



**REGIONAL EXPERTS GROUP WORKSHOP - WATER USERS'
ASSOCIATIONS IN THE SWIM-SM PROJECT COUNTRIES
SUMMARY OF Workshop RESULTS**

(WP1/ACTIVITY 1.1.3 B)

**Athens-Greece
(23-24 April2012)**



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List of Abbreviations & Acronyms

	BPs	Best Practices
	DZ	Algeria
	EG	Egypt
	IL	Israel
	IMT	Irrigation Management Transfer
	JO	Jordan
	LB	Lebanon
	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
	MO	Morocco
	O&M	Operation and Maintenance
	oPt	occupied Palestinian territory
	PIM	Participatory Irrigation Management
	PPP	Public Private Partnership
	TN	Tunisia
	WBs	Water Boards
	WUA's	Water Users Associations



1. Workshop Background, Objectives

1.1 Introduction

The Sustainable Water Integrated Management – Support Mechanism (SWIM-SM) is an EC-funded Regional Technical Support Project that includes the following Partner Countries (PCs): Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian territory, Syria and Tunisia. The project aims to promote actively the extensive dissemination of sustainable water management policies and practices in the region given the context of increasing water scarcity, combined pressure on water resources from a wide range of users and desertification processes, in connection with climate change.

Based on the need expressed by SWIM PCs, SWIM-SM is implementing a set of activities to strengthen users' participation towards a more effective local water governance and management with particular focus on Water Users Associations (WUAs). In this context a "Regional Experts Group Workshop on Water Users Associations" took place in Radisson Blue Park Hotel in Athens between 23 and 24 April 2012. Twenty (20) international, regional and local experts from seven project countries participated in the regional workshop. The participants comprised representatives of the partner institutions including WUAs in countries with which SWIM works (among which Algeria, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) were represented). Furthermore, representatives from regional organisations and donors-assisted projects, as well as resource persons with relevant experiences in the region participated in the workshop. The detailed list of participants is included in Section 7.

1.2 Objectives and expected results

As part of its activities, SWIM-SM commissioned a study on "Regional Assessment of the Status of Water Users Participation in the SWIM-SM Project Countries", with the aim to (a) illustrate the range of experiences in irrigation water users' participation in the partner countries, (b) compile information on the status of WUAs in the region, (c) take stock of the achieved progress and lessons learnt regarding water users' participation, and (d) identify measures and policy options to improve the efficiency of WUAs, including targeted activities to be implemented under the SWIM-SM project.

The workshop was held on the occasion of presenting the draft report and aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- 1) review, discuss and validate with the national partners the findings of the regional assessment
- 2) promote sharing of experiences & best practices (BPs) between partner countries in the establishment and operationalization of WUAs involving both successful & less successful interventions, and to
- 3) identify the gaps and main priority actions including capacity building and training that can be taken up by SWIM-SM during its life time with the aim to improve local water management and enhance users participation.

2. Workshop Methodology

The workshop implementation focused on maximizing active participation by all through a mixture of presentations & workgroups discussions formed around language proficiency:



- Anglophone Countries: representatives from Egypt (unofficial representative), Israel, Jordan and oPt,
- Franco-phone countries: Representatives of Algeria; Lebanon, Morocco and independent expert from Tunisia

Brief country presentations were presented by the invited experts to enable exchange of experience between the countries. The workshop was moderated by a professional facilitator/moderator and co-facilitated by two invited experts from Germany (Mr. Jochen Regner) and Tunisia (Mr. Abdelkader Hamdane). The METAPLAN¹ technique/method was used to some extent to facilitate the sessions.

3. Overview of the Workshop Agenda

The workshop was held over two days (April 23rd & 24th, 2012) as per the detailed Agenda in **Section 6** of this report.

The agenda consisted during **day 1** of:

- 1) Introduction to the workshop background, objectives and methodology, expected output, workshop rules and relevant logistical issues. The provisional agenda was also presented and approved.
- 2) Plenary sessions comprising **country presentations** from the designated national experts;
- 3) briefing on the main findings of the regional assessment on the status of WUAs in the project countries; Part 1 (see section 4)
- 4) Breakout sessions dedicated to identify challenges, constraints and gaps in the WUA initiation and operation, after which the participants convened to present their findings in plenary.

Day 2: was dedicated mostly to workgroup sessions with the aim to:

- 1) Identify based on the findings of day 1, and using lessons from successful and less successful experiences in the region, the **best practices** in the development and operationalization of the WUAs;
- 2) Specify the training needs;
- 3) Identify the actions that can be undertaken by SWIM-SM;
- 4) Validate the findings of the assessment. This was done by splitting the presentation on the regional assessment into different parts (See section 4 below); with each part addressing the same themes discussed in the workgroups while demonstrating linkages between the Regional assessment findings and the workgroups results.

4. Plenary Sessions

Country presentations

The sessions were started with an Introduction of the Report Background and the importance of collecting feedback from the national representatives to ensure the validity of the assessment and identify priority actions for SWIM interventions in the subject. This was followed by the countries' presentations which focused to different extent, on the following:

¹ A Trade Mark of the METAPLAN Company GMBH, Germany



- The evolution of WUA's
- The feature of, and instruments used in, the development of the WUA's
- The gaps, constraints or challenges that faced/face the evolution and operationalization of WUA's
- The success and failure factors.

Presentation of the Regional Assessment:

CIHEAM team (Professor Nicola Lamaddalena and Eng. Roula Khadra) who carried out the regional assessment delivered the summary of the assessment in three parts over the two days of workshop.

- **Part 1:** Introduction, Overview of WUAs evolution in the Project Countries, and presentation of the four case studies from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia, in addition to a success story from southern Italy; Consorzio di Bonifica of Capitanata
- **Part 2:** Challenges in the establishment and operationalization of WUAs in the region
- **Part 3**– BPs in WUAs establishment and operationalization, the way forward and recommended interventions by SWIM

As indicated in section 3 above, the presentations made by CIHEAM followed the presentations of the workgroups results on the respective themes, to demonstrate linkages between the findings in the assessment and the workgroups.

All participants were provided electronic copies of all presentations.

5. Results of Workgroups

The following sections represent the main outcome of the workgroups.

5.1 Challenges and Constraints

The existing challenges, constraints and gaps in the establishment and operationalization of WUAs in the project countries were defined in language-based workgroups. Below is a summary of the challenges that were identified. These formed the basis for further development of the recommended best practices and the identification of the actions to be undertaken by SWIM-SM including training needs and capacity building. All the challenges emanating from the workgroups discussions will be used by CIHEAM for further refinement of the regional assessment and its recommendations.

I. Political

The participants referred to the increased “pressure of the street” and partial collapse of law enforcement as a result of the **Arab spring** in some of the PCs which may result in increased illegal water use and low contributions of WUA members thus affecting quality of work in WUAs. Unclear, disputed **access to water** was also seen as restricting the livelihood of single farmers as well as of entire WUAs in some countries.

The **Lack of political will and specific legislation** for WUAs, result in some associations operating to date under inadequate jurisdictions (1 country), whilst the absence of land appropriation policies does not encourage farmers to form associations in an effective manner (1 country). Furthermore, the lack of income from irrigated agriculture, often does not encourage farmers to participate in their associations activities, and in particular to pay the fees necessary to carry out their core missions related to the operation and maintenance (O&M) of the irrigation water systems



II. Economic and Financial

Identifying the economic impact of the WUAs –mostly due to inter-annual changes in water availability, different marketing opportunities **was considered a challenge which** makes it very difficult to correlate improvements of WUA on farm income. **Sustainable financing, lack of funds** and income generation endangers maintenance and replacement of irrigation infrastructure in most of the PCs. Moreover **irrigation water tariffs** are imposed by the state without taking into account farmers' profit opportunities from the agricultural activities. It is therefore important that the WUAs are involved in setting the rates while maintaining the regulatory role of the state.

III. Technical

Handing over responsibility from government to WUAs may be done with **Lack of clarity about responsibilities and rights**. **Poor infrastructure** which is often the result of neglected long term maintenance, affects irrigation efficiency. **Rehabilitation of distribution Network** poses problems with split or unclear responsibilities between the relevant parties. This is exacerbated with (a) **lack of technical skills among WUAs in O&M**, which leads, especially in the early life of the WUAs in defective O&M and ineffective water distribution, and (b) **weak strengthening of capacities** which represent a real challenge for the sustainability of the WUAs. Unexpected **Marketing difficulties** may also endanger the economy of WUA-members and subsequently the water distribution services.

Sensitizing the private sector on the needs, objectives of the WUAs and the nature of services and conditions in which they operate is one of the challenges that need to be addressed. This is particularly important as the private sector is the direct provider of services needed by the WUAs (sale of equipment and spare parts, repairs, audits of accounts, etc).

IV. Environmental (Institutional & Natural)

Competition among water sectors for scarce water resources is a challenge that requires mediation and close monitoring of consumption. Competition between sectoral uses is also aggravated by the **lack of coordination between Ministries of Water and Agriculture**, which often leads to conflicting messages e.g. encouraging and discouraging expansion, inadequate consultation on water use.

Inadequate Institutional Capacity of WUAs limit their administrative, managerial and planning efforts, as well as their ability to launch, implement and follow up initiatives in the absence of technical and financial support. **Establishing WUAs Federation** should strengthen WUAs and lobby for them. If badly managed it will be a debating club damaging single WUA

The texts on farmers' participation in irrigation management are not sufficiently clear with respect to the **role of WUAs in O&M** in some countries, resulting in conflicting competences and the need for the State to clarify the institutional role of the different actors.

Other challenges were also identified, mostly related to water quality reliability, over-pumping and unsustainable management of ground- and surface water sources and **Soil Salinity**: resulting from inadequate network or even watershed management (leakages) leading to losses in crop yield and even complete failures.

V. Legal/Legislative



Approving the legal framework is a lengthy and difficult process. In order to ensure **WUAs stability**, there is a need to have the necessary legislation in place to help ensure efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the WUA as a recognized representative of the interests of water users and to officially transfer responsibilities from the governmental institution to the WUAs.

Where countries have made good progress in participatory management, **adopting a dynamic approach to update the legislation governing the WUAs according to the changing situation is a challenge**. This is particularly advisable to consolidate gains and build their capacities. **Creating a contractual framework for the concession of irrigation facilities to WUAs** is needed to avoid situations where some WUAs find themselves responsible for management functions (O&M) beyond their technical capabilities and the financial capacity of their members (fees). There is hence a need for establishing a contractual framework for the concession of equipment between the WUAs and the State, which also defines the role of each in an evolving process over time.

VI. Social/Cultural

These included the following challenges:

- **Conflicts among stakeholders and users** arising from different farming practices (fruit vs. vegetables vs. staple) or animal husbandry vs. horticulture and differing water requirements in quantity and annual distribution.
- **Equity of shared water resources allocation** arising either from social factor (subsistence vs. big farmer) cropping pattern (water requirement in time when water is abundant, when water is scarce).
- **Big Farmers Influence** with big investors challenging the “one man one vote”-rule.
- **Weak understanding of the WUAs among different stakeholders**
- **Social Consent on country level:** Society has to agree on investments for irrigated agriculture and on management of joint water resources.

5.2 – Best Practices

The following represents a compilation of the best practices that were identified during the workshop:

- The participants emphasized the importance of the participatory approach with farmers in all development steps including problem analysis, technical planning and implementation of infrastructure and rehabilitation of old irrigation systems to enable them to select what fits their capability and economic capacity and adjust the alternatives to their needs. Consultation with the WUAs to identify the methods of measurement of water volumes and pricing is also a practice that should be adopted with the implementation of a contract with the WUAs. A water contract is to be established between the WUA and its members, which sets out in a clear way the obligations of the parties;
- Adopt multidisciplinary approach for the technical, social, cultural analysis of problems and constraints during the initiation of WUAs;
- In order to mitigate farmers’ resistance to the WUA establishment, pilot activities should be supported to demonstrate to the farmers the advantages of working together. Visionary farmers can also be selected for the first implementation. Guiding farmers to neighboring successful pilot activities and organizing study tours to Irrigation Management Transfer (IMT) solutions in other



countries will help farmers learn even if the visited example doesn't fully fit their own conditions;

- There was a general agreement on the need to (a) prepare the presidents and members of the Board with adequate training on their mission and irrigation management objectives, especially during WUA establishment (b) provide Technical assistance to WUAs and the irrigation administrations in charge of the transfer in areas on good governance, water saving techniques, and technology transfer (c) continuously upgrade skills, and administrative & technical qualification during implementation especially in O&M with particular emphasis on the implementation of preventive maintenance;
- Involving third parties such as civil societies helps in the development of the WUAs and in voicing farmers concerns;
- Transfer of irrigation perimeters to WUAs is recommended only if there is sufficient water resources and if the condition of irrigation network and equipment allows it;
- Establish a legal framework to empower WUAs and enable them to carry out their functions (collect fees, control income and expenses and establish bank accounts, apply incentives and penalties) and to resort to the court when needed. The legal framework should also include laws regulating water use and empowering WUAs in conflict resolution;
- Adopting democratic rules in the election process of the WUAs Administration Councils builds relationships of trust between members and their associations and strengthens decision-making power of WUAs' councils.
- Develop WUA internal laws
- Determine the water charges, irrigation costs, and the structure and level of tariff to be adopted and the alternative strategies for cost recovery based on technical and financial analysis. Generating adequate funds for O&M on WUA level is also necessary to cover cost of functions. There are already many different fund raising models in different countries including those for creating common generating income projects.
- Establishment of water advisory unit to support WUAs in administration of their contracts, training and backstopping.
- Development of Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Program to assess the level of progress/performance of WUAs and determine points of failure. Developing standardized bench marks and indicators help assess yearly progress, comparison of different WUAs in the same catchment area and regional comparison. Involving third party such as the administration (or the civil societies as an independent entity) is needed to identify impact of WUAs. Use different criteria for evaluation depending on the WUA implementation phase (initiation criteria, and operation criteria).
- Tunisia has developed BPs in M&E that could be of great use.
- Establishing Federation of Associations offers multiple advantages including provision of economy of scale with regards to sharing experiences, exchanging skills, pooled resources availability, ability to better defend the common interests, etc.
- Share & disseminate good practices

5.3 Training needs

The following is a summary of the training needs that were identified during the workshop. The table lists only the training needs that were thought to be relevant to the



scope of SWIM-SM, that have regional perspective and that were scored for more than 1 country.



Table 1: List of training needs

Category	Description	DZ	EG ²	IL	JO	LB	MO	oPt	TN ²	Rank
Conflict Resolution	Develop conflict resolution management skills	X	X		X		X	X		5
Nonspecific	Develop managerial and technical skills of WUAs and irrigation agencies	X	X		X		X	X		5
Info Sharing	Pilots, study tours, information sharing	x	X		X		X	X		5
Communication	Communication techniques between WUAs and farmers and WUAs and the government	X			X		X	X		4
Finance	Financial management, budgeting and accounting				X		X	X		3
Management	Management Techniques	X			X			X		3
Nonspecific	Training of the Administration staff to enable them to understand the objectives of the association movement and enhance their capacities to better fulfill their new role vis-à-vis the WUAs	X					X		X	3
Nonspecific	Training WUAs board members and the technical staff of WUAs, to increase awareness of its members in the WUA implementation with a view to ensure their effective participation	X					X		X	3
Finance	Fund raising, and Financing				X		X			2

5.4 Priority SWIM-SM Interventions

Below is a summary of the priority actions needed from SWIM-SM interventions sorted according to their rank, noting that only those that were thought to have regional perspective and that were scored for more than 1 country are listed.

Table 2: List of Proposed SWIM interventions sorted according to their Rank

Priority Actions needed	DZ	EG ²	IL	JO	LB	MO	oPt	TN ²	Rank
Establish M&E units for continuous assessment of success / failure / constraint. Recommended M&E to be operated and managed independently by a third party (e.g. NGO)	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	7
M&E of management performance (recommended M&E system independently operated)	X	X		X		X	X		5
Develop awareness campaigns to different stakeholders on irrigation modernization objectives, components and process.	X	X		X			X	X	5
Clarify roles, responsibilities, authority of WUAs&irrigation agency	x	X		X		X	X		5
Set equitable and transparent tarification rules aiming at enhancing the O&M recovery and system sustainability and productivity	X	X		X		X	X		5

² Recommendations represent the unofficial views of independent experts from the country



Priority Actions needed	DZ	EG ²	IL	JO	LB	MO	oPt	TN ²	Rank
Technical consultations - Technical assistance on tariffication and real cost of irrigation						X			
Determine the requirements to ensure financial and managerial stability of the associations			X						
Analyze irrigation agency functions and mandates, the process and methods they use in the application of their functions and an assessment of their physical and human resources capacity		X		X		X	X		4
Establish mechanisms for communication and cooperation between WUAs & administration	X			X		X	X		4
Assist in development of scope of work for the Water Users Federation and WUA advisory unit and identification of Federation Scenarios				X		X	X		3
Define role and functions of the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation (Egypt) with respect to the functioning of Branch Canal WUA and Water Boards after their establishment and development of a monitoring and co-ordination system for nation-wide establishment of WBs.	X			X			X		3
Establish guidelines for reorienting agency & handling staff disposition		X		X			X		3
Enhance devolution of authority from national to regional and local level, institutionalize Public Private Partnership (PPP) and create forae for stakeholder participation and communication links among agencies and stakeholders	X			X			X		3
Sensitize the private sector on the objectives of the association movement and the nature of services and the conditions in which they operate.	X					X		X	3
Encourage irrigation entrepreneurship (PPP) model in reasonably dynamic economies. Re-orientation of irrigation bureaucracy is critical.	X			X			X		3
Encourage and support international and national efforts to apply Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) in more extended pilot areas in Palestine in an attempt to increase water productivity and farmer income.		X		X			X		3
Establish clear legal framework				X			X	X	3
Adapt legislative texts to better adapt them to the progress recorded by WUAs									
Carry out a comparative study of the legal framework related to WUAs in the region									



Priority Actions needed	DZ	EG ²	IL	JO	LB	MO	oPt	TN ²	Rank
Develop a clear strategy regarding WUA long-term financing as essential ingredients to go forward in IMT and yield positive impacts on the modernization process				X			X		2

6. Detailed Workshop Agenda

		Agenda -Day 1	Responsibility
From	To		
9:00	9:20	Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcoming Participants Introduction and orientation by task leader (Water Expert SWIM-SM) Logistical Issues Presentation and revision of provisional agenda 	Project Director – SWIM-SM (Stavros Damianidis) Task Leader (Suzan Taha)
9:20	9:30	Workshop Outline: Objectives, Rules & Briefing on Methodology	Mutaz Al Taher (Facilitator)
9:30	9:45	Introduction of the Report Background and the Purpose of Collecting Feedback on its Presentation Style, Contents Coverage & Quality and Key Findings(15 Minutes)	Task Leader (Suzan Taha)
9:45	11:15	Countries Presentations (15 Minutes each) & 15 Minutes over the session for questions of clarification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Egypt Israel Jordan Occupied Palestinian Territories 	National Representatives Workgroup Facilitator
11:15	11:45	Coffee Break	
11:45	12:45	Countries Presentations (15 Minutes each) & 15 Minutes over the session for questions of clarification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Algeria Lebanon Morocco 	National Representatives Workgroup Facilitator
12:45	13:45	Lunch Break	
13:45	14:45	Regional Assessment Report: Part 1 – Introduction, Overview of WUAs evolution in the Project Countries, and presentation of the four case studies from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia	Prof. Nicola Lamaddalena CIHEAM/IAMB
14:45	15:45	Challenges and constraints, and gap identification, to the development and operationalisation of WUAs at the national level	WG Facilitators
15:45	16:15	Coffee Break	
16:15	17:15	Presentations by Groups' Representatives	
17:15	17:45	Summation & Conclusion of Day 1	Mutaz Al Taher (Facilitator)



		Agenda - Day 2	Responsibility
From	To		
9:00	9:20	Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Day 1 • Presenting Tasks for Day 2 • Organizational Issues 	Mutaz Al Taher (Facilitator)
9:20	9:40	Regional Assessment Report: Part 2 - Challenges and linkages with work groups results with examples from 4 selected PCs	CIHEAM /IAMB
9:40	10:40	Best practices in the operationalisation of water users' associations using successful and less successful examples and learning points WG Discussions (60 Minutes) Discussion in Language-Based Workgroups	National Representatives Workgroup Facilitator
10:40-	11:10	Presentation to Plenary by Participants (45 Minutes)	Mutaz Al Taher (Facilitator)
11:10	11:30	Coffee Break	
11:30	12:30	The way forward – A Regional Outlook (proposing a vision with a regional perspective to address the issues influencing the prospects of WUAs at	Plenary Session
12:30	13:30	Regional Assessment Report: Part 3 - BPs, the way forward and recommended interventions by SWIM	CIHEAM/IAMB
12:30	13:30	Lunch Break	
13:30	15:00	Review of the report recommendations, including proposed SWIM interventions for capacity buildings- Participatory Discussion followed by workgroups discussions Discussion in country-based workgroups	Mutaz Al Taher (Facilitator)
15:00	15:30	Workshop Evaluation (Filling Questionnaires)	Mutaz Al Taher (Facilitator)
15:30	16:00	Wrap up and closing remarks	



7. List of Participants

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Sustainable Water Integrated Management (SWIM) - Support Mechanism

Project funded by the European Union

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