



Restoring Saidaa pond brings peace to Bait Radam

“Saidaa” is a prolific water pond in Bait Radam village located in the Bani Mater district, Sanaa governorate. The pond is one of the primary sources of water for the district’s residents.

Since time immemorial, the pond has remained a viable source of safe water and its maintenance (every six months) was managed on a rotation basis by the four villages which benefit from the pond’s precious liquid. However, a few years ago, the residents of one of the villages refused to do carry out scheduled maintenance work, sighting a breach of water usage rights by another village. They claimed that the other village had installed extra water pipes from the pond for irrigating their lands and were thus using more than their allocated share of water.

This led to a chain reaction and the remaining three subsequently refused to do the required maintenance. As time went by, tensions increased steadily as the water resources dwindled. Some of the farmers diverted the pond water through illegal channels diverting water directly to their farms.

Sediments formed in the pond due to lack of maintenance and violent conflicts soon ensured for the ever decreasing pond water. In the end, the mostly rain replenished water pond capacity was at an all-time low, carrying only 5 percent of its optimum capacity leaving the community very little water to satisfy their requirements. Also, another source of water that replenishes Saidaa pond (Al-Masqa) remained largely neglected as blocked canals resulted hindered the already scarce water from feeding the pond.

The local authorities tried to resolve the conflict between the villages, but all of their efforts were in vain. Most of the solutions put forward did not focus on the root cause of the dispute. There were also huge expenses needed for the rehabilitation of the infrastructure which had degenerated, and the local community simply could not raise the money required, especially in the prevailing humanitarian crisis context.

Against this backdrop, the Shahab Asfal Water Users Association for the Sana’a basin was created with funding from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Youths from both villages were engaged to establish and lead the executive council of the association with at least 30 percent women representation. From the executive council, a conflict resolution committee was appointed.



Women at the conflict resolution committee have taken a leading role to comprehend the root causes of the conflict as well as analyze its impact on both men and women in the communities to propose a lasting solution.

Shehab Asfal Association had several meetings with Sheikhs and key figures in Bait Radam village to resolve the protracted conflict. Of particular concern were the gender-specific challenges that emerged as women were found to shoulder an enormous burden of water scarcity, traveling long distances on foot to fetch water from far away locations. For the first time in the villages’ history, women were active participants in the meetings with Sheikhs and proposed gender-specific solutions.

The FAO technical team, together with the conflict resolution committee proposed the rehabilitation of the network of water canals. FAO funded the rehabilitation work, while the communities provided the labour through “cash for work” modalities. Some of the work included reconstructing broken channels, clearing debris, and also installing filters at the entrance of the water ponds to slow down siltation rates.

The conflicting parties, including Bait Radam’s Sheikhs, unanimously agreed on the proposals and swiftly issued a tribal decree to ensure the commitment of all in maintenance work even after the rehabilitation works were complete. The decree also underlined that no one had the right to use the water paths for their own personal interests, and those found in violation would pay a stipulated fine. It is worth mentioning that the Sheikhs recognized the key role women had played in resolving the conflict and identified specific sections to be expressly managed by women.