



Palestine

The Thrill of Running Water

Mona and Raaed Mahmoud Abourob turn the tap on to get water for tea. When Mona wants to do some cleaning, she fills a bucket. A few flowers grow in the dry red earth of their garden and they can cut their own mint for their tea.

For people living in the UK, none of this is remarkable - but for them it is a minor miracle.

Until recently Mona had to go to her father-in-law's house to carry water back to her own family house in Jalboun, a village in the hills about 12 km east of Jenin city in the West Bank.

Now she has a well in her garden, dug as part of the EMPOWERS water project that is transforming lives across the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan and Egypt.

"Before the EMPOWERS project helped us dig our well, it was very hard for me to provide my house with water. I had to carry water from my father-in-law's house to our family house.

"This took a lot of time and work and I couldn't use the water as I wanted to, to clean the house or wash clothes, because I had to save as much water as I could," said Mona.

"Before the project we had no water in the tap, like we do now. Now we own our own washing machine, and I can plant some mint and flowers as I have a source of water to irrigate them."

CARE is a partner in EMPOWERS, a major European Commission-funded programme that aims to improve long-term access to water and management of water supplies, particularly for marginalised groups.

Before the 1948 war, the people in Jalboun relied on water carried from the Mujada'a spring which was then located within the boundaries of the village area, and whose water they preserved in cisterns.

However after the Israeli occupation, the lack of groundwater wells or springs in the village forced the inhabitants to collect and store water during the rainy months in individual cisterns used by each family or public ones used by several families.

Now the water situation remains the same, with the main source being individual cisterns. In dry months and after the stored rainwater runs out, villagers have to buy water that is brought in tankers from private, agricultural wells in nearby villages.

Source: www.careinternational.org.uk



Towards ownership and self-reliance

Yesterday I joined the Palestinian EMPOWERS team when they visited the village councils and women centres of two new communities in Jenin: Arraneh and Beit Qad. The people in these two communities have been working since May 2006 with EMPOWERS and governorate staff on analysing their water situation, envisioning what they would like to have changed in the coming seven to ten years and planning and deciding on small community water projects on the short term. In the short meetings with them I was asking myself and them what are the "things" that have surprised them and what they see as a benefit in working this short period with EMPOWERS. The following is only part of their story but reveals "things" that I also saw happening in the communities working with EMPOWERS in Jordan and Egypt.

- "We see the benefit of deeper reflecting and analysing the water situation in our village; and we can do this now ourselves also for other issues".
- "It is possible to identify our own needs (and not just implement the agenda of a donor) and put them as priorities for a project".
- "We have learned to be more realistic and plan for the water activities that we can do ourselves or that are within our own reach; and not dream only of things which are not possible in the shorter term".
- "Involving everybody in the village in the reflection, planning and decision-making process is much better for the whole village".

What became apparent also is that they feel the above is important as they cannot count really on the government for having things done; and that is because the government cannot do everything.

Peter Laban/ RC EMPOWERS
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