

Piloting climate change adaptation to protect human health project in Amman, Jordan, March 2011

More than 50 Jordanian and international health and environmental experts joined WHO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in launching the piloting climate change adaptation to protect human health project in Amman, Jordan, on 21 March 2011.



The workshop introduced and discussed essential components of the project to a wide spectrum of stakeholders, including representatives of the Ministries of Health, Environment, Agriculture, Planning, Water and Irrigation; nongovernmental organizations representing the public, farmers, the media and other community partners; and several research bodies representing Jordanian universities. Participants revised the project plan to meet current needs in view of developments already achieved by several United Nations and other international partners who are implementing wastewater reuse activities in Jordan.

This novel project is part of a unique global initiative being jointly implemented by WHO, UNDP, GEF and numerous national stakeholders. The project, piloted in seven countries, seeks to identify and delineate tangible solutions in order to address health risks caused and exacerbated by climate change and variability. In Jordan, the project will particularly focus on enhancing the national adaptive capacity to respond effectively to health risks resulting from chronic water scarcity aggravated by climate change.

Jordan is classified among the lowest ranking countries in the world in terms of water availability and renewability (ranked third or fourth lowest). Water resources are persistently and seriously limited (estimated at 147 m³ per capita per year) and are far below the threshold line of water poverty. These resources depend mainly on local and scattered precipitation for replenishment which will steadily decrease due to climate change. The threats of climate change will increase water scarcity and deteriorate water quality. The lack of water availability and related secondary effects of these changes are considered the highest priority risk to health in Jordan. Water scarcity will have a direct adverse impact on the health of Jordanians.

Due to the serious vulnerabilities stemming from water scarcity, the national Government of Jordan has restricted the use of clean water for domestic supply. This should avoid much of the direct health risks from water scarcity. However, the proposed increase in use of wastewater reuse as an alternative unconventional water supply for agriculture could raise a series of public health risks. Unless adequately managed and soundly utilized, both untreated, and to a lesser extent, treated wastewater poses significant risks to health in Jordan. The project will help to identify safeguarding adaptation mechanisms and best practices to utilize wastewater in agriculture for combating climate change effects without compromising the well-being of human health and the environment. For more details about the project please contact:

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<http://www.who.int/globalchange/projects/adaptation/en/index5.html>