

Learning Alliances for local water resource management in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine: lessons from the EMPOWERS project

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Abstract

EMPOWERS is a four year regional program for improved local water management in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine, with the specific objective of improving long-term access, and rights, to water by the underprivileged. EMPOWERS seeks to achieve this by enabling increased participation and representation of stakeholders in planning and decision-making processes at the intermediate and local level. To this end, the project is developing a participatory planning cycle for Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), and embedding the cycle within a wider process of Stakeholder Dialogue and Concerted Action.

The SDCA process is being hosted within a knowledge community or learning alliance that consists of stakeholder platforms at multiple levels from National to Local in the three countries. The role of SDCA is to help break down the barriers to horizontal and vertical communication within and between these platforms – the role of the planning cycle is to give structure to the enhanced communication.

The paper reports on the practical experiences of establishing learning alliances in the three countries, and their use in doing action research into improved local level water management and governance. It highlights the main findings and lessons learned to date, and focuses particularly on the difficulties of initiating such processes using project funding and project teams who are at once learner, facilitator, donor, project manager and methodology developer. The paper will examine the composition of the teams necessary to carry out and facilitate this work, as well as reflecting on the interaction in this learning process of the different institutional partners that have initiated this whole process. In its conclusion, the paper will highlight the apparent synergy of the two key approaches: enhancing dialogue and mobilizing stakeholders (SDCA) and structuring planning and decision making through the participatory planning framework.

Background and introduction to EMPOWERS

EMPOWERS is a four year regional programme for local water management in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine, funded by the EC MEDA Water Programme and CARE International²⁸. It consists of a Regional Partnership of fourteen local and international organizations. The main long-term goal of the project is to improve development and management of water resources at the intermediate and local level by promoting increased participation and representation of stakeholders in planning and decision-making processes, and by improving the flow and use of information used in such processes. EMPOWERS believes that this will lead to improved local water governance²⁹. While focusing on governorates and districts (units of approximately 250,000 people) and local communities for its main piloting activities, EMPOWERS ensures the relevance of the approaches being developed to national policy formulation through the use of a learning alliance structure.

EMPOWERS advocates and implements an approach of Stakeholder Dialogue and Concerted Action (SDCA), with the assumption that greater stakeholder involvement leads to improved use and

²⁸ CARE International and its country offices in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine, is also the lead partner in the EMPOWERS Partnership.

²⁹ *Water governance* relates to the range of political, social and economic and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources and the delivery of water services at different levels of society. EMPOWERS focuses particularly on local water governance – that is governance at levels ranging from the community to district/governorate.

management of water resources. To this end, the project is developing a participatory planning cycle for Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), see figure below.

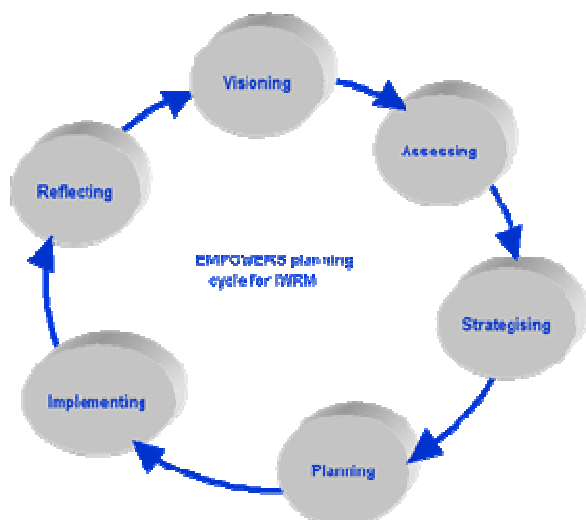


Figure 1: Planning cycle for IWRM

This cycle builds on the identification of water-related problems and the development of area specific long-term visions and strategies. This strategizing process is supported by the collection and analysis of relevant information on water resources, water supply and drainage infrastructure, demand for and access to water services (RIDA) and the validation of this information in semi-quantitative Bayesian Networks (computer software). EMPOWERS also develops the necessary capacity and systems within local government to manage, share and make effective use of the information collected. The aim of this planning cycle is to support stakeholders at local and intermediate levels in making the technical and political decisions to develop and manage their water resources within a commonly agreed future vision. The EMPOWERS stakeholder and planning cycle approach is described in more detail in Working Papers that can be accessed at the EMPOWERS Website: www.empowers.info.

Since 2003, the EMPOWERS approaches are being tested and developed in the Governorates of Balqa (Jordan) and Jenin (Palestine), and in Ihnazia District in Beni Suef Governorate in Egypt. Within each governorate/district it is also being tested in three selected communities (see the relevant case studies presented in this symposium).

At the time of this symposium the four-year programme is about half way and in the process of closing an important phase of learning and methodology development. Much of this experience is captured in a series of Working Papers, mentioned under the references to this paper. The last two years will be used for consolidation of the approaches and methodologies and making them replicable for use after the project.

Scope and make-up of the EMPOWERS Partnership team

The EMPOWERS project is funded to the tune of approximately 5 million Euros, of which approximately 4 million is earmarked for methodology development, and only one for the implementation of piloting activities on the ground. The importance of this small but not insignificant amount in generating stakeholder buy-in is discussed later.

To provide a feeling for the scale of the activity being undertaken by EMPOWERS it is worth briefly considering the make-up of the country teams. These consist typically of one full time 'country coordinator', and two full time 'field coordinators', as well as a full time process documenter. In addition to these, each country team works with a part time professional facilitator. The profiles of the members of the country teams vary, but in general a mix of hard and soft skills in project implementation and research were sought. The gender balance of the teams is good in Palestine and

Jordan with a fifty/fifty split, but less so in Egypt, where there is currently only one female member. In practice it has been very difficult to identify the correct mix of skills in the countries, and these have had to be more or less built from scratch. While there is a wealth of technical and classic project management skill available, there is far less in participatory approaches and almost none in action research.

These teams have had the role of implementer, facilitator, and motivator to the learning alliances in each country, as well as by virtue of their make-up also being an important part of the learning alliances. The structure and activities of which are considered in the next section.

Box 1. The EMPOWERS Partnership

In each of the three countries EMPOWERS is developing partnerships with key stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, end-users and the private sector.

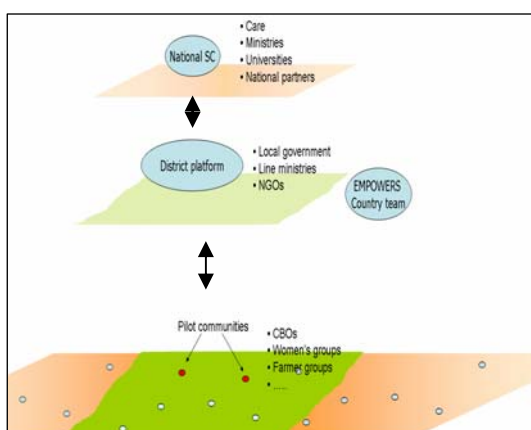
The EMPOWERS Partnership is facilitated by the following direct partners:

- International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC), Delft, The Netherlands
- Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resources Development and Management (INWRDAM) in Amman, Jordan
- Water Department of Ministry of Agriculture in Jordan
- Zein Al-Sharaf Institute for Development (ZENID) in Amman, Jordan
- Development Research Technology & Planning Centre (DRTPC) at Cairo University, Egypt
- National Water Research Centre/ Ministry of Water Resources & Irrigation in Egypt
- Egyptian Water Partnership (EWP) in Cairo, Egypt
- Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) in Ramallah, Palestine
- Palestine Hydrology Group (PHG) in Ramallah, Palestine
- CARE International in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine

The EMPOWERS Partnership is supported by CARE UK, CARE Nederland and CARE USA

In the three countries different institutional arrangements have taken form. Where in Egypt the Partnership seems to follow a service-provider model, in Palestine it has a solid base in three NGOs with equal responsibilities, while in Jordan it seems to be a healthy mix of NGOs and a Government Agency. The different nature of the three CARE Country Offices (the lead partners) has also its effect on the type of Partnership. Where in Jordan and Palestine the non-CARE partners assume an important role in the development and guidance of the project, in Egypt the Partnership is essentially dominated by the CARE Country Office.

Learning alliances for SDCA and scaling-up



EMPOWERS has consciously adopted a learning alliance structure as defined in the background paper to this conference (Moriarty et al. 2005), with clear platforms created at national, governorate/district, and local level. This learning alliance structure is at the same time following a multi-stakeholder approach for social organization and innovation as has been described by Engel (1997). This section will describe these platforms, as well as the links between them. The bulk of work is carried out at the intermediate and local level, and the teams are based primarily in the governorate/district although also maintaining a foothold in the capital.

National level

The national level element of the EMPOWERS learning alliances is provided by project steering committees in each country. These committees involve the principal governmental stakeholders at the most senior level, as well as senior representatives of the partners in each country, and have been essential in obtaining the necessary authorisations for lower level stakeholders to take part.

These Steering Committees serve to advise EMPOWERS and be instrumental in the later scaling-up of approaches developed and tested. Especially in Jordan and Palestine much interest is demonstrated from Government officials to start replicating the EMPOWERS approaches in other Governorates. The Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) is moreover very interested in finding an institutional place within the institutional framework in Palestine for the process facilitation proposed by EMPOWERS. EMPOWERS is invited to assist PWA in developing reflection around such a possible Water Facilitation Body.

Governorate/District level

Box 2 gives an overview of the members of the stakeholder platforms established at governorate and district level in each of the three countries. Typically, all of these stakeholders are also represented on the national level committee.

Box 2. Stakeholder platforms in EMPOWERS

| Egypt | Jordan | Palestine |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation (Gov.) • National Water Research Centre (Gov.) • Ministry of Agriculture (Gov.) • Potable Water Authority in Beni Suef Governorate (Gov.) • DRTPC/University of Cairo (Uni.) • Egyptian Water Partnership • CARE Egypt (INGO) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Water and Irrigation (Gov.) • Ministry of Agriculture (Gov.) • Ministry of Social Development (Gov.) • Ministry of Interior in Balqa Governorate (Gov.) • Ministry of Planning (Gov.) • INWRDAM (Islamic Network for Water Resource Development and Management) (RC) • JoHUD/ZENID (NGO) • CARE Jordan (INGO) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) (Gov.) • Ministry of Agriculture (Gov.) • Ministry of Local Government (Gov.) • Ministry of Environment (Gov.) • Palestine Hydrological Group (NGO) • Union of Agricultural Work Committees (NGO) • CARE WBG (INGO) |

Note: In bold face the 11 EMPOWERS partners facilitating the SDCA in the three countries. Non-bold face are key stakeholders.. Gov. = Governmental; NGO = Local non-governmental organisation; INGO = International NGO; RC = resource centre; Uni. = University. The entire Regional Programme of EMPOWERS is supported by IRC and CARE International

A conscious and structured effort has been made to involve early-on those stakeholders that are considered key to the implementation and sustainability of the programme. These key stakeholders have been identified (October – December 2003) and are participating right from the beginning in the direct planning and implementation of activities. In short they consist of Ministries of Water, Agriculture and Local Government. From February 2004 the focus of the programme has shifted from Governorate level to Community level. In all three countries three target communities have been selected to represent main issues in the Governorate.

A very motivated group of key stakeholders are now part of the broader EMPOWERS Partnership, especially in Jordan and Palestine (see Box 2). They form part and parcel of the implementation of EMPOWERS activities, especially at the Governorate/District and community levels. The same applies to key representatives of community organizations in the nine selected target communities.

Village/town level

Initial work in villages and towns has been with a mix of individuals and local organisations identified during the early stages of problem identification and PRA. Establishing a more formal representative body for water management in the village or town is often one of the main recommendations of early work with the community. In most of the involved communities more direct relationships have been

established with Village Councils, CDAs, and other organizational structures within the community. Further work has started to identify specific target groups and their possible organizations, especially among women and the poorest sections of a community.

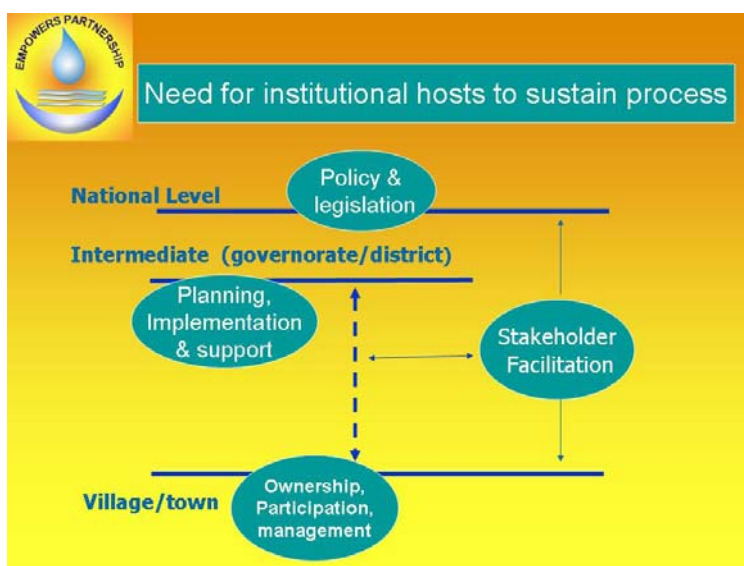
How EMPOWERS works – action research at local and intermediate level

EMPOWERS is adopting a classic action research approach (as set out in, for example, O'Brien 1995) of cycles of planning, implementing and reflecting backed by strong process documentation. It is doing this with country teams made up of full and part-time staff from the partners, primarily international and local NGOs, but including local government (in Jordan) and University (in Egypt) personnel. In addition to its three country teams, EMPOWERS also has a regional coordination and dissemination team of three people based in Ramallah and Amman.

In practice this means periods of working with and apart from stakeholders at both intermediate and village level in a series of workshops and less formal interactions. A key aim of the EMPOWERS approach to creating a learning alliance has been to involve governorate level stakeholders in work in the villages, and vice-versa, bringing together local government officials and end-users, often for the first time. The team has at all times been open with all members of the learning alliance about the experimental and learning focussed nature of the work, although this has also led to problems as discussed in the next section.

Progress and lessons learned

Need for facilitation capacity to be institutionalised



The participatory planning process being developed by EMPOWERS relies on many factors to be successful, most important amongst which are the existence of adequate and adequately shared information, good channels for communication, capacity of key stakeholders to fulfil their roles, and most important an ongoing process of open and constructive dialogue between all stakeholders. This latter is crucial as, in the most fundamental sense, water resource management and water service provision are political processes, and these can only be successful through effective dialogue. However, it would be naïve to assume

that such dialogues can be maintained and facilitated by the stakeholders themselves (Laban et al, 2005). The stakes are too high, the conflicts of interest too ingrained, and the opportunities for the abuse of power too many. Because of this it has become clear that a critical step in ensuring the sustainability of the approaches developed by EMPOWERS will be the identification of host agencies for the facilitation role. It has become evident that embarking on a highly participatory planning process - involving a wide range of different stakeholders at different levels – cannot go without much more emphasis on the skills and capacities needed to facilitate such a process. In Palestine, the current partners can be considered able to take up such a role (PHG, CARE WBG and UAWC), when their process facilitation capacities would be further increased. Discussions in Jordan with partners and key stakeholders have led to invite the Zein Al-Sharaf Institute for Development (ZENID) to become a member of the Partnership. ZENID is a facilitation, training and social analysis institute under the umbrella of JoHUD, a NGO that manages and supports 52 Community Development Centers all over

the Kingdom. It seems particularly apt to take up this complex new role in the water sector. In Egypt important delays have led to a situation where still no decisions are taken.

The work in EMPOWERS has identified a fundamental structural weakness in both local government and NGO staff in facilitation capacities. This seems to be a general observation for the countries of the Middle East, where a long history of centralised and top down management has led inevitably to disempowered actors at intermediate and local level. Often technically skilled but unused to taking part in serious planning, decision making, or facilitation processes. This reflects also on project core staff and staff of key stakeholders, where because of this initial weakness it was necessary to identify and involve professional facilitators in the second year of project activities.

Lessons learned on required staff

It has proven to be important not to rush recruitment of implementation staff. Delayed recruitment and a budget revision have made it possible to adapt staff profiles as best as possible to the needs of an evolving programme (profiles of field coordinators, documentation/communication specialist instead of webmaster; and new process documentation specialists and facilitation coaches).

In view of general staff capacities in Middle Eastern countries, especially with regard to genuine participatory approaches and facilitation processes, more time and budget was needed for basic training of partner staff in WRA, scenario building, facilitation skills, participatory planning, stakeholder analysis, PRA and participatory innovation.

To speed up the start of similar future projects, it may be considered to either start identifying candidates for key positions before final approval of the donor, or to give more time for the inception phase. In the case of EMPOWERS a no cost extension of 6 months at the end of the project needs to be considered.

Lessons learned on methodology development

Absorption capacity of involved staff (partners and key stakeholders) of a wide range of new tools and approaches has been over-estimated. Closer coaching by supporting partners (IRC) in between field visits through electronic communication has recently been put in place. Closer involvement of management of the lead partner and its country offices, apart from the oversight and methodological guidance by the Regional Coordinator, would have been desirable.

Nevertheless, this period has seen an increase in confidence of the country teams in the use of methodologies that are being developed and piloted by the project. The fine-tuning and clarifying of approaches and methodologies in the first eighteen months of EMPOWERS was an important learning exercise. The putting into practice of this planning approach could not have been possible without re-adjustments and a certain degree of confusion.

Availability of accurate data within relevant organizations seems to be an important constraint (especially in Egypt), often compounded by contradictions in data from different sources. It is one of the functions of the EMPOWERS approach to facilitate the checking and validating of these data through triangulation. Community information acquired through PRA is often very valuable in this process.

The necessary time investment in methodological approach is certainly justified, as it is leading to the production of key project outputs. The time and effort (initial workshops and work meetings) taken to sharpen vision and understanding of EMPOWERS has proved to be a critical and important investment in the programme. Its development towards an iterative planning cycle approach can be considered as a significant achievement in a relatively short period.

If such a programme/process would be implemented in other countries, it is important to recognize the need for a decent length learning/methodology development phase (of about 18 months) before really

getting going. In neighbouring countries in the Middle East/North Africa Region such a period may be shorter, as it will be easier here to capitalize on the learning process in EMPOWERS.

Lessons learned in the involvement of key stakeholders

More thought had to be given in the project proposal to the practical implications (methodological space, staff and budget) of heavily involving key stakeholders in the programme (this has been accommodated in the revised budget approved early in year 2).

Careful identification and selection of stakeholders remains critical. More space and staff for preliminary analysis, and more structured hands-on training of implementing staff, in stakeholder analysis tools, such as RAAKS (Engel & Salomon, 1997) and problem tree facilitation, would have increased impact at an earlier stage. Measures are taken in year two to bring such knowledge and experience up to required levels.

The use of Metaplan for problem analysis (problem trees of logical sequences of causes and effects) at the Governorate and village levels has been very instrumental and beneficial for the 'buying in' of key-stakeholders and in the sharing and structuring of ideas. It has been quite an eye opener to government officials that it is possible and effective to discuss such issues openly and across institutional boundaries.

The open ambiance of the participatory stakeholder workshops and meetings has already proven helpful in finding shared opinions and commitment to the programme. The high and genuine interest shown by all key stakeholders involved at this stage of the programme may be considered as one, if not the most important achievement to date.

The process of working with and building the capacity of line departments and other partners is progressing well. In Jordan and Palestine discussions have started on the extent to which the EMPOWERS planning and information process can be adopted by line departments in the same and other Governorates.

Being open in communicating uncertainty to partners has been critical and sometimes difficult. One of the struggles so far has been to get either teams or partners into a real 'inquiry and learning' mode. Especially in the first year, it has been difficult for the country teams to actively experiment with proposed methodologies and adapt them to their own local insights and specific conditions. Rather, the teams wait for conceptual lead from RC/IRC, while the key stakeholders, on their turn, wait on it from the teams. A frequent complaint from the teams has been 'you keep altering what we are doing which makes us look weak in front of the key stakeholders' – implying that the team are making a false proposition about their own certainty to the key stakeholders. Over time this has strongly altered and especially the core teams and key stakeholders are now in a phase of taking up ownership and initiative to adjust tools and methodologies.

Lessons learned in Stakeholder Dialogue and Concerted Action

An important eye-opener when starting effective implementation of a planning process have been the problem tree methodology (META Plan) facilitating in a visual and participatory way a problem analysis in the water sector. The problem trees (cause and effect networks) opened an important dialogue among stakeholders and at the same time gave a priority focus for data collection in the subsequent Light Water Resource Assessment (LWRA). Problem trees have been introduced at both the Governorate and Village levels. Confrontation of these not all together similar trees was a learning experiment in itself and has provoked sometimes heated discussions on different perceptions and priorities on water issues between representatives of these different levels. The problem trees have been instrumental in providing EMPOWERS a problem focused approach and creating a preliminary picture of interrelated concerns.

Hands-on capacity building in a learning-by-doing mode has been characteristic for EMPOWERS during these first eighteen months. It has been received in a very positive way by both governmental

and non-governmental staff, community representatives and the project core teams. This learning-by-doing has greatly contributed to reducing the gaps between all stakeholders, while clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each party. This has certainly led to better cooperation and effectiveness and high commitment of all involved.

In general, and as signalled already, it was necessary to strengthen facilitation capacity of both partners and key stakeholders. The recent involvement of more experienced facilitators coaching the team in their work, helping them to design effective workshops, coaching the team members when facilitating and filling in the blanks when needed has certainly helped the programme to make an important quality step.

Another key role/issue is the pro-poor focus and the gender focus. It is important to create a genuine commitment in the teams to adopting a pro-poor and gender sensitive right-based approach, and as importantly, to provide them with the tools to do this. These issues will be taken up in year 3.

Although country teams are now using innovative methodologies, there is a concern that too much of the actual planning/stakeholder process is being compressed in intensive short workshops. Lessons to be drawn here are:

- Tools (planning methodologies) might be more easily embraced by stakeholders than the (facilitation) skills needed to implement them.
- Stakeholder processes must proceed at a pace that is dictated by the stakeholders and not the outside agency.
- Awareness raising and overcoming resistance to change is a long process.
- Several iterations may be needed with any step of the planning cycle before real progress is achieved.
- Progress will vary from community to community. This fact makes scheduling inter-community planning workshops sometimes difficult.
- The planning and stakeholder dialogue process needs to become more organic, using workshops merely as key moments for reaching consensus and overall decision-making.

Lessons learned on Process Documentation

For a programme that is in essence driven by a process approach it is essential to take the necessary time and structured efforts to fine-tune, to learn and internalize and to further innovate the proposed approaches and methodologies with core partners and key stakeholders. It is essential that this happens through coordinated brainstorm meetings and hands-on learning workshops.

The strongest arguments for the project are its participatory and inclusive planning; information sharing between levels and sectors; and stakeholder approaches. This will however only become clear through positive examples that can be clearly seen as leading to 'better' outcomes than existing approaches. Defining the success-stories by the team, and looking for these success-stories should be a key activity for EMPOWERS. However, the 'newness' of process documentation as an integral part of development projects (very few elaborated examples in the world) has certainly created a certain number of difficulties for implementing staff. RC and IRC will continue to give this much attention and support.

It has become clear in these last months that public awareness has to become another important aspect and approach in the EMPOWERS project. Systematic campaigns will be planned and developed in cooperation and with real participation of the key stakeholders in the coming two years.

The role of the country team – facilitator, motivator, implementer, donor or learner?

As part of this intensive learning process, it was often not easy for the EMPOWERS teams to remain an impartial facilitator, and not get too involved in the content of that what was being discussed. Because of this the "outsider" role of a facilitator was at times mixed up with the role of technical expert and project implementer. More awareness on this 'outsider-role' is still needed when facilitating somebody else's process (the process of the stakeholders!). By force the country teams

have been operating first of all in both a “learning-itself” and “motivator-of-others” role. There was no time (and budget) foreseen in the project frame to get into more in-depth capacity building of the core teams prior to on the ground implementation of the process. Where this has been felt as a constraint, it has proven to have also positive aspects. Key stakeholders were involved right from the start in the methodology development process, enhancing their feeling of ownership for it. Most of the methodologies proposed and developed are not new but adaptations of existing ones (PRA, problem tree analysis, RAAKS, visioning and scenario building, WRA, etc). Finding the right mix and sequence is probably most effectively done in a learning-by-doing process, again creating greater ownership for the result among all core players involved. It may well be that prior capacity building of core teams and implementation with stakeholders afterwards would have taken more time than now and be perceived as imposed upon by the key stakeholders in government and communities. The steep learning process of the core teams and the initiating role to get the project implemented has of course been at odds with a more independent role of facilitator of the stakeholder process. The consolidation phase of the coming two years has to be used to make this shift from implementer to facilitator. For sustainability and replicability of the approaches it will become increasingly important for key stakeholders and key facilitators to take the driver seat of the EMPOWERS approaches. The EMPOWERS core teams will have to adapt to a new role of merely facilitating that this will happen. The selection and guidance of the pilot projects have created new demands on the core teams, that of the role of donor and supervisor. Initiatives are undertaken to reduce that responsibility, also to keep time free for the facilitation of the programme.

Conclusions and challenges ahead

Identifying institutional homes for facilitation skills

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing the EMPOWERS country teams is to ensure the smooth transition from a funded project to ensuring long term sustainability in terms of institutionalized processes. It has become clear, in particular, that the legitimacy of the role of process facilitator – supporting the stakeholders at governorate and end-user level to work together effectively is crucial. To ensure this legitimacy it will be necessary for the facilitation role to be carried out by an independent actor or institution. Identifying the long term holders of this role is a great challenge for the project and on good track in Jordan and Palestine.

Developing the skills of the country teams – a precursor to creating an engine for sustainability and continued change.

It has taken nearly two years to develop both the methodology, and the capacity of the project teams (an alliance of several local and regional organisations) to implement it, to a point where they are competent and confident to apply the methodology without external support. The next step will be to develop their capacity to spread their knowledge to other stakeholders within the EMPOWERS districts, and in the longer term more widely within their countries.

In the background paper to this conference, Moriarty et al (2005) talk about the need for a Learning Alliance to have an ‘engine’ to move it forward. A group of people (and in this case it is individuals rather than institutions that is important) who have a vision of how progress can come about and who encourage and support others in working towards it. However, this engine itself has to be created. What we have seen in EMPOWERS is that there is a delicate balance between the ideal of every member of the alliance being involved fully in a process of learning, and the reality that some will be more keen on change than others, that some will actively lead, while others resist. In each country we have seen this evolve differently, with the initial involvement often being based as much on personal links and interest as on any institutional decisions. In the EMPOWERS project it still has to be seen what time it would take to turn the ‘vision’ of a very small group of individuals involved in writing a project proposal to the EU into a concrete approach, and the skills to apply it, in a relatively large group of people from diverse institutional and professional backgrounds scattered across three countries and with a regional/international element.

Over the two years of project implementation the relative weight of partners in developing the innovation has changed. In the early days, the main conceptual drive was coming from IRC and the Regional Coordinator. The first task in developing the learning alliance was therefore to develop the country teams and their capacity to take on the primary role of facilitator, motivator and implementer of the process. This has now been largely affected, and the role of the external partners has changed to one of punctual support. The second task is for the country teams – and their closest national collaborators – to do the same for the wider group of governorate and national stakeholders.

Developing the skills and tools for a genuine participatory planning process that can be replicated in a cost- and time-effective way is probably a process that will take more time than a 4 year project. The project, as initial results and government interest in Jordan and Palestine seem to indicate, should probably be considered as a catalyser to get it going. With country teams is meant the broader teams of project-hired staff and closely involved representatives of key stakeholders and local communities. Sustaining and replicating approaches developed and tested by EMPOWERS and up-scaling them to other Districts (in Egypt) and Governorates will certainly require important further capacity building. To ensure this to happen it is key that in each country there is an engine to continue the learning, facilitation and capacity building process by the end of the project. EMPOWERS is working on this by getting on board the key institutions (and within them the individual drivers) for planning, decision-making and policy as well as the institutions that may take-up the facilitation and capacity building.

Developing draft Guidelines and training materials

Developing guidelines and training materials is considered a major output of the project. How to use them and how to scale up in a way that does not lose sight of the continuous need for facilitation and SDCA will be a big challenge. Draft guidelines and training materials, based on the working papers (partly available on EMPOWERS website www.empowers.info) will need to be developed in time for testing in the consolidation phase of the project.

Synergy – how useful it has been

The stakeholder process (SDCA) as described above is used here as the approach to social organization for the implementation of the EMPOWERS planning cycle for IWRM and improved water governance. The two main approaches of EMPOWERS: the Planning Cycle Framework and the SDCA approach cannot be separated. They have to be considered as two intrinsically connected components creating together the synergy to make the overall approach of EMPOWERS functional, replicable and sustainable; they are the twin pillars upon which improved water governance and IWRM stand. A stakeholder approach without a focused and structured interest (a planning framework in our case) will not mobilize people and institutions for the longer time-spans essential to both water resource management and water service provision. At the same time a technically sound planning framework will miss the point if key actors are left out during negotiation, planning and decision-making. The Planning Cycle Framework provides this underlying interest and structure, to underpin an SDCA approach to IWRM.

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