

Operational Guidelines

for

EMPOWERS Thematic Group

Advancing participation and dialogue in local water governance in the MENA Region

September 2007 – August 2009

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The Terms of Reference (ToR) set out below are intended to set out the vision, purpose, main activities and governance of the EMPOWERS Thematic Group (ETG) or hereafter referred to as 'The Group'. The Group's overall objective is to improve long-term access and rights to water by vulnerable groups in local communities through a process of participatory water Governance. The Group will serve as a knowledge network on participatory planning for improved local water governance, and build upon the existing work and experience gained by its current members through their involvement in the implementation of the EC – MEDA Water EMPOWERS Project (2003 - 2007) in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine. The ToR set out below are effective from September 2007 until August 2009

ETG's Vision and mission

Our vision is of a region in which all water users (particularly the poor and vulnerable) and stakeholders are actively and meaningfully involved in the management of their water resources. We believe that by achieving our vision we will contribute to the wider cause of ensuring more equitable and sustainable development of the region's scarce water resources; i.e., where individuals have access to equitable shares of quality and affordable water and sanitation services. Services that ensure a dignified healthy living and that allow productive activities without compromising their surrounding environment.

Our mission is to contribute towards achieving the vision through advocating for, and facilitating the development of participatory approaches that foster high involvement of all stakeholders, specifically, local stakeholders in order to enhance greater access to water and higher levels of responsibilities at the local level of communities and community based organizations ...

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The ETG will actively seek innovative approaches and methodologies that meet the needs of the sector and the poor / vulnerable. It will also focus on the development of the necessary capacity (knowledge, attitude, models, skills) to enable improved local governance for WATSAN. Therefore, The ETG will work to consolidate, further develop and scale up the philosophy and approaches of the EMPOWERS project (2003-2007): through influencing policy and practice; replication of work within the three countries where EMPOWERS was implemented (Egypt, Jordan and Palestine), and through the establishment of new initiatives in other MENA countries.

The ETG will have an Arab face and will work to ensure learning and exchange of experiences primarily between Arabic speaking countries. It will be open to all organisations and individuals who share its vision and are prepared to contribute to its achievement. It will take as its starting point the interested partners, concepts, tools and experience of the EMPOWERS project, and seek to promote the core concepts while improving and adding to knowledge, tools and experiences.

It is envisaged that the entity will operate at several levels, initially regional and national, while in the future it is possible that sub-regional platforms may also be desirable.

Main activities of EMPOWERS Thematic Group

Focusing on achieving improved local governance for water and sanitation (WATSAN) and IWRM, and with an emphasis on scaling up existing expertise and good practices; the ETG initiative will carry out three broad groups of activity. These are:

A - Experience sharing between members:

Operating in a think tank mode and adopting an action research approach, the ETG will provide a platform and systems for members to share experiences and develop the concepts underlying the EMPOWERS approach and philosophy. The sharing of experiences will be based on and supported by the outputs and learning gained from the implementation of activities (*Main activity B*).

Specific activities that will take place under experience sharing include:

- Regular meetings (Learning seminars, training workshops, exchange visits, etc...)
- Regular regional news magazine

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- Maintenance of a web-site/portal and management of a shared information system that could develop into a **Resource Centre** in the future. Resource centres can play an important role in ETG activities, particularly in ensuring the sustainability of new capacities, and in the up-scaling of experiences and lessons learned. For this, member's capacities will also need to be strengthened and will require activities including human resource development, organisational development and institutional strengthening.

The ETG portal will be housed at INWRDAM and continue to receive technical assistance from IRC when needed

B - Enabling learning and implementation activities:

Focusing on a number of priority themes, identified regionally and in focus countries, the Group will identify opportunities to carry out further learning and implementation activities.

It will aim to develop and have funded a programme to undertake further work regionally, in countries where the EMPOWERS project currently works, and in new countries within the region. To do this the Group will:

- Support its members in securing funds to carry out implementation and learning projects;
- Support knowledge and information management and exchange through supporting its members in documenting best practices, developing case studies, disseminating experiences learned and other information products designed to meet the different stakeholders at the different institutional levels.
- Produce training materials and support the development of training
- Support the organization of regional training workshops to exchange experiences and lessons learned between countries and sub-regions

C - Networking and Advocacy:

The ETG will also seek to provide a platform and tools to its members to carry out advocacy for the EMPOWERS philosophy and approaches; increase resources for capacity building of intermediate level actors; and to effect institutional/policy reform and development within the water (and related) sectors in the region.

Specific activities include:

- Developing and implementing an advocacy strategy
- Developing and producing advocacy products
- Networking and lobbying through members

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- Encouraging and facilitating institutional/policy reform and development
- Creating and strengthening partnerships / alliances with other networks

Membership and Governance

Membership of EMPOWERS Thematic Group is open to any organisation that both shares the vision of the entity, and is prepared to commit to the broader philosophy and approaches of EMPOWERS.

Members will ensure the growth and development of the Group through their:

- commitment of own human and *financial* resources;
- committing to work on joint proposal preparation and fund raising activities;
- facilitating necessary linkages between activities and actors at different institutional levels, within and between the various countries

Members will meet face to face (f2f) twice yearly to report on progress, share experiences, and agree on the ETG's future strategy. In addition to the f2f meetings, members will attend the ExCom conference calls (see Governance below). In the first year, ExCom calls will be monthly. Later, ExCom calls will take place every two months.

Members' financial commitments include:

- Pre-defined membership fees that differ based on the entity (International / regional vs. local organisation vs. individual¹)
- Twice-a-year, a 2-days, face to face meeting at own expense (travel, accommodation and facilities).
- Optional - additional contributions (grants) committed by the members to support the running of the secretariat.

All ETG financial resources will be channelled towards the establishment and running of the **ETG Secretariat**. The secretariat (Annex 4) will be housed in INWRDAM and will be responsible for leading and catalysing an effective and successful ETG capable of carrying out the Vision and Mission set out in these TOR.

¹ For the period of Sept. 2007 – August 2009, ETG membership fees are the following: for regional/international organizations = EUR 1,000 (or USD 1,350); National Organizations = EUR 500 (USD 675.0) and EUR 75 (USD 100 for individuals)

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New membership to the Group: Applications (Annex 5) will be reviewed during the ExCom meeting directly following the application date. Members are to have a two year commitment and will be invited to become member by allowing their logo to be inscribed on ETG's portal

Governance of the entity rests with the members. It is acknowledged that de-facto leadership will be assumed by the group of organisations prepared to commit the resources necessary to carry forward its work. The Secretariat will assume responsibility for leadership and day-to-day management of the ETG.

- Legal status of the ETG: For time being, the ETG will be a program under INWRDAM who will also host the ETG Secretariat. The appropriate type or entity the ETG could develop into remains to be seen. Therefore any payments for the planned trainings would be directly paid to INWRDAM; with audits under their account and with separate book keeping and invoices.
- Chairing the ETG: By rotation and to be decided upon during the F2F meetings which are to take place twice a year.
- Membership, membership fees & Accounting:
 - For administrative reasons and bookkeeping; membership fees needs to be separated from any additional contributions committed by the members to support the running of the secretariat.
 - Membership fees should be renewed annually and are due by January 1st of each year. For this year's fees (2007), these will cover 2007 only, 2nd fees payment will be due on Jan. 1st, 2008.
 - ETG annual budget (Annex 3) is estimated at EU 44,000.0 Budget (Sept 2007 – August 2008). About EU 36 thousand have been committed (Annex V) which is enough to start up the group and the work of the ETG coordinator.

Annexes

- Annex 1: ETG Operational Guideline – This Document
- Annex 2: Action Plan - ETG Secretariat
- Annex 3: ETG budget and funding sources
- Annex 4: TOR of ETG Secretariat and ETG Coordinator
- Annex 5: Membership Application