

AUSLANDSBÜRO JORDANIEN

September 09, 2015

October 05, 2015

November, 08, 2015

DR. OTMAR OEHRING

IMKE HAASE

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Improvement of Sustainable Development Conditions in the Jordan Valley

Event: Workshops

Date, Place: September 09, 2015; The Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development in Tabaqet Fahel Town, Jordan Valley

October 05, 2015; Agriculture Department of Deir Alla, Jordan Valley

November 08, 2015; City Hall of Shuneh al-Janubiyyeh, Jordan Valley

December 12, 2015; Royal Automobile Club Amman, Jordan

Organizations: KAS Jordan Office, Amman Center for Peace and Development (ACPD), Jordanian Climate Change & Environmental Protection Society (JOCCEPS)

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In Jordan, one of the most arid countries in the world, droughts, heat waves, lack of rain and water scarcity are not new phenomena and the impacts of climate change are further exacerbating the problem. At the same time, the country is facing diverse economic problems. It is therefore crucial for the economic and environmental development of the country and the future of its next generations to promote a sustainable agriculture, which constitutes a main economic sector in Jordan. In addition, it is also necessary to encourage an increase in the utilization of renewable energy sources in Jordan, such as solar and wind energy projects.

Specifically in the Jordan Valley, which is famous for its agriculture, a mismanagement of scarce water resources, an extensive use of pesticides, as well as a high production of garbage, are threatening the resources and thus the livelihoods of many of its residents.

In this framework, KAS Jordan office, in cooperation with Amman Center for Peace and Development (ACPD) conducted three workshops, which took place in different locations in the Jordan Valley (Tabaqet Fahel, Deir Alla and Shuneh al-Janubiyyeh). Farmers, agronomists and politicians from the region came together to discuss the various problems in order to formulate possible solutions and thus promote sustainable development in the Jordan Valley.

The series of workshops closed with a final seminar on, "The Employment of Alternative Energy to Reduce the Effects of Climate Change," which was held in Amman in partnership with the Jordanian Climate Change & Environmental Protection Society (JOCCEPS). The aim was to raise

awareness and promote the use of alternative energy sources, and increase reliance on renewable sources of energy. This is a key factor towards averting climate change.

Presentations in the Jordan Valley

The speakers in all of the workshops agreed that the Jordan Valley's resources are threatened by population growth and uncontrolled industry and tourism, with an overdeveloped northern Dead Sea shoreline. Furthermore, agriculture aggravates the situation with its water-intensive crops, high usage of chemical fertilizers and a mismanagement of liquid and solid waste.

Accordingly, the workshops in Tabaqet Fahel and Deir Alla in the Jordan Valley addressed such topics as, the misuse of chemical pesticides and its effect on the environment; management of water resources and new water technology; and the management of house garbage.

The lecturers called for a new policy which would improve regulation of industrial pollutants as well as address agricultural cropping patterns in order to decrease chemical fertilizers and encourage organic fertilizers instead. In addition, the experts recommended building sewage plants in order to decrease pollution of existing water supplies. Solid waste dump sites should further be better managed to decrease problems related to contamination, odor and insect infestation.

Special emphasis was placed on the management of water, since limited water resources are considered to be the main challenge facing agricultural development sustainability. The speakers also stressed that, in regard to the influx of Syrian refugees and a population growth of almost

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eight percent, Jordan is in dire need of new water resources to fulfil the demand. Only 37 percent of Jordan's water supply comes from easily replenishable surface water resources, and those are diminishing rapidly.

The agriculture sector, especially citrus and banana farms, which need a high amount of water, consumes 64 percent of Jordan's water resources. Therefore, the experts recommended addressing the issue of water scarcity in the agriculture sector by changing the cropping patterns and improving irrigation systems and technology to determine the actual water requirements of crops and maximize water use efficiency in general. In this context, the speakers suggested concentrating more on date palm plantation, for example, and other crops that consume less water.

Date palm farming in the Jordan Valley is an important factor in Jordanian agriculture. However, the so-called red palm weevil is undermining the sustainability of the stocks and its spread seriously jeopardizes the profitability of date palm farming in the Jordan Valley. In this context, the presentations in the last workshop in the Jordan Valley, in Shuneh al-Janubiyyeh, focused on the topic of date palm plantation and pest control techniques, especially to detect the infestation of the red palm weevil. The workshop aimed to raise awareness among the local population, especially among the farmers concerned, regarding the use of new cultural and biological practices to control the red palm weevil. The animated discussions showed that the very specific topic was of high interest to the participants, most of whom were experts in this field.

All three workshops were attended by participants from the region, especially by farmers, including date palm farmers and

their wives, agricultural engineers, local politicians and field technicians from the Red Palm Weevil Laboratory. Thus, the workshops served mainly as a platform for experts to exchange information about their experiences.

Final Seminar on "The Employment of Alternative Energy to Reduce the Effects of Climate Change"

On the 12th of December 2015, the KAS Jordan office, in cooperation with the Jordanian Climate Change & Environmental Protection Society (JOCCEPS), held a workshop on, "The Employment of Alternative Energy to Reduce the Effects of Climate Change."

In his opening speech, the society's chairman, Mansour Abu Rashid, referred to the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris by stating that the results were not sufficiently satisfying. The importance of a positive outcome of the climate talks for Jordan, a country that is deeply affected by climate change, became clear in the presentations that followed in the first two sessions of the workshop. One of the main problems that Jordan faces is the impact of climate change on water resources. The speakers stressed that the reduction of flood flows and groundwater cause serious water scarcity. Furthermore, a lowering of the level of the Dead Sea can be observed, which is why supplying the Dead Sea with water from the Red Sea to reverse the process is under consideration.

In his speech about "Alternative Energy and Climate Change," Raafat Al-Assi stated that climate change was directly and indirectly related to human activity. He mentioned the greenhouse effect, which causes global warming, and highlighted that it was crucial to focus on energy in this regard. According to him, energy balance is not only important to reduce

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greenhouse gas emission, but also for Jordan to become more independent from energy imports. In times of increasing energy demand, the strategy should be to promote more diverse energy resources. Session 2 picked up on the topic of "Alternative Energy Use and Its Impact on Climate Change." Papers were presented on "Renewable Energy Sources," which have become increasingly important for Jordan, "The Impact of Electromagnetic Waves on the Environment," and "The Impact of Industry on Climate Change."

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All in all, the presentations and discussions underlined the need to expand the role of renewable energy and also increase energy efficiency in Jordan to counteract the already tangible effects on the country.

CONCLUSIONS:

The workshops in the Jordan Valley have been highly successful in shedding light on the very specific problems that this unique region in Jordan and its inhabitants are facing, and to discuss possible responses with relevant stakeholders from the region.

As mentioned earlier, one response could be the expansion of renewable energy sources and increased energy efficiency in Jordan.

Although sustainable development is a universal challenge, many practical responses can only be defined nationally and locally. Therefore, such workshops should be further promoted to make an important contribution to the discussion and development of practical steps on a local level.

Press Coverage

An article about the final seminar was published in Arabic in Al-Dustour, a Jordanian daily newspaper: