



### Water is life in Al-Zayah

Water in Al Zayah village, located in Manakhah district, Sana'a governorate, is indeed a scarce commodity. In 2013, the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation completed a water barrier in an attempt to retain and harvest rainwater. The barrier was constructed at the foot of terraces upon which communities planted coffee. When the rains came, the barrier wall created a small lake - as was envisioned.

This project, though well intended, endangered the social cohesion of the village as the conflict started soon after completion of the works. Higher ground farmers were unable to pump the retained water back up to their coffee farms on higher ground, while those in the low lands (Aqam al-Suda), powered by gravity, and were able to proceed.

Approximately 90,000 cubic meters of rainwater were wasted, and several casualties experienced as a result of the armed conflict which ensued. As a result, all farmers were barred from using the precious liquid.

Following this, the local authorities tried to resolve the conflict, but all of their efforts did not bear fruit as the solutions didn't focus on the root causes of the dispute which was the management of the scarce water resources and development of the water network to have equitable water allocation of water for each farmer.

After few years of the deadlock, the Al Zayah Water Users Association for the Sana'a basin was founded and funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization. The Association engaged youths from both villages in the leadership of the Executive Council of the Association (with at least 30 percent women representation). A conflict resolution committee was appointed by the executive council. The primary role of the committee was to comprehend the root causes of the conflict as well as analyze its impact on both communities to find a lasting solution.



FAO trained Al Zayah Association in the water conflict resolution. After they proceeded to work with representatives of both conflict parties to fully comprehend the root causes of the conflict and all related issues therein. They also worked out what necessary actions would satisfy the parties to ensure the equitable allocation of the water resources. The villagers agreed to a set of actions and have since become part of the implementation process.

In the efforts to resolve this chronic conflict, FAO and Al Zayah Association with the support from the community leaders have presented the resolution in two actions; Opening dialogue channels and negotiation between the communities, Facilitating mediation meetings where both parties signed an agreement based on the installation a pumping system with pipeline network to pump the water from the lake to the reservoir located at the top of the agricultural terraces and then to flow naturally.



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Therefore, the water will be distributed to the agricultural land of both villages.

As part of the agreement, the communities also agreed to uproot the water thirsty Qat trees and use harvested water to irrigate the coffee trees in the villages. This result will see the production of coffee increase and improve the efficiency of water use.

Economically, farmers' incomes will increase because the coffee grown in this area is of the finest quality (Arabica Coffee) that and considered high-value cash crop and that will enhance the community livelihoods.



The people of Al Zayah villages after the long dispute, have started appreciating the importance of peace and development and now have a better understanding of the consequences of conflict. This is a direct outcome of the FAO-implemented Peace Building project in Al Zayah village, "Strengthening the role of Women in peacebuilding through natural resources management."

Onwards and upwards, economically and socially, the community walks firmly towards a better life.