

Public-Private Dialogue

The Jordan Valley Water Forum

by

Amal Hijazi, Managing Director, Sustainable Environmental and Energy Solutions

*Presented at the Public-Private Dialogue 2014 Workshop
(Frankfurt, March 3-6 2014)*

1- Background and Context

The Jordan Valley Water Forum (JVWF) is an inclusive and transparent mechanism for multi-stakeholder engagement aimed at solving critical issues facing the water and agribusiness sectors throughout the Jordan Valley. It is a process involving government representatives, farmers, development partners, Water Usage Associations, and other industry associations which meet twice a year to agree on priorities and review progress made since the past forum. The World Bank Institute's Private Sector Engagement for Good Governance (PSSG) program helped establish the JVWF in June 2012.

Before the creation of the JVWF process, the ability for the private sector to constructively engage in a coordinated manner on these issues with their government counterparts was a challenge. The private sector farmers only engaged their government counterparts via informal and ad-hoc practices. The JVWF enables to coordinate between public and private sector actors to ensure effective water resources management and sustainability, and enable agribusiness enterprises to expand, compete and attract investment.

The JFWF continues to take place in the context of declining availability of water resources coupled with stress caused by regional conflicts in countries surrounding Jordan resulting in influx of refugees. Jordan is a naturally water scarce country. Its climate ranges from semi-arid in the northwestern part of the country to arid desert in its eastern and southern reaches. The country is one of the ten most water-poor countries in the world, on a per capita basis at 147 m³ per person per year in 2010. This is less than one third of the widely recognized "Water Poverty Line" of 500 m³ per capita per year, a limit also categorized as "absolute scarcity of water".

Jordan is already running at a water deficit of 500 million cubic meters per year. Water supply from surface sources has declined substantially over the past ten years due to declining number of rainfalls but the significant reductions in surface flows are also caused by human activities throughout the watersheds that drain into the Jordan River Valley. A significant share of

available water is used for Jordanian agriculture purposes, a critically important sector whose growth is severely constrained by its current lack of sustainability. In the coming decades, Jordan is forecasting a significant overall growth in water demand for domestic, industrial and energy uses. The predicted climate change will exacerbate the problem of water scarcity.

The Jordan Valley Water Forum is aimed to address a number of water sector issues along the themes of legal and regulatory issues, task transfer for the Water Usage Associations (WUAs), agricultural skills, technology and innovation, marketing, export and trade, access to finance, infrastructure operation and maintenance, water quality and quantity issues, and adaptation to climate change.

The JVWF is not designed as a single event, but as a multi-stakeholder engagement process. As a process, it aims to fulfill a number of goals based on stakeholder inclusion, coordination, prioritization and recommendation.

The JVWF is designed to have the most significant water sector impact through multi-stakeholder engagement.

The above impact can be achieved through:

- An inclusive process that will bring increased coordination between the water sector actors;
- Fairness in the process which will bring about regulatory improvements that work for all and ensure a level playing field between the different types of water users;
- Streamlined transactions between the public and private sector that means more transparency at the local level when constituents can see a direct impact on water service delivery and water quality and quantity; and finally,
- The revelation of additional information through multi-stakeholder engagement, which translates into stronger accountability from the public officials, to address the constraints faced by their constituency and deliver on their needs in a realistic and practical manner.

The JVWF process is therefore based on the following principles:

- Collective action by farmers throughout the Jordan Valley to produce realistic proposals and recommendations aimed at solving the principal water resource issues,
- Commitment by the public sector to review and consider the water sector proposals throughout the JVWF process,
- Commitment by the Jordan Valley farmers and WUAs to actively participate in the JVWF process, taking into consideration the reforms needed to best serve the overall farming community throughout the entire Jordan Valley, and
- Transparent and inclusive discussions amongst the public and private sector stakeholders resulting in the most realistic and priority solutions to water sector issues, and
- Use of the JVWF for realizing an effective integrated water management system for the Jordan Valley.

A consolidated list of priorities has resulted from the Forum which is provided as follows:

Working Group 1:

Legal and Regulatory Issues: Relationship between the JVA and Water User Associations (WUAs)

Priority Reform	Timeframe for Implementation
Amending the JVDL through the addition of articles (A and B) in Forum Proceedings	10 months
Implementation of a fair water tariff in the JVA Law	10 months

Working Group 2:

Skills, Technology and Innovation in Agribusiness and Marketing

Priority Reform	Timeframe for Implementation
Creation of an Ad hoc committee to change the mechanism for establishing and utilizing processing facilities and central markets.	2 months
Provide a government guarantee of airfreight space for produce exports on regular flights for a transition period of three years.	6 months
Increased technical assistance through the MoA Extension Services focused on implementing more sustainable and productive crop selections.	6 months

Working Group 3:

Integrated Water Management Infrastructure

Priority Reform	Timeframe for Implementation
Establishment of an independent technical committee to identify opportunities for studying and implementing irrigation network rehabilitation correctly.	2 months
Recruitment of new technically trained staff for O&M in order to provide enhanced water distribution services and increase irrigation network efficiency.	Continuous process
Installation of more efficient filtration systems at the bulk water level to remove impurities present in the local irrigation water.	1 year for designs and feasibility studies and infrastructure development would be subject to securing infrastructure funds

Working Group 4:

Water quantity and quality

Priority Reform	Timeframe for Implementation
Support for farm level water harvesting to improve efficiency and lower demand on bulk water supply. Can be performed through ACC or MoA support.	1 year
Implement protection measures along the KAC to prevent pollution from local activities.	On going service/projects by JVA

Working Group 5:

Adaptation to climate change

Priority Reform	Timeframe for Implementation
Enact legislation and penalties to control the illegal drilling of wells (already existing at WAJ) as the Ground Water Monitoring by-law.	6 months
The expansion and support of an "Agricultural Risk Management Fund".(MOA)	6 months
Deployment of advanced irrigation methods such as drip, spray and micro-sprinkler irrigation.	Subject to individual farmer initiative/expense

2- Progress in Reforms/Success

Following the reporting from the zone representatives, H.E. Secretary General of MoA and JVA Secretary General provided comments to the issues presented. They both confirmed the need to continue the dialogue process in partnership and that we collaboratively address the specific solutions facing the water users/farmers.

The World Bank Institute team also renewed its support to the JVWF on the collaborative process and suggested to the Steering Committee to elaborate a scorecard and logical framework that will help participants measure the progress of the JVWF and its impact on their livelihoods. One of the framework elements could be one presented on next page, which the WBI has used in its proposals to request funding for the JVWF. The reform table is alive and its issues continue to be vetted for reform.

Considering the importance of the water sector in Jordan, it becomes critical that development partners support the JVWF inclusive process by aligning their technical assistance along the priorities identified so that reforms are appropriate, feasible and can be implemented by the beneficiaries themselves. This will result in better management of the demand for water, increased efficiencies in farms, increased employment as well as ensuring that farmers cultivate better crops that the markets need.

3- Challenges and Next steps

A major challenge the JVWF PPD initiative is facing is related to ensuring its sustainability and for it to continue to get its needed full attention as the Government of Jordan continues to face external pressures resulting from the external regional pressures and conflicts facing Jordan.