



Al Hima: Possibilities are Endless

V.2



INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE - REGIONAL OFFICE FOR WEST ASIA



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IUCN began implementing the EU funded project "Securing Rights and Restoring Lands for Improved Livelihoods" in 2010, with field projects identified in Botswana, Jordan, Mali and Sudan. In Jordan, the project is implemented by the International Union for Conservation of Nature – Regional Office for West Asia (IUCN- ROWA), partnered with the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and The Arab Women Organization (AWO).



Introduction

The Jordan Badia extends over 90% of Jordan's landscape, with Bedouins and other villages using it for livestock grazing as part of their main economic activity. Traditional grazing systems have declined over the years, subjecting the lands to a number of environmental pressures that further stem from industrialization, urbanization and agricultural intensification. Traditional grazing systems have the ability to reverse this degradation and restore the land to its optimum productivity and levels of biodiversity.

With local community & key stakeholders playing a role in re-introducing traditional grazing systems and adapting to environmental conditions, the Hima system was revived. The Hima system allows communities to conserve areas of key resources in order to regulate their use. Improvements in rangeland biodiversity and fodder production were observed in as little as one year of establishing these Hima sites.

This positive model has created a combined effort with the help of the National Rangeland Strategy Committee at the Ministry of Agriculture in Jordan, to update the National rangeland strategy for Jordan and endorse it to give direction and recommendations that focus on the Hima approach and the strengthening of local communities and increasing gender engagement.

The Zarqa River Basin Environmental & Social Challenges

The Zarqa river basin faces a number of environmental risks that bring about desertification and land degradation. Its plant cover has fallen victim to the growing water demand, leading to large scale ground water extraction that further depletes its aquifers. Indigenous plant biodiversity has decreased drastically,

shifting productive land to arid and industrialized zones limiting its production for fodder. The local community's answer to such stressful situations is purchasing fodder and making use of the arid land for grazing larger numbers of livestock.

With a population of 6.3 million, Jordan has to struggle with limited natural resources and serious environmental challenges. Desertification and declined standards of living have forced the locals to abandon pastoralism and immigrate to urban centers. Desertification and over grazing patterns have allowed for inevitable outcomes; poverty and unemployment. Poverty in certain areas in Jordan has drastically increased tribal conflicts over the years further depleting natural resources and decreasing the social and environmental status of their area.

In short, roots of the problem lie in the country's rapid population increase, land and water mismanagement, and lifestyle change. The roots of these problems include:

1. Land tenure: private land owners exploited lands unsustainably and at the expense of traditional pastoralists' in the area.
2. Poor marketing of livestock and agricultural products.
3. Weak coordination between relevant governmental agencies and local communities resulting in conflict approaches to the management of land and natural resources.
4. Potable water scarcity & the lack of sanitation.
5. Bedouin settlement, allowing livestock to over-graze in a specific area.

Options for rangeland management

To sustainably restore and manage rangelands in the Zarqa River Basin, a European Commission funded project seeking to reduce poverty and re-introduce traditional rangeland management techniques such as the Hima system was

established. The word Hima (Arabic: حمى) originally means "protection" and refers to an area set aside for conservation. Its a traditional conservation system used by Bedouins to organize grazing and keep lands protected and conserved. The Securing Rights and Restoring Lands for Improved Livelihoods project is designed to set a positive example for protecting rangelands and regain its biodiversity.

Fundamental aspects for achieving this vision include:

- Securing rights and access to land tenures;
- Improving governance of land and natural resources; and
- Enhancing income generation.

The project is implemented, by IUCN ROWA in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Arab Women Organization, in four Jordanian villages (Duliel, Hashemeyeh, Bani-Hashem and Hallabat) within the Zarqa River Basin. All of these areas represent major problems in ownership perceptions and rangelands.

The local community's past perception was that they had no role in any decision making process in their community. It was generally perceived that the government has the sole

responsibility to take any decision that may concern livestock and grazing. Local communities had little feel of ownership towards their lands and livestock.

Socioeconomic development initiatives were therefore funded to establish comprehensive training models based on their traditional knowledge and methods of adapting to environmental challenges and change ownership perspectives. Target communities are to be fully involved in rangeland restoration activities and special emphasis will be given to building individual and institutional capacities for environmental management. Proper local community engagement and governance will engage women and marginalized groups to develop and take part in the planning and management process.

Towards Solutions

A Framework for change

A framework for change has been created by which local communities' have secured rights to manage their land and resources. The initiative created a greater sense of resource ownership, leading to their protection, restoration and sustainable management.





The resultant benefits of improved livelihoods and environmental restoration are to be sustained through accessing markets and acquiring negotiation skills that enable them to present their cases to the government and other stakeholders to demand their rights. The government's role is therefore to update policies and legislations to become supportive to that process and present appropriate incentives.

The project methodology is based on two key points: Stakeholders dialogue for concerted actions, and the participatory management cycle. The first step highlights dialogues and collaborative activities. Stakeholders include land users from the local community, and service providers from the governmental and non-governmental institutions that support the community. The decision making process takes place within the integrated management framework of natural resources, following a

consensual approach. Such approaches lead to mutual understanding of integrated management and a greater ability to develop and implement management plans and natural resource regulations.

Using a different approach: Stakeholder Dialogues & the Participatory Management Cycle

The initiative uses a participatory approach which assists in organizing and guiding the stakeholder dialogue in taking informed decisions that lead to concrete outcomes. The phases of the cycle can be divided into three main categories:

1. The phase of forming the "vision", "assessment" and "strategies" providing an appropriate environment for achieving the shared long-term vision and strategy for improving livelihoods.

2. The phase of "planning" and "implementation" that sets priorities for strategic interventions, developing and carrying out implementation plans.
3. The phase of "reflecting" which is considered as an ongoing phase throughout project implementation.

Upon project completion the newly established pastoral (Himas) established by local initiation, will set positive models in pastoral land protection and management including organizing grazing, restoration of indigenous plant cover, better surface water management and finally, agricultural awareness about growing plants compatible with fragile ecosystem of drylands, that are capable of surviving droughts and frost. Participatory communal management of Hima will have substantiated local communities' right to sustainably use the Hima and protect it from violations.

Hima: Local positive models

Encouraging the Hima systems in each of the villages necessitated tribal community meetings attended by government officials, directors of governmental departments and representatives of the Environment and Water Committee at the Parliament. Local community committees were formed, each under the name "Hima Committee". Some of these committees created a "Tribal Charter"¹ inviting signatories to practice proper rangeland management and contribute to the restoration of the indigenous plant cover in their areas.

Land tenure constraints have created a major barrier to organizing grazing and improving the environmental situation in the targeted communities. Private land and land owners were reluctant to involve other parties in using these lands for grazing purposes or establishing Hima systems. The current system of land tenure gives these types of tenure the right of land use regardless of environmental consequences. The project addresses this complexity by launching these Hima sites in lands not located within the boundaries of tribal tenures to serve as a positive model of participatory management.

Once underlying governance arrangements have been strengthened, communities are supported in various ways to implement improved management. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture has trained and assisted community members to conduct a floral baseline survey that will help improve monitoring and will improve knowledge of indigenous plants and their potential economic benefits. Exchange visits including local community and NGOs have allowed participating communities to be acquainted with new conservation and management approaches.

Targeted Communities

Hashemeyeh: Community standing together

Located 10 km north of Zarqa City, Hashemeyeh lacks most governmental departments, sufficient medical services

and qualified infrastructure. 97% of the village's households are supported by the father with negligible contributions from mothers, which is in line with gender roles in Bedouin communities and culture. Income sources vary including raising livestock, working in nearby factories, trade and civil service jobs. Many households keep 5-10 heads of sheep or goat for home use and sell what is left. A study on poverty in Jordan classified Hashemeyeh as one of the poverty pockets in the country with 30% of its inhabitants below the poverty line. While unemployment is a major poverty factor, the lack of women empowerment and low education levels within families are further aggravating the situation.

The deterioration of pastures has overarching implications on the Hashemeyeh community. While livestock owners suffer from land degradation, pollution and high cost of production inputs like fodder, housewives complaints revolve around the declining



ability of households to maintain food self-sufficiency. A study reveals that the local community is well aware of the main source of deterioration and the fact that they contribute in its degradation through over grazing practices and rangeland mismanagement.

Following project implementation, the Hashemeyeh community realized - through a PRA² study and field survey - that the main challenges for applying sustainable cultivation and grazing practices include the lack of communal awareness concerning their rights to manage land and natural resources. On the other hand, several earlier projects have created a negative impression towards the community by blocking them out of any decision-making processes.

To address these challenges, a local committee was formed representing all Hashemeyeh community segments and different stakeholders. This committee acts as a networking hub to spread obtained knowledge to the rest of their community. Pasture development, grey water reuse, producing environment-friendly compost and drafting strategic plans for dryland resources are among the many things that this community has gained. Their vision was established to serve livestock owners and lead to human development in the area.

Moving towards achieving that vision, grazing and cultivation techniques have been already put into practice, shifting their current agricultural system to better sustainable ones like using treated grey water for irrigation and cultivating corn instead of barley. Through these sustainable behavioral changes, the community has showcased the benefits of including the local community in any set environmental solution, further allowing them to fund raise for new desertification combating projects.

Hallabat: Combined Efforts

Located 25 km northeast of the Zarqa city, the Hallabat villages have a total population

1. Tribal document or agreement

2. Participatory Rapid Approach

of around 7,000 mainly from the Bani-Sakhr tribe that follows a Bedouin lifestyle. Cold in winter and hot in summer, the villages have a typical desert climate with an annual rainfall average of 120-150 mm.

The Hallabat Municipality has very limited resources, with the inhabitants having to struggle with challenges imposed by the existence of one preliminary medical care center, lack of infrastructure, absence of sufficient sanitation systems and environmental services.

The community of Hallabat have faced particular hardship since abandoning their former mobile lifestyle and settling. Increased unemployment and decreased income are due to the deterioration of pastures, which present the main income source with no present alternatives available. The Average monthly income of a household is JD160 with many families owning 7-17 heads of sheep, using their milk products for home use while selling young lambs to meet other financial needs.

The above challenges have led to a declined vegetative cover and the loss of valuable grazing plants in Hallabat. While fodder costs have been rapidly increasing further consuming a significant portion of families' incomes; pastoralist's currently lack the skills necessary for increasing milk production and marketing it.

The community sought to create a Hima in their area to demonstrate sustainable management of rangeland and livestock production. However, the local community was reluctant to allocate an area from their tribal lands for that cause, an agreement with the Antiquities Department to establish a Hima on 150 dunums of public lands was signed in 2014 and therefore reviving sustainable traditional grazing and cultivation practices.

Activities in this Hima intervention include rehabilitating the Hallabat Palace wetland for irrigation practices and livestock grazing. The economic benefits of this pilot will be granted mainly to less fortunate widows. The success of this exercise is promising, since the local

community is considering allocating around 200 dunums of their private and tribal lands for up-scaling the Hima approach.

Duliel: Adapting to change

Duliel (Arabic: الضليل) originally meaning "Shade" is located 15 km northeast of Zarqa city is the home of 37,000 inhabitants including 13,000 non-Jordanian workers. Both the nomadic tribal and settled rural lifestyles are prevalent among citizens as the area is inhabited by Bani-Hassan tribes and tribes from Irbid, Ajloun, Beersheba and other clans of Palestinian origin. The town has a typical desert climate, cold in winter and hot in summer, with an annual rainfall average of 150-200 mm.

Duliel has various governmental departments covering medical care, education, social and labor affairs among others. Civil society organizations have strong presence in Duliel including issues like social development, special education and rehabilitation, youth and livestock breeding. Nonetheless, the Duliel district is considered one of the poorest areas in the Kingdom. Several families own 10-15 heads of sheep and others keep cows for their products. Most farms belong to owners from outside the district while locals work therein for daily wages.

Duliel's long history of dense tree cover and abundant water has been replaced in the past few decades by rapid desertification due to the expansion of investments and industrial waste. Industrial waste such as plastic doesn't only affect land use, but causes the deaths of thousands of sheep per year. Other key challenges for pastoral livelihoods include land tenures, as most of the land is either governmental or designated for military exercises. The area moreover lacks rainwater-harvesting techniques that can provide for pastoral agriculture in light of the poor rainfall and effects of climate change.

Working with the locals in the area, an awareness campaign targeting 200 women and other community members used a participatory video approach to identify their problems and document their suggestions. These approaches have allowed the community to develop a vision



for restoring rangeland plants by 20-30%, which will later reflect on the economic and social situation of livestock owners in their areas.

A Hima was established with proper rangeland management aiding in the revival of indigenous plants necessary for sustainable pastoralism. Livestock can later graze in the Hima that is now barren and exclude cultivation in the area. Managed grazing will no longer be a desertification factor but rather contribute in spreading the seeds in wider areas. The outcomes shall encourage the adoption of this experience in other areas of Duliel, while the resultant benefits of the community especially women will alleviate poverty and improve living standards. Change takes time in practice, but will be complemented with training local community members on effective marketing methods to come up with different investments.

Bani-Hashem: Political Support Does Count

Bani-Hashem consists of four communities located 21 km north of the Zarqa city and has a total population of 15,000 mostly of Bedouin origin. The area had been characterized by a rich plant cover and abundant water resources, which encouraged Bedouin tribes to settle there since the 1850s. Yet with population growth, urbanization and the tendency towards employment in the civil service, natural resources started to deteriorate. A particular incident in 1954 further accelerated this deterioration when a malaria outbreak drove the inhabitants away from water resources after which they started selling their lands and abandoned agriculture and pastoralism.

The area has semi Jordan Valley weather, hot and dry in summer and moderate in winter with an average annual rainfall of 170-220mm. It is a desertification hotspot due to climate change, and human social activities that include overgrazing and quarrying. Income sources include; jobs in the military and civil service system, while 20% of households rely completely on livestock raising.

There are several environmental problems due to the lack of a sanitation system as most houses have cesspits, which leak into the soil causing contamination. Quarrying, on the other hand, cause contaminates in the air and soil. As for present water resources, they are contaminated with sewage water pumped into the Zarqa River from Al-Kherbeh As-Samra treatment plant.

Despite the above mentioned factors, livestock remained a core socio-economic element in the life of Bani-Hashem's communities, meeting some of their basic nutritional needs and providing an additional source of income. The current number of livestock in the area is around 5,000 heads whose owners have several complaints such as lack of sufficient pastures, high costs of fodder, difficulties in marketing livestock products, water scarcity and the spread of livestock diseases.



To address these problems a Hima was established with a vision of achieving ecologically sustainable rangeland management and supporting social, ecological and economic activities. The Hima land is being rehabilitated and indigenous plants are being restored to contribute in improving living standards in Bani-Hashem. Through the Ministry of Agriculture's support, the local community obtained the Prime Ministry's approval to allocate 1000 dunum of rangelands for use and management by the community.

The participatory management of natural resources through Hima has enabled the local community in Bani Hashem to determine and produce a future plan for grazing. This plan takes into consideration the sites and mechanisms of using it for herbal/medicinal plant picking during grazing seasons, which furthermore determine the exact number of hours set for a grazing path in the Hima.

It was finally concluded that September will be the set grazing period instead of spring. This will ensure that indigenous plants had grown and dried, allowing further seed dispersal with the movement of livestock in the area. Based on a biomass study achieved in 2013, the Hima is open for 1,600 livestock for 4 consecutive days (4

It is evident that the charter has caused tribal conflicts to decrease.

Abu Hussein - Bani Hashem

hours daily) making sure that set water points are available through the area.

To ensure Hima sustainability, a tribal charter was drafted and signed by community members pledging for its protection from violations. The charter acquired an official status by involving law enforcement authorities in its application, while a local committee was formed to coordinate the management of Hima following tribal traditions.

Addressing the different needs of groups in the community, and to further decrease the gap between the local community and official groups, different studies have been conducted that helped the creation of the grazing seasons schedule. Economic valuation studies and studying how ecosystem goods and services could increase massively with the Hima approach, the local community could finally visualize the benefit they would encounter.

Awareness campaigns have created a wider understanding of the Hima concepts for the sustainable use of rangeland natural resources. To further institutionalize the management of Hima a private society was established that coordinates the actions of the community members. This joined effort allowed better local women empowerment by giving them complete ownership of a herbal/medicinal plant workshop. During grazing seasons, local community women will cultivate native plants which are processed and packed in the workshop to be later sold for extra income.

What has Changed?

With overgrazing and desertification causing degradation of natural resources in the Zarqa River Basin, the local community had no choice but to adapt and work together for a better future. As a result, the sites have improved environmentally and socially; tribal conflicts over natural resources have reduced, grazing seasons are better managed and indigenous biodiversity was revived. Solving overgrazing will no longer portray livestock immobility, but rather properly managed grazing periods. These solutions have prepared a way forward that builds on the capacities of the local community and increased women involvement. These played a major role in improving their livelihoods through securing their managing rights and building the relationship with government institutions. Adaptive solutions like Hima, have built new partnerships that enable upscaling this initiative and present a successful case.

The Future

The mere focus of the future, is self sufficiency. The project approach and methodology have touched upon major behavior and social change, allowing the local community use their pastures efficiently and manage their natural resources. Capacity building is currently directed to keeping this objective alive, while government departments aid and assist in this process that helps strengthen their interaction with local bodies to define existing and future decisions and responsibilities. Governmental support will target institutions that manage the Hima sites therefore legitimizing and recognizing the importance of such combined efforts in managing and protecting arid lands.

Tangible benefits of the project are an indispensable sustainability factor. Local communities need to see actual benefits of their improved pastoral practices and newly built capacities and acquired rights. Increased capacities provides them with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to play a major role in the reform process and hence contribute to the welfare of their community. Improved levels of living will therefore encourage sustaining these practices and further developing them.

Sustaining Hima requires effort and stakeholder commitment. Investing in these resources only makes sense when the effort involved is

outweighed by the benefits gained. The achievement of real and lasting benefits is not something that can be easily achieved by one stakeholder. It requires building new and innovative partnerships, which include governmental, civil society, private sector and donor agencies. Strong partnerships bring institutional capabilities and human resources together in the form of skills, experiences and ideas that tackle common problems beyond the capacity of a single organization or community group.

Upon all that, the Hima concept will be upscaled and applied in wider geographical areas. At that point, larger numbers of communities will have changed their pastoral practices and consequently improved their lives. Hima will no longer mean small confined pieces of dryland, but a whole new approach of rangeland and natural resource management.



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The Drylands, Livelihood and Gender Programme

The Programme contributes to the rehabilitation of drylands in the West Asia region, to further provide nature-based solutions and ecosystem services needed to improve livelihoods through better participatory management, gender equity and better integration of the local communities.

The Programme is part of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, Regional Office for West Asia (IUCN ROWA)

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About the Global Dryland Initiative

The Global Drylands Initiative contributes to strengthening the resilience of dryland ecosystems & livelihoods further conserving drylands biodiversity. The Initiative builds on and strengthens local knowledge and institutions that enable people to govern their resources sustainably. This is therefore achieved by strengthening rights and governance from the local to the national level as well as globally.

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