
Wadi Al-Karak Environmental Advocacy Campaign: Enforcing National Laws Related to Dealing with Wastewater Treatment in Wadi Al-Karak

*Princess Basma Development Center- Al-Karak
Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD)*

Jordanian Civic Activists Toolkit II: Case Studies of Jordanian Advocacy Campaigns

Civil Society Capacity Building in Jordan
USAID Civic Initiatives Support Program
2013 – 2018



¹ Source: The information related to these four areas of rights are adapted from and found in Discover Human Rights: A Human Rights Approach to Social Justice Work, The Advocates for Human Rights (<http://bit.ly/1TmOp6v>). The New Tactics Method utilizes: safety and security; non-discrimination; participation; and protection-accountability. NOTE: The rights listed in these four “categories” may be placed in any area depending upon the context where the right is being violated. For example, Article 23: Right to join trade unions might be placed in “Safety and Security” rather than “Participation” where organizing or joining a union is dangerous.

² Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) Article 25 (1): Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

³ The identification of the four action areas outlined in the Legacy Tool comes from the advocacy experience of Mr. Faisal Abu Sondos, former Executive Director of The Royal Conservation Society of Jordan (JREDS). Mr. Abu Sondos has been a New Tactics Method Trainer since 2010 and Lead Method Trainer since 2011. While using the New Tactics Strategic Effectiveness Method in his own organizations' advocacy efforts and coaching other civil society organizations in using the Method he identified these four action areas to assess progress. The benefits and drawbacks regarding the use of technology in each of these advocacy action areas needs examination in relation to the appropriateness for the intended target groups and goals of an advocacy campaign.

Overview

Advocacy Issue

The right to live in a safe and clean environment.

Human Rights-Based Focus Area¹

Protection / Accountability – (UDHR – Article 25²)

Scope of Advocacy

Local: Al-Karak Valley, Al-Karak Governorate

Advocacy Action Areas³

A challenge for many civil society organizations is distinguishing between being busy with activities and implementing tactical actions that strategically advance an advocacy effort. In order to help organizations better assess how to expend precious resources, the Legacy Tool offers four action areas that are needed to conduct any advocacy campaign: internal capacity building, research, mobilization and engagement with decision makers. This case provides insights into all four action areas:

- internal capacity building
- research
- mobilization
- engagement with decision-makers

Tactical Aim

New Tactics in Human Rights has identified four primary human rights-based tactical aims: prevention, intervention, restorative and promotion. This Wadi Al-Karak Environmental Advocacy Campaign: Enforcing national laws related to dealing with wastewater treatment in Wadi Al-Karak demonstrates the following tactical aim:

- intervention

Campaign Period

June 1, 2017 – April 30, 2018

Brief Summary

This campaign helped the Princess Basma Development Center – Al-Karak, under the umbrella of the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Development (JOHUD)⁴, to work on a rights-based environmental, health, well-being and livelihood issue that helped build trust between civil society organizations, the local community, and the government bodies. This campaign emerged as a result of the Princess Basma Development Center’s participation in the USAID Civic Initiatives Support Program (CIS) Advocacy Support Fund grant process. A primary component of the grant process included an advocacy training using the New Tactics in Human Rights Program’s **Strategic Effectiveness Method** which facilitates the collective identification of locally-defined priorities. As a result, Princess Basma Development Center launched the campaign, *Enforcing national laws related to dealing with wastewater treatment in Wadi Al-Karak/Al-Karak Governate*.

In recent years, the capability of the wastewater treatment plant in Al-Karak has become compromised, leading to the decrease in the quality of the water coming out of the plant. The result is that the water coming out of the plant is not in line with Jordanian specifications. This water, being dumped into Al-Karak Valley, is causing environmental damage to the Valley and the surrounding areas due to the pollution to the spring waters. This water pollution has led to a number of grave concerns. There has been a sharp decrease in the quality of agricultural produce in the area and the demise of several forest trees and plants. This, in turn, has caused severe damage to the economic situation of farmers and their families due to residents refraining from purchasing any produce from the Valley. This once constituted the strongest provider of agricultural produce in Al-Karak. To make matters worse, bad fumes and emissions from the water are creating health hazards. Finally, the polluted water from the treatment plant is flowing into the spring waters in Al-Karak Valley which has damaged the tourism sector, once was one of the best tourism destinations in Jordan, especially for adventure tourism.

In cooperation with several local civil society organizations and other interested parties, the Princess Basma Development Center in Al-Karak, part of the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (PBDC-JOHUD), decided to examine this problem based on the violation of Al-Karak citizens’ rights to live in a safe and clean environment. The PBDC-JOHUD set out to advocate for the rights of those being affected by this violation through demanding the improvement of the wastewater coming out of the treatment plant to ensure that it is in line with Jordanian wastewater treatment standards. PBDC-JOHUD in Al-Karak undertook this advocacy through mobilizing the community members in a number of key ways. They contracted a local research firm to examine the economic and social impacts of the untreated wastewater being dumped in Al-Karak Valley on the residents. They also contracted national entities accredited in laboratory testing to conduct the required analysis of the incoming and outgoing wastewater at the treatment plant to determine the existence of a problem. Based on the lab analysis, PBDC-JOHUD developed

⁴The Princess Basma Development Center in Al-Karak is one of the centers under the umbrella of the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Development (JOHUD). The center works on spreading awareness aimed at motivating people to participate in addressing the phenomenon of poverty in Jordan and easing the negative effects of the social and economic changes in the lives of the poor. The Center also calls or the right of everyone to participate in decisions that affect their lives especially the poor and marginalized groups. JOHUD strives to empower the poor to be self-reliant, to gain access to resources, to make their voices heard, and to gain support for the issues that are important to them.

a position paper containing an the analysis of the problem, its impact on the community, the types of violations present, and the specific demands required from decision-makers to address the problem.

PBDC-JOHUD engaged the community by conducting a meeting with local allies with the presence of the Governor of Al-Karak and members of the Governorate Council. They presented the results of the research, the laboratory tests, the position paper, and recommendations for creating a joint action plan. PBDC-JOHUD was successful in creating a campaign committee of twenty members related to the wastewater pollution issue. The members included representatives of the Governorate Council (decentralization), environmental activists, and officials from the environment, agricultural, water, and health sectors in Al-Karak governorate. This provided an opportunity to hold a dialogue with direct decision makers, especially the Secretary-General of the Water Authority and the Secretary-General of the Jordan Valley Authority to discuss the issue and its ramifications. They arranged for a visit to the treatment plant and surrounding areas of Al-Karak Valley for an up-close view of the problem.

These coordinated actions put pressure on the government to fulfill its role as an accountable party to address the human rights violations related to the wastewater pollution in Al-Karak Valley. By cooperating with the Governor of Al-Karak, PBDC-JOHUD was able to exert pressure on the Ministry of Water and Irrigation. The General Secretary of the Water Authority was instructed to visit the site and instruct stakeholders from the Water Directorate in Al-Karak to examine the problem; take required measures for completion of maintenance of the current plant; and to complete the expansion on the new plant within a specified time frame.

This advocacy campaign resulted in many significant results, namely the allocation of 250 thousand Jordanian Dinars for immediate maintenance of the treatment plant, as well as putting pressure on the responsible contractor to speed up work on the new treatment plant. This is an expansion adjacent to the current plant. This campaign enabled the local community in Al-Karak to know their rights and empowered the community to demand the realization of their rights in instances of violation. The campaign also contributed to the commitment and engagement of stakeholders vis-a-vis citizens' rights, and their recognition of the importance of realizing those rights. This advocacy campaign enhanced the trust of citizens in their government's ability and interest to respond to citizens' demands.

Beyond the success of the campaign, a major achievement of this campaign was building the knowledge and understanding of those running the campaign of human rights advocacy methods, skills, and tactics to address not only the violation related to water but to address any violation related to the human rights of citizens in the area.

Achievements

Princess Basma Development Center in Al-Karak (PBDC-JOHUD) made significant gains in achieving their campaign goal – *Enforcing National Laws Related to Dealing with Wastewater Treatment in Wadi Al-Karak*. Key successes of the campaign took place in the mobilization of the community and engaging decision-makers. The ways in which PBDC-JOHUD in Al-Karak mobilized the community ensured an accurate understanding of the problem and the development of appropriate solutions that could be offered to decision-makers.

Appropriate timing of the campaign: This campaign coincided with a period of civic activism movements inside Al-Karak, which contributed to more responsiveness to local demands. It also coincided with a visit by the campaign coalition team to the General Secretary of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation who had at the time only been in his post for a few days. This contributed to his openness and readiness to respond to demands.

Implementation of the campaign by an entity that enjoys the trust of everyone (trust of locals towards the campaign leadership): PBDC-JOHUD, Al-Karak Branch, gained the trust of the campaign coalition by engaging local leaders, members of the Governorate Council, environmental activists, etc. The reason for this trust was that the campaign was prepared under an organized, reputable national umbrella that has the capacity for implementation. The campaign team was also guided and supported by advocacy specialists within the donor organization.

Without a doubt, one the biggest achievements of this environmental advocacy campaign was activating and applying the laws related to wastewater treatment and disposal as per Jordanian specifications in Al-Karak Valley. The campaign coalition worked together to mobilize the community to demand action from decision makers to solve the issue of the environmental pollution resulting from the wastewater treatment plant in Al-Karak. Furthermore, a significant result was achieved when decision makers allocated 250 thousand Jordanian Dinars for immediate maintenance of the current treatment plant. In addition, the campaign succeeded in accelerating the completion of the new treatment plant.

Key Lessons

Advocacy Action Areas⁵

The Advocacy Action Areas in this campaign constitute challenges and lessons learned from the experience of PBDC-JOHUD in Al-Karak in the implementation of the *Wadi Al-Karak Environmental Advocacy Campaign: Enforcing National Laws Related to Dealing with Wastewater Treatment in Wadi Al-Karak* campaign.

Internal Capacity Building

PBDC-JOHUD in Al-Karak built their internal capacity through the USAID CIS sponsored advocacy training using the New Tactics in Human Rights **Strategic Effectiveness Method**. The five-step method begins with a collective process to identify a clear and focused problem statement. This foundational step is critical for any campaign (see Research). PBDC-JOHUD in Al-Karak identified the problem as: *Residents and visitors of Al-Karak Valley do not enjoy their rights to a safe and clean environment due to the dumping of wastewater that is not treated as per standard specifications into the Valley water stream.* The **Strategic Effectiveness Method** provides a step-by-step process to develop a strategic path – or journey of change. This strategic path helps to also track and monitor progress (see Figure 1).

In terms of the internal capacity building for implementing the environmental advocacy campaign, PBDC-JOHUD created a coalition of relevant institutions. The coalition engaged most constituents of the community, such as local civil society organizations, government departments, research institutions, as well community leaders and dignitaries. The coalition members worked collectively with the campaign team in facilitating the implementation of various campaign activities.

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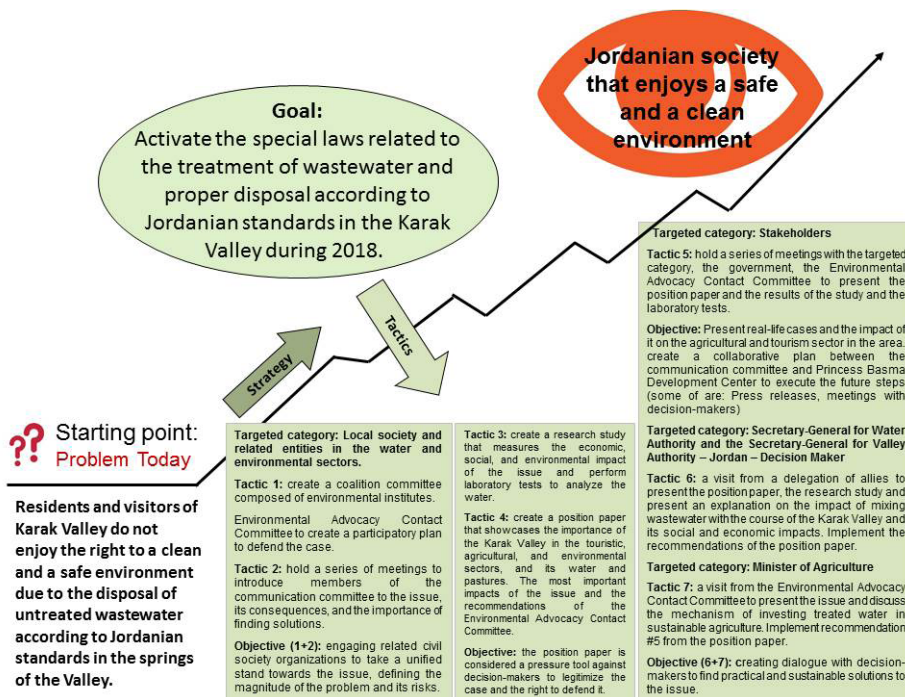


Figure 1: The strategic path developed by the PBDC-JOHUD Al-Karak for their campaign.

Research

One the most important lessons learned with regards to the research element in this campaign was the importance of conducting laboratory tests of wastewater samples. The samples were taken by a local community lab and analyzed by the Royal Scientific Society. The results provided critical leverage in the phase of mobilization of stakeholders and supporters. The results constituted scientific evidence, provided by a licensed national institution for laboratory testing, thus forming a solid tool in the hands of the campaign team. The wastewater results were central when presenting the advocacy case and highlighting the importance of finding direct solutions. This, in turn, contributed to creating a position

paper by the campaign team which was based on a clear understanding of the problem and its ramifications. This improved the campaign team's ability to present, discuss, and achieve better results. The concrete results were a significant component when engaging in dialogue with decision makers.

Mobilization

This environmental advocacy campaign succeeded in stirring the interest of stakeholders to mobilize the required support in the community to advocate for clean water. This manifested in the high numbers of allies to the campaign and in the diversity of the entities that the coalition represented. The campaign team, with coalition members, succeeded in raising public opinion supporting the rights of citizens, farmers, and visitors of the Al-Karak Valley area to clean water. Furthermore, wide coverage from journalists, various media outlets, as well as social media platforms, contributed to alerting stakeholders from local government and the Governorate Council to consider the issue and take it seriously. The support of local leaders and dignitaries provided significant added value to the coalition and to its diversity.

Engaging Decision Makers

The campaign team, with coalition members, engaged decision makers in all phases of the campaign by holding one-to-one meetings, various workshops, and discussion sessions. The presence of representatives of the local government in the coalition facilitated access to main decision makers in relevant ministries. Furthermore, the participatory approach adopted by the campaign reinforced the persuasive style in which the case was presented to decision-makers. This approach manifested in the engagement of the Governor. The campaign team informed him of the idea of the campaign due to the ramifications of the problem. The Governor, in turn, exerted pressure on the relevant decision-makers in the Ministry of Water and Irrigation.

When campaign team conducted visits to the Ministry of Water and Irrigation and the Ministry of Agriculture, these served to make the ministries aware of the

problem and its ramifications. The visits also contributed to gaining their trust in order to move forward in finding joint solutions. The campaign team wrote an article in the local newspaper about the issue, meetings and decisions taken in order to hold the Secretary General accountable for promises made in the meeting.

Engaging decision makers in all phases of the campaign contributed to opening channels of active dialogue and opportunities to discuss the problem and its ramifications. This made it possible to adopt solutions and respond to citizens' demands. Overall, it can be said that the PBDC-JOHUD campaign fully utilized the four advocacy action areas of *internal capacity building* for campaign implementation, *research* through the detailed scientific results of the wastewater, strong *mobilization* of the community, which all contributed to a fruitful dialogue to *engage decision makers* yielding concrete successes for the **Wadi Al-Karak Environmental Advocacy Campaign: Enforcing National Laws Related to Dealing with Wastewater Treatment in Wadi Al-Karak** campaign.

Organizational Impact of Advocacy

Perhaps one of the most important impacts of this campaign on the area has been building trust between civil society organizations and the local community on the one hand, and government bodies on the other. Having a local organization, previously known for its charitable role, work to tackle social problems from a rights-based approach creates trust amongst citizens and contributes to changing negative stereotypes related to local civil society organizations. This campaign also changed government agencies' perspectives of these organizations. Civil society organizations are now being viewed by the government as capable to provide support and solutions to citizens' issues. This success has given a boost to the campaign team and PBDC-JOHUD to continue their development mission and assistance to local communities especially in human rights-based advocacy cases. Furthermore, the success of the New Tactics Strategic Effectiveness Method for advocacy adopted by the campaign team and achieving impressive results in a short period of time, has resulted in this methodology being placed on the PBDC-JOHUD's agenda as a new methodology to be implemented in finding solutions to other community issues.

"I believe that our success in this environmental advocacy campaign is the result of several factors, such as the methodology used in designing and implementing advocacy campaigns in a strategic well-thought manner.... We believe that our ability to take advantage of the general context present at the time played a big role in achieving tangible results in a short time frame. This has given us the confidence in our ability as a community to achieve change, even in issues considered to be difficult."

– Ali Saoub, Campaign Manager, General Manager of Princess Basma Development Center, Al-Karak

"The allocation of 250,000 Jordanian Dinars for the maintenance of the current wastewater treatment plant, in addition to summoning the contractor to follow up on and speed up completion of the new plant, came as a response to the voice of the local community represented by the environmental advocacy campaign implemented by Princess Basma Development Center in Al-Karak and local civil society organizations and institutions in Al-Karak."

– Engineer Iyad Aldhayyat, General Secretary, Water and Irrigation Authority