Capacity Assessment and Reflection on Pilot Project: Ma'an

By Vanessa Farr, Ph.D., consultant to PAIC

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Purpose of the Assessment

A field-based Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) was conducted in early August 2022. This review, which is individualised for each partner organization that forms part of the Palestinian Agricultural Institutions Coalition (PAIC), examines how social inclusion and sustainability are understood, and addressed, in the pilot projects designed and implemented through the Environmental and Climate Justice Programme (ECJP) supported by We Effect.

For the purposes of the assessment, each pilot's baseline is the conditions in and around the site on the day of the field visit. The assessment considers variables such as the physical and material conditions of any infrastructure installed in the pilot site, conversations and interactions with the individuals and communities rights-bearers and beneficiaries of each pilot, and on-site discussions with project staff.

This report also draws from field-based interactions and focus group discussions with PAIC gender and advocacy officers, technical staff, and leadership, conducted both before and after the field visits.

A foundational purpose of the assessment is to consider what "sustainability" means in each pilot. Sustainability is not defined as the installation of "green" technologies. Instead, the focus is on the conditions in each site and what these say about how long any technological investment is likely to remain optimally functional.

This report regards the pilot projects as ongoing sites of learning. It offers practical advice on how each PAIC member's external investment into the pilot can realise the promise of sustainability. It also asks what internal conditions in each organisation might need to be rethought in order to advance the vision of implementing long-lasting projects.

Ma'an

Pilot title:	"Creating a community garden from a dumpsite"
Location:	Al Zbidat community (Jordan Valley)
Thematic area:	Environmental and Climate practices
Gender and Advocacy Officer:	Hamza Zubiedat

Project overview

Problem: A community of women has asked for support to turn a dumpsite/wasteland at the entrance of their village into a community garden for recreation.

Piloted solution: Ma'an proposes to help clean up and secure the site, and to install technologies deemed necessary for its maintenance and security.

No site visit took place. The project has faced difficulties related to procurement of the necessary technical components.

Pilot Project ESIA

1) Does the pilot meet the needs of the beneficiary community?

No evidence available.

Does the pilot make good use of technology and infrastructure?

No evidence available.

2) Is the pilot sustainable?

No evidence available:

In discussion with the project officers, it appears no preparation work yet been undertaken to start clearing the site.

Recommendations:

- Ma'an is encouraged to consider that installing technological systems is a beginning, not an end: the pilot project should not be started without building community interest in, and commitment to, upgrading and caring for the site as a whole
- Advocacy and awareness-raising can begin immediately without any technical equipment on the site; and this is an urgent priority to prepare hearts and minds to establish a basis of care for the proposed investment
- Ma'an should immediately devise an appropriate monitoring and management plan for any infrastructure it hopes to install before undertaking any further work
- What is needed to ensure that the technological equipment installed will be maintained at optimal efficiency for many years?

3) Can and should the pilot proceed?

No evidence available.

While waiting for technical equipment, Ma'an can work with the beneficiary community to ensure a monitoring and evaluation process is set up for the pilot, including assessment of skills transfer for maintenance of any technical installations needed.

5) Can the project boost the profile and advocacy of the PAIC?

No evidence available.

6) Is the project politically pragmatic?

No evidence available.

7) Does the pilot meet the criteria of social inclusion, especially gender inclusivity?

No evidence available. The requesting beneficiary community is mostly women left behind when men move to illegal settlements to sell their labour.

- Ma'an can immediately begin to assess whether men will object to changes made without their engagement
- Will there be any challenges associated with teaching women to maintain technical equipment Ma'an plans to install in the community park?
- What challenges or risks are there to the maintenance of equipment and other planned investments? Are there potentially multiple challenges to the success of this intervention? What mitigation steps can already be talen?
- Ma'an should take necessary steps (preparatory research) to ensure the site will be inaccessible to anyone with physical disabilities.

8)   How could a gender analysis in the project's design phase anticipate and address these limiting beliefs?

Ma'an is positioned to proactively look for social inclusion opportunities as this project is still in the design phase. Consider establishing a cross-sectoral, mixed sex, multi-age community greening committee to ensure that community members begin to engage differently with the dump site as a green space?

A well-designed **advocacy strategy** is urgently needed, perhaps especially aimed at absent male villagers, to establish the basis to ensure that the need for future maintenance and care for the site work is understood, planned for, and actually gets done.

Will there be male resistance? If so, what can be done to overcome it? Decades of evidence show that arguing with individuals about "gender equality" makes the problem of women's exclusion worse, not better. In communities that struggle to address social stereotypes, the best way to proceed is to look for ways to open up new spaces and possibilities that we have not seen before.

9) Capacity-strengthening needs

Ma'an is not primarily a gender justice organisation. Can it prioritise gaining strong technical skills in devising and delivering socially just environmental projects? Internally, Ma'an could commit to reflecting on the purpose and conceptualisation of this proposed project. Has the community already

showed signs of readiness to work on a sustainable ecological project? If not, what can be done now to change the situation and help this community care for this site?

As this community awareness-building proceeds, Ma'an should identify gendered inequalities that are likely to **undermine** and **prevent** this from becoming an inclusive project for all potential rights-bearers. What can Ma'an support that will change community attitudes and help realise **the hope of sustainability**?

Realistic and measured changes can be made to Ma'an community and government-liaison work; but it is neither possible nor desirable to build expectations that Ma'an or any PAIC member will become "gender justice" experts overnight.

10) What small, doable actions are possible?

1) **Connect differently to the proposed pilot project site**

Ma'an is invited to consider the following forward-looking steps:

a. Revise the project delivery outcome: instead of focusing on the hoped-for technology as a solution to the crisis resulting in the dumpsite, focus on the existing reality. Are the villagers a land-alienated and indifferent community? Why is the entrance to the village so dirty and neglected? What can change attitudes and lead to a better cared-for site – even before the garden is built?

b. Devise advocacy efforts to tell the story of how the community is approached and the changes brought about when they learn to rethink the proposed garden as a place to be proud of and enjoy

c. Support the community to gain the skills and commitment they will need to maintain their garden

d. Maintain a relationship of care with the community: what ongoing needs will they have to change their attitude to their natural surroundings? How can these needs be met? What resources are necessary and where will they come from?

e. Proactively look for new project ideas for the area surrounding the proposed garden. Examples could include a litter clean-up day, encouraging removal of rubble and litter from the site, etc..

2) **Hold an internal reflection on what social inclusion and sustainability can mean for Ma'an**

a. Has Ma'an examined the proposed field intervention site not as a technical, but as a social challenge to be addressed with community insights and support?

b. Has there been too much focus on installing a technological solution? Is this likely to prove sustainable

c. If Ma'an thinks think broadly about social inclusion, who else from the surrounding community might become advocates and carers for the garden?

d. Have opportunities already been missed to turn this into an eco-project?

e. How can teams communicate better across any technical/social divide that might exist inside Ma'an?

3) **Question internal siloes in Ma'an**

a. Whose technical expertise should have been included in the pilot design at inception? What skills are needed to ensure the proposed beneficiary community can become a partner promoting sustainability?

b. Even asking the question, "have we considered the existing mind set and capacities of the potential rights-holder in this project?" may change the inception and the outcome

c. Conduct a short internal review of how Ma'an recruits and assigns its project teams. This can reveal the extent to which male technicians may be working alone and focusing on technology (the effects of the technology=masculine stereotype) as a single solution – and ignoring the realities of attitudes and commitment to care in communities that are likely to undermine and prevent the realisation of sustainability as a goal

4) Devise an internal project design process or checklist

a. If men are found to be over-associated with technological interventions as singular solutions, what tool can remind male technical staff to think beyond the technology, to ask who will use it, who will benefit from it, who will care for it, and who can be included as project beneficiaries.

b. How can male champions be encouraged to ask a new sustainability question: who will care for and maintain this project once it's delivered?

c. Are women over-associated with the social development aspects of Ma'an's work

d. If yes, what training can be offered to help Ma'an's socially-focused staff to understand technologies as a site of relationship with a receiving community? How can they learn to ask bigger questions about the community's state of preparation for a new technology, without needing to become "experts" in those technologies?

5) Examine stereotypes and internalised beliefs, especially about the promise of "green" technologies

a. This is particularly important if a new technology is being proposed

b. The first question to ask is: is a technological solution the first and best issue to focus on, in this particular site?

c. Are rights-bearers ready for more infrastructure when they can't take care of what they already have? If not, what can Ma'an do to change the community's attitude and overcome their lack of care?

d. What can Ma'an change now about their approach to reach and benefit the widest number of rights-bearers?

e. What can be changed now to design the proposed garden to become more accessible to more people, and to be seen as an important site of care for as many rights-bearers as possible?

f. How do we prevent the excitement of a promised technology from blinding us to the community's attitudes and responses?

g. Who will look after/maintain the garden and its systems once it has been built? To whom will these skills be transferred?

h. What long-term maintenance plan has been devised or the planned system. What resources are needed?

6) Budget for inclusion and sustainability

1) Is the finance officer aware of their responsibility to include a targeted budget for women's inclusion in the advocacy strategy that should urgently be designed for this community?

2) Are earmarked resources available for use?

3) Can this inclusion budget be deployed now, at *inception* stage, before delivery of the garden and its systems?
4) How will maintenance and repair be funded?