

Chapter 6: CONCLUSIONS ON PROJECT RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 Conclusions on the Co-operation with Local Institutions

- The WSMP is currently co-operating with two charitable societies (one operated by men, the other by women) and two newly created women's cooperatives in the Northern project area in and around Wadi Rajib. To select existing or to build up new target group organisations has proven to be a suitable approach, in particular with regard to the support of income generation and cistern constructions. By doing so, the project has avoided working directly with individual families, which would have overburdened the extension capacities, and has increased the chances for sustainability of the activities through the strengthening of local institutional structures.
- The total of 26 training courses in institution and capacity building offered during the past two years to 3 of the co-operating local institutions show that the WSMP is fully aware of the importance of strengthening these organisational structures (see **Annex 7**). Yet, a closer look also shows that the men's society of Al Hilla has benefited far less from those training courses than the women's cooperatives. This is partly due to the more dynamic role JCC plays in supporting their cooperatives compared to the DoSD or GUVS in the case of the societies. Moreover, the WSMP also favors support to women groups compared to their male counterparts. Overall, the women living in Jabal Al Akhdar or Thaghrat Zabeed have received a much stronger support in human resource development measures compared to any other group co-operating with the project. Courses on business management, accounting, proposal writing, use of computers, literacy and English language are among the training events offered in the past.
- The project experience of co-operating with local institutions has clearly shown that women's organisations are more motivated, more innovative and flexible and particularly less subjected to power struggles and tribal conflicts than men's organisations. It has also proven virtually impossible to work together with men and women in one organisation, as male domination will always keep the upper hand and traditional distribution of roles cannot be influenced in these cases.
- For the support of income generation, cistern construction, but even for community development purposes and some land-based activities, e.g. tree planting, cooperatives have been the better partners of WSMP in project implementation. Cooperatives are by nature more business-minded, but have also demonstrated a high level of social responsibility towards their members. By keeping membership open only to all female members of a community, the women's cooperatives are seen by some as serving their members only, but overall they have had an important impact on the development of the entire community.
- The fact that each local institution is working closely together with one particular staff member on the WSMP team has in most cases helped to create good understanding and trust between both sides. The steering committees, in which decisions are taken jointly, and the joint management of accounts have helped the local institutions to

adopt clear procedures and standards. WSMP has also supported this by setting some simple basic rules and regulations.

- At this stage, three years before the end of the Watershed Management Project, it seems extremely difficult to predict whether the efforts undertaken in strengthening the capacities of the local institutions will provide them with the means to continue their successful operations even after the withdrawal of project support and guidance. At the moment, the WSMP staff still plays an important role in advising and monitoring the groups' work. Still, all staff members are also aware of the fact that they have to gradually withdraw their support in the coming years and make the groups more independent and self-reliant. Once again, it seems more likely to achieve this institutional and economic sustainability in the case of cooperatives than in the case of charitable societies.

6.2 Conclusions on the Income Generating Activities and the Cistern Programme

- With currently a total of 160 IGAs implemented in the four selected pilot areas in and around Wadi Rajib and a total of 132 female and 59 male beneficiaries, the project has reached what could be considered a critical mass in its Northern project area. Poultry raising, lamb fattening, the keeping of a horse for ploughing, dairy cows, bee keeping, thyme planting enterprises and handicraft production are among the most commonly implemented IGAs. One of the main problems is that the number of suitable IGAs still seems very restricted and there is little diversity in the projects. In order to avoid over-production or fierce competition, which in view of the limited markets will entail falling revenues, target groups as well as WSMP staff face the challenge of identifying and testing new business ideas to enhance overall success. Still, until now only 8 families (4 in Al Hillal and 4 in Jabal Al Akhdar) have discontinued their IGA for one reason or another.
- In addition to the IGAs, a total of 50 cisterns have been constructed in the area with a combined capacity of 1337 m³. The cisterns have undoubtedly helped the beneficiaries to improve their drinking and household water situation as well as the availability of irrigation water in certain cases. The result of first monitoring and evaluation surveys has shown that an average family saves about 48 JD per year in water costs. On the other hand, the investment per cistern of about 600 JD remains very high and reduces overall profitability. Another deficiency of the cistern programme is the fact that most beneficiaries regard their construction more as a storage tank and less as a water harvesting device. In most cases water is collected from house roofs, but the volumes are insufficient to fill the cisterns even during the winter and spring months. Most beneficiaries therefore still fill their cisterns mainly by the use of piped water supply and water tankers. In future, more emphasis by WSMP staff should be placed on the testing and promotion of truly water harvesting cisterns from surface run-off and their increased use for agricultural or horticultural purposes.
- All co-operating groups have understood and embraced the concept of re-investing their revolving funds, both for IGAs and for cistern constructions. Yet, as no interest rates are charged on loans for religious reasons, and with current national inflation rates standing at approximately 10%, the revolving funds continuously lose value in

real terms. This poses a real threat to the financial sustainability of the revolving funds over time.

- Since May 2000 the WSMP team has finally started conducting regular M&E surveys and involving beneficiaries in data collection on the profitability of individual IGAs. A practical M&E system for WSMP was devised with the help of a short term consultant and training has been provided to all staff members. The various M&E formats have been tested and developed further with the help of beneficiaries. First results of the M&E operations have proven the high profitability of handicraft production, dairy cows (albeit the higher risk of loss) and horses for ploughing.
- Although WSMP particularly emphasizes poverty alleviation by the creation of better income opportunities, it has been very difficult in practice to enforce poverty criteria in the selection of beneficiaries. Other rules, such as the fact that each beneficiary has to be a member of the cooperative, which might be difficult for extremely poor people in view of membership and registration fees, or the often applied "first come, first serve" principle seem to overrule the importance given to addressing the poor in particular. Project staff has successfully developed and tested a well-being matrix for poverty assessment on household level. Also social maps have been drawn up for each new target area. Yet, both tools are not used during the process of selecting beneficiaries for IGAs or cisterns.
- As a result of the steadily increasing co-operation with women's cooperatives and societies, the vast majority of beneficiaries in IGA's and also in technical and administrative training courses provided through WSMP, are women. Undoubtedly this strong focus of the project on women and women's activities has had strong effects in the target areas. Previously under-occupied women, restricted to their homes, have now started to organise themselves, to acquire new knowledge and to gain more income for themselves. Some of them have for the first time been exposed to the world around them. Yet, this tendency also faces many setbacks and threats. Not all men living in the area have accepted that their wives and daughters have suddenly become a little more independent. Not all the women have actually received the benefits of their new activities, as several of the men still demand the money gained by their female family members. Equally, not all loans for IGAs allocated to a woman are in reality managed by the woman. Some men have encouraged their wives and daughters to apply in their name and are now reaping the benefits of the respective activity. In future, the project will have to monitor very carefully all the impacts of IGAs and other measures on women.
- Many of the households in the target areas have a total monthly income of between 90 and 150 JD from employment and agricultural activities. If the profits from some of the IGAs, as they were measured up to now (see **Annex 8**), are compared to these figures, an increase in overall household income of 20 to 50% seems realistic. Nevertheless, the project must continue the initiated M&E efforts on the individual IGA. With time it will be even more important to assess the impact of the measures in a broader sense. This could for example be done by an increased number of case studies.
- Handicraft production is something of a special case in the field of income generating activities. While in most IGAs there is a clear tendency towards individual family

enterprises, which is also favored by WSMP as group activities have generally been less successful, handicraft requires group work, at least for the purchasing of materials and marketing. In the case of Jabal Al Akhdar, it seems that this group and team work is increasingly successful, with group members helping each other and coordinating activities. Some of the more experienced or gifted group leaders have started working as trainers within their cooperative and beyond. Marketing of the handicraft products is still heavily supported by WSMP, but first arrangements have now been made to make the producers more responsible for promoting and marketing their own products. The women of Jabal Al Akhdar have meanwhile shown and sold their products at several bazaars and exhibitions. One lady has even travelled to Damascus twice to buy new supplies for the handicraft production. Additional markets for handicraft products from Wadi Rajib are currently being explored by a WSMP staff member, also in neighbouring countries.

- The repayment rates of the three groups currently receiving payments on loans is carefully monitored by WSMP staff and the respective administrative committee. When comparing the actual payments collected to the amounts due by end of October 2000, the average of the three groups currently stands at 85.3 %. This is not an entirely satisfactory repayment rate, as it would mean that approximately 15% of the revolving fund is lost if this trend continues.

6.3 Conclusions on the Land Use Planning Exercises, Demonstration Activities and the Fruit Tree Programme

- In the area of the Al Hillal Society a participatory land use planning exercise was conducted in the presence of the land users. For the state land a forest inventory of all plots was prepared. Unfortunately, both exercises had little impact on land use changes in the area. There are two main reasons for this:
 - a) 66% of the private land is already covered with olive tree plantations and 11% with natural forests, which can be considered the optimum land use for this area. The only option for further improvement of this land use scheme would be the introduction of an undercrop (e.g. cereals or irrigated vegetables) in these plantations. Undercropping could increase the overall productivity of the land and further improve soil protection from erosion.
 - b) Over 70% of the land is under Masha'a joint ownership land tenure. This means in reality that hardly any changes of the production system can be introduced to this area.

The experiences made in Wadi Rajib have shown once again that under the current framework conditions in Jordan land use planning will only have a negligible impact on land use changes³⁰.

- WSMP staff has in the past years carried out a total of three demonstration activities together with the farmers of the Wadi Rajib area. Of these, only the undercropping of irrigated vegetables under old olive trees has been particularly successful in ecological and economical terms. This practice is now ready for widescale promotion through the project's extension activities. Stone tree basins and stone walls have proven their ecological benefits in terms of reduction of run-off, but the overall investment and especially the labour costs involved remain excessively high. These

³⁰ See also: Rock, F. (ed.): Watershed Management in the Wadi Ibn Hammad Catchment, WSMP/Mo/AGTZ 1999

techniques are not likely to be implemented by a large number of people on a voluntary basis without important subsidies.

- As discussed earlier, WSMP has achieved a lot of change regarding income generation, particularly for women. The project has been far less successful in increasing agricultural production in all land-based activities. The only exception are activities in the homegardens, where the planting of fruit trees, thyme plants and some vegetables watered from the cisterns have had a positive impact.

6.4 Conclusions on the Co-operation with Government Institutions

- The national implementing agency for the WSMP, the Department of Forestry and Range (DFR) and its director in particular, has in the past strongly supported the project, despite the fact that project activities to a large extent fall outside the mandate of that institution. The co-operation of WSMP with other Government institutions on national level, such as the projects department, M&E section and extension department of MoA have also been satisfactory on the whole.
- Co-operation with the decentralised units of MoA, namely the Agricultural Directorate of Ajlun, has not functioned well. The Directorate has at no time shown any interest in playing an active role in project implementation. Participation of target groups is still seen as an alien concept and as a threat to the position, status and influence of the Directorate. In some cases field activities implemented by farmers with support of WSMP have been obstructed rather than supported. Since the project progress review in early 2000 all attempts to establish co-operation between WSMP and the Agricultural Directorate of Ajlun have therefore ceased. Currently the Directorate is regularly informed about project activities, but not involved in the implementation.
- In the support of charitable societies WSMP has co-operated with the DoSD Ajlun and the GUVS. GUVS has for example provided some sewing training at Al Hillal Society. GUVS also carries out regular monitoring and financial controlling visits to Al Hillal. Unfortunately, neither DoSD nor GUVS provide suitable training courses on management issues and institution building to their societies. This is a serious deficiency and limits the opportunities of charitable societies to increase their standards and capacities.
- The JCC has co-operated very well with WSMP in the creation of new women's cooperatives in Wadi Rajib area. Once the cooperatives are established, JCC also plays a very supportive role in strengthening the new organisations. JCC trainers have conducted courses on accounting, management and administration for all the members of the administrative committees in each cooperative.

6.5 Conclusions on the Co-operation with other Projects and Funding Agencies

- With the exception of some projects supported by religious organisations and the huge IFAD-funded Highland Development Project, there are not that many other project activities in the target areas of WSMP. WSMP tries to avoid strong overlap with other projects by careful selection of its pilot areas. One reason for this is the fact that most projects, and Jordanian Government projects like HDP in particular, have very high subsidy components for most of the activities supported. WSMP on

the other hand emphasizes target group participation and provides revolving loan funds instead of direct grants or subsidies. The conflicts which arise from this difference in concept are avoided as much as possible by separating the working areas. Nevertheless, HDP has also been very supportive in other aspects, e.g. by supplying a dairy processing unit to Jabal Al Akhdar women's cooperative. The MoA has actively encouraged this and provided some extra funds to the group.

- WSMP has continued its successful co-operation with CARE International in the case of training courses on business management and project proposal writing. The training skills of CARE staff have been highly praised by the target groups.
- In recent months, the target groups themselves, with some assistance by WSMP have been able to attract substantial amounts of additional funding by various donors, such as GEF, WFP, several embassies in Amman and the UNWG. This is a very encouraging development and constitutes one more step towards making the groups increasingly independent from WSMP support.

6.6 Conclusions Regarding the General Project Approach

WSMP started off as a project with the objective of testing and promoting a participatory approach to watershed management in Jordan. With time and increasing experience gained during phase I and II, WSMP has gradually evolved towards a project mainly dedicated to rural poverty alleviation. In addition, strong components of local institution and capacity building and water supplies are promoted. In the implementation of the activities, WSMP has given highest priority to gender aspects by specifically building up and supporting women's groups.

In addressing these issues in a rural environment of Northern Jordan, the project has been very innovative in many aspects and thus fulfilled the expectations of being a "pilot project". Yet, the results produced by the project are less visible on the land or in the watersheds, but rather in the heads of people, in their livelihood and in changes of attitude.

The evolving approach has now been documented in several reports and publications by WSMP and is now sufficiently tested and proven for a wider replication in other areas of Jordan.