



# Project 4

## Greening WANA: Integrating Islamic and community-driven natural resource management systems for environmental sustainability and conflict resilience

**Objective:** The roll out of community-based natural resource management techniques that promote conflict resilience, equitable resource sharing and environmental good governance.

**Duration:** 24 months (Jan 2016 - Dec 2017)

### Background

The environmental crisis in the WANA region is both evidenced and broadly admitted. The Arab states have the lowest freshwater availability per capita of any region in the world. Around 17% of the population lack access to improved sources of drinking water, and 20% lack access to improved sanitation facilities. Competition for water — between communities, industry and agriculture — is now a flashpoint for unrest, particularly in states where resources are unequally distributed and related institutions are weak. Likewise, water and soil pollution, coupled with climate change and land degradation, means that food security is a growing security concern. Pollution and unsafe waste disposal have attendant consequences for health, urban poverty and reduced productivity; unsafe sanitation practices drive illness and mortality, and

mount pressure on public resources and health systems. The water scarcity situation is matched by disparities in energy resources between WANA states. In some areas, inadequate and unreliable energy access maintains poverty traps and inhibits entrepreneurialism. In others, fossil fuel-based desalination accounts for nearly 50% of the world's desalination capacity, driving pollution and enhancing inequalities. Finally, it is impossible to assess the region's water and energy challenges without referencing the associated pressures of food security created by dominant agricultural practices, specifically inefficient resource use, crop selection, urban expansion and the intensive use of agrochemicals. These tensions are being exacerbated by refugee influxes, population growth and urbanisation.

### Problem analysis

Sustainable development is not possible without safe and equal access to water, sanitation, energy, and food security. Health is a sine qua non to a growing economy. Water- and food-borne illnesses impact school and workforce participation rates, constitute a major drain on healthcare systems, and negatively impact tourism. Equitable access to

water, food and energy is also key to regional and domestic political stability. Key factors in the Arab transitions were lack of equity in resource sharing, accountability and access to services. Syria had its worst drought immediately prior to the break out of civil war, which pushed 1.5 million people off their land and into towns.

Despite the deteriorating environmental situation and risks posed, there is strong evidence of popular apathy on the issue. The World We Want survey ranked people’s chief concerns among basic economic, social and political rights. From the 320,000 votes cast in the West Asia-North Africa region, protecting forests, rivers and oceans, access to clean water and sanitation, action on

climate change and reliable energy at home did not rank in the top six choices.

There is an urgent need to balance environmental programming goals with quality and equality of access. Safeguards need to be set in place to ensure that advancements do not further entrench inequality or facilitate quality that is highly segmented. HIMA, community-based natural resource management techniques enshrined in Islamic traditions, is a framework for better understanding and responding to such challenges. While research has been undertaken in this area, little progress has been made in developing models and practical frameworks for the realisation of the HIMA concept.

<p><b>Research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigation into the viability and utility of models that increase community control over and management of scarce resources to optimise efficiency based on <i>hima</i> (Islamic community-based natural resource management).</li> <li>Investigation of the relationship between dominant agricultural practices, water and food insecurity and risk of conflict.</li> <li>Output: Findings and recommendations disseminated to 2,500 stakeholders, research reported in two academic journals, research presented at two conferences, two interview vignettes with HRH Prince Hassan, one animated video, two infographics, two opinion editorials, launch of a Regional Environmental-Commons and Empowerment Charter.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conferences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two-day regional conference for 75 policy-makers, civil society practitioners and resource management specialists on <i>hima</i> models for resource sharing, civil society monitoring and the relationship between resource practices and conflict</li> <li>Output: 75 civil society practitioners, policy-makers and resource management specialist attend conference.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two-day practical training for 40 civil society practitioners from ten WANA countries on empowerment-driven resource monitoring programme design, and <i>hima-based</i> commons models, e-learning module launched.</li> <li>Output: 40 civil society actors from ten WANA countries participate in training workshop, 150 participate in e-learning programme.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An objective evidence base that drives impactful programme strategy and policies supportive of sustainable natural resource management and conflict resilience.</li> <li>A model for water and common pool resource sharing based on <i>hima</i> principles is endorsed and supported by key stakeholders.</li> <li>Civil society and resource management agencies use new knowledge and tools to initiate or improve programming and policies.</li> </ul>