to choose between them. They finally agreed that they would buy a computer because everyone would benefit from it.

These successful attempts to apply EMPOWERS tools encouraged Eman to learn more about the project. She decided to start her own dictionary of terminology used by the EMPOWERS project team.

Eman used the skills she learnt to direct the attention of key officials to the problems in the Irrigation Improvement Project (IIP) that was implemented in Beni Suef Governorate. The IIP sets up water users' associations at the mesqas (small water streams) and undertakes construction works to replace the old mesqas with more advanced ones using covered mesqas. However, farmers were not using the improved mesqas for a number of different reasons. Aside from a number of technical problems, there was a lack of awareness of the benefits of the improved mesqas. Engineer Eman listened to the farmers' complaints and delivered their message to the



Eman's dictionary of EMPOWERS terminology

authorities. As a result, the IIP is being revised by high ranking officials in the Ministry of Water and Irrigation Resources in Cairo.

Eman also managed to enhance coordination between the Irrigation and Agriculture Directorates by inviting irrigation engineers to lecture in farmers' schools about the importance of water conservation.

Communities often fail to participate in water decisions, not because they don't want to participate, but because they do not know how to, or they feel too shy. When government officials are willing to support community participation, they break down the walls between communities and government. Eman became a good example of breaking down these walls and helping the community to engage around their problems. She also managed to influence and involve other government officials in dialogue with the community. This dialogue was key to the success of their projects.

You will hear people say that EMPOWERS is not a magic stick, it cannot enlighten everyone and it cannot change everything. But it can provide some direction. It shows the way, a new way which can make a big difference. The difference will happen if people make it happen. EMPOWERS made a big difference to the way Eman worked and to the impact of her work. She was able to hear about the problems, see the problems, discuss them, and involve the right people in addressing the problems. Eman was both empowered and empowering in the way she works.

Overcoming bureaucracy within the bureaucracy

Bureaucracy is created to ensure that rules and decisions are properly implemented. The structures and regulations within a bureaucracy are designed to control activity so that there is proper information flow and cooperation. Bureaucracies are supposed to ensure efficiency and effectiveness and the provision of good services. But this is not always the case. Some bureaucracies are still based on old rules and regulations and old systems of communication and networking. They are also dependent on how well the people working in the structures are able to 'work the system' to solve problems and get things done. If the people in the system do not work well together, the bureaucracy can become a very slow machine. It can be seen as a hindrance rather than a system to enable collaboration, coordination and concerted action.

Bureaucracy in Beni Suef Governorate

Government officials in Beni Suef Governorate face many challenges which require coordination between departments. But the official systems for communication and coordination are slow and do not allow for rapid problem solving or dynamic dialogue. For example, there is a lack of sufficient water for irrigation of some lands. This is a problem that the Ministry of Irrigation deals with. The Agricultural Directorate plans what crops should be planted in different areas. Some crops require more water whilst other crops require less. However, because there are no mechanisms for the Agricultural Directorate to consult the Ministry of Irrigation about where there are water shortages, they make plans for farmers to grow crops that use a lot of water in areas where there is insufficient water. If the directorates were acquainted with each other's work, this type of problem would not occur, but the bureaucracy within which they work has no clear mechanisms for sharing the information necessary to coordinate their work.

The Ministry of Agriculture

Mohammed Qalawi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture in Beni Suef Governorate raised the problem of coordination between the Departments of Agriculture and Irrigation. He said that coordination was limited to official correspondence between the officials of the departments. This correspondence did not mention the details of the work of each directorate and nobody had attempted to find a practical mehod of facilitating better communication and information sharing. In addition, there were no mechanisms for joint problem solving or cooperation.

Resistance to change

Part of the problem within the bureaucracy is that it creates resistance to change. Whilst government officials know that there are quicker and more effective ways of coordinating and dealing with problems, they continue to use the systems and procedures that they have always used. And because systems and procedures are in place, officials often don't think of more creative ways to deal with a problem. Their response becomes procedural rather than thinking about the outcome that they want to achieve. Coordination across departments will most likely achieve better outcomes, but bureaucratic processes are generally not suited to facilitating coordination across different structures.

Opening the channels for dialogue, the first step

Officials knew that they would achieve better outcomes if they coordinated, but no one had been ready to take the first step. EMPOWERS brought the different stakeholders together into a single room. Immediately, officials from different departments started to talk about similar problems, and this was the start of a process of coordination. They asked each other why certain things were not happening and why certain decisions had been taken. The bureaucratic procedures gave way to open dialogue. The EMPOWERS meeting had made the first step possible by getting the officials from the different ministries together.

Eman Ismail, Director of the Under-Secretary's Office of the Ministry of Irrigation in Beni Suef said that the EMPOWERS approach gave them the tools to solve any problem. Through the EMPOWERS process the officials of the Irrigation and Agricultural Directorate started to build a dynamic working relationship where they could engage with each other in a much more direct way. For example, an official from one directorate could enquire about the causes of a problem through a phone call to an official in another directorate without having to resort to long, complex and time-wasting bureaucratic procedures.

Meeting of government officials from the Agricultural and Irrigation Departments

The creation of a space for dialogue was successful. It was also backed up by training for the officials on the EMPOWERS management cycle and on how to identify problems and work to solve them.

Formalising cooperation with a Memorandum of Understanding

Stakeholder collaboration through the EMPOWERS Project led to a successful process to formalise cooperation between ministries. This was achieved through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Director-General of Agriculture and the Irrigation Ministry Under-Secretary.

The memorandum called for agronomists to work within training courses in the field within all the agricultural departments in the Beni Suef area to increase awareness about rational use and conservation of water. This would be done in cooperation with irrigation engineers. It was also agreed that the irrigation engineer would attend the weekly meeting of the Agricultural Guidance Department and explain the water situation in cooperation with the agronomist.

مصر به الزراعة بنى سويف

مكتب مدير عام الزراعة

إلى السيد المهندس/ رئيس الإدارة المركزية للموارد المائية

تحية طيبه وبعد .....

مرسل لسيادتكم برنامج الندوات للادرات الزراعية بمراكز محافظة بنى سويف وذلك لتفعيل المشاركة بين الري والزراعة في (تفعيل المشاركة في إدارة الموارد المائية (EMPOWERS)

مرفق جدول باجتماعات المراكز

اسم المركز	اليوم	الساعة
الواسطى	الثلاثاء	١ ظهراً
ناصر	الأربعاء	١ ظهراً
بنى سويف	الأحد	٧ مساءاً
اهناسيا	الاثنين	١ ظهراً
سمسطا	الأحد	١ ظهراً
ببا	الثلاثاء	١ظهراً
الفشن	الاثنين	١ ظهراً

ابتداءاً من السبت الموافق ٢٠٠٥/٥/١٤

حيث أن هذه الاجتماعات تعقد للمرشدين الزراعيين القائمين بعمل المدارس الحقلية بالأحواض الخاصة بهم مع المزارعين

برجاء التفضل بالاحاطة لاتخاذ ما ترونه مناسباً نحو تكليف السادة مهندسي هندسات الري لحضور هذه الندوات لشرح أهميه ترشيد استخدام المياه حتى يقوم السادة المهندسين الزراعيين بنقلها إلى السادة المزارعين .

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام

مهندس/ محمد القلعاوى

مدير عام الشئون الزراعية ببنى سويف

Memorandum of Understanding between the Director General of Agriculture and the Irrigation Ministry Under-Secretary

Facilitating coordination

This level of coordination between governmental stakeholders would not have happened without the dialogue that took place at EMPOWERS workshops. The structures simply did not exist to bring those stakeholders together in a way where they could share problems and information and find joint solutions.

The officials realised that not all of the problems they were facing were due to lack of resources, lack of skills, corruption or insufficient human resources. The problems lay with poor coordination between different stakeholders and the inability of the bureaucracy to facilitate coordination. The bureaucratic style of work that the officials had always followed created a divide between

the different government bodies and between them and the communities. This was something that they would have to address because the answer is not to simply get rid of bureaucracy. Bureaucracy has a very important role to play in the functions of government. But sometimes more innovative ways of addressing daily challenges are needed where ideas and information can be exchanged openly between departments and with stakeholders outside of government. How should channels of communication be opened? How can greater dialogue amongst stakeholders be promoted and facilitated? What opportunities for cooperation are there to solve problems jointly? Who should make cooperation happen? These are some of the challenges that the departments faced.

One government engineer described how he saw the process of ensuring greater cooperation.

"Dialogue between stakeholders is one of the pillars to activate participation and to start a process of problem solving. This is what we are trying to do. We are using the EMPOWERS methodology to get dialogue going between stakeholders from the community and stakeholders from government. We also ensure ongoing dialogue and exchange of information between government officials in the Beni Suef Governorate so that we all know what is going on from one department to the next. The dialogue is more than sharing information, it is discussion of problems and it is working together to ensure coordination in the management of water sources. We are convinced of the importance of coordination, so we make sure we coordinate with each other. We do it to ensure better services for our citizens. Now we must find ways to make coordination part of the bureaucracy, so that it is something that happens in all our processes and so that we have proper structures to coordinate."

"You can overcome the limitations of bureaucracy by being innovative, but once you've found a way to do things better, you need to bring the new way of doing things back into the bureaucracy to improve the way you work on a daily basis. This is how you empower the system and everyone working in it. This is how you achieve dialogue, coordination and better service delivery."

From governmental planning to participatory planning

Government departments often plan and implement projects that do not achieve the results they expected. The projects are good, the services are good, but the community does not make use of the service. What went wrong?

Irrigation Improvement Project

This happened with the Irrigation Improvement Project of Towa Canal in the Beni Suef Governorate, a project by the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation to increase land productivity.

A traditional mesqa that is part of the turn system

A traditional mesqa that is still in use

Hag Mohamed from Masharqa village shows a location in the village where the Irrigation Improvement Project was implemented but not yet in use

Before the project started, irrigation in the fields was done through open channels (mesqas) in which water would flow through the mesqas for 5 days, be cut off for 10 days, then back on again for 5 days and so on. This was called the 'turn system'.

The purpose of the Irrigation Improvement Project was to provide farmers with continuous irrigation systems and to assist them to take charge of their own water management. The project aimed to achieve this by replacing the old mesqas with more advanced ones using covered mesqas which would provide uninterrupted flow, and by establishing water users' associations for the mesqas.

Improved mesqas were constructed in Kassab and Masharqa villages in 2000 by the Beni Suef Irrigation Improvement Inspectorate.

Field research shows project not used

Field research was undertaken as part of an EMPOWERS project in these villages, it was found that the farmers were not using the new mesqas.

An EMPOWERS workshop was held with the communities from the villages where the management cycle and several tools were used to analyse information and to build stakeholders capacity to initiate dialogue. The community drew an irrigation problem tree and, through this process, clearly identified a number of reasons why the new

system was not being properly used in either village. Members of the community said that they preferred their traditional system because they were not familiar with the new mesqas, not trained in how to use them and unaware of the potential benefits. They basically had not been consulted about the new system, and it was something strange to them. (There were also some technical problems with the new mesqas.)

Joint meetings between government officials and the community

Governmental stakeholders in Beni Suef also received training on how to apply the EMPOWERS management cycle and the benefits of drawing the problem tree. At a later stage, members of the community and government representatives were brought together in joint meetings. They exchanged ideas and opinions about water problems in the villages and how to solve them.

As a result of these meetings, the community representatives from Masharqa and Kassab villages told the government officials from the Irrigation and Agriculture Directorates about their problems with the Irrigation Improvement Project. The government officials were pleased and responsive because the community provided information on the problem in an ordered and useful way.

Addressing the problem

The authorities in Beni Suef Irrigation Improvement Project carried out field visits to open up dialogue with the communities. They listened to the complaints of the farmers, something that had never happened before. Different stakeholders at different levels became involved in addressing the problems in the project, including the community, farmers, officials from the project, the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, and the Beni Suef Governorate. Groups of farmers assembled and analysed data about the extent of the problem.

A multi-stakeholder research-based report was prepared and was presented to the Head of the Irrigation Department and sent to the Water Resources and Irrigation Ministry.

After receiving the report his Excellency Dr. Mahmoud Abu-Zeid, the Water Resources and Irrigation Minister instructed the Irrigation Directorate in Beni Suef to form a committee to put a plan in place to address the problems and overcome some of the technical problems. A meeting was held by the heads of the concerned bodies of the Irrigation Improvement Project. It was decided to stop recovering costs from the beneficiaries of the Towa Canal II system until the restoration process of the Towa Canal was completed. A follow-up system was set up with bi-monthly reports on progress with the situation of the Towa Canal.

Coordinated action

The Irrigation Undersecretary Office took responsibility for coordination. The Beni Suef Governor held a meeting with the irrigation officials in Beni Suef to accelerate and finish the restoration works and get the mesqas operating. He also asked members of the village councils to be responsible for the mesqas until the water users' associations were functioning for each mesqa.

This led to the establishment of a group of small scale farmers who were able to identify and in some cases deal with daily irrigation problems. Instead of quarrelling amongst themselves or getting upset with the officials, they put their complaints in writing and provided officials with information. A substantial change also occurred in that the irrigation managers started listening to the farmers and conveyed the farmers' problems to the higher authorities.

Dialogue was started amongst all the stakeholders involved in the IIP. This resulted in concrete action such as repairing, testing and operating some of the improved mesqas, not only in the Masharqa and Kassab villages but also at other mesqas on the Towa Canal. These repairs took place at a total of 120 mesqas in three villages, as well as in parts of Ehnasia City.

Towards participatory planning

The government officials realised from the problems with the Irrigation Improvement Project that there was a problem in the way projects were being planned in their administration, related to a lack of participation by beneficiaries. They realised that if the beneficiaries had participated in the planning of the project, the new irrigation system would have been used by the community.

A committee was formed at district level comprising representatives from the different communities to participate in the planning and management of the Irrigation Improvement Project. For the first time village representatives were invited by the central administration to attend an official meeting at the Under-Secretary's Office. A copy of the minutes was also sent to the Community Development Association. The implementing company carried out the required changes to some mesqas and the Water Advisory Administration established some new associations at the repaired mesqas.

Planning changed from government planning to participatory planning. The result was ownership by the farmers of the new irrigation system so that water users' associations could manage the new system. Ultimately, the result was improved irrigation and improved land use.

The path to achieving success

What it took to achieve success was not complicated plans or large investments, but dialogue between stakeholders, joint problem identification and finding working together to find solutions.

To solve the problems, changes had to happen both with community members and government officials. The community had to start participating and getting involved in efforts to improve their irrigation system. The government officials had to move out of their conventional ways of planning to more participatory approaches where the voices of the community were heard and their ideas were incorporated into planning decisions.

The objectives of both the officials and the farmers were in fact the same, which was improved irrigation and greater ownership by the farmers over the management of the water. But the approach of both the officials and the community did not produce the desired results. Instead of the project solving problems, it became a problem. Dialogue and working together solved the problem. It was a different way of working but it worked and it achieved the project's results.

Participation of stakeholders in the early planning stages increases the feasibility of projects, ensures greater ownership of projects, and achieves greater social and economic impact.

Community speaks out for safe project construction

Masharqa village is the most active community that the EMPOWERS project worked with in the Beni Suef Governorate. It is not surprising that many signs of communal change in attitude and behaviour took place in this village.

After the first year of EMPOWERS work in Masharqa, there was increased community participation in local water resources management. However, the community realised that the EMPOWERS strategies and methodology can also be used in other areas of daily life, and started to implement the participatory approach in various aspects of their lives. This is a story that illustrates how the empowerment of a community can result in concrete actions to improve the way government serves a community. It is about the safety of a bridge.

A new bridge

The roads directorate decided to build a new bridge over the Qela channel in the area in front of Masharqa Village. The Masharqa people woke up one morning to find a group of workers building the bridge. Some of the people from the village, who had worked on similar bridges in other areas of Ehnasia district, noticed that the contractor was not using any steel. They looked for the technical engineer responsible for the bridge to consult him on the matter but he was not available.

Raising the problem

Some villagers then approached the building contractor to express their concern about the lack of steel in the building of the bridge. They also raised their concern about how the bridge was being built. The contractor was not happy about being questioned. He did not want to be answerable to the community. They explained that they felt entitled to ask these questions because they would be using the bridge, which was being built to serve their village and families. They were worried about the safety of their children who would use it on a regular basis. The contractor still refused to answer any questions. He told them that they were not authorised to ask questions.

Raising a problem with a building contractor was a very unusual step for the people of Masharqa village. Normally they would not have the courage to raise questions about work taking place in the village. However, members from the community had participated in the EMPOWERS participatory approach and stakeholder-dialogue training and they felt that the community had a right to know what the roads directorate had planned for the village, and about the safety of the bridge. They were not engineering experts but they knew enough about building and building materials to know that a bridge without steel would not be safe.

Meeting government officials

When they did not receive any explanation from the building contractor, a small group of community members was assigned to go and meet with government officials in the roads directorate. They explained their concerns to the officials. They said that they had spoken to

the contractor and enquired about the building materials because they knew that the materials were not sufficient for a bridge. They asked if a technical engineer could follow up on the work done to check the safety of the bridge.

The officials were very surprised that the community had sent a delegation to the office with this information. But they were also very welcoming and were pleased at how organised the Masharqa delegates were. The delegates had explained the problem very carefully and professionally, and expressed their demands very clearly.

Getting results

A specialist engineer from the directorate was assigned to meet with the contractor and to investigate why no steel was being used to build the bridge. The contractor was instructed to correct the problem. The roads directorate also made arrangements to monitor the contractor's work and to answer any questions the community had regarding the building of the bridge.
The community had used what they learnt from EMPOWERS to confidently claim their rights. The

The Masharqa Bridge, after it was safely constructed under the supervision of the specialist engineer

roads directorate said that they could see that participation and dialogue between stakeholders improves interaction and ensures that decision makers are accountable to the community.

Both the community and the roads directorate were pleased with the result, a safe bridge.

Nagah on the road to success

I am May Abu-Elseoud. I am a process documentation officer working in Egypt. This is a story from my diary about Nagah.

The first time I met Nagah was in one of the EMPOWERS meetings in June 2005. She was 24 years old, poor and a widow from Masharqa village in Beni Suef Governorate. The EMPOWERS team was starting to facilitate the establishment of a women's group in the village.

Nagah (left) with May Abu-Elseoud (centre)

In Arabic, Nagah means 'success'. But Nagah was in a position far from the meaning of her name. Her husband was killed in a car accident after four years of marriage and Nagah was left with a three-year-old child to support. Although she had a high school diploma, she could not find a job. She also could not remarry because of the traditional views in some areas of Upper Egypt that a widow should only marry someone from her husband's family. As her husband had no brothers, she had little hope of remarriage.

Nagah joined EMPOWERS activities after hearing about the project from a friend and decided to attend a meeting in the hope that she would find a job. However, the EMPOWERS team made it very clear that EMPOWERS does not provide job opportunities or financial compensation for any work the community gets involved in on EMPOWERS projects. The purpose is to benefit the entire village.

As process documentation officer, it was my job to observe and record what was happening in the meetings. I quickly saw how intelligent and hard working Nagah was. I decided to try to convince her to continue working with the project, through attending meetings and collecting data on drinking water problems, even though there was no tangible return for her personally.

Nagah was sad and desperate, as she had no money, could not find a job and could not remarry. She once told me: "I know I come from the bottom of this society and I have no future". It was difficult to see her feeling so desperate, but I believed she had potential that she could use not only for her benefit but for the benefit of others as well. I advised her to get the most out of the

EMPOWERS training and its methodology and to apply what she was learning to the problems in her life, particularly the management cycle.

Nagah joined the Masharqa Women's Group and became one of its main members. She participated in data collection on water problems in the village, collecting information about drinking water, sanitation, and irrigation problems. She took the initiative with other members of the group to publicise EMPOWERS to other women who were not directly participating in the project. She also taught them some of the skills she had learnt in the EMPOWERS training. She was a strong participant in formulating the problem tree, the vision, the scenarios and all the other steps in the EMPOWERS cycle.

Nagah in a meeting, holding up the data collection exercise she had participated in

Nagah gained self-confidence and acquired new skills. She overcame her sorrows and started to plan for her future. She applied for volunteer work in other programmes besides EMPOWERS and also worked in the Masharqa Community Development Association (CDA), becoming an active member of its education committee. In June 2006, Nagah went for an interview for a job with a new education project opening up in Beni Suef. One hundred candidates were interviewed and Nagah was one of the nine who were selected. "I did it, I did it," she exclaimed on her return. She said that during the job interview, she explained what she had learnt through EMPOWERS and how the methodology can benefit people in all sectors, not only water. She talked about the management cycle and how it can be used to identify problems and find solutions by involving all stakeholders.

Today, Nagah has a job in an education programme. She has also decided to resist some of the traditions that were restricting her life. She met a farmer from her village and even though he was not a member of her husband's family, she decided to marry him. She argued that he has an understanding personality and he appreciates her. He is also taking good care of her child and these qualities are more important than the traditional rules.

Nagah became a different person than the one we knew a year ago. She attributes this change to her work in EMPOWERS. Today she lives her name. She has become a symbol of success.

Nagah, a symbol of success

I am nothing

I am Galal Moawad and I work with EMPOWERS in Egypt. This is a story from my diary.

There are many water problems in Masharqa village. A lot of people are not connected to the water network because it is very expensive, and there is no sanitation system. There are also problems with irrigation because of a shortage of water. When we talk about water we often think about technical things, but this story is about people and how they can improve their lives through participation.

We went to the village to find out more about the community. When I studied the community, I noticed that the problems were mainly a lack of services, but also a lack of awareness and low motivation to deal with problems. I think the lack of enthusiasm was a result of poverty.

Many people – both men and women - had not even heard of participation; they did not know what it was or what it meant. They had a negative point of view about many issues, some said: "So what? That is not my problem to solve". I asked them about an irrigation improvement project on their land and they did not know much about it. They did not ask why the project had been implemented. They did not seem interested. The village also has a Community Development Association established since 1964. The government promoted the establishment of these CBOs with the purpose of promoting development. But I found that the organisation was simply a name and some papers. This is what I saw, nothing more.

During my first visit to the village, I met with association officers to introduce EMPOWERS' ideas. From this first meeting I understood that they had no experience of participation or any kind of community development. I thought to myself: "Why do they have an association and not use it for anything?" I asked them what the association was doing, and who the members were. I found that all the members of the association were men. They wanted a position in the association but they had become sleeping members. They did not want to give up their positions, but their positions were in deep freeze. They were not in a position to change anything.

Some younger people from the community had tried many times to change this situation, to use the association to bring about change for the community. In 2003, they managed to convince the members of the association to stand down and let younger members become active. The older members were not going to stand down without conditions. They wanted a rule that if they left, someone else from their family would take their position. The younger people agreed because they wanted change to happen. So that is how the young people succeeded in negotiating the older people out of the leadership of the association.

I met with these younger people who started working in the association. We did not start with EMPOWERS methodology, but just started talking. Later we talked about an EMPOWERS project.

The EMPOWERS project started with the clear objective of enabling the poor to secure their water needs in the long term. However, we made it clear to the village community that the project was not going to build water infrastructure, such as a network, or provide latrines.

The purpose was to build the capacity of the village community to participate in solving their own water problems and to introduce the idea of accountability. Right from the start, the community took ownership of the project with an agreement that the project will facilitate their development into becoming real partners with government officials.

We started the workshop at 10 o'clock. As I normally do, I asked everyone to introduce themselves, and tell us where they came from. One person introduced himself and said he is a farmer who owns 5 feddans[1] of land. The next person introduced himself and said, "I am nobody." I asked him: "Why are you nobody?", and he replied, "I just own one quarter of a feddan, so I have nothing and I am nothing."

I told him, that we came here to hear from everyone without hearing what they own. I told him: "You have the right to express your opinion, to say what you want, without looking to what you own."

The farmer and 'nobody'

[1] A feddan is 4,200 square metres, or just over four dunums or one acre of land.

I felt a huge responsibility on my shoulders to convince this man to involve himself and to participate. I felt I needed to help him change his opinion of himself and to value his own worth.

It was crucial for us to convince people in similar circumstances that they have a lot to offer. Poverty should not, and must not, be an obstacle to reaching fair solutions to problems. We started building the capacity of the community by asking them to define their problems.

We encouraged poorer community members to exchange perspectives with the more influential community members. In this way, they could build their confidence. That was a first step to shake the walls within which community members had confined themselves. These walls start with a feeling of inferiority and they are fortified by poor financial conditions and traditions. We saw a glimmer of hope, when poorer people stood in front of the village leaders to speak up, and when women talked about their plight and were met with utmost respect.

Government officials came and listened to what the community was saying. This was very significant. The ambitions of what the community could achieve grew, because of support from governmental officials. They welcomed community participation and they provided the community with access to information.

Galal Moawad meeting with women from the community

Introducing the idea of community participation and accountability required time and effort. It did not take place overnight and at first, was not accepted easily by the government officials. However, after meeting with and listening to the community's practical suggestions in solving their problems, the officials saw proof of what the community had to contribute.

They realised that, if given a chance, the community could participate in a very positive way to identify and solve problems. For too long the silence of the community had been a burden for the community leaders. This was another reason why the idea of community participation was welcomed.

Training was given both to community members and to government officials. The government officials had meetings and training on facilitation and communication where they leant how to listen and become receptive to other voices. The community training helped the community to conquer their fears and to bridge the gap between the community and government officials.

EMPOWERS training with members of the community

Collaborative work and the growing interaction between the teams resulted in field visits by senior officials to the communities where they met and listened to the people's problems and discussed ways to solve them. This is the fruit of breaking down the walls. This sort of real change had not happened before.

The real reason I wrote this story was because of 'nobody'. You may be wondering what happened to 'nobody' after the first meeting. His name is Abu Sayed and he continued to attend all the meetings. He became very enthusiastic and he started to take on responsibilities, such as data collection about the farmers group and agricultural patterns. Abu Sayed became the most active person in the group. Soon he took on the responsibility of inviting other people to the meetings because of the positive impact the process had on his life. I also noticed that he became very happy and self-assured. The last time I saw him, he told me about projects the community had participated in, including a waste-water treatment plant and household connections to drinking water. He said to me: "I am a rich man because now I have so much to give." I really smiled that day, because his worth made me feel very proud of what he had achieved. He was empowered.

Jordan

Jordan's climate is semi-arid. Rainfall varies between 50 mm in the desert region to about 600 mm in the western mountains near the Jordan Valley. The total annual rainfall is estimated to be 8.5 BCM (Billion Cubic Metres), 85% of which is lost through evaporation while the rest flows into valleys, some of it infiltrating deep aquifers.

Water resources consist of surface and ground water. Renewable resources are estimated to be 780 MCM (Million Cubic Metres) annually. In addition, treated wastewater is considered to be one of the most important water resources. There are 19 treatment plants producing around 72 MCM of treated wastewater which is used for irrigation.

The expanding population, the influx of refugees due to the political instability in the region and the climatic and topographical conditions of the country have caused enormous pressure on limited water resources. Available renewable water resources have dropped drastically from 3,600 m^3 per capita per year in 1946 to 145 m^3 per capita per year in 2007. It is estimated that by the year 2025 it will have decreased to 91 m^3 per capita per year. By then water demand will exceed available renewable water resources by 33%.

In order to carefully plan for the future, Jordan has adopted a National Water Strategy. The strategy is a comprehensive set of guidelines employing a dual approach of water demand management and water supply management. It places particular emphasis on the need for improved water resources management, stressing the sustainability of present and future uses. Typical water related problems in Jordan include the inefficient management of national water resources, subsidised water to end users, poor aquifer and surface water quality, big losses in water distribution networks, illegal water use and inefficient use of irrigation water.

Jordan can be divided into four basic geographical areas:

1. Al-Aghwar area (Jordan Valley) located in the western part of the Kingdom.
2. The mountain area spreading throughout the Kingdom from the north to the south with altitudes ranging from 600 to 1,600 metres above sea level.
3. Plains, also spreading from north to south.
4. The desert occupying the eastern part of Jordan.

Jordan

- Area: 89,297 km^2
- Population: 5,924,000
- Population growth: 2.5%

Balqa Governorate

- Area: 1,119 km^2
- Population: 370,000
- Water share: 90 l/c/d
- Average water use: 30-150 l/c/d
- Water storage capacity: 3 m^3/family/week

(Water is pumped once per week for 24 hours)

Balqa Governorate

Located in the north west of Jordan and constituting 1.2% of the country's surface, Balqa Governorate has a population of 370,000 citizens with a density of 321 people/km^2. Geographically it is divided into the highlands and the Jordan Valley areas. There is significant diversity. The Jordan Valley area (Ghor) reaches as low as 400 metres below sea level, while the highlands rise to an altitude of 1,130 metres.

The climate in the highlands is rainy and cold in winter and moderate in summer, while the Jordan Valley enjoys moderate temperatures in winter and high temperatures in summer. The average rainfall in the highlands is around 500-600 mm annually, while in Ghor it is around 100 mm annually.

Jordan Valley

Water problems in Balqa include the gap between water supply and demand, a high rate of water leakage (50% of the supply), difficulties in delivering water to rural areas, and over-exploitation of water from non-licensed and licensed wells. Moreover, there is an overlap of responsibilities between the various water management institutions and a lack of sharing of water information between them. Both have adverse effects on water planning.

Changing dreams, changing perspectives

Damya is situated about 40 km north-west of Salt City, at approximately 200 m below sea level. The village is hot in summer and warm in winter and the annual rainfall is around 177 mm.

After the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, when the borders shifted, the village was relocated a few kilometres east from its previous position on the banks of the River Jordan. The land had to be cleared of landmines before houses could be constructed to accommodate the refugees from the original village.

Damya is the only village in this area. It is hot, like in a desert. There is not much there. There are no trees. The people of Damya have learnt to live with it, but they feel like refugees and it is their dream to go back to their original land, where their farms still exist. They can go there in the daytime, but only until 4 o'clock and they have to renew permissions monthly. Going to the farms is refreshing. They long for that. Only recently have they realised that they will never go back, and their dream will not come true.

On the way to Damya

Agriculture but no access to irrigation

Most of the villagers work in agriculture or the public sector. They do not have access to irrigation although the King Abdullah Main Irrigation Canal is only three kilometres away from the village. Over the last 10 years, they have repeatedly asked the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) to provide them with irrigation water, and exerted various kinds of pressure on the JVA without any success. They asked their district representative in Parliament to use his influence and tried to reach decision makers by using Wasta, a system of favouritism. Nothing worked. In addition to what they call the careless attitude and laziness of government officials, they now say they failed because of their lack of information about the water situation and the way that they presented their problem. "We did not properly explain the situation. We just said we are poor and we need this connection," says Abdul Haleem al Ramadneh, vice-president of the Damya Village Youth Club.

Drinking water supply used for many things

The village does have a drinking water connection, but it is also used for a range of other uses. It is estimated that livestock consumes over 16,000 m^3 per year. Air conditioning in people's homes use almost 17,000 m^3 a year and irrigating the gardens around the houses takes 13,000 m^3 per year, reducing an individual's annual allocation of drinking water by 60%.

Houses in Damya

The Damya Village Youth Club: they thought they knew what was best

Damya Village Youth Club is the only Community Based Organisation (CBO) in Damya village. The club was established in 1975 by a group of young people, then 16-17 years old. Traditionally, it was a sports club, a place where mainly men could get together. In the 1990s, the Club shifted its role to include social development and voluntary work. In the late 90s, the Club started mainly small income generating projects such as medicinal herbs planted by local women, keeping bees for honey and wax and setting up a nursery for palm trees. For this last project, they tried hard to get the irrigation water to the village, but again failed.

"The projects weren't designed correctly," says Abdul Haleem al Ramadneh. "The medicinal herbs project took off well because the year in which we started was very wet. But after the first year, we struggled. Bee-keeping failed because there are not enough trees in the village for the bees to produce the honey."

The people in the Club are enthusiastic. They knew how to access funds from the rush of the donors who wanted to work with CBOs. They learnt how to phrase their proposals to get the money. But because of that, they forgot the real problems. They did not think about the needs of the village, so much as about the requirements of the donors. In effect, the club worked on its own. The men in the club decided. They said we know what the needs of the village are and we know what is best for our women: a bee-keeping and medicinal herbs project. But they didn't ask and didn't engage anybody else in the planning.

The start of planning differently

The Club started developing a strategic plan for local water resources. The EMPOWERS team helped them by training people to use the project management cycle and the technique of scenario building. Abdul Haleem comments: "We gathered information and analysed the water

related problems in the village. We went to all houses. People said the problem is that we do not have enough water for domestic use. 60% of our drinking water goes to livestock, gardens and air conditioners. That was their analysis, not ours. After that, we developed a shared vision that is clear and attainable based on the actual needs of the local community. In the end, we decided to decrease the use of domestic water by funding another source which would bring irrigation water to the houses. So there would be no irrigation water to the palm tree nursery of the Club, but irrigation water to the houses for livestock, palm trees near people's homes and for air conditioning. This was a change of perspective from what we considered to be the best for the village to what the village decided what is best. We never thought about water to people's houses, only about water for the nursery."

Preparing the village map of water resources and water services

The analysis, visioning and strategy development helped the village to get the accurate numbers and a clear indication of the needs. With the strategic plan for water resources in Damya, finally the Club got permission from the authorities to connect the village to the irrigation canal. Abdul Haleem said: "This way of working wasn't considered before. Relationships with government were limited and formal. They only thought of us as complaining and begging. Now we have more open and transparent relationships with the government agencies in the governorate, especially with the JVA officials."

Meeting to plan water projects

Damya: the green village?
In the end Damya got what it had strived for so desperately for more than 10 years; irrigation water, not to the Club nursery but to the houses.

This achievement was based on another way of analysing the village problems. Until then, the Club had been thinking for the people in the village, with the best of intentions, but they had never asked the people themselves. When they did, their perspective changed. Now the irrigation water goes where it is most needed. Abdul Haleem says: "In the end we achieved our goal. And even if we had not received permission to connect to the irrigation canal, we were on the right track to make a difference in the village. We will continue this way and we hope that Damya will be called the green village in the future. That is our dream."

Ekhlas Al Balawneh and the changes in Rweiha

Ekhlas, a typical Jordanian girl

Ekhlas is a young woman in her late twenties. She is from a moderate income family in the village of Rweiha. Her father is a landowner. She has a diploma in Arabic literature from the local community college. She used to work part time on a literacy programme for the older people in Rweiha and, together with her sister, she once tried to start a small income generating project. The idea was to raise cows and sell the meat. But they could not get support and had to give it up.

Many would say that Ekhlas is the typical Jordanian girl. Although she is educated and smart, she cannot always act the way she would like. She is very active in her family, inside the house, but outside she is shy. Her world is small, but in that world she is active. Nobody pushes this onto her; that is how it is. Her family supported her in buying the cows for her little project, but she did not go out. It is all within this small world of the family.

Ekhlas on the right

Rweiha, divided in three neighbourhoods

In 2005, the population of Rweiha was nearly 3,500. The majority of the villagers depend for their income on agriculture, and 40% of villagers are from the lowest income families. Three different groups live in Rweiha: Palestinian refugees, Jordanian land owners and Turkish people from Ottoman background, known as Turkmen. The Jordanians are from the land. The Palestinians work in government, the private sector and outside the village. The Turkmen work in the fields of the Jordanians. When the Turkmen and refugees first arrived in the area, they settled outside the village. In time, these settlements grew closer to form three separate neighbourhoods of Rweiha, but with little interaction or communication between the three groups. Each group has its own mosque. There is no local organisation in Rweiha, no voluntary work, no cooperative work, no organised civil society. Because of that, it is difficult to attract projects to the village. Rweiha's neighbours are developing, but there is not much going on in Rweiha itself.

Rweiha village entrance

The first meetings of EMPOWERS with the different groups revealed the divide between them. The Jordanian landowners asked for drip irrigation because they are farmers. They said, you do not have to talk to the others, they work on our land as labourers and the others work in Amman, so it is not their concern. The Palestinian refugees and the Turkmen said that it was drinking water and sewerage that they needed. They all had their own interests and problems. All of them wanted infrastructure, the pipes and the drip irrigation, although they knew that it would be hard to get, because of the internal divisions.

Ekhlas, representative of the women

Ekhlas was one of the women who attended some of the meetings with the key figures from Rweiha. She was presented as the representative of the women when the EMPOWERS team project asked for female participation. But she was a silent participant. She was shy, as was expected of her, and she spoke with a small voice. She did not have the confidence to participate actively. However, from several private conversations, it became clear that she had good ideas and great potential.

Ekhlas says: "In the beginning I was not interested in this work of EMPOWERS. I attended the meetings because they had asked for the presence of a woman and the village leaders suggested my name. I came at their request. Then I started to notice the enthusiasm of the EMPOWERS project team and its eagerness to improve the conditions of our village. I admired that quality, but it was difficult for me to work with the project because of the traditions. Without

Rweiha village farms

the persistence of the project team and their continuous visits to our family house I would not have continued working with them."

Rweiha, all will have equal shares

The first meetings that brought the three groups together were difficult. They fought over the question of how the votes would be distributed. The Jordanians wanted more votes than the others, but the Palestinians also claimed a majority of votes. The Turkmen did not have a voice anyway, so they kept silent. After months of discussion, the representatives of the governorate started to increase the pressure. They said: "Do something. Act. It is your responsibility to help the poor people in your village, and you are now blocking solutions. Take the opportunity to organise yourselves for the benefit of your village." In one of the next meetings Ibrahim Magagfeh, the youngest son of one of the biggest land owners stood up and said: "We will all have equal shares." They agreed and elected the chairperson of the new CBO, the local water resources management committee of Rweiha. They decided that in future the committee would represent the villagers of Rweiha, act as the link between the village and the governorate and be the focal point for all water problems in the village.

Once this hurdle was overcome, the emphasis of the EMPOWERS team turned to building the capacity of villagers in water resources assessment. A group of young people was formed to take part in training in PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal)[2]. The idea was that after training they would conduct a PRA in the village with the aim of achieving a thorough understanding of the problems in Rweiha. Ekhlas was one of the participants in the training.

Ekhlas, the impact of traditions

Her brothers said: "Why are you going? You are not getting paid for it. Are you crazy, working for free?" Certain reactions still come from traditions that rule many Jordanian women. They are slowly vanishing but still have an impact on women in remote isolated villages and in the poor urban areas. The tradition says that a woman must be shy and work silently; she should not argue or raise her voice and her opinion is not as significant as that of a man. Women have limits in where they can go and whom they can visit. She can be with her family or visit nearby neighbours, but not go further. A woman must always be obedient, first to her father and brothers, then to her husband and finally to her sons. The impact of these traditions varies from one area to another and from one family to another, but these are the main characteristics of the idealised woman in society.

Ekhlas talked with her family. She was supported by the EMPOWERS team. Moreover, an initiative had been taken in Rweiha anyway. She thought, maybe I am an idiot, but this will be to the benefit of our family. She attended the training sessions.

[2] PRA, Participatory Rural Appraisal is a tool to work jointly with people in communities to analyse problems and identify solutions.

Rweiha, friendships

After the training, the young people went to each other's houses and got to know each other. They made friendships. They got to know people from the other neighbourhoods. Their families were interested in what was happening. Their parents came to see what was going on. Another important experience was when the EMPOWERS team took the group to villages in the south of Jordan that had been successful in their water management. Ekhlas and her brother went as well. She said it was a breathtaking experience to see what you can do if you cooperate and prepare good plans.

Work on the Rweiha water strategy

The voice of Ekhlas is heard in Amman

The EMPOWERS steering committee in Jordan consisted of high level government officials, representatives of the donor agencies and the management of the EMPOWERS partnership in Jordan. The steering committee, based in the capital, Amman, asked for presentations about what had been accomplished in the villages that were working with the EMPOWERS approach, from the preparation of village strategic water management plan to the selection of projects that respond to the priorities of the villages. Ekhlas was asked to present the work in Rweiha village. First her mother said: "Why should you go to Amman? It is far away, there is no need for you to go." But the family eventually consented and Ekhlas did go to Amman together with her brother. She represented the water resources management committee of Rweiha and she gave an excellent presentation of what had been done in the village.

Rweiha, more proposals for water projects

The village water management committee in Rweiha developed a strategic plan for local water resources. Committee members were trained in a methodology called the project management cycle and the technique of scenario building. This involves taking stakeholders through a structured process of problem identification, visioning, strategy development, project identification and implementation. Their pilot projects have been implemented, the most successful one being the creation of the committee itself. They have prepared more proposals for projects based on their vision for water in Rweiha.

Now Rweiha has a local cooperative society and the manager of the cooperative is Ekhlas. In a speech to a Regional Middle East Forum on water resources management, she summarised the achievements in Rweiha: "Through our experience we demonstrated that local development institutions and local community members of different groups are able to participate in the development of their communities and the management of their water resources."

Ekhlas

Ekhlas, going to Amman on her own

Ekhlas' family has changed its views. They see that Ekhlas is confident. She has good contacts to government people and she solves small problems in Rweiha with the cooperative society. Ekhlas and her sister now go to Amman on their own.

Struggling with decentralisation

In recent years, Jordan has embarked on a process of decentralising responsibility for the implementation of development and poverty alleviation initiatives down to governorate and municipal levels. The Governorate Development Programme (GovDP) and the Municipality Reform Plan (MRP) are the two policy programmes that guide decentralisation. Both are in their infancy but are receiving significant support from country decision makers and international donors.

From maintaining law and order to development

In February 2002, His Majesty King Abdullah II mandated the Kingdom's twelve governors to supervise social and economic development in their governorates. Their new role was to actively participate in and monitor and evaluate development projects to contribute to poverty alleviation. This was a radical change with the past. Until then, the main role of the governor had been to maintain law and order within the governorate, issuing licenses and solving land conflicts. The governor was responsible for security. He reported to the Ministry of Interior.

Now governorates needed to transform themselves into development units. Governorate Development Units (GDUs) were established to support the governor's new role and to coordinate the various stakeholder and development projects in the governorate. This includes going down to the village level and making contact with local people and those working in development projects. That had never been done before. New posts were created to head the GDUs. The deputy governor and representatives from the Ministry of Planning became part of the GDU, in addition to staff from the governorate office.

Hassan Al Edwan on the left

A new position for Hassan Al Edwan

Hassan Al Edwan, Bedouin by origin, comes from one of the most influential families in Balqa Governorate and in Jordan. Hassan is in his early forties and is respected by people in the governorate. He was appointed by the Balqa Governorate to lead the decentralisation process. His new title was "Head of the GDU" (Governorate Development Unit). It was a job with little

ground to stand on, and not easy to perform. From coordinating emergency plans, he now had to initiate and coordinate development in the governorate. The idea was good but it wasn't clear how to do it.

EMPOWERS, the first project to go directly to the governorate

EMPOWERS was the first project to go directly to the governorate and to be monitored by the GDU. Hassan had his doubts about the way the project wanted to conduct its activities. He argued: "You don't need to go to the villages yourselves. We can provide you with the necessary information. We know what is best for our communities." In the end he agreed to join the EMPOWERS team in visiting the villages, but still thinking that it was not his business to intervene directly in village problems. It was the EMPOWERS project that wanted to work with the local people, not he. More than once he insisted: "We know better. Just give us the money and we will use it wisely for the benefit of the targeted areas."

Working meeting

Going to the villages

PRA tools were chosen to gather information in three selected communities in the Balqa Governorate. Representatives of the key government stakeholders were asked to participate in the field activities. Hassan agreed to be trained in the PRA tools with colleagues from other directorates, and also with representatives of local CBOs in the communities. People from different backgrounds sat together and started to make connections. They discussed water problems in the villages. Different perspectives and ideas were presented. One governorate official, Engineer Daoud Al Khateeb said: "I had the most amazing experience during the training. I never realised that people know so much and have such opinions about how water must be managed. It was an eye opening experience. These villages are within my working area but it is the first time I have been there." Local community members said they always had thought that government officials work from behind their desks and do not care about local problems. After the meeting, they realised that it is not so difficult to interact with government officials. All participants noticed the communication gap between local community and government agencies.

Visiting Omm Ayyash

Changing relationships, changing understanding

Government officials normally do not meet people in villages. They do not know about poverty. When they do go to villages, they do so in their formal positions, representing the governorate, granting permissions and being responsible for security; some even have the power to take people into custody. They may not always like this situation, but they stick to their status and their position. That is how it has always been. Local people are often intimidated by the presence of government officials. In the beginning, Hassan too was very careful to represent the governorate and to keep intact his status as a man of authority. But the training and meetings with communities changed that. As they mingled with each other and discussed major concerns, the ice started to break. They realised they could complement each other's work. Hassan's speeches changed too. They became more accurate. He now talks about real-life problems in simple language rather than sonorous phrases. He knows what he is talking about, and he presents achievable solutions.

New platforms to discuss water problems

After the training was complete, two platforms were created to discuss water problems and to design strategies to address them. One platform was established at village level, a local water resources management committee operating under the umbrella of local CBOs. The other platform was installed at governorate level. It is headed by the governor and consists of the heads of the ministry directorates in the governorate. Hassan al Edwan is the coordinator of the platform. The platforms provide a space for people from different domains and with different interests to discuss water related issues. They will be responsible for planning water development projects. The platforms help CBOs to make external linkages, enhance effectiveness and reduce costs, while the governorate can expand service delivery and deepen the participation of citizens in local activities. The platforms at the two levels are linked.

During discussions at the governorate platform, it became clear that the governorate did not have accurate and up-to-date information to use in the analysis of water problems. Participants decided to start gathering information from the targeted areas systematically. A Management Information System (MIS) was developed and pilot areas were selected to test the system.

Strategy formulation in Balqa Governorate

The difference it makes

In Jordan, the general idea is that the position of government official is the best you can get. You receive a stable income, you have status, you are even better off than in the private sector. You receive a lot of respect from local people. They say this man is in the right circles. That does not make it easy for local people to talk to him. They feel intimidated, although he might not be intimidating at all. But these are roles people traditionally acquire because of their backgrounds, their families and their positions. It is the tradition; it is what is expected from you. At the same time people in Jordan break the norms all the time and are flexible. Jordanians are like Bedouins. There is plenty of space, and you are always welcome.

Hassan al Edwan found his own way to shape decentralisation. He dared to step out of his traditional position and started to do things differently. He got promoted for his work in EMPOWERS. He became assistant governor. He coordinated the development of the management information system and became the intermediary between the information systems of the ministries and the MIS for the governorate. He received a lot of status and appreciation for that. He is given as an example of a successful head of the GDU.

Hassan

Decentralisation is a long process

In the process of working with local communities in the framework of EMPOWERS, the Balqa Governorate started to rethink its recently acquired role as a development agent. In particular, the GDU realised that decentralisation mainly consisted of delegating responsibility without the necessary economic empowerment and capacity building to enable the unit to carry out its new mandates effectively. The GDU had been made responsible for development and development projects, but the projects did not come directly to the governorate level but to the national ministries. The governorate had to wait and see what came its way. Lack of coordination between ministries and the fact that projects often came from different donors with different requirements made things even more complex. Another obstacle was that municipalities did not have any formal relationships with the governorate. They are led by another ministry from the central level. These were and are the start-up pains of decentralisation processes. Despite that, governorates with the participation of representatives from local CBOs and government ministries are on the right track. In Balqa Governorate and the six villages, strategic water plans have been developed and are now in the process of being adopted by the governor and relevant ministries.

Thinking strategically

Subeihi village is situated approximately 20 kilometres north of Salt City in Balqa Governorate. It has a population of around 5,000. The area is mountainous with an average annual rainfall of around 350 mm.

The drinking water network is old and in need of maintenance. Water losses in the network are around 57%, due largely to leakages and illegal use. An individual's daily share of water is supposed to be around 100 litres but in Subeihi it is closer to 50 litres. Despite the village being connected to the public water network, some people also drink rainwater. Since an accident in 1998 with polluted water from the treatment plant, people do not trust the water, regardless of what the Water Authority tells them. The main source of water for irrigation is precipitation. This is supplemented by two springs, one of them currently overexploited by farmers in the area.

Hajaj spring in Subeihi

Composition of the Subeihi water resources management committee

The EMPOWERS team worked with the existing voluntary CBO which acts as the official body of the village. A local water resources management committee was established in the village. The members were heads of families, appointed by the elders with an official letter stating that these members represented all social groups in the community. However, not much was done by the committee. The members were not dedicated; too busy or not interested in voluntary work. It was decided that a meeting was needed to discuss the slow progress: 150 people came to the town hall and discussed the role of committee members. The participants agreed to elect representatives of the four neighbourhoods into which Subeihi is divided. It was also agreed that more women should participate in the committee as well as people from the poorer sections of the village society. It took more meetings and several changes before everyone could finally agree on the composition of the committee. Young people were now well represented.

A strategic plan for Subeihi

The committee started to develop a strategic plan for local water resources development and management. Committee members were trained in a methodology called the project management cycle and in the technique of scenario building. This takes stakeholders through a structured process of identifying water problems, making a vision for the best water situation

Meeting in Subeihi

in 10 years time, developing a strategy for implementing the vision and identifying projects for specific work on the ground. Representatives of Balqa Governorate, the Ministries of Agriculture, Social Development, Environment and Health and the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) were also involved in the process. To avoid the vision being too optimistic or unrealistic, two scenarios were developed assessing what could possibly happen in the future. The difference between the two scenarios was the level of funding the water resources management committee thought it could generate. To each scenario a different strategy was attached. The strategy linked to the more optimistic scenario was to buy a sewage tanker.

The sewage tanker

Subeihi is not linked to the sewage system. People dig holes near their houses to act as cesspits for waste water. Most of the cesspits have not been constructed correctly, causing pollution of the ground water and pollution around the houses, which attracts flies and rats and causes bad smells in summer time. That is why a sewage tanker was chosen as a project to empty the cesspits regularly and to achieve a cleaner and more pleasant Subeihi.

No sewage system in Subeihi

A dilemma for the committee

Having reached this common understanding on the strategy and having chosen the sewage tanker, the committee invited a bureau linked to the Ministry of Planning to make a feasibility study. The study confirmed the analysis of the committee and came up with a budget to buy the

sewage tanker. The committee signed a memorandum of understanding with the EMPOWERS team on the share the village would pay for the sewage tanker and the share EMPOWERS would contribute. Then the committee started the tendering process. Several bids were received, indicating a big difference of around US$ 65,000 between the price of a sewage tanker in the feasibility study and the prices charged by the different tendering companies. The dilemma for the committee was that it had committed itself in the memorandum of understanding to contribute a certain amount of money which now was much too little. Many meetings were dedicated to finding ways to solve the dilemma. Where could they get the extra money? Could they find a company offering a lower price? How would they explain this to the people of Subeihi? After long discussions in the committee and with local community members, and after studying all the alternatives they decided to revisit their original scenarios. The second scenario, based on a lower level of funding, was put to work. It included a project to buy a tractor with an irrigation water tank for water harvesting and distribution. One of the committee members comments: "Now we understand why we developed these scenarios and here is the way out of this dilemma. The scenario that we thought was the most suitable for the situation can no longer be applied because the situation is different, and we must deal with the current situation."

Strategic thinking

The committee members felt they had learnt a lesson. Strategic thinking is in the interest of the committee and the community as a whole. If you are able to develop your strategies, you can cope with any kind of problem and any kind of situation. You can anticipate future obstacles and plan ways to deal with them. In particular when resources are scarce it is important to think and act strategically.

Trusting that ordinary people can understand and find the best solutions

Mufleh Alaween worked in the EMPOWERS project right from the start in 2003. He was the field officer working directly with the people in the villages. This story comes from his diary and from an interview.

Technology transfer
I did my education in agriculture, in soil and irrigation. After school, I worked in the Ministry of Agriculture for eight years. I worked mainly in soil and water conservation in the Zarqa basin which is located in the middle and north of Jordan. After that I worked in the water and land department of the Ministry as an irrigation engineer. My role was to introduce new techniques on the farm such as drip irrigation, mulching, fertilisation techniques, and designing irrigation systems to reduce the use of water. I transferred these technologies to the farmers.

In 2000 I was seconded from the Ministry to work for the international NGO, CARE. Our work was participatory. After CARE I worked for EMPOWERS for 4 years.

Mufleh Alaween

Technical problems are easy to solve
I like to work with the villagers. I am an engineer, but I am not so interested in technical issues anymore. I like to share with the people on the ground, to cooperate with them to solve their problems. Many of them have good experience in the field, and we can benefit from each other. It is important that you do not only think about your own office and from what you have learnt in school. It is now part of my natural behaviour to work with people in the villages.

You know, technical problems are very easy to solve. It is much more difficult to deal with social things. Social issues are very complicated. There are different interests in the village. There are underprivileged people, tribes. There is not always a conflict, but often people do not talk with each other and that creates problems, also in water management. When people living at the top of the hill take all the water on the two occasions a week that it reaches their village, downhill people suffer. There is no technical solution to such a problem, only a social solution. When

water is scarce as it is in Jordan and needs to be shared between many people, you will have social problems. Social solutions are needed in the villages to make sure that people, in particular poor people, have access to water.

Working with farmers

If you only think about your house, just your own house

Infrastructure alone will not solve all problems. A village may have the taps and the network, but there is no ownership and there is no accountability for this network. The people in the village consider this network not relating to them but to the government. If this continues, then in five or six years you will not find anything on the ground. The infrastructure will not function anymore. They will use the water illegally and they will not feel any shame. 25% of the water in Jordan is used illegally by people taking water from the pipe before it reaches the meter, breaking pipes somewhere to take water. 25% illegal use is a big problem even if a country has enough water.

That is what will happen, if you only think about your house, just your own house, and you say I need water and this is the government's responsibility. But if you talk with the people about their water problems and you plan solutions for the next years together with them, then they will start thinking about how to help, how to cooperate with the government to manage this network, and to manage this water. They will also be ashamed of themselves and their own people for stealing water. They will take responsibility for protecting this network. This is 80% of what is needed to solve the problem; only 20% is technical.

Discussions with government staff

Who is the expert?

It took a while for me to accept this. My whole life I trusted in scientific approaches. Numbers and equations are never wrong. That was what they told me. Calculations give powerful indicators and highly predictable results. My work experience relied on work with experts because "they know better and do it well". I didn't trust ordinary people to understand or figure out the best solutions. But they can. It is a big step for the experts to trust the people. Because, what will be their role? They are the experts, not the villagers! But the solutions are not always about more technology, but simply better communication in villages, taking away misunderstandings, giving people information so they know what their rights and duties are, and linking them to government people and plans. The solution is in organising things a bit differently.

Trust

Will the water problems in Jordan be solved by Omm Ameen?

Omm Ayyash

Omm Ayyash village is one of the poorest villages in the Jordan Valley. It has 2,000 inhabitants, 80% of them unemployed. Most of the men do not work. They play cards and stay at home; this is a very hot area. Women work as daily labourers on the farms in the Jordan Valley. They are cheaper than men and they work longer hours. The landowners like to work with women because they believe that they are more suited to the delicate work of harvesting vegetables. Another source of income for Omm Ayyash is the national aid fund, the government's support fund for underprivileged people, the very poor and those who cannot support themselves, because of disability or because they are widows. The few in Omm Ayyash who have jobs are in the army, have a government job or work in a factory. Some keep a few heads of sheep. The average family income is US$ 110 per month.

Omm Ayyash village

The Falah family

The Falah family is poor and the eight family members live in a house with two rooms. The father is unemployed and spends most of his time inside or with friends. The only source of family income comes from their eldest son who works in the army. But his salary is low and not sufficient to provide their most basic needs. The other children are of elementary school age, but the girls do not go to school. They support the family by working on the farms as daily labourers.

The Falah family has been living in Omm Ayyash since the early seventies. In those days, the village was still located near the shrine of one of the followers of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). When the government decided to expand the size of the shrine, the inhabitants of Omm Ayyash had to migrate to the current location.

Water in Omm Ayyash

Omm Ayyash is not only poor in the economic sense. It also lacks water resources. The average annual rainfall is around 177 mm. Drinking water in Omm Ayyash is provided by the Water Authority. Some houses are connected to the network; others are not. People living in the lower areas are privileged because the pumping pressure in their water system is high and they get a

Omm Ameen in front of her house

The children of the Falah family

Children in Omm Ayyash

Water container

greater amount of water. The people living higher up get less water and the water arrives at low pressure.

Sometimes people in Omm Ayyash make an illegal connection before the water meter and hide it behind branches. People know it is illegal but do it anyway, mostly because they can't afford to pay the water fees. If government officials discover illegal use the people have to pay fines or are cut off completely from the water supply. Repeated illegal use can land you in jail. But still, 55% of the water in Jordan is not accounted for, lost so to speak, 25-30% due to leakages and 20-25% due to illegal use.

Water for a high price

The Falah family is one of the poor families not served by the water network. They built their house illegally on government land and therefore cannot get a licence to be connected to the network. Even if the family could get a licence, they could not afford the connection fee. It would cost them half of a monthly income. Paying the water fees would also be a problem because they do not have a regular income. Instead, the Falah family buys from private water tankers for high prices, without knowing the source or the quality of the water. They fill the containers in front of their house once every two weeks and whenever the mother, Omm Ameen, has 5 JDs (Jordan Dinars)[3] to buy 2 m^3. If they do not have the cash, they get water from their neighbours or steal water from the leaking pipes.

Omm Ameen

Omm Ameen married when she was fourteen. Local custom prefers women to marry early and to have a lot of children who can work on the farms. She did not go to school and is illiterate. She prays to find good husbands for her daughters and for her sons to find jobs. She is a strong woman and tries to keep her family going without complaining. Her house is clean. There are curtains and mattresses to sit on which are covered with the cloth she used for the curtains. She rules her family. Her husband is ill

[3] 1 1 JD = 1.4 US$

and old, so Omm Ameen takes the decisions. She does not like to speak publicly because she feels ashamed that she is not educated. She pays her monthly fee of 5 JDs to the Omm Ayyash Women's Cooperative Society because she knows that she will benefit.

No aid

The first meetings that EMPOWERS organised in Omm Ayyash attracted a lot of people. They thought EMPOWERS was an aid project. They thought something would be given to them, like water infrastructure. Omm Ameen was interested in the discussions. She was interested because government people came to the village and normally you don't see government people there. They were talking about important things, about water problems and she decided to stay. It could help her to solve her own water problems. She was hoping to be one of the beneficiaries.

Omm Ameen is a good source of information. She knows the history of the village. She understands the problems in the village and she has ideas for how the village could do better. However, she does not know where to go, whom to talk to. The workshops and meetings gave her an opportunity to express herself. She attended most of them, if they were held in the village. She cannot leave the village because, from her point of view, women cannot go without their men.

The water tanker

The first projects that came out of the vision and strategy for water for Omm Ayyash were to raise awareness on how to use water more efficiently and to buy a water tanker to provide households not connected to the network with safe drinking water for a reasonable price.

The tanker serves the people of Omm Ayyash and the surrounding area. It is the property of the Omm Ayyash Women's Cooperative Society, which was established in 1998 and now has 230 female and three male members. It sets up small income generating projects such as buying olive oil in large quantities and selling it to people in the area. Some women sell handicrafts made from local materials. After the tanker project, the society created a revolving fund so that poorer families could get a loan to increase their water storage capacity, to buy a household connection to the water network or to install or replace water pipes in the house.

The Falah family now buys water regularly from the water tanker at lower prices and with the confidence of knowing that the source quality is good. Omm Ameen is taking out a loan to connect her house to the water network after rectifying the legal status of the house.

Meeting of the Omm Ayyash Women's Cooperative Society

Linking to the bigger plan

Will the water problems of Jordan be solved by Omm Ameen? Local people are capable of managing their lives and their water resources, but they need support and inspiration. It is not about making Omm Ameen rich. It is about giving her recognition and confidence. It is about enabling her to talk to government officials. Omm Ameen was a silent member in society, now she is more vocal and more critical. What she always knew is now being heard and recognised. There are many Omm Ameens. All the Omm Ameens together will contribute to solving water problems in Jordan.

Governments make plans. And people have hopes and aspirations. But there is a gap in the middle. The government does work for Omm Ameen, the government wants to help all citizens, but they do not think about it from the other end, from the aspirations of people like Omm Ameen. It is like a father planning for his daughter. He is careful and considerate, he wants the best for her, but he does not talk to her. She may have needs and ideas that he does not know about. In his eagerness to care he does not ask. The question is: how do you link the big plans and the consideration of government to the aspirations of people like Omm Ameen?

Omm Ameen does not say, help me, I am helpless. She wants to know where to go to, she wants to communicate, she wants to link to the bigger plan.

You cannot tell your sister she is ugly

Tal al Mantah (the hill of Mantah) is situated about 38 kilometres north-west of Salt City and has a population of around 2,000. At approximately 200 metres below sea level, the village climate is hot in summer and warm in winter. The annual rainfall in the area is around 150 mm. Some inhabitants live on top of the hill; the rest lower down.

Tal al Mantah is one of the poorest areas in the Jordan Valley. Some 80% of the villagers live below the poverty line. The majority of them depend on farm labour for their income. Some own land but do not have the resources to cultivate it, so they rent it out to people from the capital, Amman, for whom they work as day labourers. 20% of the families in Tal al Mantah receive a monthly payment from the National Aid Fund.

Agricultural land in Tal al Mantah

Woman in Tal al Mantah

A general lack of awareness

The drinking water supply network is old and in need of maintenance. Moreover, the village is far from the water source which is in the province of Deir Alla and, for that reason, often experiences low water pressure. Two different means of delivering water are used in the network: gravity and pumps. The water is pumped to the top of the hill and from there it flows to the downhill neighbourhoods. The rate of water loss in the network caused by leakages and illegal use is more than 50%.

Awareness of the value of clean water is low. There is a lot of illegal water use, people distrust the drinking water supplied by the network and water leaks go unreported. There is also a lack of knowledge about how to deal properly with cesspits. As a result, the village has large numbers of mosquitoes and rats and suffers from an unpleasant smell.

Poverty is people's main concern, not water. Why bother about water? "We are poor, we cannot change things. Water is the responsibility of the government." That is the general thinking. People complain a lot about the government not doing a proper job and not providing sufficient water and proper sanitation. "Leakages? They are the government's problem."

Pressure problems

The PRA (Participatory Rapid Assessment) conducted by people in the village with local government representatives concluded that there were two major problems affecting the drinking water supply in the village. The first was that the government had replaced the main

water pipe feeding the village with a pipe that was too small, decreasing the pressure in the network. The other problem was more delicate.

Water is provided only one day a week to Tal al Mantah. When it comes, the water first reaches people living at the top of the hill, who are the richer families. These families have pumps in their houses, fill their containers to the brim, wash their cars and water their gardens for the whole week. That is not unusual in Jordan. When you see laundry hanging outside the houses and water spilled in the streets, you know that the area just received its weekly share of water. In Tal al Mantah this practice means that people living downhill do not get water at all or it arrives in very small quantities.

One big family

One big family

The majority of people in Tal al Mantah are descended from two families that are closely connected through marriage. To this day, village society works as one big family. This means that if people use more than their fair share of water, the neighbours find it hard to complain for fear of being seen as disloyal. The unspoken rule is that you do not blame your neighbours. You handle the consequences of their behaviour as well as you can.

Because Tal al Mantah is one big family, no one has ever bothered to start a local CBO. Why should you, if you are all part of the same family? There is a council of elders that deals mainly with the marriages in the village and with settling traffic accidents. Daily water problems were not talked about, or they were blamed on the government. There was one person in Tal al Mantah who started to realise that this could not go on.

Imam Harbi Shahadat

Revealing a long kept secret

Sheikh Harbi Shahadat, the imam of the village mosque, is 40 years old. He is married and has two daughters and three sons. He is a son of the village. He has always lived there. He is also a farmer and understands the suffering of the daily labourers. He tries to improve life in Tal al Mantah, and goes to the governorate offices if people have problems with taxes or licenses. He is a religious man and he is respected by all.

Imam Harbi Shahadat volunteered to do PRA in the village. He was willing to learn. Together with the PRA group he went to the houses. He himself was suffering from the water problem because he lives downhill. He saw that all the others living downhill had the same problem. He realised that he was not the only one trying to cope with the problem individually. It was much bigger and it affected everybody.

He decided to gather the people in the mosque and talk to them. He realised how difficult it would be and that he had to choose the right words. They are all his relatives. Once he said: "It is like telling your sister that she is ugly. You cannot do that."

When Sheikh Harbi started his speech he was shy. He reminded the people of the water crisis in the village and in Jordan in general. He also presented some verses from the Holy Qur'an emphasising the value of water and the importance of preserving it. He added another verse talking about the importance of cooperation between people and that people must support and help each other in good and in bad times. He said: "We must solve this as a family." People listened in deep silence. He then asked the PRA group to present its findings. They spoke about the problems with the pressure in the pipes and the people downhill not receiving sufficient water and what the reasons behind this problem were. Then the discussion started.

Discussion in Tal al Mantah

Meeting in Tal al Mantah village

A reliable source

But maybe you have to give her a mirror

The discussions showed that people were not aware of the consequences of their behaviour on their neighbours who are also their relatives. Some of them felt encouraged to present some of the wrong practices of the villagers such as watering their gardens after filling the water tanks in the uphill houses. Others pointed to the carelessness of people who do not report water leakages to the authorities.

From that day, problems were discussed openly, and a culture of complaining started to change into a culture of making plans. A local water resources management committee was created. It agreed to start a campaign to raise the awareness of people on water issues. The slogan would be: 'Use your water wisely, or your neighbours can suffer.' The committee also contacted the water authorities and asked them to provide a bigger main pipeline to increase the pressure in the network. More cooperation and a greater consciousness can now be found in Tal al Mantah.

There is also resistance. There are people who still put their interests first. They still fill their water tanks first, but at least they wait until the water has flowed to the lower houses before they water their gardens. However, most people have accepted that there is a problem. It was the imam who gave them a mirror. And he is a reliable source.

Palestine

Historical Palestine lies on the western edge of the Asian continent and the eastern extremity of the Mediterranean Sea. It is bound to the north by Lebanon and Syria, to the west by the Mediterranean Sea, to the south by the Gulf of Aqaba and the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, and to the east by Jordan.

The West Bank is characterised by a sub-tropical climate of hot, dry, and sunny summers, and cold winters with frequent storms of moderate rainfall. Rainfall occurs in the Jenin Governorate from the middle of October and continues to the end of April. Almost 80 percent of the yearly rainfall occurs between November and February. However, annual rainfall ranges between 350 mm and 700 mm. Consequently, in terms of annual rainfall, and cropping pattern, the Governorate can be divided into the following areas:

1. Eastern area: average annual rainfall in this area varies between 350 mm and 550 mm, while the dominant agriculture is that of rain-fed crops, olive trees and almond orchards. In addition, a small area cultivated for vegetables is irrigated by a few agricultural wells.
2. Middle area: this area is mainly characterised by fertile soil, and the presence of several agricultural wells. Average annual rainfall ranges between 400 mm and 650 mm. The area is mostly used for intensive irrigated farming systems.
3. Western area: average annual rainfall ranges between 450 mm and 700 mm, and the main agriculture is rain-fed crops, and olive groves.

Palestine
- Area (West Bank & Gaza): 6,170 km^2
- Population: 4,000,000
- Population growth: 3.2%

Jenin Governorate
- Area: 583 km2
- Population: 270,000
- Water share: 62 l/c/d
- Average water use: 25-115 l/c/d

In the West Bank and Gaza water scarcity is further aggravated by Israel's control over water resources. Groundwater resources would amply satisfy demand in the West Bank, but more than 80% of the West Bank's renewable water resources are used by Israel. In Gaza, current water use already exceeds the magnitude of renewable water resources.

Jenin Governorate

The area of the Governorate is around 583 km^2 with a population of 270,000 inhabitants, living in 96 urban and rural communities. Agricultural land in the Governorate is estimated at 289.8 km^2 of high soil quality and fertility. Irrigated areas constitute only 14% of the fertile land in the Governorate, while the rest of the area is under rain-fed crops. None of the rural areas in this Governorate are connected to a sanitation system, but rely on individual cesspits, while parts of Jenin City are connected to a sewerage system.

Water management in the area is highly scattered and poorly organised. Municipalities and village councils are responsible for the management of domestic water supplies in communities that are connected to water networks, while in other areas the management is handled by owners of private wells and water tankers, and in some cases even by the end-users themselves.

In the Jenin Governorate, water supply is provided mainly from groundwater sources through seventy registered wells that have been drilled in the area, and an unknown number of unregistered wells, in addition to the natural flow of eight major springs.

The total available water quantity from the different resources is about 10.149 million cubic metres, not counting quantities unaccounted for and abstracted from newly drilled wells, small springs and seepage.

Jalboun community decides who gets what

Jalboun village is located in a hilly area in the West Bank of Palestine, 12 kilometres east of Jenin City. It is part of the Jenin Governorate and is bound, eastward by the 1967 ceasefire line (green line). Before 1948, the Jalboun village area was approximately 33,000 dunums (a dunum equals a quarter of an acre). However, during the 1948 war thousands of dunums were confiscated and, more recently, with the construction of the West Bank 'Separation Barrier' by the Israeli Authorities a further 2,000 dunums have been lost. Today, the total village area is estimated to be only 5,000 dunums, with a population of approximately 2,300 people.

In early 2004 when EMPOWERS went to Jalboun, it found that besides poverty and unemployment, the whole community suffered severe water scarcity. The village is not connected to a public water supply network, and following the Israeli occupation, most of the water sources now lie in confiscated land.

Currently, the only water sources local people have access to are those harvested from rooftops during the rainy months between November and April (with an average rainfall of 395 mm/yr) and stored in household cisterns. During the dry summer season, they are forced to buy water from private agricultural wells from nearby villages.

The village council is the main institution in Jalboun. Due to the lack of a municipal water resource and water network, the village council is limited to providing water via the municipal tanker. Other village-level institutions include a women's centre, a society, and a farmers' union, all of which have a limited role in water-related activities.

Manufacturing and construction form the main economic activities in the Jalboun community. Due to the current political situation, the unemployment rate has risen.

Jalboun selected for an EMPOWERS water project

Because of this bad situation, Jalboun was selected by EMPOWERS as one of the communities in Palestine to implement a water project to increase access to safe drinking water.

The EMPOWERS team worked with stakeholders at governorate and community level and found that 85% of the houses had cisterns. These cisterns stored approximately 18,794 m^3 of water each year. However, the community was purchasing a further 22,304 m^3 of water per year from private agricultural wells. Since it is normal to have at least two families sharing one house in Jalboun, the average available water for each individual is about 48 litres per day, while the projected minimum requirement of an individual is 70 litres per day.

A stakeholder workshop was held on September 2004 where a preliminary decision was taken for the construction of household-level water harvesting cisterns as a pilot project for Jalboun. The project involved building water cisterns for 20 households.

Workshop to decide on pilot project

Applications for the water cisterns

Members of the community were invited to apply for a water cistern and the village council received 80 applications. The problem facing EMPOWERS and the village council was how to select 20 households from 80 applicants.

A local water development committee was formed in the village, consisting of representatives of community based organisations working in Jalboun, together with other key stakeholders. The committee was made responsible for setting the selection criteria for choosing the beneficiaries of the household cisterns. The selection criteria had to focus on the poorest families in Jalboun who could not afford to construct their own cistern.

The selection criteria

The EMPOWERS project team facilitated a workshop for the local water development committee to identify and vote on the criteria.

Setting and voting for the criteria for beneficiary households

The stakeholders set the following criteria for the targeted beneficiaries:

√ Socio-economic status: priority was given to households with no or irregular income, or those with regular, but low income.

√ Households that did not have access to any sources of water supply.

√ Families who had not benefited from previous projects in the village.

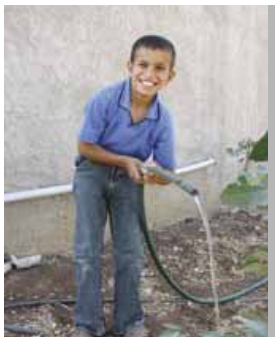
√ Family size: priority was given to large families.
√ Multi-use: Besides water for drinking and cooking, priority was given to households that could make use of extra water for irrigation (productive home gardens) or for their livestock.

These criteria were then used to assess the application forms.

The process is open and transparent
During the assessment process, one committee member withdrew his application and said he did not want the committee to consider it. An EMPOWERS facilitator spoke to the member to find out why.

"He told me he felt unhappy about members looking at his application because he had participated in developing the criteria and his application did not fit the criteria. After talking to him for some time I realised that he had not expected such a transparent and open selection process. He had thought that because he was on the committee his application would be selected, but after participating in the process he felt embarrassed that he had applied for a household cistern, because he clearly did not qualify.

"He also explained that in the past, selection of beneficiaries for projects would be done according to what suited the members of the selection committee and not according to criteria that would benefit the poorest in the community. Committees have frequently selected relatives or friends as beneficiaries, without applying agreed selection criteria. As a result, there have been problems in the village about who has benefited from projects and how they were chosen."



Water to irrigate fooda

Tap in the house for drinking, cooking and washing

On this occasion, the participatory approach to developing the criteria ensured that the most deserving households were selected for the pilot project and the community as a whole was satisfied with the selection.

Raaed Mahmoud Abu-Elrob was one of the beneficiaries from this pilot project. His wife Omm Ahmad told the EMPOWERS project that before the pilot project she suffered a lot. She had to carry water from her father-in-law's house to her family home. This was very time consuming. With the new cistern, she now has a tap in the house and can also use the water to grow food.

Not all families in Jalboun that satisfied the selection criteria were chosen for the construction of a cistern. One such case was that of Omm Hamzeh.

Omm Hamzeh's daily quest for water!

Omm Hamzeh is an old woman, living with her two daughters in a run-down, one-room house in the village of Jalboun. She cannot buy water from private vendors because it is beyond her means. The rock and the small area around her house make it unsuitable to dig and construct a water-harvesting cistern.

This plastic container is the only place to store water for the house

To cover the family's daily water needs, Omm Hamzeh's daughter Renad, has to make several trips each day to fetch water from their neighbour's well.

Renad has to walk a long way over very bad roads to reach the well and then carry the water on her head back to her mother's house.

Coping with a little water

Managing with these scarce amounts of water in the house is no easy task. Omm Hamzeh and her daughters have to make do with several 'tisht' and 'ebrik' (plastic or tin utensils) for drinking, cooking, personal hygiene and household chores.

Renad cleaning the dishes

The latrine with no connection to a water faucet

Preparing to 'shower'

Formulating a vision to increase drinking water

With many villagers in Jalboun facing similar problems and living conditions, EMPOWERS worked with the community to help them to formulate their vision, find practical solutions and pilot activities to attain their vision. Jalboun's vision was to raise, by the year 2010, the amount of drinking water for each individual from the current 48 l/c/d, to 100 l/c/d.

Pilot project

To achieve this vision, the local community, governorate staff and EMPOWERS team formulated several scenarios, each with several proposed activities. Under current conditions, including an inability to acquire licences from the Israeli authorities to build or connect to the public water network, the community agreed on the most suitable pilot to undertake. They decided to increase the amount of harvested rainwater in the village by building eight additional water-harvesting cisterns which would serve 70 to 80 people.

Omm Hamzeh's struggle continues

Unfortunately, Omm Hamzeh and her two daughters were not one of the households to benefit from the pilot project.

However, the local committee was determined not to give up on Omm Hamzeh's situation. They used the lessons they learnt through EMPOWERS training to address her problem. They developed a number of strategies to find a solution. They decided that they had to look for other channels to finance a well for Omm Hamzeh, finding an alternative outside the pilot project. They discussed how to raise the finance. They agreed that they must enter into dialogue with a range of stakeholders involved in water. They prepared a plan and raised her problem with various NGOs and projects working in the Jenin Governorate and also contacted national organisations.

Finding a solution

A representative of the women's centre on the EMPOWERS local committee, Hazar, put Omm Hamzeh's case as a top priority for the committee to address. Together with the committee, she finally succeeded in finding funds for the construction of a well, from a project called Livelihood Improvement of Palestinian Territories (LIOPT).

Hazar shared her thoughts about this case and what the committee had learnt. She said that even though the village did not have the financial means to assist Omm Hamzeh, through using the problem solving and scenarios approach and through working hard together as a committee they managed to achieve their vision of finding other sources of funding to increase access to water. "We are empowered now; we have the vision and the tools to achieve our goals."
Renad no longer walks several times each day to her neighbour's well.

Construction of the well

Water under occupation

This is a story about Palestinian villagers who drink unsafe agricultural water rather than drink water provided by an Israeli water company.

Tankers carrying water form the Mekorot station

Tanker that brings water from the agricultural wells to the houses

The same agricultural wells and the same tankers are used for transporting water for domestic use and for irrigating the green houses

Cistern on the roof of an Arraneh house to store domestic water

Arraneh village

Arraneh village is located four kilometres north-east of Jenin City. The total area of the village is 7,866 dunums with a population of approximately 2,208 persons. The village depends on dry-land farming although there is a small part that depends on irrigated farming using water from the village well. Manufacturing and construction form the main economic activity. As in other Palestinian communities, the unemployment rate has risen due to the political situation.

There is a water station in the nearby village of Al-Jalameh to provide drinking water. However, residents do not trust this water because it comes from the Israeli water company Mekorot. Residents say that the water smells of chlorine and they do not regard the water as being of good quality.

They store water in their cisterns for drinking and domestic use, brought by tankers from the town well or from nearby agricultural wells. This is clearly a problem, because the water from the agricultural wells is not safe for drinking.

The same agricultural wells and the same tankers are used to transport water for domestic use and for irrigating greenhouses

Despite the existence of a municipal groundwater well since 1997, at a depth of 140 metres and with a discharge capacity of 50 cubic metres per hour, the Village Council does not have a licence to install a water network.

The Village Council is the main institution in Arraneh. It has a track record of implementing works in the village, but due to lack of a water network, does not have a role in the water sector.

Dealing with the drinking water quality problem
Although there are periodic quality checks at the water station, the population still refuses to drink water from there due to a lack of trust in the Israelis. The EMPOWERS project staff tried holding seminars and workshops with the people of Arraneh to raise awareness about the quality of the water from Al-Jalameh station.

The workshops explained that the water from the Al-Jalameh station is being constantly tested, and that the quality from the station was better than the water from the agricultural wells that the residents were drinking. But that was not enough for the community. People said that the water could be contaminated in the periods between quality tests. This is why they preferred to drink water from the agricultural wells on their lands, which are not inspected or tested, than drink water from the Al-Jalameh station.

Convince us
After much discussion about the risks of drinking the agricultural water and the risks of drinking the water from the Al-Jalameh station, the community said: "If you guarantee the source at Al-Jalameh station and convince us, then and only then will we drink that water."

The EMPOWERS project team had to think about this challenge before proceeding. They discussed it and felt powerless. They were afraid of persuading the people to drink from the source. They could not guarantee that the source would not be contaminated deliberately or unintentionally at any time in the future. They could not take on such a responsibility. People must decide for themselves.

No solution
The team realised there are some situations where water problems cannot be solved simply by going through a process. The drinking water problem was not a technical problem, or a social problem. It was a political problem and a problem of trust. The solution could never lie with the Al-Jalameh station.

One of the EMPOWERS members commented that in situations of war or occupation the space for negotiation is either extremely limited or non-existent.

Notes from a diary

Contaminated water

Sewage from Israeli settlements is dumped into water courses which pollutes the underground water. Because the Palestinians use wells which are not very deep to access ground water, the water becomes contaminated by the sewage and pollutants. The settlements are on the hill tops and the Palestinian villages are in the valleys. So the Palestinians get sick. These are some of the problems the Palestinians are facing. How can these problems which are coming up in Arraneh's problem be solved? Talking about the problems may be easy, but identifying solutions is not

Contaminated water in the valleys

No licence for a network

We have money to run EMPOWERS workshops and to try and solve problems. We talk about scenarios for different situations. Often people from the village come up with good solutions. But the problem of having no licence to install a network is another kind of problem. The Israelis don't want to give a licence and this is not a problem our workshops can solve. We were depressed about this problem, but it is interesting how the community thinks about alternatives. In the scenario building workshop, people talked about what they are doing to get drinking water. They are now relying on methods that were used by their ancestors, traditional methods, such as rainwater harvesting. The network would be much more efficient and would give more water, but people find a way when they are desperate.

Women solving their water problems

Qabatya, home to about 23,000 people, is the largest town in the Jenin district of the West Bank. It is renowned for its agriculturally fertile land, its agricultural wells and its quarries and stone cutting industry. Agriculture is the main economic activity, with approximately 28% of the Qabatya population working in this sector. As in all Palestinian communities, unemployment has risen due to the political situation, and currently stands at 30%.

In the past, cisterns and hand-dug wells in Qabatya formed the main water resources for inhabitants for all purposes. In the 1950s and 1960s, many wells were drilled, causing water levels in the aquifer to drop and causing seepage as well as drying up many springs. In the 1970s, the municipal network was connected to the West Bank Water Department transmission line, but due to intermittent supply and repeated cut-offs, the municipality drilled its own well in 1999. This well supplies water for domestic purposes and is the main water resource for the town. Additional quantities are purchased from private agricultural wells in order to meet the inhabitants' high demand for water in the summer months.

High parts of Qabatya surrounded by agricultural land

Building the capacity of women

The EMPOWERS project chose Qabatya as a place to build the capacity of women to work in advocacy to improve their water. Because a significant number of employees work in the stone quarries, many of the town people are known as being tough and stubborn. The society is male dominated and there is no clear role for women in water management issues, community services or general communal activities. Women do not own land or houses, and it is generally not socially acceptable for women to be working in the town. The EMPOWERS project team therefore encountered great difficulty in finding a group of women to join EMPOWERS training and to represent women in EMPOWERS project meetings.

Which women?

At the beginning of the EMPOWERS work, municipal leaders invited women relatives or acquaintances to attend meetings. In truth, the municipality was not convinced that women should be participating in the meetings or the project at all. They only invited women in order to fulfil donor funding conditions for the project, and they invited women they thought they could

easily control. As one municipal staff member said: "If you want women's participation, we will bring you women who will say what we think".

A meeting of the women in Qabatya

Separate meetings for women

Integration of women in decision making and management of water in Qabatya was therefore challenging. It was difficult to get a high level of participation by the women in mixed meetings. It was therefore decided to hold separate meetings for women. The outcome of these meetings was remarkable. The EMPOWERS team found that many women who had previously not spoken or had hardly spoken at the joint meetings, started to discuss their ideas and communicate their views.

An association for women

The women expressed the need for an association which could unify all women into a single body. They wanted the association to represent them in meetings in the town and with the municipality. They also wanted the association to train women in health and water-related issues, as well as provide health and community services.

The idea was presented to stakeholders including the municipality and, after some discussion, it was agreed that a women's association should be established. The municipality offered to provide support to the association in terms of an office and training by water specialists.

Training to plan and identify problems

The EMPOWERS project provided the women with training in planning skills and in how to use a problem tree to identify problems and propose scenarios and solutions for their water sector problems.

One of the women said, "At first I was hesitant to participate, because this is the first such organisation in our community, and women never participated in things like that. I changed my mind and I participate, because I want to see a role for women in Qabatya. Now women are participating and taking an active role in decision making."

No water on the high land

A number of the women in the association who lived on higher land that was not easily accessible complained that they did not have access to water, although Qabatya is known for its water resources.

The women proposed to members of the administrative bodies and the project team that a field visit be made to the area to see the problem on the ground. The visit demonstrated that indeed the population on the higher land did not have access to water, due to the lack of access to the water network, and the water tankers not being able to deliver to their homes as the roads were too difficult to pass.

Women visit the municipal office

Following the field visit, the women's association visited the municipal office and filed a complaint. This was an unprecedented step, since the municipality had always been off limits for women. Municipal employees described the visit by the women as 'an unusual scene'. However, the municipality decided to involve the women's association in planning one of Qabatya's pilot projects for the rehabilitation and redesign of the town network.

The new project to connect the water network to the high areas in Qabatya

Success in addressing the problem

As a result of the association's participation in this pilot project, the municipality obtained funding to extend the network to higher land and to install a water pump that could deliver water from the reservoir to the high ground.

A few months after the pilot project was implemented, the EMPOWERS process documentation specialist, Buthaina Mizyed met with the Chief of Water in Qabatya. While he was telling her about the projects adopted by the municipality, he told her how much he admired the valuable role that the women had played in solving the problem of access to water in high lying areas. He said he had not been convinced of this at the outset, but now that the women in Qabatya are actively participating in the management of water projects, problems are being solved.

The Qabatya Women's Association now has 70 members and is very active in water and public health training, water management, and community services. It is a dynamic organisation and is particularly effective in organising women to participate in decisions that affect them.

The rights and responsibilities of water users

I am Buthaina Mizyed and I work for CARE International as a process documentation specialist in the EMPOWERS project.

One of the areas I work in is the Jenin Governorate. Part of my work as a process documentation specialist is to observe and write about changes that happen amongst the government officials, local community associations and end-users that participate in the EMPOWERS project. I really enjoy this work because I often see big changes as the result of small actions.

Working with members of the community

When you see a process documentation specialist, you also see a diary, especially when she is making field visits to local communities. I use my diary to make notes of the events the team is involved in. I write what happened in the events and my thoughts about what I saw. Here are some notes from my diary about a new pilot community in Arraneh village at the end of 2006.

First meeting with the community

In Arraneh representatives of the Village Council, farmers' union and women's associations talked about a lack of a water network. They were angry and complained about their situation. They said the problem was with the Ministry of Local Government who was not providing the funds for the network. They blamed the Ministry for not doing anything to help them. The community did not reflect on their role in the water problems. We asked them if they had met with any officials from the Ministry or Water Authority. They said that no one had tried to meet with them. The general mood in the community was one of apathy and helplessness. No one came up with any ideas on how to solve the problem, and it appeared that they were waiting for someone to come and solve all their problems for them.

EMPOWERS training

We had a number of workshops with members of the community. These workshops provided the space for participants to reflect on the problems they were facing and what could be done about the problems. They encouraged the community to think about a vision for their village and different scenarios to achieve that vision. I noticed that various members of the community

started to think about what they could do to improve their situation. They became motivated and started to share many ideas about what they could do. One of the solutions they came up with was to set up a meeting with the water officials to talk about their water problems.

Meeting at the Arraneh village after the EMPOWERS training

Some weeks later, we visited Arraneh village again. We started our visit with a meeting with the village council and representatives from the farmers' union and women's associations. I noticed that the situation was very different from our first meeting. From the beginning of the meeting all the participants showed a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities as water users.

While talking about their water problems and possible solutions, I noticed people's explicit acknowledgement of their earlier negligence to obtain a licence to establish a water network. They said that it was through the training they received from EMPOWERS and through the meetings with the Water Authority officials that they realised the problem.

The problem was not that the Ministry of Local Government had not funded a network, but rather that they had never applied for a licence for a network. Now their dialogue with officials had drawn their attention to the fact that they needed to present plans upon which they could be granted the necessary funding. The community also learnt of the requirements of obtaining a licence when they visited the Water Authority in Ramallah. The officials in the Water Authority not only offered to issue the licence very quickly, but also to fund the network.

Community taking up responsibility

I reflected on the progress made by all those present at the meeting and thought how successful the stakeholder dialogue method used in the EMPOWERS training had been. It had raised awareness and strengthened the negotiating power of the community in dealing with their water problems. This community has made a lot of progress in addressing their problems, simply by starting to take up their responsibilities and engaging with the right people on the right issues. That is what EMPOWERS is all about, empowering communities to take action.

Local community at our EMPOWERS meeting in Arraneh village

No longer an area only for men

My diary, by Buthaina Mizyed, the EMPOWERS Process Documentation Specialist from CARE West Bank.

Buthaina

2004 – Staying outside
It took us more than one and a half years to convince the women from Qabatya village to enter the offices of the municipality. They said to us: "It is an area for men. It is not acceptable to the community for a woman to enter the municipality and ask for any service." When the water was cut off or there were electricity problems in the home, women would try to call the municipality to come and fix the problems, because their husbands were away at work. The municipality would say yes they will fix it, but it took a long time for them to come.

There is a very small space in public life that a woman can move in. She can engage in health services and training, but not more. She cannot engage in water management issues, marketing agricultural products, electricity matters, or garbage removal. There are no women members on the municipal board. Women are simply not seen as belonging in municipal life or municipal decisions. There are no women employees in the municipality. It is a man's world. For this reason, women did not feel comfortable even to walk through the door.

Claim your rights and go in
We, at EMPOWERS encouraged the women to enter the municipality. We said, look at us, we go into the municipality and we are women. We offered to go into the municipality with them, but we said we could not ask for the services for them. "No one can do this for you; you need to ask for yourselves."

We understood that the women did not feel confident, because traditionally men do not expect women to engage with these things. But slowly women need to start taking their place in society. So we said, "You need to claim your rights and claim what you need from the municipality. You are paying for those services, and you have a right to them. I am a woman just like you and I come from the same community as you. I enter the municipality and nothing happens to me.

What is the difference between you and me?" In this way, it made it easier to convince them, because we are women, just like them.

This is how it was in 2004. We were having conversations like the one I've just described. We often saw women struggling with problems but not feeling confident enough to take their problems to the municipality.

It takes time for change to happen, but it does happen, by talking, by sharing and by taking action.

In 2006, the situation changed in my village. It was not just men walking through the municipal door.

2006 - Going inside

A Palestinian woman called Amina from Qabatya village had a problem. When she opened the tap, the water was yellow. She called the municipality and told them about the problem. She asked them why her water had changed colour. They said it was because of rust in the pipes. They told her that the pipes in her house were old and that she needed to change them. She changed all the pipes inside her home, but the water remained yellow.

She phoned the municipality and told them that she had replaced all the pipes in her house but that the water was still yellow. They said they would come and have a look, but they never came.

Amina became very annoyed by the situation. She decided to visit the municipal office. She took a bottle of water from her tap with her.

She said to the officials, "I called you and told you that the water had changed colour and the colour was not good. I asked for help and you told me to replace my pipes. I replaced my pipes and the water was still not good. So I called you again and you said you would come. You did not come. Now I have brought myself and your water here to show it to you. If you don't fix the problem, I will come here again. I will come with my babies and I will sit in front of your municipality. I will show all the people in this town the water you give us to drink."

The municipal officials saw how strongly Amina spoke. They knew that she was very serious. They did not want anyone to hear her or see the bottle of water she was holding. They quickly put her into a municipal car and took her home to see what the problem was. They fixed the problem for her immediately.

Amina said that the municipal officials respected her because she was a woman. She said that if she had been a man complaining about the water, she would have been sent away. This was a very different situation from 2004, when the women were too timid to even enter the municipal door.

So what brought about the change?

The change did not happen quickly, but by 2006 the situation was different in Qabatya. The change started to happen when the women of the Qabatya community came together to establish the Qabatya Women's Association. The municipality is an institution and the association is an institution and they both treat each other officially. The women in the association received training and through the training and workshops became empowered to take up issues and claim their rights.

They had gone through a process of identifying all the stakeholders in their village and the different roles of the stakeholders. They realised that as women they had a key role to play in the development of their village and in accessing services. The training had shown them that problems cannot be solved if the different stakeholders do not communicate with each other and if they do not participate in finding solutions to the problems.

Today, under new rules, every municipal board must have at least two women members. Both the women on the Qabatya municipal board come from the Qabatya Women's Association. Amina is also from the Qabatya Women's Association.

Women meet with officials inside the municipal office

Gradually things are changing. People are starting to become familiar with the officials who work in the municipality. Soon there will be no need to have rules about women quotas because women will be voted in anyway. Women are starting to show themselves in the municipality not only to talk about their problems, but also to solve problems for the community.

The municipal office is no longer an area just for men.

Fatima from silence to a voice

Many women want to participate and take up their rights but do not know how to do so. They need a supporting hand to take the first important step. This was the case with Fatima, a woman from Qabatya village, where half the population are women, but there is no role for them in decision making. They do not participate in meetings of the municipality or any societies. The only type of organisations where they can become involved are those dealing with health issues.

In Qabatya, a woman's desire to lead a full life is constrained by cultural environment, social barriers, and the traditions within which she is brought up. Women take up responsibilities within the home and family, but most of them also long for a life outside the home.

I met Fatima at an EMPOWERS water project stakeholder meeting in Qabatya village. The purpose of the project was to facilitate dialogue between stakeholders to improve water management in the area. Fatima was very shy and looked depressed and disillusioned. She did not participate in the meeting. I decided to speak to her after the meeting to find out more about her and why she had attended.

A role for women in the community

She told me a relative had persuaded her to come to the meeting because educated young women should play a role in the community. Fatima had a university degree, but had given up looking for a job because she was disillusioned with her chances of finding employment. She said she did not believe that the meetings would be useful because "they are a requirement of the municipality and are not in the interests of women or their needs".

We discussed how she and other women from the town could take advantage of such meetings. We agreed that the women should participate to raise women's issues and influence people in the municipality to recognise the important role of women in the community and in water issues.

Starting to participate

Fatima arrived early to the next meeting. This was for women only because we found that they participated more freely when meetings were not also attended by men. She participated in planning skills training, which described the various stages of how to draw a problem tree and propose solutions, and how to come up with recommendations, scenarios, and strategies that could provide solutions for water problems.

Fatima with other women at an EMPOWERS meeting

Qabatya Women's Association

Following this training, the women decided to establish a women's charitable society in Qabatya, to unite their voices and help them solve their problems. It would also enable them to become involved in the water sector and to break the barrier between women and the rest of society, especially the municipality.

Fatima became very active in obtaining a licence for what became the Qabatya Women's Association. We all noticed that she had changed from being timid and silent to actively participating in the association, working to unite the efforts of the women.

Once the licence was issued, a Board of Directors was elected and Fatima was elected as the General Secretary. As part of the Board, she was responsible for raising funds for association activities and for representing women at many meetings with government and other institutions, including the municipality.

Fatima was instrumental in the Women's Association playing a key role in determining a pilot project to assist families living in high areas that were not receiving water. She also became a member of the EMPOWERS Committee established to supervise project activities and training for the Association's members.

Fatima facilitating problem analysis and strategies to solve water problems

Personal empowerment

Fatima became a different person. After participating in the training and the association, she became self-confident and motivated. She decided to look for work again and found a job in a kindergarten. Later she was employed in the Ministry of Local Government in human resources development. She played a special role in the Ministry where she became the eyes and ears of the town and of women in particular. She also transferred what she had learnt through the EMPOWERS methodology to her colleagues and trained them to use problem trees, scenarios and strategies for planning.

Fatima describes the EMPOWERS project as evidence based in the way it proposes practical solutions, and says that it offers new skills to the entire community

Buthaina Mizyed

Personal interests to a joint decision

A workshop was held with the Kufrdan village community to decide what pilot project to implement with funds from EMPOWERS. The EMPOWERS team facilitated the two-day workshop, using a participatory step-by-step process of problem identification, visioning, strategy development, and project identification.

Here is the problem tree that the community developed:

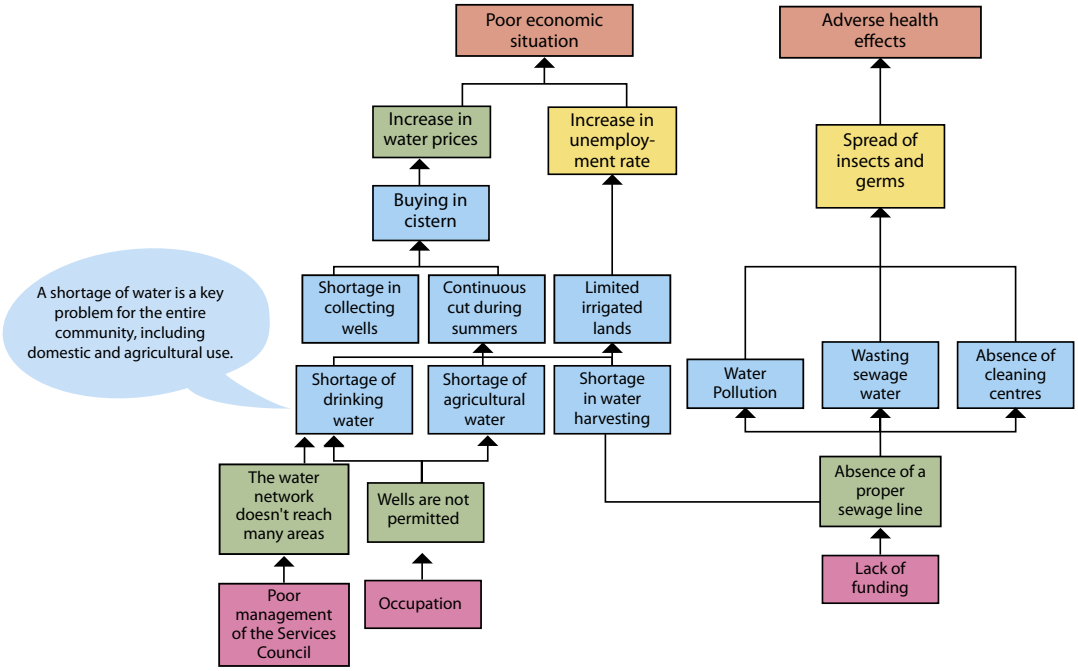


Figure 2: Kufrdan problem tree

And here is the vision the community developed:

Kufrdan Vision

By 2016, access to domestic water from the public network of 100 l/c/d for each individual in the village instead of the current 24 l/c/d. Improve the management of groundwater extraction, mainly by agricultural wells, and protect groundwater from pollution.

Kufrdan is located about 6 km to the west of Jenin city. The population of the village in 2005 was 5,265, made up of approximately 1,000 families. The literal translation of 'Kufrdan' is the home of adjudication or the house of the judge ("kufr" means village and "dan" means judiciary or judgment).

All citizens have access to electricity. Kufrdan receives its electricity via the regional electrical network which is connected to Jenin's electrical network. The village council is responsible for organising and providing electricity, as well as collecting service payments from the villagers. There are about 1,100 properties in the electricity network, which includes households, ateliers, shops and groundwater wells, which are managed by employees.

The village also has an internal road network and a phone network, but there are no sewerage pipes. The village council collects all garbage and disposes it in an area approximately 300 metres away from where residents live.

There are four schools in the village; two for girls (elementary and high school) and two for boys.

In the past, villagers relied primarily on agriculture and government jobs, with some employment in the (1948) occupied land. Today, as a result of the political situation and continuous closures, agriculture is the main source of living for villagers. Families that do not own land rent land from others or work for a wage on other people's farms.

Many local institutions are active in the village of Kufrdan, including the Village Council (a local government unit comprising 11 elected members and 13 employees, responsible for infrastructure related services), the Joint Services Council (JSC) for water and wastewater (23 employees under a board representing 11 western Jenin village councils), the Agricultural Cooperative, the Charitable Organisation, and the Women's Centre.

Villagers depend on four main sources of water: groundwater wells, rainwater cisterns, the JSC water pipeline and the Wadi-Hassan Spring.
Water in Kufrdan village is primarily used for agricultural and domestic use with some industrial use (stone quarries and a block factory). The largest amount is used for agriculture. Farmers get the greatest benefit from water resources, and agricultural well owners, farmers, the JSC and citizens are all sellers and users of water.

Lack of coordination
There is little or no coordination between stakeholders, which creates frequent conflicts. For example, villagers and the Village Council do not believe that the Joint Services Council works in the interests of the village. They see the JSC investing in the village's water resources in order to sell water for high prices and to make a large profit. However, this belief is not based on accurate information about the cost of providing the water. Lack of communication and knowledge

about the performance of the JSC and its financial situation has caused many problems and a break down of trust.

Workshop to identify a pilot project

During the first day of the workshop, many different ideas were put forward for a pilot project, according to the particular interests of the various community members. Some wanted cisterns at each house, some wanted pipes to connect their farms to agricultural wells, others wanted a reservoir for agricultural purposes and so on. The community could not decide amongst themselves what project to choose because of a conflict of interest between different sections of the community.

Meeting of the community of Kufrdan to decide the most suitable pilot project

Strategy to think beyond personal gain

The facilitators and members of the village council noticed that most of the participants were only considering the personal benefit they could gain from the project, rather than thinking about benefits for the whole community. The challenge for community leaders and the EMPOWERS facilitators was to find a way forward where the whole community could agree.

The project team and the Village Council held a meeting before the start of the second day. The head of the Village Council, Abu-Faker, and representatives of CBOs in the village discussed a number of projects that would benefit the whole community and achieve the vision for Kufrdan village.

Abu-Faker, left, discusses the pilot projects with other representatives

They discussed a strategy to help the community to think beyond personal gain to the interests of the whole community.

Abu-Faker and the representatives discussing a way to achieve the interests of the entire community

Choosing the pilot project

When the second day started, many more people from the village attended because they knew that this was the day when the pilot project would be selected. Participants drew up a list of all the projects they were interested in. But the discussion about the projects was not the same as on the previous day. Two participants, one from the village council and the other from the farmers' group, helped to lead the discussion. They asked participants to discuss the suitability of each project in terms of the beneficiaries and in terms of the relevance of the project to the vision for the village that had been developed the day before.

After examining each project in this way, it was agreed to reduce the list of projects to two, each of which would have a benefit for the broader community: one for the agricultural sector and one for local schools. The first project was to provide farmers with metal tanks to store water harvested during rainy months so they could use it for irrigation during the dry summer. The second project was to construct a sanitary unit in the boys' secondary school and a water reservoir in the girls' primary school. Students in the boys' school suffered from a lack of healthy sanitary facilities, while the girls' school was dependent on small, inadequate plastic tanks for drinking water.

Thinking about communal benefits

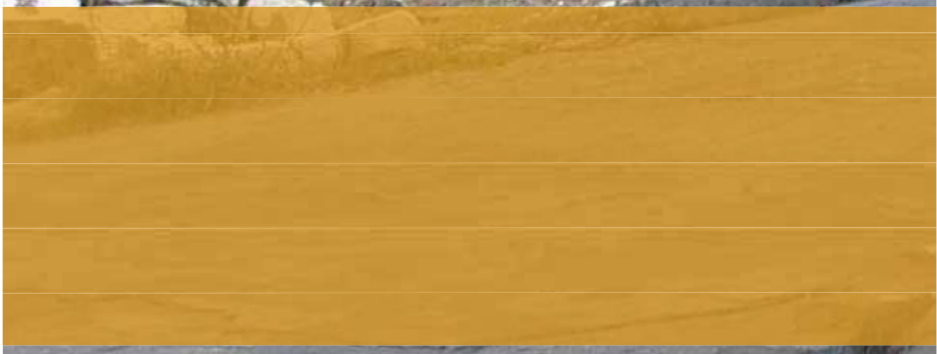
Before the community decided which project was the most suitable, Abu-Faker suggested that they should weigh up the communal benefits of both projects in order to make the right choice. He mentioned the number of students that would benefit from the sanitary unit and the reservoir. He also talked about the benefits of storage tanks for farmers. He asked the community to think about the vision of the village. The community discussed the benefits for both the projects and then they voted: 28 out of 30 participants voted for the sanitary unit and the school reservoir.

At the end of the workshop one participant said: "I and others attended this workshop to influence the selection of the pilot projects to our own benefit. We did not think about the

whole community. However, when I heard what Abu-Faker said about the number of students who will benefit from this project, I remembered the bad situation of this sanitary unit when I was at school and thought that my children in the future will face the same bad conditions. So I decided with the others to have something that the entire village will benefit from and felt that this was the most suitable project for achieving our vision."

Kufrdan's choice of pilot project shows that developing a vision and stakeholders' dialogue leads to choices that best serve the interests of the entire community.

EMPOWERS adopts a number of approaches to improve long-term access to water for communities, and these are demonstrated through pilot projects. The design, development and implementation of each pilot project helps EMPOWERS to ground its work.



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