



# **SWITCH**

## **Including marginalised groups in equitable water management through a Learning Alliance Approach: The EMPOWERS project**

**A case study on social inclusion for SWITCH**

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(May 2008)

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## Executive Summary

**Key words:** IUWM, participatory processes involving marginalized groups, transparency water for livelihoods

It is increasingly recognized that solutions to water shortages and water conflicts require integrated water resource management, participation by stakeholders from community to national level and increased accountability from governments to water users. This case study is about EMPOWERS, a learning and development project that aimed to improve the access of poor men and women to water. EMPOWERS ran from 2003 to 2007 in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine, where water management and security are high priorities. The project aimed to improve water governance, with special attention to involving the most marginalized groups in participatory processes of problem analysis, planning and action. For this purpose multi-stakeholder platforms were established at local, intermediate and national level for planning and management of water resources and water services.

Different groups within the targeted communities were engaged in problem analysis and resolution. Jointly they identified pilot projects which would improve the daily situation and livelihoods of the poorer community members.

The project has also strengthened community organisations that can have an ongoing role in empowerment of socially excluded groups and in broader community development. Government decisions and action became more informed by local realities. Participatory approaches and planning tools have helped generate knowledge, attitudes and practices needed for better, stakeholder-led, water governance. Capacity building for improved planning, conflict resolution and engaging end-users is crucial to making the approach work.

EMPOWERS shows the strong potential of people with often few means, little education and limited negotiating power for problem solving and innovation if the process is well facilitated and organisational capacity is built. Understanding the divergent (and often conflicting) priorities and demands for water resources and effectively involving end users and local institutions are crucial elements of the project approach. Demand-driven approaches that take into account processes of exclusion will likely be more sustainable and meet the practical needs of the poorest and least powerful. These lessons on social inclusion are relevant for SWITCH and many other projects working towards sustainable Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM).

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SWITCH (Sustainable Water Management Improves Tomorrow's Cities' Health) is a research partnership supported by the European Community (Framework 6 Programme) and its partners [www.switchurbanwater.eu/learningalliances](http://www.switchurbanwater.eu/learningalliances)

# 1. Introduction and Background

## 1.1. Introduction

EMPOWERS stands for Euro-Mediterranean Participatory Water Resources Scenarios. The project aimed to improve the health and livelihoods of people who are most marginalized in their access to fresh water through better management of water resources. EMPOWERS developed and tested approaches, methods and tools to involve poor and otherwise marginalised groups. The underlying goal was to achieve more sustainable, efficient and equitable access to and use of water resources.

The project had four specific objectives:

- Increasing the influence of stakeholders -particularly the poorest and most marginalized- on the planning and decision making process for the use and management of water resources.
- Enhancing vertical and horizontal linkages and information flows between water stakeholders.
- Demonstrating effectiveness of the approach through pilot projects.
- Documenting the learning process.

EMPOWERS developed its approaches and tools and tested them through pilot projects in the three different locations (Table 1)

**Table 1: Empowers locations**

Country and governorate	Selected communities
Jordan (Balqa Governorate)	Damyra, Rweiha and Subeihi
Palestine (Jenin Governorate)	Jalboun, Arraneh and Qabatya
Egypt (Ihnazia Districtin Beni Suef Governorate)	Kassab, Masharqa and Maseed

EMPOWERS was led by CARE International (an independent humanitarian organisation) and mainly funded through the European Union's MEDA (Euro-Mediterranean) Water Programme for Local Water Management. Other funding agencies were CARE International; International Water and Sanitation Centre and Personnel Services Overseas (PSO)<sup>2</sup>.

Fifteen organizations collaborated on the project facilitation and implementation:

In Egypt: Development Research and Technological Planning Center (DRTPC), Cairo University; Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE) Egyptian Water Partnership (EWP); National Water Research Centre (NWRC); Federation for Environment Protection and Enhancement (FEPI) ; Coptic Evangelic Organization for Social Services (CEOSS; CARE Egypt.

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<sup>2</sup> The project budget was approximately 5 million Euros

In Jordan: Ministry of Agriculture, Queen Zein Al Sharaf Institute for Development in Jordan (ZENID), CARE Jordan.

In Palestine: Union of Agricultural Work Committees in Palestine (UAWC), Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG); CARE West Bank/Gaza.

Regional partners were IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, the Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resources Development and Management (INWRDAM) and CARE International.

## **1.2. Background**

As qualified in the next section, freshwater is the scarcest resource in the Middle East and contributes to conflict in the region (Jägerskog and Phillips 2006, UNDP 2006). Sustainably managing water resources is of essential importance for life and livelihoods and is directly related to good governance (UNDP 2006).

### **1.2.1. Water resources issues**

The annual availability of fresh water in the Middle East fell from an average of 3,300 cubic meters per person in 1960 to less than 1,250 cubic meters per person in 1995 (World Bank, 1996), the lowest per capita water availability in the world (UNDP 2006). Renewable water resources are about 335 km<sup>3</sup>/year and it is estimated that by 2025, this will drop to less than half of the 1995 level. Compared to other countries in the region, Egypt has a relatively high per capita availability of water, but the demand exceeds the supply. Jordan and Palestine are among the countries with the world's lowest per capita availability of water (UNDP 2006).

Water shortages and unequal distribution at community level are impacted by the political situation and dynamics at national level. Egypt, Palestine and Jordan rely heavily on water resources that lie in part beyond their borders<sup>3</sup>. In the West Bank, water scarcity is compounded by Israel's control over access to water. In Jordan, waves of refugees from Palestine and Iraq further increase the pressure on limited fresh-water resources (Jägerskog and Phillips 2006).

Scarcity and decline of freshwater are major development constraints. The adverse affects of increasing conflicts over control of and access to water resources are especially felt by the poor and marginalised (Skoet and Stamoulis 2006, UNDP 2006, DFID 2007).

### **1.2.2. Water governance**

Water governance refers to the set of systems that controls decision-making with regard to water management and water service delivery; it includes all the relationships, mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which stakeholders can mediate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations and make decisions for the delivery and provision of services (Moriarty *et al.* 2007<sup>1</sup>,

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<sup>3</sup> The Palestinian population relies almost totally on transboundary water, most of it shared with Israel. On the West Bank, Israeli settlers consume an average of 620 m<sup>3</sup> per person annually and Palestinians less than 100 m<sup>3</sup>. 97% of Egypt's water needs depend on the flow of the river Nile, which it shares with ten other countries (Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda) (UNDP 2006).

De la Harpe 2007). Water governance is widely recognized as an essential element of poverty reduction (DFID 2007, UNDP Water Governance programme).

Reviews of water policy and water institutions in the region have concluded they need strengthening around issues of accountability and democratic participation (World Bank 2007). Egypt, Jordan, and Palestine have approved National Water Resources Plans which include shifts towards decentralization and Integrated Water Resource Management. However, the World Bank MENA<sup>4</sup> Development Report concludes that:

“Those who would benefit from reforms—farmers, environmentalists, and poor households on the edges of cities—have not been able to form effective lobby groups. In some cases, they did not have enough information about the problem. In others, they lacked organization, or could not access the necessary channels to communicate with the authorities” (World Bank 2007: 25).

The various agencies and departments with a stake in water at governorate level operate in a very fragmented manner. Joint planning, co-ordination and information sharing between sectors, let alone with community members is lacking (El- Manadely, Soliman and Fahmy 2005). Community level priorities, especially those of the socially and economically most marginal groups are not translated adequately to higher levels of administration. Government staff at community and district levels lack the skills and incentives to facilitate participatory processes to engage end-users, especially those who are less powerful or vocal. These groups, in turn, lack experience in vocalising their rights (Laban and Moriarty 2005).

Growing demands for and shortages of freshwater, the centralised institutional set-up and the lack of transparent and accountable water management are major constraints to equitable water management in the region. The EMPOWERS project aimed to reduce these problems through concerted actions with stakeholders at community, governorate/district, national and regional levels.

### **1.2.3. Social Exclusion and Water Resource Management**

There are three dimensions of social exclusion. People can be excluded because of: *a.*) what they have or do not have in terms of access to resources *b.*) where they live, or *c.*) because of who they are (discrimination flowing from specific group identities as perceived by others in society) (Nelson *et al.*, 2007<sup>1</sup>). With respect to water resource management, social exclusion reveals itself through things such as: water scarcity, unequal distribution/ rationing, unequal ownership rights over water systems, poor water quality, the absence of sewage collection and treatment systems, large distances to water sources, and so on<sup>5</sup>. Box 1 provides an example of the links between water resources and social inequalities in Jordan.

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4 The term MENA generally includes all the Arab Middle East and North Africa countries

5 In EMPOWERS social exclusion was understood as attempted to involve the ‘under-privileged’, which was defined as: poor access to resources, social status and networks and quality water sources, or a sanitation system (Barghout *et al.*, 2005).

**Um Ayyash** is one of the poorest villages in the Jordan Valley in Balqa Governorate in Jordan. The population is 2800 and household sizes range between 8-13 members. Around 80% of the people are unemployed, while others work as day labourers on farms, in the factories, the army or for the government. Many families depend on government support. Women and girls are slightly more likely than men to find work on nearby farms because their wages are lower. The average family income is \$110 per month. The average rainfall is around 177mm/yr, and only 60% of the households are connected to the public water network. However, the high losses from leakages and illegal tapping cause low pressure in the network and water does not reach the hilly areas.

Water gets pumped to the village once a week for 12-24 hours, but most households only have a storage capacity of 1 m<sup>3</sup>, which means the average per capita availability is 20-40 L/day. To satisfy their water demands, villagers must buy water from private tankers at prices that can equal half of their monthly income and with no quality assurance. Um Ayyash does not have a sewer system.

**Box 1 : Existing situation regarding water and social inequalities in Um Ayyash, Jordan (Source: Barghout *et al.*, 2007)**

Each location has a specific context of exclusion (see Box 2). However, women, landless peasants, people from certain tribes, youths, elderly people and people with disabilities commonly face exclusion from formal decision-making bodies and they are often not formally organised. Existing local initiatives are normally carried out by the traditional leadership, a group of influential family representatives often dominated by older men, better educated men and women or the most well-off in the community. Decisions are mostly taken by these groups. Other community members lack champions or spokespeople who can bridge the gap between their reality and the reality of decision-makers and planners. The end result is that the needs of different community members are often not adequately taken into account.

Gender norms are one example of social exclusion. The public sphere remains only partially accessible to **women**, which limits their access to opportunities, knowledge and, consequently, economic and political power (World Bank, 2004). Especially in rural areas, women rarely mix and participate in meetings where men are present or go to public offices in, municipal buildings. It is socially unacceptable to complain, claim their rights or follow up on problems with service delivery, faulty connections, broken pipes, high bills (Barghout *et al.*, 2005). However, it is almost always women and girls who are responsible for providing water for their families and often also for their in-laws.

**For the poorest**, the price of connecting to a network or buying water from a safe private source is prohibitive. They rely on the charity of family, neighbours and friends. Some tap water illegally at risk of being fined or even jailed. The most marginalized often depend on waterways, shallow wells and agricultural wells, which are often polluted (Abu-Elseoud *et al.*, 2007).

In some communities, **ethnic group/ tribe lineage** determines where a person can live and thus if they have access to water and sanitation services. Without land tenure, a family cannot obtain a water licence. In others, geological conditions make it impossible to dig a well, or the water pressure is not sufficient and sometimes private water tankers cannot make the journey. The widows/ widowers, the **old or infirm** are dependent on others to fetch water, sometimes from a distant water source. They often lack finances.

**Box 2 : How are different groups marginalised? Examples of social exclusion**

### 1.3. Organisation of the case study

Section 2 describes the guiding principles and methodologies of EMPOWERS, selecting field locations, the methods and tools for effectively involving marginalised groups in decisions and planning around water resources and the resources involved in applying this approach. Section 3

explores the outcomes, conclusions on social inclusion and key lessons for SWITCH relating to social inclusion in IWRM.



## **2. The EMPOWERS Project**

### **2.1. Guiding Principles**

EMPOWERS developed and tested practical approaches and tools to apply a rights-based approach that emphasises the inclusion of end-users, more specifically the poor and marginalised, in water-related decision making processes at local level. The approach is based on two pillars: stakeholder consultation and participatory planning. This is in line with the principles of good water governance which were laid down in the Dublin conference of 1992 (WMO, 1992) as well as existing guidelines such the EC Guidelines for Water Resources Development Cooperation (EC, 1998) and the RAAKS<sup>6</sup> guidelines (Engel and Salomon, 1997). The project applied and modified tools from various participatory stakeholder approaches<sup>7</sup>, including wealth ranking, focus group discussions and feedback using visual materials like charts, drawings and diagrams.

Through participatory planning and stakeholder involvement in the planning cycle (see section 2.2.2.), EMPOWERS attempted to involve socially excluded groups. This implied a specific focus on those people that have weak influence on decision making, or those with poor access to resources (women, landless, people with limited education, finances), social status and networks (belonging to a reputable family or tribe) limited access to quality water sources (for drinking or irrigation water), or a sanitation system (Barghout *et al.*, 2005).

### **2.2. Conceptual model and methods**

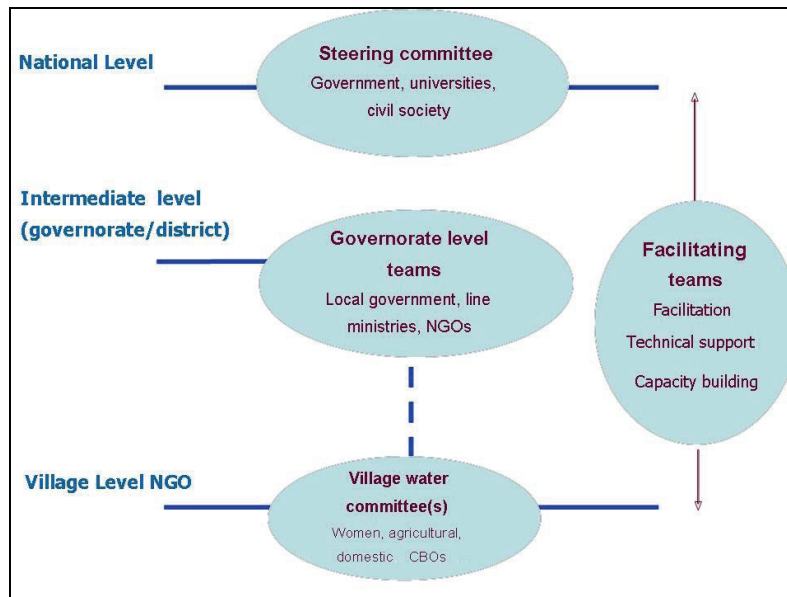
#### **2.2.1. The Learning Alliance and its members**

The project aimed to improve governance, by changing the ways in which people work together to manage their resources and services. For this purpose, facilitated multi-stakeholder platforms (Learning Alliances) were formed at community, district/governorate and National level (Figure 1).

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<sup>6</sup> RAAKS stands for Rapid Analysis of Agricultural Knowledge Systems and a methodology developed and tested in the early 1990s by Wageningen Agricultural University in The Netherlands the method describes steps for participatory actor and network analysis and at the different perspectives of different stakeholders. RAAKS aims at improving stakeholder problem-solving capacity through improved communication and joint learning.

<sup>7</sup> EMPOWERS Guidelines Methods and Tools (Moriarty *et al.*, 2007<sup>2</sup>) lists tools and useful further web-based resources on Participatory Rural Appraisal, such as [www.eldis.org/manuals/participation.htm](http://www.eldis.org/manuals/participation.htm)



**Figure 1 : Structure of Learning Alliance**

Learning Alliances are made up of mix of stakeholders with different roles and responsibilities. For example, the stakeholder platform in Al Balqa governorate (Jordan) included the Ministries of Water and Irrigation, the Ministry of Social Development, governorate officials, the Ministry of the Interior, and Ministries of Agriculture, Health and the Environment. Stakeholders also included a resource centre, NGOs, donors and community groups.

At community level, EMPOWERS started by involving existing formal bodies such Village Councils, Community Development Associations, etc. as well as informal groups. An assessment was carried out to identify groups that were not represented by these organisations. To ensure representation of women and the poorest sections of a community, the project supported the formation and strengthening of community organisations with membership from these groups. In Qabatya village in Jenin Governorate, Palestine, for example:

“The only 2 women CBOs [community based organisations] already active in Qabatya were not enough to represent the +9000 women in Qabatya. Also the CBOs either had political affiliations- which was considered as a ‘repelling’ factor by many women- or the CBO focused on specific issues (e.g., health awareness) that didn’t necessarily respond to women’s direct needs. Therefore, during a stakeholder workshop conducted in September 2004, when the first round of pilot projects were to be selected, and on the basis of a needs assessment, it was decided that [...] one of the first pilots to be implemented in Qabatya, was the establishment of the ‘Charitable Women’s Association’. Later, two women from the Charitable Association were selected to represent women in the Qabatya Water Committee” (Barghout et al. 2005, p 17).

Learning Alliance membership was on a voluntary basis, though some compensation was provided for travel or other expenses. Each Learning Alliance had facilitation teams, employed by the project which supported the process of developing a participatory planning cycle for local Integrated Water Resources Management.

## 2.2.2. Participatory methods and tools

Various participatory methods and tools were used to work through the Participatory Cycle for Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) (Figure 2). These included stakeholder identification, actor and task analysis, institutional analysis, social mapping and identifying criteria for social exclusion, problem tree analysis, SWOT, visioning, scenario building and strategy development. Stakeholders were engaged through informal meetings, semi-structured discussions, workshops and presentations, Water Resource tools included Bayesian Networks, Geographic Information System, and analysis of information on water Resource, Infrastructure, Demand and Access (RIDA), scenario building, water resource assessments.

Special attention was given to involving the most marginalized groups in participatory processes of problem analysis, planning and action called ‘Stakeholder Dialogues and Concerted Action’<sup>8</sup>, structured through the water management cycle. Through frequent informal visits the team sought to inform and involve community members, especially groups who were less vocal. Because women remained silent or did not attend community meetings, separate gatherings were held with them. Section 2.2.4 gives more detail on how women and the poorest people in the community were involved. A selection of the tools for working with stakeholders are summarized in Table 2 and described in-depth in Moriarty *et al.*, 2007.

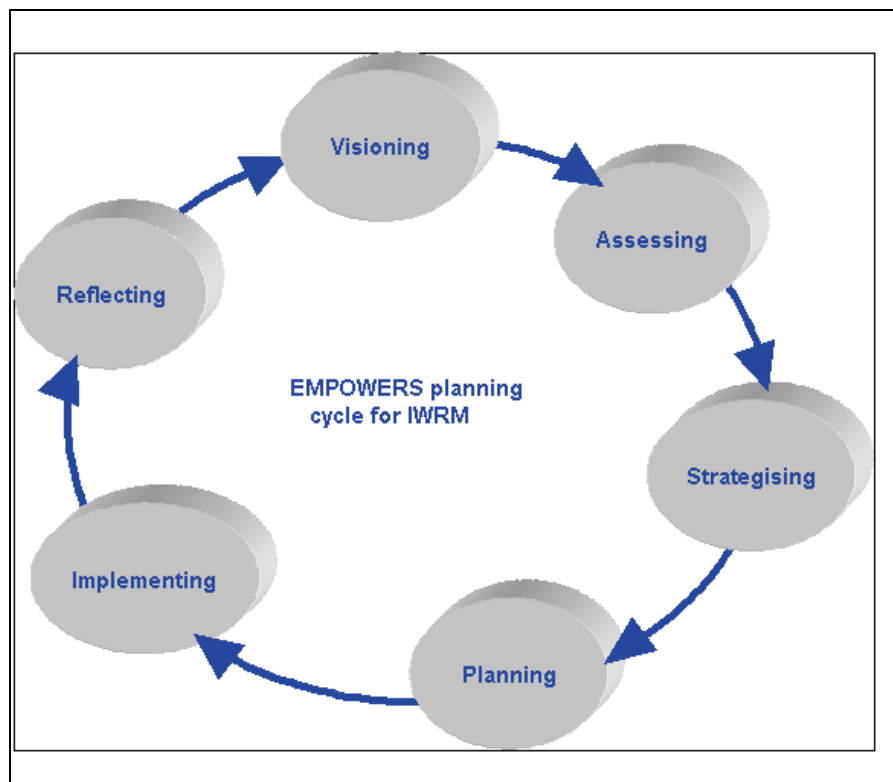


Figure 2 : Participatory Water Management Cycle

<sup>8</sup> A detailed description of the approach, planning cycle, tools used, facilitation and capacity building, are set out in *the Guidelines for improved local water governance* by Moriarty *et al.*, 2007

**Table 2 : Participatory Water Management Cycle :steps, tools and outputs**

Steps	Outputs
1. Visioning <i>Identifying different stakeholder and problems or conflicts.</i>	Water resource/ service related problems identified, stakeholder groups visualised (different versions to be compared, discussed and consolidated); formulating visions and scenarios that are then validated by a wider group of stakeholders and revised as needed to increase ownership, identifying information needs
2. Assessing <i>Targeted data collection and analysis facilitated by sector experts, together with local stakeholders and representatives of marginalised groups; creation of a shared information base with information is that can be used by farmers and other water users</i>	Clear understanding of water user groups (gender and poverty focus), shared information base with institutional, societal and physical information that can be used by farmers and other water users, summary village report which is comprehensible to non-specialists
3. Strategizing <i>Jointly developing strategies to meet the agreed vision under different scenarios, resolving conflicts over strategy choice</i>	Amended vision, scenarios, cost benefit analysis and strategies agreed by all stakeholders,
4. Planning <i>Detailed planning of activities in multi-stakeholder platform based on most likely scenarios and related strategies</i>	Detailed work and financial plans, approved by local stakeholders and organisations funding activities, agreement on roles and institutional arrangements
5. Implementing <i>Execution of plans, documentation and monitoring</i>	Projects carried out according to plan, clear agreement on roles/ responsibilities, M&E to support transparency and learning
6. Reflecting <i>Analysis of monitoring results (costs, benefits impacts) and documentation to inform further cycles.</i>	Active participation of stakeholders in reflection, information exchange, progress reporting on achievement of vision

Participatory approaches and planning tools have helped generate knowledge, attitudes and practices needed for better, stakeholder-led, water governance. In Jordan, for example, villagers and representatives of the local authorities conducted informal research to explore the social, economic and health situation in relation to water resources. Semi-structured interviews with community leaders and school teachers, interviews with families, focus group discussions, direct observation, map-drawing and a problem tree analysis were supplemented by a review of secondary sources (previous reports and available data) and inputs from the problem tree workshops and meetings at governorate and national level (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Developing the problem tree for Um Ayyash Village, Jordan  
*(source: EMPOWERS website)*



“Having the under-privileged groups represented in the village water committee working side by side with the governorate staff in collecting data and managing information, made villagers able to determine, convince and prove to the governorate staff that the amount of water that their homes received was almost half (about 40 L/c/day) of what the water authority

staff were stating that they pumped to homes (80-100 L/c/d)” (Barghout *et al.*, 2005, p 15).

This example from Um Ayash in Jordan illustrates how bringing together different stakeholders broke down some of the barriers in information sharing. Through the joint planning cycle, actions plan that were supported by the entire community could be formulated.

The methodologies and tools themselves were adapted and developed in collaboration with the teams and stakeholder groups. This approach was quite unusual in the region: engineers supposed to show expertise and control. Reflections from the project show that this learning mode led to increased ownership of the methodologies and of the project as a whole. Stakeholder consultation workshops and meetings were held to jointly determine EMPOWERS vision, scenarios, strategies and plans at community and district level. The key stakeholders have participated since then in planning and implementation of a range of activities (Smits *et al.* 2007). Box 3 provides an example of how the skills and methods were used by a community group in Qabatya village, Palestine to plan for activities outside of EMPOWERS.

Because women did not attend or remained silent in public meetings, women only meetings were organized. There, the women expressed a desire to have a women’s association. The EMPOWERS’ team provided training in planning skills and the Municipality provided an office and support from its water experts. In early 2005, the Women’s Association was established and licensed. Through the association, women started playing an active role in decision making on water resources. They filed a complaint with the municipality, which led to the extension of the water network and a pump to reach the houses in the higher ground (Barghout *et al.* 2007).

Members of the Women’s Association used the participatory tools and planning framework from EMPOWERS to plan other kinds of activities as well. These addressed general concerns of women in Qabatya and aimed at empowering women and building the capacities of the Association members (over 70). Activities included:

- Inviting water technicians from the municipality to conduct training on saving water, and simple plumbing (fixing and maintenance of water faucets at home).
- Inviting lecturers on issues related to elections, early marriages, and domestic violence, and courses in food processing by the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Organizing training and awareness workshops for women living outside the water network and to CBOs in nearby villages.
- Organizing computer training workshops for girls at a boys’ training centre after allocating one day per week for the centre to be used by the girls only.
- - Signing an agreement with the Medical Relief Committee to set up a clinic and hold a medical/health day once a month with reduced rates.

**Box 3 : Impact of EMPOWERS infrastructure and methods outside the project in Qabatya, Palestine (Source: Barghout *et al.* 2005, p. 18)**

### 2.2.3. Selection of field locations

The EMPOWERS approach was developed and tested with 9 villages and towns in Egypt, Palestine and Jordan with a population between a few thousand up to 30,000 inhabitants. The approach was also tested at the level of districts or governorates. Key criteria for selection of the Governorates and villages/towns were poverty and critical shortages of water and/or inadequate infrastructure. Other selection criteria were that the identified problems were representative,

dependence on water for livelihoods (primarily agriculture), population size, and areas not benefiting from other projects (Abu-Elseoud *et al.* 2007). In each community, a participatory process of identifying key problems and possible solutions was established and this led to the implementation of pilot projects. This process will be further explained in the following section.

#### **2.2.4. Changing how things were done**

Changing the way water resources are managed implies very fundamental changes in how people think, interact and communicate. This takes time, substantial resources and facilitation.

##### **Attitudes and skills of programme staff**

“In essence, a governance model based on stakeholder engagement implies a change in role for water experts from leaders to supporters, helping other stakeholders to discover what are the implications of different possible options and, where necessary, aiding them to invent new ones” (Moriarty *et al.* 2007<sup>1</sup>, p 28).

This was a challenge for the stakeholders, but also for EMPOWERS project team. The process of developing problem trees at national, governorate and community level together with the different types of officials and researchers, or at community level, with women and men from a diverse social-economic background (Figure 3) created new awareness of the problems, and their causes. Governorate level experts started to recognize the expertise of the village men and women (Smits *et al.* 2005). Given the strong tradition of centralised and top-down water governance in the region, developing participatory and bottom-up approaches was quite challenging (Box 4).

Hassan Al Edwan, Head of the Governorate Development Unit (GDU) was one of the governorate level officials involved in EMPOWERS Jordan. This 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. "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 project team to visit the villages thinking it was the 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 in the benefit of the targeted areas". However, over time, he became one of the champions of the participatory approach.

**Box 4 : We know better'; Changing attitudes and way of communicating in Jordan (Source Abu Elsoud *et al.*, 2007)**

Participatory approaches involve doing things very differently

“The main difficulty that faced the project in the field was the low level of trust and confidence towards each other of both governmental officials and the local community. On the one hand, the local community members have the classical stereotype image of government officials as people who work solely from behind their desks and are concerned only with finalizing their paperwork and reports, and have no interest in referring to the community while supposedly planning for their needs. On the other hand, governmental officials see the local community members as passive recipients of government plans and have low confidence in the local communities' capabilities to



handle their village's problems along with them. Another obstacle is that the two parties didn't have any sense of ownership or responsibility for preserving local water resources, as they see this as the responsibility of the government, who are also responsible for providing them with water services. This situation has been significantly changed during the project process" (Shraideh *et al.* 2005, p. 208 ).

Meaningful involvement takes time and effort. Conflict resolution and process facilitation skills are crucial in the context of improved water governance. Stakeholders often have conflicting interests and objectives factors that are not directly related to the water sector, such as political tensions, antagonism between different social groups or a lack of respect can hamper cooperation (Shraideh *et al.* 2005, El- Manadely, Soliman and Fahmy 2005).

EMPOWERS placed a large emphasis on understanding the reality of the different categories of end users – women and men, with and without land, with only domestic or also productive uses of water for agriculture, animals, building and so on. Together with the community members, the teams investigated the different beliefs, behaviour and priorities that existed within the community. Information sharing is key to social inclusion. EMPOWERS paid attention to sharing relevant information with stakeholders in ways they could use and understand and to valuing local knowledge of 'non-experts'. Information needs, educational levels and ability to participate and contribute all must be taken into account. Documentation and monitoring of the changes during the project contributed to dialogue, learning and empowerment

### **Involving women and the poor**

Representation of all groups, especially the most marginalized, was a fundamental principle of the project. For each community, social surveys, wealth ranking (with economic and qualitative indicators) and secondary data were used to gather information and identify groups that could be considered marginalised or vulnerable. This included female-headed households, the landless and farm labourers. Data was collected on the quality of water resources and the access these groups had to these resources. As a next step, local water development committees developed criteria to select the most deserving households for the pilot projects that were agreed in each community (refer Box 5 and Box 6)

In a stakeholder workshop the construction of household level water harvesting cisterns was agreed as pilot project in Jalboun village. Villagers were invited to apply for a water cistern and 80 applications were received, while only 20 could be constructed. The local water development committee set the following criteria for determining who would benefit.

- Socio-economic status; Priority was given to those households with no or irregular income or with an a low regular income
- Households lacking access to any water source
- Families who had not benefited from previous projects in the village
- Family size: priority was given to large families
- Multi use: priority was given to households that could use the extra water for productive uses (home gardens or livestock)

The application of transparent, pro-poor criteria was something new for the villagers. Previously beneficiaries were often chosen on the basis of personal or political relations.

**Box 5 : Criteria for selecting households to benefit from pilots in Jalboun village, Palestine. (Source: Barghout et al., 2007)**

‘Othman’ and his 13 member household were identified as one of the poorest families in the village, hardest hit by the water shortage. Othman owns no land and is usually unemployed. The family live uphill, where water pressure is lowest and they have a 1m<sup>3</sup> tank for water storage. To meet the water needs of his family, he has to buy water from private tankers, which is a constant struggle. Othman was invited to become a member of the Village Water Committee and worked together with the other village stakeholders, governorate staff from the Governorate Water Committee and the EMPOWERS team to prepare water resources development plans, and to define water priorities for the village, using the planning cycle.

The first pilot project in Um Ayyash was to buy and run a water tanker that would provide reliable quality water to underprivileged households, at a reduced rate. The water authority certified and regularly monitored the wells.

The following selection criteria for pilot projects were formulated by the Village Water Committee:

- Pilot serves the community, and not specific group of individuals;
- Pilot contributes to achieving the vision, is in line with the scenarios developed;
- Execution time is short;
- Sustainability is guaranteed;
- Pilot costs do not exceed €30, 000
- The project should have clear benefits for the most vulnerable and community as a whole

**Box 6 : Putting social inclusion into practice in Um Ayyash village Jordan. Source: Barghout et al. 2005)**

To be able to monitor the progress on active involvement of socially excluded<sup>9</sup> in planning and decision-making, the project team set benchmark indicators<sup>10</sup>. They encouraged people to take note of who might not be involved in the discussions and what barriers would need to be overcome to ensure that these people could make their voices heard. Most existing organisations were not socially inclusive, so the facilitation team invested time in informal interactions and awareness raising. They supported the formation of groups that represented different types of women and men (such as richer, poorer, certain tribes or families, age group) in the community<sup>11</sup>. Meetings for women only were planned after reviewing most suitable options for location and time. The project team looked for champions from all stakeholder groups who could enthuse others and increase commitment and ownership of the process.

### **2.2.5. Resources needed to facilitate socially inclusive multi-stakeholder platforms**

Considerable effort is required to establish and maintain stakeholder platforms and to build the capacity of stakeholders to work together. Different stakeholders have differing, sometimes conflicting interests and levels of power. Consensus is the exception. Time and resources also need to be put into identifying and supporting marginalized groups in participating in the process.

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<sup>9</sup> In EMPOWERS these people were referred to as ‘under-privileged’

<sup>10</sup> At the end of the project, it was reported that between 40 and 90% of the members of the Community Water Platforms were representatives of the most ‘under-privileged’ groups.

<sup>11</sup> The EMPOWERS field team in Palestine initially was all male. This made it very difficult for the team to interact with women and conduct surveys or involve them in meetings or discussion. In 2005, two female field coordinators were hired (Barghout et al. 2005). Over time, women became more vocal in mixed meetings.



Human resources. Each country team had a full time facilitator and a full time documentalist. The team was supported by content specialists and an international team of experienced sector professionals with experience in IWRM and participatory approaches. For replication, EMPOWERS advises that for one governorate the facilitation team will consist of two to four people with a range of disciplinary backgrounds, both technical content and social processes, including an understanding of gender and social exclusion.

Experience from the project reveals that capacity building is needed to develop the skills for managing water resources and strategic planning and especially for applying participatory approaches. Intensive support on process facilitation to familiarize stakeholders with the approach and tools, as well as to deal with power dynamics and to help in resolving potential conflicts of interest. Facilitators must act as intermediaries and avoid taking sides.

Financial resources. The total project budget was approximately five million Euros, of which some four million was earmarked for methodology development, and one million for implementing pilot activities in communities (Smits *et al.* 2007). Now that the methodology has been developed, Moriarty *et al.* estimate that the approach can be implemented at a cost of around US\$ 2-5 per person per year within a given area. The local context and other expenditures within the sector will co-determine if this is sufficient financing. Resources both financial and human are needed in particular for capacity development, improved communication and improved information management (Moriarty *et al.* 2007<sup>1</sup>).

The project provided € 300.000/country/year, of which € 100.000/year was earmarked for pilot project implementation and € 200.000/year on stakeholder facilitation, methodology development, and program management. The project employed a full time process documentation specialist in each country to record the lessons and challenges. Additional funding for pilot projects in the communities was sought as well (see Annex 1). Another € 300.000/year was spent on regional information exchange, support to the regional EMPOWERS Thematic group and to provide capacity building workshops, publicize experiences attend international symposia etc.

Time. Changing social patterns and institutional processes takes time and ongoing efforts. By the end of the project, platforms were set up in each community and at each administrative level. The involvement of stakeholders increased over time as they developed greater trust for each other and confidence in the process. In EMPOWERS, time was needed for the project team to develop skills in facilitating participatory approaches. According to the project evaluation: a properly budgeted comprehensive strategy for core skills development should be embedded in any similar project (Ghezae *et al.* 2007).

### 3. Outcomes, Conclusions and Key Lessons

#### 3.1. Outcomes

The most important outcomes of the EMPOWERS project were stronger—and in some cases new—relationships between water users and local government representatives and between water-user groups and different line ministries. A second important outcome of EMPOWERS are support at national and governorate levels for the EMPOWERS approach (El- Manadely, Soliman and Fahmy 2005). Representation of community stakeholders, including marginalised groups has helped to get the needs and abilities of different stakeholders on the agenda of decision-makers. According to the final evaluation, the Governorate/District level, staff of the stakeholders who had been involved in the process said that they: Gained better understanding of the problems of the local communities and felt that their work had become more efficient; gained confidence in the ability of community members to understand and solve water problems (Ghezze *et al.* 2007).

More specifically, outcomes include:

- Through development and testing of guidelines and tools for improved local governance of IWRM capacities were built for problem analysis, visioning and scenario- building, prioritising needs and solutions. These guidelines and tools have been shared and used in other regions as well<sup>12</sup>.
- Cooperation networks and stakeholder platforms representing marginalised groups at the community and district levels were established and have been sustained since the project ended.
- Using the cooperation networks and methods pilot projects were selected which increase access to water resources for socially excluded groups.
- Local ownership and increased confidence witnessed (especially of women) to voice their interests and assert their rights

#### 3.2. Conclusions on social inclusion

It is becoming increasingly recognised that sharing responsibilities and influence with users is vital to effectively identify, analyse and address water management problems. Improving water governance requires financial resources, monitoring systems for information collection and sharing, monitoring systems for the inclusion of marginalised groups and good facilitation. The participatory approaches and planning tools used in EMPOWERS have helped generate knowledge, attitudes and practices needed for better, stakeholder-led, water governance. The following are the specific conclusions from the project experiences:

- *Representation and influence.* For the most marginalized groups within communities to influence decision-making, representation must be seen to be legitimate. The involvement of community members from the onset of the project helped build their trust in the

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<sup>12</sup> EMPOWERS methodology has been used in settings as diverse as Nigeria, India and Malta.

process and their commitment. Joint activities helped to overcome an initial lack of trust between groups.

- *Facilitation.* One of the most important conclusions from EMPOWERS was that maintaining and facilitating dialogues at the various levels cannot be left to stakeholders themselves. EMPOWERS identified the need for a full time process manager as well as a high level facilitator in each country to facilitate the process. Also, the facilitation team requires people with different kinds of expertise, both technical and social.
- *Expertise on gender and poverty.* The EMPOWERS guidelines advise that each team should have a poverty and gender expert to develop a strategy for the involvement of the poorest and most marginalized. The project team looked for champions from all stakeholder groups who could enthuse others and increase commitment and ownership of the process.
- *Sharing information and lessons.* The project has produced extensive documentation including papers, presentations, training and a website and data base on IWRM. EMPOWERS also engaged with policy makers, NGOs, donors and media through regional networks for water resources management. Training based upon the guidelines has been well received across the region. At community level, information sharing was also key to social inclusion: To contribute to improved governance, information had to be shared in a way that is appropriate to the educational levels and needs of stakeholders from different backgrounds.
- *Ownership.* The approach and methods, with learning platforms at all levels and a link with participatory problem solving in the field led to a high sense of ownership with all parties. The EMPOWERS Thematic Group, a knowledge network on participatory planning for improved local water governance, builds upon the existing work and experience gained by the partners in the EMPOWERS Project.

Important longer-term indicators of the impact of a project are its institutional sustainability and the ongoing use of the developed approaches and tools. On the institutional sustainability of process facilitation, initial results have been promising:

- In Palestine, the project partners agreed to take the role of facilitator after EMPOWERS finished.
- The government of Jordan has agreed to look in more detail at the establishment of a national steering committee. Strong facilitation, training and social analysis expertise exists there through the Zein Al-Sharaf Institute for Development (ZENID) a local institute under the umbrella of JoHUD, a NGO that manages and supports Community Development Centres all over the Kingdom.
- In the Balqa Governorate in Jordan an integrated water information management system has been established.

Overall, it can be concluded that improve local water governance is quite a challenge, but that the project has contributed to a shift from the top-down approach that has existed in the region for generations. Social change is not something that happens overnight and there are many

political constraints in the region. In the selected communities the project helped community members solve several existing problems associated with social exclusion. Through creating multilevel platforms and building leadership these problems could be reduced in future. To ensure sustainability of the multi-stakeholder approach, local host agencies (government, NGO, service providers, or professional facilitators) with staff who have both technical and social skills must take over the facilitation.

### **3.3.Lessons for SWITCH cities**

EMPOWERS shows that with strong facilitation people with often few means, little education and limited negotiating power have a big but often untapped potential to solve problems and to innovate together with government officials and other stakeholders. Understanding the divergent (and often conflicting) priorities and demands for water resources and effectively involving end users and local institutions are crucial elements for sustainability and improved local governance in IWRM.

Building stakeholder platforms, identifying all actors and interest groups at each level, including the most excluded, and ensuring that there is a constructive dialogue is not easy. It often will require capacity development at individual, group or organizational level so that marginalized groups can participate and be effectively represented. Facilitation and a strategy for the involvement of the poorest and most marginalized are needed to ensure representative participation and to resolve possible conflicts between individuals and stakeholder groups. Both technical and social expertise are needed. EMPOWERS identified the need for financial resources and a full time process manager as well as experienced process facilitators, who have networks and standing in the sector.

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### **Links for further information on EMPOWERS:**

EMPOWERS project  
<http://www.project.empowers.info/>  
Empowers insight 1, 2005  
EMPOWERS Partnership governance principles  
EMPOWERS Factsheets  
EMPOWERS case studies, reports and papers  
EMPOWERS concepts, guidelines and change stories

European Union's Regional MEDA Water Programme for Local Water Management  
[http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external\\_relations/euromed/meda.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/euromed/meda.htm)

Dialogue 'Water, Food and Environment'  
<http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/dialogue/Index.htm>

Global Water Partnership; Dialogue on Effective Water Governance  
<http://www.gwpforum.org/servlet/PSP>

Participatory Rural Appraisal [www.eldis.org/manuals/participation.htm](http://www.eldis.org/manuals/participation.htm)

RAAKS guidelines

Engel, P., Salomon, M.(1997). *Resource Guide to RAAKS. A Participatory Actor-oriented Methodology on Networking for Innovation and Stakeholder Analysis* (KIT/CTA/STOAS).

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## Annex 1 : Examples of Selected pilot projects and funding agencies

Community	Pilot Project	Responsible community organization	Funding (EMPOWERS or others)
<b>EGYPT/ Beni Suef</b>			
El Masharqa	1) Enhance potable water network maintenance and 2) Activate Water User Association one mesqa (small canal) and provide solutions to Irrigation Improvement Project 3) Increase number of people connected to potable water services 4) Study the best solutions to solid and liquid waste disposal systems in village control	1) Community Development Association (CDA), Women's Group, Potable Water Authority (PWA) 2) CDA, Farmers Group 3) CDA, PWA 4) CDA, experts	1) EMPOWERS, PWA, 2) EMPOWERS, Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation (MWRI) 3) EMPOWERS 4) EMPOWERS
<b>JORDAN/Balqa'</b>			
Subaihi	Rehabilitation of two springs	Subehi Voluntary Society	Netherlands Embassy
Rwaiha	Strengthening Community Water Committee through a revolving fund for water management and agricultural purposes	Rwaiha Cooperative Society	EMPOWERS
<b>PALESTINE/Jenin</b>			
Qabatya	1) Study and redesign of the municipality water network. 2) Installing water meters at agricultural wells to organize and account for use of irrigation water for farmers without a well.	1) Municipality, Palestinian Water Authority 2) Farmer Group, Ministry of Agriculture	1) EMPOWERS, Municipality 2) EMPOWERS

Source Barghout *et al.* 2006, p23