

EMPOWERS – a partnership to support stakeholder dialogues for improved water governance in Egypt, Jordan and the West Bank and Gaza

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Abstract

The EMPOWERS partnership is working in Egypt, the West Bank and Jordan to develop the knowledge, methodologies and tools necessary for effective local water governance, based on the hypothesis that this can best be achieved through a structured process of stakeholder dialogue. To do this, it is supporting knowledge communities at the governorate and village/small-town level to support government and involving non-government, government and end-user stakeholders. These knowledge communities are together developing locally appropriate tools and approaches for the development and implementation of locally owned water development plans. At the regional level, EMPOWERS also supports a regional information office that disseminates the work of the EMPOWERS partnership and links other actors involved in improving local water management across the region.

Early indications two years into the project are that the initial hypothesis is correct, and that enabling and supporting processes of stakeholder dialogue can indeed lead to improved programmes for water service delivery and water resource management. At the same time there are also encouraging indications that the use of knowledge communities can help in the development of tools and methodologies that are locally appropriate and owned, and therefore suitable for replication and scaling-up.

Introduction

This paper has been prepared for the EMPOWERS Regional Symposium on End-User Ownership and Involvement in Integrated Water Resources Management held in Cairo in November 2005. The aim of the paper is to serve as an introduction and companion to EMPOWERS and as background to other more detailed papers presented in the symposium.

The countries of the Middle-East and North Africa (MENA) are one of the most difficult environments in the world in which to provide and water services and managed water resources. This is, in large part, due to a combination of low naturally occurring freshwater resources, dynamic population growth, and changing patters of demand for water. The World Bank supports many of the papers prepared for the symposium when it says that the region is the most water scarce in the world.

“Today, average per capita water availability in the region is about 1,200 cubic meters per year (world average is close to 7,000). The annual water availability in the region ranges from a high of about 1,800 cubic meters per person in Iran to less than 200 cubic meters per person in Jordan, West Bank/Gaza, and Yemen. By 2025, the regional average water availability is projected to be just over 500 cubic meters/person/year.” (World Bank, 2004)

EMPOWERS, which stands for Euro-Mediterranean Water Resource Scenarios, is a European Union (MEDA) funded project working in three MENA countries: Egypt, Jordan and Palestine. Currently funded as a project, EMPOWERS is a partnership of 8 international and national organisations¹, led by Care International and its country offices in the three countries. The EMPOWERS project started in mid 2003 and will run until mid 2007, and has a budget of some 5.4 million Euros.

EMPOWERS simple but ambitious mission is to change the way that the scarce water resources of the three EMPOWERS countries – and eventually the region – are managed so that this becomes more effective, equitable, and sustainable. To achieve this goal, EMPOWERS is focussing on water governance² at the local level – the governorate, district and village/municipality; increasingly recognised as crucial and at the same time uniquely challenging for both water service provision (Lockwood, 2004); and water resource management (v. Ittersum and v. Steenbergen, 2003). EMPOWERS is working with a wide range of governmental and non-governmental partners and stakeholders to develop methodologies and tools that will support stakeholder involvement in local governance. And by adopting an approach based on action research it is at the same time developing and institutionalising the knowledge required to use these tools and methodologies effectively beyond the project timeframe.

This document sets out the background to the EMPOWERS project, the rationale behind the approach, and the twin pillars that support the approach being implemented; a process of stakeholder dialogue structured around a programme cycle approach based on visioning and scenario building. It briefly reports on the activities undertaken in the first two years of EMPOWERS, and those that are planned for the next two years. Other papers presented in this symposium give greater detail of different elements of the EMPOWERS project, as well as more detailed studies of its application in different countries, and therefore this paper does not attempt to comment on the progress of, or lessons learned within, the project itself. In addition, it is important to underline that what is set out here is a simplified version of the complicated social reality in which the project operates. To gain a better impression of the reality of EMPOWERS readers are encouraged to look not only at the other papers presented during the symposium, but also at the EMPOWERS website (www.empowers.info) where a wide variety of more and less formal materials are available documenting all aspects of the EMPOWERS process.

Status of local water governance in the EMPOWERS partner countries

The three countries in which EMPOWERS is developing its approach to local water governance cover a range of conditions typical of those found in the wider MENA region. These range from Egypt, which in the region is relatively water rich (although

¹ Care International, PHG, ZENID, IRC, INWRDAM, DRTPC, UAWC, Jordanian Min Ag

² Water governance refers to the set of systems that control decision-making with regard to water service delivery and water resource management. Water governance is much more about the way in which decisions are made (i.e. the process: how, by whom and under what conditions decisions are made) than the decisions themselves (Moench et al, 2003).

still water stressed) but highly dependent on the Nile, to Jordan and Palestine – two of the most water scarce countries on the planet. All have high population growth – in the region of 3-4%. All suffer from a fragmented and top down water management system. All have recently committed, more or less strongly, to decentralisation of water management and to increased stakeholder involvement in water service delivery and water resource management.

Perhaps more contentiously, EMPOWERS has found that despite a rhetorical commitment to decentralisation, many of the prerequisites for its effective implementation, including clear definitions of roles and responsibilities, adequate financing, and necessary technical and organisational skills, are largely lacking. And that this is particularly the case at the level local government. This is not to say that within governorates and districts it is impossible to find qualified staff. From a technical point of view the region has a well developed cadre of engineers and managers. What are lacking are the skills (and often motivation) needed to managed, and especially plan, effectively: to identify and take decisions, to use information to underpin choices; to look to the future and plan strategically. Also more generally lacking in the region, is experience in participatory approaches and the involvement (empowerment) of grass-roots stakeholders in decision making processes.

It should be emphasised that while this is the condition that pertains in the EMPOWERS countries (and the MENA region generally), this is a time of change. Were it not, EMPOWERS as a relatively small project could not hope, by itself, to facilitate significant sector reform. Across the region civil society is growing and flexing its muscles, often with the active involvement and support of government. Whether it is the strong NGOs that have emerged in Palestine through the resistance to occupation, the growing movement of water user associations (WUAs) in Egypt, or the network of village CBOs in Jordan, there is a growing body of experience in the region – experience that will be critical for the scaling-up and institutionalisation of EMPOWERS.

At the same time there is a now deeply rooted awareness of the region's water problems, and a widespread acceptance of the principles of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) – particularly the need for integrated planning and better demand management. This awareness is often (although not exclusively – witness Egypt's WUAs), focussed at the national level where efforts to integrate ministries and create overarching water management institutions are well advanced.

This then is the background in which EMPOWERS seeks to act: a water stressed region undergoing significant change in both water management and local governance. A region that is facing great challenges related to management of limited water resources and provision of sustainable water-based services³, where demand for water has increased dramatically during recent years to the extent that, in most areas, it is now outstripping supply.

Given this situation, and that there is limited scope for developing additional or unutilised water resources, the challenge of meeting demand centres on better and

³ Water services refers to irrigation and drainage, as well as domestic water supply and sanitation, and industrial water supplies

more equitable use of what is already available. That is to say, on issues of water governance and, in particular, the decision-making processes that ensure:

- People receive an adequate supply of water to meet their basic needs especially during periods of drought;
- Water is shared in an equitable way, also for under-privileged groups in society
- Water is allocated to the most beneficial uses;
- Environmental and sustainability targets are met;
- Active participation of stakeholders and/or their representatives

The EMPOWERS hypothesis – structured stakeholder involvement leads to improved water governance

The heart of good IWRM is participatory planning; that is, stakeholders making decisions about future activities within the context of achieving shared long-term objectives, based on the analysis and projection of key trends. EMPOWERS is seeking to develop a set of practical planning tools that support an integrated approach to planning for water service delivery and water resource management at the local level.

The core hypothesis, or more correctly belief, underlying the approach adopted by EMPOWERS to developing these tools and methodologies, is that: developing water services and managing water resources in a process of dialogue between all major sectors and users will lead to improved water governance, better and more sustainable service delivery, and greater equity. This belief is underpinned by the second Dublin principle for Integrated Water Resource Management which advocates for management of water at the most appropriate level (GWP TAC, 2000). While this level is often assumed to be the river basin or major aquifer, this is only partially correct. While the basin or aquifer is indeed the correct large scale unit at which to view water and land management issues, it is often too large a scale to deal with problems associated with water service delivery or localised conflict over shared water resources. What is more the basin very seldom conforms to existing administrative boundaries, hence creating the need for new basin level institutions.

The EMPOWERS project therefore seeks to look at the management of water at scales below the basin/aquifer, and working within existing institutional boundaries (villages, towns, districts and governorates). We believe that this bottom up approach to implementing IWRM – what has elsewhere been referred to as ‘light’ IWRM - is important in and of itself, but also has the potential to create or strengthen the necessary institutions and knowledge to enable ‘full IWRM’ (fully integrated management of land and water resources at the river-basin/large-aquifer scale) (Moriarty et al, 2004).

Two often overlooked elements of IWRM are recognition of the role of women as key stakeholders in water, and the importance of water as a social as well as an economic good. EMPOWERS, while taking local level water governance as its overall umbrella, has a specific focus on:

- **Equity:** that is on ensuring fair access to water and water services by the poor

- and, on **gender**: ensuring that the different roles of men and women in water are recognised and included in planning and implementing.

How EMPOWERS is addressing its hypothesis – creating and supporting knowledge communities

The approach that EMPOWERS is adopting to develop these tools is action research within a learning community involving researchers, implementers, government, non-government and end-users at national, intermediate and community level. At its most simple, action research implies working through short cycles of problem analysis, priority-setting, action, and reflection with groups of stakeholders. Research methodologies are applied to support learning and to make it rigorous, rather than to extract information for an external audience. One of the aims of action research is to make the stakeholders the owners both of the learning and also of the outcomes of the learning (for a good overview of the conceptual background to action research see O'Brien, 2001). Action research as it is applied in EMPOWERS is, therefore, an engine of capacity building and change.

In EMPOWERS, action research is carried out by stakeholder groups (called platforms) at national, governorate and local (village/town) level. These groups are facilitated, in each of the three countries, by an EMPOWERS country team and are involved in each step of the development of the EMPOWERS approach. The stakeholder groups consist of: at the national level, a programme steering committee involving key stakeholders, particularly from government; at governorate (or district) level a group of representatives from government and non-government stakeholders who are involved with the EMPOWERS team in working with communities; and at community level by water management groups and sub-groups representing key water users. One of several areas where EMPOWERS is innovative is in applying action research not just at the community level, but also at governorate and national levels. Taken together, this groups is referred to in EMPOWERS as a knowledge community.

One of the important elements of having EMPOWERS funded explicitly as an action research project is that there are sufficient funds available to support the work properly. This contrasts with many projects where 'learning' activities are an under-funded add-on to the main work of implementing capital programmes. The high level of funding has meant that the EMPOWERS country teams supporting the process of action research consist of a full time country coordinator, supported by one or two full time 'field coordinators' and a 'process documentalist'. All staff members are graduate level, and are drawn from the staff of the project partners. These teams are typically divided between the capital and the governorate to enable them to carry out the work of facilitation and advocacy associated with supporting the platforms of the knowledge community. Each team is in addition supported by a senior facilitator/coach who supports the team in workshops and meetings with stakeholders, and also helps in the professional development of the teams. The three teams are furthermore supported by the staff of the International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC), a Regional Coordinator and a two person regional information programme.

Progress in implementing EMPOWERS

The EMPOWERS project started up in the second half of 2003, with the start of recruitment of country teams, and is now at a point of reflection between the end of a first phase, and the start of a second and final one. The first phase of the project consisted of establishing the country teams, and starting to build a shared understanding amongst all stakeholders of the key methodologies and tools to be used, and most importantly of the overall EMPOWERS approach. This was a long process, as skills in key aspects are in short supply: process facilitation, research, action research, planning, process documentation, participatory approaches.

The action research philosophy underpinning the methodology development meant that at the same time as the team was creating a shared understanding of the process, it was also introducing the process to key stakeholders – particularly at the governorate level, and beginning to implement the process with them within a set of ‘pilot’ communities. The outline methodology presented in the following section, and in more detail in the various EMPOWERS working papers, is therefore the outcome of – rather than an input to – to this process.

During this first phase the bulk of the work took place at the level of the village/town, with three of these being chosen for pilot activities in each country. In each of these communities the full cycle has now been worked through, with an agreed water development plan developed and a first set of implementation activities related to these plans carried out, and a second set identified. Each pilot community is now in possession of a ‘water development action plan’ based on a vision, scenarios and strategies worked out by the community in consultation with local government and NGO partners. Currently, these plans are being used by communities to approach potential donors for further funds to carry out additional activities (examples of community action plans can be found at the EMPOWERS website).

At the same time as developing the methodology for village water development plans together with governorate level stakeholders, a parallel process of governorate level planning was being started. Due to the more complex nature of planning at the governorate level this process will continue during the second phase of the project, however one clear need identified at this stage in all governorates/districts is for support on the development and mainstreaming information management and communication systems (including but not limited to GIS and data-bases) to support the process of improved planning and decision making being targeted.

It is beyond the scope of this paper, and in any case still relatively early in the process, to draw definitive lessons about the effectiveness of this approach. Nonetheless, the experience to date has been encouraging, with strong national teams able to generate a high degree of buy-in to the process from government and non-government partners, and promising early indications that the results and outputs (in the form of new approaches to planning) being created are generating genuine interest among national level actors.

It should be underlined that these processes are messy, time consuming and highly iterative. Progress is not made in a series of smooth steps, rather it is a chaotic process of interaction between various groups, false starts and new beginnings,

confusion and disagreement. As we emphasise in the next section, water governance is an essentially political and social process, in which the numbers and data of the 'water manager' has a crucial, but relatively small role to play. This last is a contentious statement, and will not be agreed with by many water professionals. Nonetheless, although this paper is neither the time nor place to go deeply into the theoretical or empirical justifications for it, we believe that its underlying truth has been amply documented elsewhere.

Implementation of a regional information programme

In parallel to the establishment of the country programmes, a regional information programme – staffed by two full time professional staff and hosted by EMPOWERS - partner, INWRDAM, was established. The regional information programme has established a web-site and dissemination policy as well as making links to a wide range of regional activities with whom active efforts to share data are underway, these include: support to the EC-MEDA Water Programme, EMWIS, bi-annual Magazine, Regional Training Workshops on EMPOWERS approaches and this symposium.

The EMPOWERS approach to local water governance - stakeholder dialogue for improved water governance structured according to a participatory planning cycle

As mentioned, the EMPOWERS approach is rooted in the belief that the key to improved water management lies in the involvement of water users in planning and decision making, together with the breaking down of sectoral barriers between those stakeholders responsible for water service delivery and water resource management.

EMPOWERS is addressing this challenge by bringing together (generally) already existing tools and approaches from within and outside the water sector and using them to create country specific local planning frameworks. The this framework is structured around a participatory planning cycle, which is itself used to give structure to a process of stakeholder dialogue. This latter is crucial because, in essence, water governance is about the political process of reaching agreement between different stakeholders with different needs. EMPOWERS aims to support the political process by providing a structure within which information can be used in as objective as possible a manner to reach informed decisions about agreed goals.

The EMPOWERS planning cycle for local IWRM

Project or Programme management cycles are widely recognised and used by many organisations as a way to structure thinking about planning. Many development agencies use them within the context of Objective Oriented Project Planning methodologies (OOPP). As such, a programme cycle was clearly the most logical way to structure the approach and tools being developed (and synthesised) by EMPOWERS. There is also some experience of using PCM approaches within IWRM planning – perhaps the most developed of which is the European Commissions 'Strategic Approach' (EC, 1998) which was an early inspiration for the EMPOWERS approach.

Central to all programme cycle management (PCM) is the idea of managing a decision making process within a clearly defined set of steps, thereby ensuring that decisions are based on a clear and logical flow of thought. In the case of the EMPOWERS planning cycle for IWRM this process leads firstly to the development of village/town, and governorate water development plans (WDPs), and subsequently to the implementation and learning of lessons from activities related to these plans.

However, where the EMPOWERS approach differs from many project cycles is in a) its assumption of the need (and provision) for stakeholder involvement at all phases; and b) in its explicit acknowledgment of uncertainty and future variability, which it addresses by incorporating scenario building into the steps of the cycle. The hybrid framework developed has the potential to be a powerful tool in guiding long term strategic decision making about water development at both local and intermediate level. At the same time the inclusion of scenario and strategy building provides a much needed link between initial problem identification (through problem/objective trees) and logical framework as used in OOPP; an area which in conventional approaches is often quite unsatisfactory.

The key attributes of the EMPOWERS approach to PCM are that:

- It is problem and vision focussed. That is, it addresses clearly identified problems, within the context of achieving a clearly articulated long term vision.
- It sees the creation of a commonly owned and accepted body of key information – qualitative and quantitative - as being essential to the development of effective planning.
- It acknowledges that there will always be multiple paths to resolving problems and achieving visions, and that deciding between them is a political (governance) issue.
- It recognises that different levels of risk are associated with different courses and that effective planning seeks to minimise immediate and long-term risks.
- It brings to the foreground the voice of local communities and end-users and tries to advocate the rights of the underprivileged among them.
- It is designed to support processes of adaptive management.

The EMPOWERS Participatory Water Planning Cycle (PWPC) for IWRM cycle (see Figure 1) consists of six main steps, each of which can be further divided into sub-steps (the inset in figure 1 shows the sub-steps of the initial *Visioning* step). The steps (further elaborated in EMPOWERS Working Paper 3) are as follows:

- **Visioning:** based on an initial identification of stakeholders, work with them to develop a first vision and identify information needs based on a problem tree analysis exercise
- **Assessing:** targeted data collection and analysis based on problem analysis and vision, leading to the creation of a shared information base
- **Strategising:** the development, based on information analysis of different possible future scenarios, and of strategies for meeting the vision under these scenarios
- **Planning:** The development of detailed action plans
- **Implementing:** the execution of plans

- **Reflecting:** documentation of activities and analysis of monitoring and documentation to inform further cycles. Reflection while shown as taking place as a specific step in the cycle is actually present throughout the cycle.

Each of these steps has a series of activities, tools and outputs related to it. The most important tools used during the cycle include: problem tree analysis to identify key problem areas and focus information gathering; water resource assessments (WRA) based on the resource, infrastructure, demand and assessment framework (RIDA); a range of tools from participatory rapid appraisal (PRA) and participatory technology development (PTD) used for information collection and the identification of activities; a range of tools for stakeholder analysis (RAAKS). The WRA is described in EMPOWERS working paper 5; problem tree analysis and stakeholder analysis in working paper 6, and the use of PTD in a forthcoming WP8.

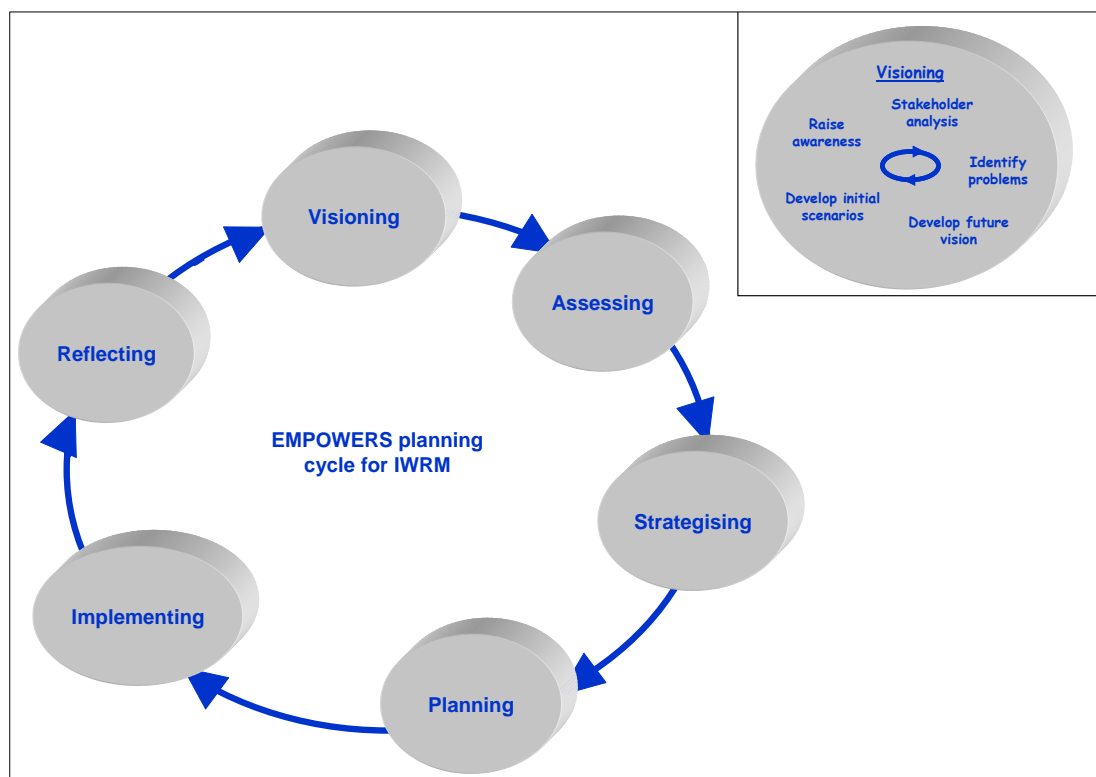


Figure 1 EMPOWERS Participatory Cycle for Water Planning

The first four steps of the planning cycle lead to the development of water development plans, consisting of a vision (describing the desired future state of water services, institutions and resources), preferred strategy and activities for achieving the vision, and a set of scenarios which outline the key assumptions made in the development of the strategies. This is supported by a scenario building process that is set out in more detail in EMPOWERS working paper 4.

Stakeholder dialogue for improved water management

The participatory water planning cycle set out above provides a logical set of steps in which decision making for water service delivery and water resource management can take place. However, water resource management and water governance are fundamentally, and of their nature, political processes. The framework can help to

structure these processes – to give them a form and to help to feed in critical information to those who must make decisions, choices and compromises. But the process of decision making is a human one in which, if it is to have legitimacy and be accepted, those with an interest or stake (or their representatives) must have the opportunity to take part and make their voices heard.

Dialogue and strategic consensus

Therefore, to ensure that this process of negotiation takes place, and to facilitate the involvement in it of the poorest members of the community, the above planning cycle is embedded in a process of stakeholder dialogue. These stakeholders come from a range of sectors, interests and responsibilities at different levels, ranging from national authorities; via government agencies, NGOs and the private sector operating at Governorate, District and Municipality levels; to different end-users of water at the grass-roots level.

It was a hypothesis of the EMPOWERS project, now borne out by much well documented experience, that sharing information, dialogue and joint planning – often in more informal settings – will enhance coordination and cooperation of these actors (concerted action) for concrete activities in the water sector, be it irrigation, drinking water provision or sanitation.

This dialogue is facilitated by the EMPOWERS country teams, who help the different stakeholders to make explicit the different opinions, perceptions, preoccupations, assumptions, and judgments that they bring to their understanding of water. The teams also help to identify the information needed and to make it available in a usable form at key junctures in the process of negotiating and decision making. This process is referred to as Stakeholder Dialogue and Concerted Action (SDCA)

The objectives of SDCA, as it is being applied in EMPOWERS, can be summarized as:

- A comprehensive understanding of the social organization needed in IWRM
- A shared and clear vision of the stakeholders for IWRM at national and local level.
- A shared understanding of the actual roles and responsibilities of the relevant stakeholders in IWRM.
- Identifying other potential stakeholders with clear potential future roles and responsibilities.
- Agreement of key stakeholders to a greater emphasis on pro-poor and right-based approaches
- Suggestions for improvements in IWRM and a shared vision of how to implement these improvements.
- A shared and validated information base, as a basis for action planning

(for more detail on SDCA and how it is implemented in EMPOWERS see Working Paper 6)

Again, it is beyond the scope of this paper to comment in detail on the experiences of using the EMPOWERS approach in practice. However, it is worth mentioning that even in this relatively early stage of the project the use of the cycle by stakeholders at both governorate and community level has been successful and highly appreciated. Evidence of this is provided by a number of stakeholders – from both levels – taking

up the approach and using it for other activities – both water related and outside the water sector. Many of these experiences are detailed on the EMPOWERS web-site.

Looking to the future - next steps for EMPOWERS

As mentioned, EMPOWERS is now entering its second phase. The Cairo symposium is part of a process of reflection and lesson learning taking place at the end of the first phase, and intended to give direction to the work of phase two. This second phase will consist of two main focuses: further replication and systematisation of the approach developed in phase one; and, institutionalisation of the approach at the governorate and national level.

Replication and systematisation in villages and at the governorate level

In the remaining two years of the project, the country programmes will focus on consolidation and replication of the village level approach, and further development and systematising of the approach at governorate level.

At the village level this will mean the finalisation and testing of guidelines for the development of village level WDPs in a further set of pilot villages in each governorate and the implementation of the steps of the planning cycle as set out above, using a set of draft guidelines currently being developed in Arabic and English, and based on the working paper series.

At the governorate level the focus will be on establishing the necessary institutional structures to support the village level processes, and to embed them within a governorate level plan, that is itself nested within (and coherent within) the context of national water policy. This work will include the development of information management systems at the governorate level to underpin improved integrated planning and decision making but, the emphasis of the work will be on the institutional arrangements and behavioural change necessary for improved water governance. By the end of the second phase guidelines and training materials will have been finalised to systematise the governorate level approach so that it can be replicated in other governorates.

Institutionalisation of the approach at governorate and national level

The whole reason for the embedding of the development of the EMPOWERS approach within a knowledge community was to ensure that the approaches developed were genuinely owned by the EMPOWERS partners and stakeholders and therefore likely to be institutionalised and widely adopted at governorate and national levels. There are already – as reported in other EMPOWERS papers in this symposium – several promising signs that this is indeed happening, with both government and non-government partners picking up the approach and starting to use it for further water and non-water related activities.

Nonetheless, institutionalisation of a new approach – especially one as radically different from current practise as EMPOWERS - will continue to demand concerted effort for the next two years. This effort will require three main sets of activities. The first, related to the governorates in which EMPOWERS is working, will be to ensure that the current work of developing village water development plans will be adopted

and continued by governorate level partners once the project ends. To this end, the EMPOWERS project will ensure that part of the governorate water development plan (mentioned above) includes a realistic plan to also develop plans for all villages and municipalities within the governorate.

The second step is to identify an institutional home(s) for the key facilitation work carried out by the EMPOWERS team. Trusted intermediaries between all stakeholders are essential for the approach to work, and essential for the process of stakeholder dialogue and concerted action to succeed. It is not realistic to expect one of the government stakeholders to play this role (due to the obvious conflict of interests involved). Identifying an independent and credible entity – most probably an NGO – who would be able to provide support to further village and governorate level processes is therefore essential to the institutionalisation of EMPOWERS.

Finally, for the approach to be fully institutionalised with the three countries, it will be necessary for national level stakeholders – currently involved in the EMPOWERS steering committees – to play a role in advocacy within the institutions and organisations. There are, again, encouraging signs that this is already taking place, and success at the governorate level during phase two will add a powerful impetus to advocacy efforts.

Summary and conclusions

Integrated Water Resource Management while widely accepted as the paradigm for good water governance has also been attacked as a vague set of philosophical aims that lacks the practical tools to make it functional (see for example Biswas, 2004). EMPOWERS is seeking to address the challenge implicit in this attack by developing a set of planning tools that support an integrated approach to planning for local water service delivery and water resource management.

EMPOWERS is doing this within a knowledge community including government and non-government actors from national, governorate, and community level who are working together using an action research approach to develop tools that have wide ownership and applicability. Early indications are that this approach is leading to an enhanced willingness to take up and use the EMPOWERS approach both within and beyond the water sector, with encouraging implications for the further replication and scaling-up of the EMPOWERS approach more generally.

The EMPOWERS approach is centred around involvement of stakeholders from different levels and sectors in a structured process of stakeholder dialogue. The main outcome of which is agreed village/town and governorate water development plans. To date these plans have been finalised for three villages or towns in each country, and have been (partially) developed for one governorate in each country.

Further work will focus on the further consolidation of the approach developed into national guidelines for local water development, as well as on the further institutionalisation of the approach within key stakeholders.

References:

EMPOWERS working papers

EMPOWERS has developed a series of working papers, published on its website, to set out the main elements of the approach being developed. The working papers referred to in this document can all be found by visiting the relevant section of the EMPOWERS web-site (<http://www.empowers.info/page/1057>)

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