

Avoiding Conflicts over Water

An adequate supply of clean water in local communities in Jordan will create stable living conditions for all residents

The challenge

Water losses fuel conflicts

Between the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011 and the beginning of 2021 around 13.4 million people have been uprooted out of a pre-war population of just over 20 million. Around 6.6 million Syrians have fled Syria. By July 2022, Syria's southern neighbour, Jordan, had officially registered more than 676,000 Syrians, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). More than 80 per cent of these refugees are living outside official refugee camps.

Host communities have to provide infrastructure for refugees which often creates almost insurmountable challenges. Providing an adequate supply of clean water pushes many communities to their limits: Jordan is one of the most arid countries in the world. Its water supply system is outdated, poorly maintained and not fit for purpose in many places. In some locations, up to 70 per cent of water is being lost as a result. The resulting shortages were already a challenge for municipalities when the system had only to supply Jordanian households. The arrival of refugees has substantially increased the number of consumers, and this is placing impossible burdens on municipalities. The already scarce supply of water now must meet the needs of both the local Jordanian population and refugees, bringing a risk of further conflict in the communities affected.

Our approach

Access to water for all residents

In fourteen target municipalities and Jerash camp, the project "Supporting Participatory Resource Management to Stabilize the Situation in Host Communities" is being implemented to ensure that all of the 78,000 residents – among them more than 12,700 refugees – have adequate access to water. The project is ensuring

that dilapidated water networks are repaired, modern water storage systems are installed in private households and ramps allow access for all to water supply in public institutions. These improved living conditions benefit both the Syrian refugees and the local Jordanian population, preventing future conflicts between the two groups.

Project name	Supporting Participatory Resource Management to Stabilize the Situation in Host Communities
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Jordan; eleven municipalities in the governorate of Irbid, two municipalities in the governorate of Ma'an, one municipality in the governorate of Balqa and Jerash camp
Lead executing agency	Ministry of Water and Irrigation (MWI)
Partners	Water Authority of Jordan (WAJ), Yarmouk Water Company (YWC), Aqaba Water Company (AWC), Balqa Water Directorate/Miyahuna, Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD)
Duration	07/2015 – 05/2025

Residents in the fourteen municipalities also have an opportunity to become involved in their own long-term water supply. They are taking part in regular meetings with the responsible water utility and Jordanian politicians to discuss the future construction measures needed. Representatives of all groups in society are invited to play their part in ensuring that water is distributed equitably across communities and in helping to prevent conflict over this scarce resource. Women participation is increased through establishing Water Wise Women (WWW) groups. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) contributes to the project implementation in one of the municipalities, Bait Ras.

An additional SDC contribution was allocated to improve water management and hygiene at household level in Jerash camp and improve access to WASH facilities for vulnerable persons with disabilities.



Left: Improving water storage capacity at household level

Right: Discussion of water challenges with water providers in participatory manner



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Left: All opinions are heard and welcome.

Right: Drinking network rehabilitation

Impact in figures

New systems save water and money

Repairs and rehabilitation of around **128 km** of water networks almost halved losses in the municipalities concerned. Through network rehabilitation and the installation of water-saving devices and storage equipment, local communities saved around **1.266 million m³** of water annually, equivalent to approximately **1,600,000 JOD**. A total of **9,638** modern roof-top water tanks, **11,572** water-saving devices, and **1,683** water-saving toilets were installed, improving water-use efficiency in more than **90%** of private households in the project municipalities.

The project also supported more than **396** employees of the participating water utility. In-service training equipped staff to improve the water supply to local communities, plan supply networks, and minimize water losses.

Special consideration was given to people with special needs, including children and persons with disabilities. Measures included the installation of barrier-free entrances, construction of ramps in **100** public institutions (mosques, schools, and health centres), distribution of **634** wheelchairs and **681** toilet wheelchairs, and rehabilitation of WASH facilities in **780** households to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.

The project is part of the **BMZ special initiative** 'Tackling the Root Causes of Displacement, Reintegrating Refugees', which provides short-term support to refugees and their host communities. In the long term, sustainable measures are designed to eliminate the structural causes of displacement, such as social inequality and lack of prospects. This project helps to provide water for refugees and host communities and promotes social cohesion, health, and sustainable development.

Impact in faces

A unique project in Foa'arah

Fayez Al Hmoud and his family fled their home in Daraa in Syria when the war broke out. For the past ten years, he and his wife, their children and their grandchildren have been living in Foa'arah in Jordan. The family finds it difficult to gain access to water. Old and dilapidated water pipes in the municipality in which they live mean that running water is a rarity, as Fayez Al Hmoud explains:



'We get running water for just a few hours every 10 days. While the water is on, we try to do our laundry and clean the house but also to fill our small water tank, which is our only source of water when the main supply is off. Repairing the network and installing more tanks is improving the water supply and making our lives easier. The striking thing about the project is that it is not just improving the infrastructure. All those living in the community – Jordanians and Syrians – get together round the table and discuss the challenges we face in Foa'arah. To start with, we didn't really talk about anything other than the water problems, but after a while, these meetings have started to help us feel more and more like a community.'

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