



GOOD PRACTICES #3

A dual-track approach for more productive and resilient livelihoods in the West Bank

What is decent rural employment?

[Decent rural employment](#) refers to any activity, occupation, work, business or service performed by women and men, adults and youth, in rural areas that: (i) respects the core labour standards as defined in ILO Conventions; (ii) provides an adequate living income; (iii) entails an adequate degree of employment security and stability; (iv) adopts minimum occupational safety and health (OSH) measures adapted to address sector-specific risks and hazards; (v) avoids excessive working hours and allows sufficient time for rest; and (vi) promotes access to adapted technical and vocational training.

THE SITUATION

Limited access to water represents one of the most pressing problems for poor Palestinian farmers and herders in the West Bank. In Jenin and Hebron Governorates, access to water resources and rainfall have become increasingly sporadic and scarce. The poorest farming households – particularly those headed by women – are the most negatively affected, due to their reliance on rainfed agriculture.

Water is an essential resource for agriculture, and thus sustainable and resilient livelihoods depend upon its availability. Without stable access to water, farmers are unable to achieve the productivity gains that are conducive to broader rural economic growth.

This can ultimately limit both the quantity and quality of available rural employment opportunities for landless rural workers and other vulnerable groups living in these rural areas.

PROJECT DETAILS

Title: Supporting the food security and sustainable livelihoods of poor rural families through improving rainwater harvesting and water demand management for agricultural purposes

Date: 2011–2013

Location: Jenin and Hebron Governorates

Responsible institution(s): Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture (implementing agency); FAO (technical support); European Union (funding agency)

Sub-sector: Crops, Livestock and Horticulture

Budget: US\$1.9 million

HOW THE ISSUES WERE ADDRESSED

A **dual-track approach was applied** to address water scarcity and promote rural employment. First, by implementing a “cash transfer” modality, cistern owners were able to participate in the construction/rehabilitation of their own structures, in addition to hiring contractors or supplementary labour to carry out the work. Hence, the project provided **short-term employment opportunities through public works schemes**, while also involving the targeted communities in the construction and rehabilitation of water cisterns.

Second, the project provided **training to local farming households and agronomists** on good agricultural and water management practices to ensure that households would be able to effectively utilize, manage and maintain their new cisterns. Consequently, this second track of the approach improved farming households’ access to the resources, skills and knowledge needed to drive productivity and income gains.



Criteria used to identify good practices

To be considered a good practice in promoting decent employment in agriculture and rural areas, a programme/project must:

1. Have been directly **relevant** to promoting decent rural employment;
2. Have had a **positive effect on employment** issues among target beneficiaries;
3. Have included measures that will ensure the **sustainability of its effects and/or support**; and
4. Be **replicable** by other organizations, in other contexts and/or for the benefit of other groups.

IMPACT

The project contributed to a substantial increase in available water resources, improving families' incomes and their food security status. The project resulted in the construction of 465 new cisterns and the rehabilitation of 35 more, for a total of 37,609 m³ in new rainwater-catching capacity. The project supported 500 of the most vulnerable farming households in the West Bank to access and utilize these water resources. Project monitoring revealed that these families benefited from an increase in agricultural income, as well as improved food security.

The investments in infrastructure also generated significant short-term employment opportunities for poor rural workers. To build and improve the 500 cisterns, about 32,000 working days were made possible for 2,198 skilled and unskilled rural workers, worth about 15 working days for each worker. This provided an influx of income for the targeted communities, which is likely to have positive spillover effects. Gender equality was also a cross-cutting subject. There were 158 targeted households headed by women (32 percent of all project beneficiaries), further enabling them to financially support their households through alternative income-generating opportunities. Given the significant part that women play in fetching water, improved water management had a positive effect on their livelihoods.



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SUSTAINABILITY

The projects' dual-track approach contributes to the sustainability of its livelihoods support. First, the 500 water cisterns built over the course of the project have an expected lifespan of 40-50 years, with annual maintenance. Second, the trainings provided to project beneficiaries and local agronomists will help ensure that this infrastructure is adequately utilized, managed and maintained over time. Third, cisterns are by their very nature a resilience-enhancing type of infrastructure; they can act as a water reserve during times of crisis, and thereby reduce poor families' exposure to risks related to fluctuations in rainfall. This ensures that the income gains attributed to the project's implementation are more likely to be sustained in the long run. Finally, by involving members of the community in the construction of their own cisterns, the project helped ensure greater local ownership of, and thus responsibility for managing this infrastructure.

REPLICABILITY

The project's approach to supporting livelihoods through improved access to water resources could be replicated in other water-scarce rural areas with high levels of poverty and food insecurity. Cisterns are a cost-effective means of providing poor farming families with more reliable access to water. Combining infrastructure development with skills development can help to unlock the productive potential of local farming households.

Such an approach could also be applied to develop other types of rural infrastructure in a way that provides widespread support for rural livelihoods, such as communal water reservoirs. The project's approach of bridging social protection and livelihoods support in a way that also generates necessary rural infrastructure – identifying gaps that are constraining productivity and incomes, and paying the intended beneficiaries of the infrastructure to build it – could be further upscaled to support decent rural employment and development.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS GOOD PRACTICE, PLEASE CONTACT:

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TO SUBMIT YOUR OWN GOOD PRACTICE, CONTACT:

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