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# The EMPOWERS Approach to Water Governance At a glance



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**By Peter Laban and Firas T. Abd-Alhadi**

# Background

Water is an increasingly scarce and contested resource around the world, especially in the Middle East. There is general agreement that the most pressing need today is for more attention to be given to managing water resources through systems of good water governance, rather than attempting to develop and/or augment water resources. In other words, organise the use of water better, to use it more efficiently and waste it less. The key water governance challenges in the MENA region and elsewhere include:

- Developing institutional arrangements and forums for addressing competing interests for water ('stakeholder platforms') that are able to respond as water-related problems become increasingly complex and more stakeholders become involved. As win-win options become elusive, dialogue is essential to agree on trade-offs between benefits for different interests.
- Developing and adapting approaches, methods and tools that improve dialogue between stakeholders, especially to increase involvement in water use and management by people and organisations at community level. Dialogue needs to take place 'horizontally' between platforms at the same level (for example between two or more village based water bodies), and 'vertically' between platforms at different levels (for example between village-based organisations and those at governorate level).

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

The methodologies and tools employed by EMPOWERS have been set out in *The EMPOWERS Approach to Water Governance: Guidelines, Methods and Tools* available on EMPOWERS website <http://www.empowers.info/page/2850>.

*The contents of this booklet are the sole responsibility of its authors and cannot be taken to reflect the views of the European Union*

# 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, with 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. This booklet is part of these efforts.



## EMPOWERS a Part of the EC-funded MEDA Water Programme

EMPOWERS was part of the EC-funded Mediterranean Regional Programme for Local Water Management (MEDA Water Programme) and was led and implemented by CARE International in partnership with:

- Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resources Development and Management (INWRDAM).
- IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre.
- Development Research and Technological Planning Center (DRTPC), Cairo University.
- Egyptian Water Partnership (EWP).
- National Water Research Centre (NWRC) in Egypt.
- Federation for Environment Protection and Enhancement (FEPI) in Egypt.
- Coptic Evangelic Organization for Social Services (CEOSS) in Egypt.
- Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE) in Egypt.
- Jordanian Ministry of Agriculture.
- Queen Zein Al Sharaf Institute for Development in Jordan (ZENID).
- Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG).
- Union of Agricultural Work Committees in Palestine (UAWC).
- Country offices of Care in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine.

## The EMPOWERS Approach

The EMPOWERS approach to improving local water governance is built upon a participatory management cycle embedded in 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.

Demonstration villages were selected on the basis of critical shortages of water and/or inadequate infrastructure. By 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 the underprivileged sections of the community.



To pursue their vision, 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. This process identified the relevant actors for water provision and use.

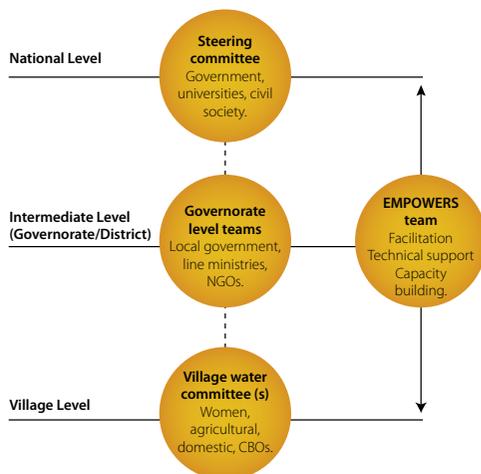
A representative cross-section of the village developed and debated their own Water Resources Strategy to guide priorities and future work for themselves and for service providers. The villagers practiced direct control over planning and decision making, with facilitation and assistance from EMPOWERS staff. The tremendous sense of confidence and ownership 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.

# Facilitating the Stakeholder Management Process

Individuals and institutions who are affected by decisions relating to water resource management are all stakeholders in the outcomes. Some stakeholders are closely involved in water issues, while others may have little knowledge beyond their use of water, and little experience of discussing use with others. However, involving stakeholders in the management and planning of water services and resources is recognised as a key element in obtaining a balanced and sustainable utilisation of water. The involvement of stakeholders or their representatives in planning processes can be time consuming and fraught with difficulties. This is partly due to stakeholders having conflicting interests and objectives in relation to water-related challenges, but also due to factors not directly related to water such as political tensions, antagonism between social groups or a lack of respect between specialists and non-specialists. Because of these difficulties, wide-scale involvement of stakeholders in water resource planning and management will only succeed if it is cost-effective, leads to conflict resolution, identifies worthwhile tradeoffs between different objectives and produces outcomes that are measurably better than existing approaches.

Successful implementation of the EMPOWERS approach requires good facilitation of the processes of stakeholder dialogue and concerted action (within stakeholder platforms) and of participatory planning. Facilitators must be skilful, knowledgeable and resourceful, and may need training and support to fulfil their roles. Specialists called on to facilitate the processes, may also need capacity building if they are to be efficient.

*Facilitation structure of the EMPOWERS Project*



The EMPOWERS approach requires flexibility and respect for the needs of stakeholders, recognising that it is their process. The steps in the management cycle and in tools and methods represent and contribute to a clear logic and way of thinking. However, each village, district or governorate is different and the pace and sequencing of different steps and activities must be driven by the needs of the stakeholders. The process may therefore lead in different directions in different circumstances. The most important thing is that those facilitating such processes understand the overall logic of the approach, as well as the objectives of each step and the potential benefits and pitfalls of each tool.



### Cost of Facilitating the EMPOWERS Approach

The cost of facilitating the participatory management process recommended by EMPOWERS has been estimated on the assumption of a four year programme involving about 30 villages in a single governorate that aims to invest in the drinking water, sanitation and irrigation sub-sectors. The cost will amount to about €8,000/year for each village. With an average village size of 4,000 inhabitants, the annual cost will be €2 for each individual.

# The EMPOWERS Management Cycle

A key aspect of the EMPOWERS approach to improving local water governance is programme cycle management. This incorporates two important ideas: a project or programme proceeding through various logical and sequential stages and the need for management through all the various stages of the project cycle. What is being managed is a process, rather than a one-off event. The EMPOWERS management cycle also emphasises the need for decision making within a clearly defined set of phases to ensure that decisions relating to water issues are based on a clear, logical flow of thought and actions.



The EMPOWERS management cycle is supported by a set of tools and methodologies for water governance<sup>1</sup>. The majority of the tools and methodologies are well-proven in regular use in many different contexts. The major achievement of EMPOWERS has been to adapt these tools and methodologies and develop a practical framework for their use. These tools and methodologies have the following characteristics:

- They provide a framework and a starting point for dialogue between specialists and non-specialists, and between stakeholders horizontally at the same level or vertically between levels.
- They help build consensus and reduce or overcome conflict.
- With good facilitation, they can be enjoyable to use and cost-effective in terms of time and other resources.
- They help stakeholders come to grips with the inherent uncertainty involved in planning for water resources management and water service delivery.
- They improve the level of ownership that stakeholders or their representatives have over planning decisions at governorate and community levels.

<sup>1</sup> A detailed explanation of the tools and methodologies is available in Chapter 5 of *The EMPOWERS Approach to Water Governance: Guidelines, Methods and Tools* downloadable from [www.empowers.info/page/2853](http://www.empowers.info/page/2853).

# The EMPOWERS Water Governance Toolbox

Tool Category	Specific Tool
Strategic Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visioning</li> <li>• Scenario Building</li> <li>• Strategy Development</li> <li>• Planning</li> </ul>
Participatory Learning and Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Tools</li> <li>• Problem Tree Analysis</li> <li>• Semi-Structured Discussion</li> <li>• SWOT Analysis</li> <li>• Prioritisation and Ranking</li> <li>• Accountability and Rights Analysis</li> </ul>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources, Infrastructure, Demand and Access (RIDA)</li> <li>• Qualitative Information System (QIS)</li> <li>• Quality Assurance and Control</li> <li>• Water Balance Estimation</li> <li>• Time Series Analysis</li> <li>• Modelling</li> <li>• Information Management</li> <li>• Cost-Benefit Analysis</li> </ul>
Working with Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder Identification</li> <li>• Actor and Task Analysis</li> <li>• Identifying Key Stakeholders</li> <li>• Institutional Analysis</li> <li>• Visual Models of Leadership and Coordination</li> <li>• Involving the Poor and Marginalised</li> <li>• Capacity Development</li> <li>• Awareness Raising</li> <li>• Facilitation</li> <li>• Conflict Management</li> </ul>
Tools for Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring and Evaluation</li> <li>• Benchmarking</li> <li>• Process Documentation</li> </ul>

## Governorate-Level Piloting<sup>2</sup>

Working with EMPOWERS and people in the project villages, one governorate in each of Egypt, Palestine and Jordan developed its own vision and strategy for future water management. The governorates of Beni-Suef (Egypt), Jenin (West Bank, Palestine) and Balqa (Jordan) also committed themselves to the development of water management information systems to improve the efficiency of future management and planning processes. These information systems are accessible to all actors in the water sector from community-based organisations to government agencies.

Significant numbers of governorate staff were involved in the EMPOWERS programme. As a result, they became more conscious of the need to involve local stakeholders in the planning and management of water resources at governorate level. At the same time, they won more respect from village-level stakeholders. A mutual understanding about what could or could not be done by end-users and by government officials contributed to mutual respect and concerted action. Working at both levels was essential, as a village water strategy cannot be isolated from the broader water situation in the governorate, while governorates cannot meet their water goals without action at village level.



Following the end of the pilot period, the governors and senior staff continue to advocate the EMPOWERS approach at national level. In each country, national level government representatives are assessing the approaches in order to decide on their usefulness and relevance for national policy and local practice.

<sup>2</sup> *The experiences of piloting the EMPOWERS approach at governorate and local level have been fully documented and are available at [www.empowers.info](http://www.empowers.info).*

## Local-Level Piloting Egypt

Beni Suef is one of the poorest governorates in Egypt, ideal ground for piloting the pro-poor methods and tools developed by EMPOWERS. The pilot involved five rural communities with a total population of 30,000 people. EMPOWERS also worked with government officials to open channels of dialogue and encourage participatory approaches in the planning and management of water resources at village, district and governorate levels.



A capacity-building programme increased the levels of awareness and understanding about their water situation by individuals and community stakeholder groups. It strengthened their capacity to negotiate with government officials and gave them the confidence to take the driving seat in their own community development.

## Overall Impact of Piloting

The planning process also resulted in a number of community water projects:

- Establishment of a system of revolving funds in Kassab, Masharqa, Manyal Hani, Mamaleek and Bahsamoun villages to connect poor families to the drinking water network.
- Reaching an agreement with the water authority to extend the distribution network to satellite areas of Kassab.
- Construction of a sewage and solid waste collection and transportation system in Kassab, Masharqa, Manyal Hani, and Mamaleek.
- Establishment of a system of collection and treatment of grey-water for 550 households in Bahsamoun, Manyal Hani and Mamaleek.
- Establishment of a service workshop in Masharqa to support communities in maintaining infrastructure to improve supplies of drinking water and water for irrigation.
- Installation of valves on the drinking water network in Masharqa to regulate water distribution.



## Local-Level Piloting Jordan

EMPOWERS piloted improved systems of local water governance in six villages in Balqa Governorate with an aggregate population of around 20,000 people. In recent years, villagers have seen their livelihoods adversely affected by a dwindling supply of water due to leaking pipes and increasing demand from urban areas, new industries and agricultural water users. To add to the problem, many sources are badly polluted.



Using the EMPOWERS approach and working closely with governorate-level stakeholders, strategies were developed to tackle water supply problems and to protect water resources. The emphasis has been on identifying and adopting practical solutions to improve water quality and use, adapting local technologies, such as water harvesting, treated water reuse and spring protection. Villagers were also encouraged to share their experiences and views with the EMPOWERS National Steering Committee and to advocate for policies that would sustain water supplies within the villages and the governorate and lead to equitable sharing of water resources.

Community water projects were selected on the basis of a participatory visioning, strategising and planning process.

### **Overall Impact of Piloting**

Village water efficiency and storage capacity was improved for 150 households; revolving funds were established to support the replication of water management technologies in Rweiha, Tal Al-Mantah, Omm Ayyash and Subeihi; and measures were put in place

to deliver irrigation water to farms in Damya, to reduce the use of drinking water for irrigation. In Omm Ayyash, 15% of households without piped water received water for the first time, on a cost recovery basis. A further 30% of households in the upland areas received supplementary water to compensate for an inadequate piped supply. In Rumaimeen, the efficiency of water canals was increased with the aim of reducing water losses from 50% to 20%. Following the end of the pilot period, villagers continued to hold effective dialogue with the governorate officials who have agreed to replace dilapidated networks.



#### Rweiha's vision for 2012

- To increase the daily supply of drinking water from 30 to 45 litres per capita and in accordance with the Jordanian water standards.
- To increase the daily supply of irrigation water from two to three cubic meters per dunum.
- To improve environmental and agricultural conditions in the village.
- To enhance team work and cooperation among villagers.

## Local-Level Piloting West Bank

In the West Bank, EMPOWERS worked in Jenin Governorate, where only 14% of the fertile land is irrigated. The remaining agricultural land relies on rainfall. None of the villages are connected to a sanitation system and households rely on individual cesspits. Where they exist, piped-water supply networks are old and in need of repair.



Water management in the area is chaotic and disorganised, primarily due to controls imposed by the Israeli military occupation on water resources and water supply infrastructure. Municipalities and village councils are responsible for the management of domestic water supply in communities that are connected to water networks. In the case of agriculture, water supply is handled by owners of private wells, by water tankers, and by end-users themselves.

Water comes primarily from eight major springs, 70 registered wells and an unknown number of non-registered wells. The total available water from various sources in Jenin Governorate is around 10 million m<sup>3</sup>.

Piloting of the EMPOWERS approach took place in one town, two smaller municipalities and three villages. There was general agreement that pilots had led to a strong feeling of confidence and ownership over the process and results. People felt that they had greater control over their own situations, despite the precarious life under occupation and the everyday difficulties faced by the Palestinian authorities.

## Overall Impact of Piloting

The following water projects were implemented in Jenin:

- Installation of domestic water meters in Qabatya to achieve a more equitable system of charging that reflected the actual amount of water used.
- Redesign of Qabatya's water network.
- Construction in Arraneh of 25 water harvesting cisterns (each with a storage capacity of 50 m<sup>3</sup>) to increase water supply for 25 families.
- Installation of eight domestic cisterns in Jalboun to increase storage capacity for around 70 people from zero to 500 m<sup>3</sup>.
- Purchase of a tractor and a water tank for transferring water to higher areas of Meithaloun.
- Construction of eight metal reservoirs and associated water harvesting systems in Jalboun (total storage capacity 1600 m<sup>3</sup>) to supply water for greenhouses.
- Construction of twelve metal reservoirs and associated water harvesting systems in Qabatya (total storage capacity of 2400 m<sup>3</sup>) to supply for greenhouses.
- Installation of water meters at ten private agricultural wells in Qabatya to better regulate groundwater extraction and the supply of water to users.
- Increased access to water in Beit Qad through the collective use and management of a water tanker.
- Construction of a new concrete reservoir to provide drinking water for 500 pupils at Meithaloun boys' school.
- Construction of a culvert to divert runoff away from the compound of the girls' school in Meithaloun.
- Construction of a sanitation unit at Kofr-Dan boys' secondary school and renovation of an old sanitation unit at Kofr-Dan boys' preparatory school.
- Construction of a concrete water reservoir at Kofr-Dan girls' secondary school.
- Establishment of a women's charitable society for water related awareness raising activities in Qabatya.



## Empowerment and Ownership in the Three Countries

As a result of piloting and taking ownership of EMPOWERS methods and tools, stakeholders at the village, district and governorate levels in all three countries adopted some of the following practices:

- Capacity building of village-level organisations to improve skills in needs assessment, participatory approaches, planning, management and proposal writing.
- Enhanced communication and cooperation between village and governorate level stakeholders.
- Training and encouragement of young people and women to be active members in developing their villages through community-based organisations.
- Establishing women's groups and helping to ensure that their representatives were elected to serve on village councils.
- Establishing a community credit programme with the potential to play a significant role in promoting income-generating activities.
- Organising awareness campaigns aimed at introducing novel agricultural methods and domestic water techniques, such as drip irrigation and water harvesting, to overcome water shortages, improve sanitation and expand cultivable land.
- Conducting participatory training programmes aimed at encouraging farmers to adopt new cropping patterns and other agricultural practices.
- Redesigning community water networks and introducing fairer systems for charging for water by introducing water meters.



# Impact and Sustainability

Monitoring by EMPOWERS indicated the following impacts:

- 50% of groups and women in involved communities gained access to water and were able to:
  - prioritise water problems and needs;
  - engage in planning within their community;
  - negotiate with government and propose water plans.
- Community-based organisations in 18 local communities became:
  - better connected to the people in their communities;
  - accountable to marginalised people in their societies;
  - capable of planning and implementing village water projects;
  - authors of finalised water development plans (in six villages/small towns in each country). These plans were endorsed in principle by governorate authorities and able to serve as a basis for further funding and implementation of community water projects.
- At governorate level:
  - active stakeholder dialogue was introduced between governorate officials and stakeholders in small towns/villages;
  - more than 60 community and governorate institutions (in the three countries) acquired experience and ownership in the EMPOWERS approach, with more than 240 individuals actively involved.



## What Makes the Difference?

Many people have asked what is it that makes an approach like EMPOWERS different and sustainable. Words are often insufficient to capture all the energy mobilised by a genuine stakeholder-driven process. However, EMPOWERS is distinguished because it:

- explicitly emphasised good process facilitation and high levels of active stakeholder participation;
- provided access to a set of complementary user-friendly tools and methodologies giving guidance to a structured and interactive planning approach;
- introduced an in-depth analysis of why local people were not able to claim their rights to water;
- implemented a process of up-scaling communication and coordination through stakeholder dialogue and concerted action;
- built bridges between stakeholders in local communities and officials in government institutions.

