

Editorial

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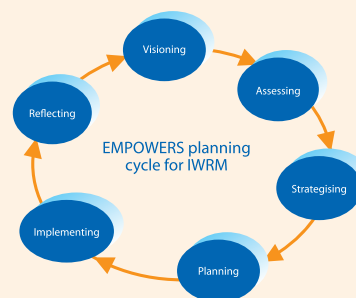
Why should people care about water?

It seems a question with an obvious answer. People need water for everything in their daily lives whether for agriculture, crop irrigation, cooking, house cleanliness, washing, to water plants in the garden, to drink, or to take a bath. Maybe a better question could be: Can people take care of their water resources? In other words, do people have the means to ensure that water resources and infrastructure for their community or households are taken care of? Is it possible for people to make sure that water resources are clean, functional, and providing enough water and at reasonable price? In more technical terms, do people have the capacity, knowledge, rights, and influence, to contribute to the best management of their water resources (whether springs, wells, a drinking water network, or an irrigation channel, etc.), so they can receive maximum benefit?

In EMPOWERS we are convinced that basically, people are very well aware of the need to manage their water resources efficiently. In Palestine for example there is water shortage not only because of the scarcity of resources. The oppressive and illegitimate Israeli Occupation of Palestinian land led to a scarcity of water resources that reach unacceptable levels. Nevertheless, also in Palestine, local communities are looking for ways to better use and manage their water resources. The people feel highly responsible for water consumption in their own local context. However, most of the time, the conditions are not always helpful to enable people to take care of their water resources, or to feel responsible for its use and management. Do people really feel accountable for the use and management of water resources and the infrastructure that serves their needs? In many cases people feel helpless and unable to assume such responsibility. This could be because people are not sure about the rights and access they have to a water source or to a water network, and sometimes they are not convinced that they can benefit from these water sources and infrastructure for the price they are paying. Sometimes they feel disempowered because there are many questions they cannot address on their own, and they feel they lack the capacity and knowledge to best manage a certain type of water source or infrastructure. Indeed as in many other situations of natural resource management, people would like to take up the responsibility but they cannot do so. In EMPOWERS we want to know more about the subtle reasons why people are often unable to assume responsibility for the management of their water resources. In the coming year we will conduct more studies on water rights and access.

Keywords in EMPOWERS Insight

- EMPOWERS Partnership
- Integrated Water Resources Management
- Sustainable Development
- MEDA Water Programme
- Local Water Governance
- Stakeholders Dialogue
- Concerted Actions
- Knowledge Community
- Pilot Project
- IWRM Planning Cycle
- Middle East and North Africa
- Participatory Approach



What is EMPOWERS?

The Euro-Med Participatory Water Resources Scenarios (EMPOWERS) is a four-year (2003 - 2007) regional programme in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine. EMPOWERS is a partnership that seeks to introduce improved local water governance which will lead to better long-term access to water by populations currently suffering from the scarcity of this essential natural resource. This Partnership is introducing such improvement through developing participatory planning approaches and involving all stakeholders and end-users in the making of important decisions about water, and by enhancing dialogue and concerted actions. The EMPOWERS teams work on establishing stronger cooperation between stakeholders, improving multilevel decision making, and empowering citizens and institutions at intermediate and community levels. Through these efforts EMPOWERS Partnership is promoting local level, Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) by which all water uses and applications are to be handled in an integrated manner. To attain these objectives, EMPOWERS invests a lot of work in building the capacities of local communities for IWRM, while involving national level stakeholders as to harmonize between local activities and national policies.

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