

Issue No. 2 – February 2021



MINARET

The MENA Region Initiative
As a Model of NEXUS Approach
and Renewable Energy Technologies

NEWSLETTER 2020



الجمعية العلمية الملكية
Royal Scientific Society





The MENA Region Initiative
As a Model of NEXUS Approach
and Renewable Energy Technologies

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Interview



Interview with Horizons for Green Development

MINARET extends sincerest thanks to HORIZONS team for their valuable efforts in implementing the project, and great partnership during the four years of the project life.

Interview:

1. Based on your experience with MINARET project, how do you see the future of NEXUS Approach for the water-Energy-Food in MENA countries?

In-line with MINARET mandate, I see that NEXUS is not only a scientific or theoretical approach; rather it is a tool for creating opportunities and opening new horizons.

From my point of view, I believe that the ultimate goal for NEXUS is to highlight the importance of clean technology through socio-economic initiatives, by creating job opportunities for women and youth.

Socio-economic empowerment is the most crucial element in implementing NEXUS to enhance youth and women's role in sustainable development to generate income.

2. What could HORIZONS bring to the communities of MINARET, and what is the proudest moment of your organization at the project, and why?

Horizons served the communities through focusing on disseminating awareness on the conceptual thinking of NEXUS and on bringing innovative tools for the protection of natural resources and conserving the environment.

I can give you an example on MINARET project in Mumia in Karak, where we chose the eco-tourism aspect to protect the environment and attract tourists to enjoy the nature in Al Karak Valley. The visitors' center in Mumia was rehabilitated to provide touristic services, while solar panels were installed to provide power to the center, including the reuse of gray water in farming to complete the NEXUS circle.

Moreover, the proudest moments, are when you give the locals the opportunity to show and use their skills and experience in the most simple yet unique way like baking the shrak bread with its special taste using the traditional tools. It is the feeling of pride locals get when they are doing a special and great job.

Precious moments are also exemplified in Jdaidet el Chouf project in Lebanon, where we installed solar panels at the Jdaideh Women's Organization to provide electricity power to homes in Jdeideh who suffers from intermittent electricity provided by the government.

I am mostly proud of MINARET implemented projects that have actual results on the ground including the installation of new equipment, machinery and eco-friendly solutions, providing job security to individuals, enhancing their capacities and awareness, opening new visions and providing new connections, and most of all the operations and production of clean energy and eco-products that contribute to the protection of the environment.

3. If HORIZONS was intended to continue in this project, what insight your organization would come with as a change?

Continuing with the bottom-up approach with special focus on the local community. Also continuing and focusing on implementing on ground projects and initiatives as they have clear and better impact for the community rather than on theoretical studies or policy dialogues.

4. HORIZONS, where to after MINARET?

Horizons will continue working to support local communities, promote environment protection, empower marginalized groups and create equal opportunities, and most of all support all creations on earth.

Response to COVID-19

MINARET Response to COVID-19

COVID-19 is at the top of the agenda for businesses globally. Being so, several cautionary steps were taken to ensure that the entire MINARET team is fully prepared.

MINARET has been impacted by the government procedures in response to COVID-19, in terms of delay in project implementation, attendance, and engagement, therefore, the project management together with the project partners took mitigation measures and alternative means to meet the deliverables and outputs. Such decisions required a modification in the project timeline as well as work plan in order to do so.

In the case of demonstration projects including Energy, Water & Socio-economic pilots; the entire activities were postponed, since alternatives are not applicable in such a case. As for the soft activities including awareness raising, capacity building and coordination meetings; the decision was made to adopt the digital modelling to implement some of these activities and prioritize where possible.

The modified timeline presents a realistic overview of the delayed activities and shifts the implementation process six months forward from the original deadline for the activity implementation 14 November 2020. According to the new set work plan, the completion date of activities will be 31 May 2021, and the post-reporting period will end by 31 August 2021.

The project financial plan was also updated accordingly to reflect the financial implications of the modified work plan, which covers spending priorities and budget reallocation responding to the project's extended lifespan.

MINARET Activities in Year 3

Despite the delay in the implementation of some of the activities due to COVID-19 restrictions; Year 3 was packed with so many activities and achievements in the three countries; Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia.

Highlights from Year 3

MINARET Second Annual Meeting

Under the Patronage of HRH Princess Sumaya Bint El Hassan, MINARET 2nd Annual Meeting took place from 28 - 30 January 2020 at the St. Regis Amman, Jordan under the title: “Access to Finance – NEXUS at Decentralized Scale”.

The event was organized in cooperation with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) – Beirut, Lebanon – Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in rural areas of the Arab Region (REGEND).

The meeting focused on sharing experiences, building capacities of relevant institutional bodies, and formulating gender mainstreaming and human rights-based strategies and action plans to support sub-national governments, municipalities and local institutions in accessing financial resources.

The event was attended by around 150 participants from different countries including high-level representatives from local municipalities, ministries, national governments, international organizations, NGOs, private sector, community-based organizations and bilateral donors.

Key messages were delivered at the opening ceremony by the President of Royal Scientific Society HRH Princess Sumaya Bint El Hassan, and the Ambassador of Sweden in Jordan H.E Erik Ullenhag and Ms. Roula Majdalani.

A visual presentation was introduced by MINARET Project Manager Ms. Rula Al-Shaweesh that summarized the project’s achievements during 2019 and the accomplished pilot projects in Karak in Jordan, Jdaidet el Chouf in Lebanon and Monastir in Tunisia.

Highlights



Followed by a commemorative ceremony where HRH Princess Sumaya Bint El Hassan distributed MINARET trophies for project partners and stakeholders in recognition of their contributed efforts to the success of the project.

The opening ceremony was followed by two panel discussions on: 1- Setting the context for the nexus approach in the MENA region and 2- Access to Finance: Challenges and opportunities of a nexus approach, presented by a linear table of panelists that included speakers specialized in the area of Access to Finance within NEXUS Approach at municipal level. Each side shared knowledge and experience in decentralization and how such approach can be responsive to both SDGs and municipalities' mandate.



Access to Finance Workshop

Following to the 2nd Annual Meeting; a workshop on "Access to Finance" was conducted on 29 - 30 January 2020 in collaboration with UN-ESCWA, with a series of sessions and panel discussions that focused on the following topics:

- Promoting integrated approaches to water, energy and food nexus in the Arab Region – Framework of the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement
- Operationalising the WEF Nexus: Technologies and Regional Initiatives
- Access to Finance and Project bankability within a Nexus Framework
- Gender Mainstreaming and the Community Engagement

The workshop and working groups focused on Project Proposals, Feasibility Studies and Financial Instruments within a Nexus Approach.

The workshop addressed the growing need of subnational governments for decentralization in order to empower the formulation of needs-based solutions while concurrently facing circumstances of sub-par national governance, limited budgets and confined legal frameworks; including little consideration to gender mainstreaming and nexus-thinking.



Highlights



MINARET at Cairo Water Week 2019

Nexus Workshop: Promoting Urban Nexus in the MENA Region – A Side Event at Cairo Water Week 2019

MINARET took part in the Nexus workshop at Cairo Water Week 2019 that was organized by the Nexus Regional Dialogue in the MENA region in collaboration with the League of Arab States (LAS); upon the expressed interest of the Egyptian Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation (MWRI).

The Manager of Energy Efficiency & Solar Thermal Division at the National Energy Research Center at the Royal Scientific Society in Jordan; Engineer Muhieddin Tawalbeh, gave a presentation on MINARET Project (The MENA Region Initiative as a model of the NEXUS Approach to Renewable Energy Technologies) and the achievements throughout the 2 years of the project.

Success Stories of Urban Nexus in the MENA Region

In this session, the Mayor of Jdaidet El-Shouf in Lebanon; Mr. Hisham Fatayri, presented the achievements of MINARET Project in Lebanon, mainly in using solar pumping irrigation systems.

The achievements of MINARET Project in Karak municipality in Jordan and Monastir municipality in Tunisia were also presented, highlighting the mechanism of public participation in defining the needs of locals regarding water and energy.

Communication

Follow up on Communication Action Plan in Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia

MINARET project, organized a two-day workshop in the municipality of Jdaidet el Chouf on 12 -13 February 2020. The workshop included reviewing and assessing the objectives and benefits of the project Task Force, responsibilities, mandate and discuss the needed capacity building programs. In addition to reviewing the progress of the implementation of the communication and visibility action plan for the municipality and the achieved results.



Monastir, 8 - 9 January 2020



**Al-Karak,
23 January 2020**



**Jdaidet el Chouf,
12 - 13 February 2020**

Publications

Publications



Two new reports were developed and published by IUCN as part of MINARET project :

- NEXUS Comprehensive Methodological Framework
- Water, energy and food security NEXUS in Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia

Gender



MINARET Strategic Gender Action Plan was developed by Horizons.

Capacity Building

Capacity Building

Gender Training in Monastir November 2019

Gender Training was conducted by Horizons on November 27th 2019, as part of MINARET project in Monastir municipality in Tunisia. The training follows the recommendations of MINARET Strategic Gender Action Plan that covers Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia.

The full-day training was attended by members of the Monastir municipality, members of civil society, CBOs, and local NGOs, and covered themes ranging from the role of gender mainstreaming in the MINARET project, the connection between gender equality and climate change action, as well as detection, prevention and mitigation of gender-based violence.

The attendees of the training got also engaged in interactive activities and discussions and received a certificate of completion at the end of the day.



Capacity Building

Gender Training in Karak for Participants from Lebanon and Jordan January 2020



Additionally, Gender Training was conducted by Horizons on January 27th 2020, as part of MINARET project for Jordanian and Lebanese participants in Al Karak Castle in Jordan.

The training covered themes ranging from the role of gender mainstreaming in the MINARET project, the connection between gender equality and climate change action, as well as detection, prevention and mitigation of gender-based violence.



Capacity Building

Agriculture Nursery Management Training in Faisal Nursery in Jerash, Jordan, 15 - 16 March 2020

A training on Agriculture Nursery Management was conducted by the National Agriculture Research Center (NARC) for participants from Karak.

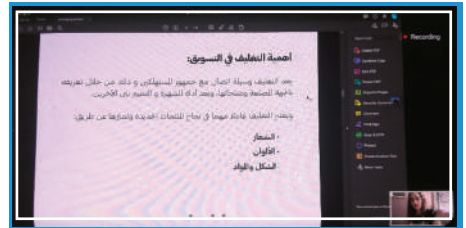
The participants are the team involved in the work of the nursery project implemented by MINARET in Al-Karak.

The training covered the following topics theoretically and practically: Nursery, Management, Landscaping, Introduction to Decoration Plants and Methods of Propagation.



Virtual Training on Product Packaging for Mumia June 2020

A virtual training was conducted by Horizons for Mumia staff and partner women working in HBBs in product packaging.



Capacity Building

A Training on Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy in Al-Karak July 2020

A 4-day training on Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy was organized between 19 - 22 / 7 / 2020 in Karak, Jordan in cooperation with the Greater Karak Municipality.

Engineers from RSS/NERC trained the participants on several topics including Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency, Water Energy Food NEXUS, Municipal Waste and Converting Municipal Waste into Energy.

Participants from Task Force, municipality staff, civil society organizations and energy engineers got benefited from the training that aimed at enhancing their capacities in the aforementioned topics.

The training arrangements considered all safety measures, social distancing and preventative actions as a response to health protection procedures against COVID-19.

Training certificates were distributed to all participants at the end of the training.



Eco-Tourism Training in Monastir July 2020

MINARET Project conducted 6-day training on eco-tourism for Notre Grand Bleu and Voice of the Child in Monastir - Tunisia.

The training covered general principles of ecotourism as well as points directly related to Tunisia in a way that will help Notre Grand Bleu and Voice of the Child capitalize on the ecotourism market in a way that will help grow their operations and service to the local community and environment



Capacity Building

Water Training in Al-Karak August 2020



MINARET represented in IUCN team held a training titled "Building the capacities of the MINARET project's Task Forces and the local authorities on water resources management and WEF Nexus approach" during 18 - 20 August 2020 at Karak Municipality – Jordan.

The training arrangements considered all safety measures, social distancing and preventative actions as a response to health protection procedures against COVID-19.

Training certificates were distributed to all participants at the end of the training.

Capacity Building

Virtual Online Training for Lebanon on Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy October 2020

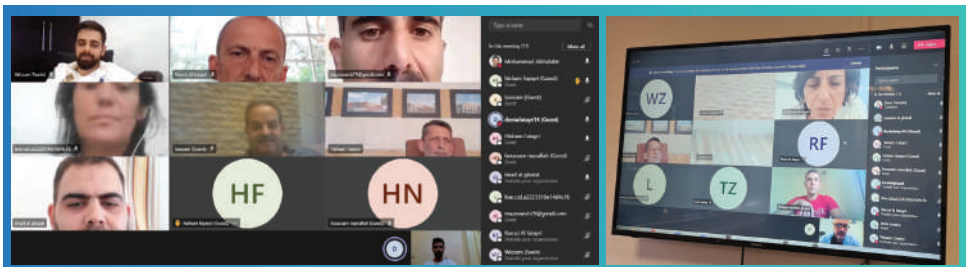
As a response to COVID-19 travel restrictions and adhering to safety measures and social distancing, MINARET conducted an online training for Lebanese participants on Renewable Energy/Energy Efficiency Technologies.

This training is part of MINARET capacity building activities for municipalities, and it was facilitated by qualified engineers from the National Energy Research Centre/Royal Scientific Society using Microsoft Teams.

Training topics included:

Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency, Water Energy Food NEXUS, Municipal Waste and Converting Municipal Waste into Energy.

The training was scheduled to take place from 6 - 8 October 2020, and from 13 - 15 October 2020.



Capacity Building

Canyoneering Training in Mumia, Al-Karak October 2020

As part of rescue and safety training programs to Mumia Eco-Tourism Center in Al-Karak, MINARET provided Canyoneer/Canyon Guide training for Mumia Falls to ensure that Mumia staff will follow the best available safety measures when they deliver hiking and rappelling services to visitors.

The canyon guide training took place at Mumia falls/Wadi Al karak. Seven days of training were executed (2 days of theoretical training & 5 days of practical training) by iBIX CLIMBING; the only entity in Jordan qualified to deliver Canyoneer training with an internationally recognized certificate.

4 meters artificial wall was bolted using artificial anchors in order to train the trainees on basics climbing and abseiling techniques in the first 2 days of practical training before going to the canyon.



Capacity Building

Eco-Tourism Training for Al-Karak 25 - 26 October 2020

Horizons for Green Development implemented eco-tourism training targeting community-based organizations, NGOs, and MINARET stakeholders that work or are tied to the eco-tourism environmental sector in Karak. The trainer gave introduction to practical strategies and policies governing tourism and/or eco-tourism.

Training topics included:

The concept of responsible and sustainable eco-tourism, the economic impact of ecotourism, the environment, pollution and ecosystem biodiversity, raising tourists' awareness on environmental protection, strategies and policies and serving the needs of tourists and visitors, and cultural communication. In participatory approach, the workshop discussed asset mapping of Karak and identifying sustainable tourism potential of Karak.



Capacity Building

Revolving Fund Unit Capacity Building for The Baqaata Women's Organization October 2020

Al-Shouf Cedar Society (ACS) conducted a 5-day theoretical and practical training to project beneficiaries to build their capacities in creating a unit within The Baqaata Women's Organization (BWO) and managing the "Small Loan Program" under NEXUS (Energy - Water - Food).

The loans will be granted to individuals or associations in order to invest in small environmental friendly projects, ensuring the ownership and commitment by all project beneficiaries.

The training was customized based on the model of the Cedar Loan of Shouf Biosphere Reserve (SBR) by providing BWO with the revolving fund application form, brochure and budgeting tools needed.



Socio-Economic Success Stories

Jordan

Socio-economic in Mumia, Al-Karak



An eco-tourism hub was established in the Mumia area near the Karak valley; the centre's purpose is to manage tourists and serve them by providing lodging, hiking services, and dining through organic and homemade products focusing on the dairy products Al-Karak is known for such as Jameed, & Ghee, as well as seasonal fruits from the valley.

The centre will serve the ecosystem in Al-Karak valley by managing the number of tourists and their hikes, encouraging and supporting projects that are related to the environment, tourism, handicrafts, and local heritage. The center aims at protecting the natural heritage in Al-Karak Valley region, and fighting unemployment by creating job opportunities through the organization's activities and by attracting tourists to the Karak area through the center.

Launching of Eco-Tourism Hub in Mumia, Al-Karak

Jordan

MINARET inaugurated the Visitor's Center (Ecotourism Hub) managed by the Mumia Organization and is now fully operational and started attracting tourists to enjoy the different services and practice hiking in Al Karak Valley.



Launching of Nature Shop

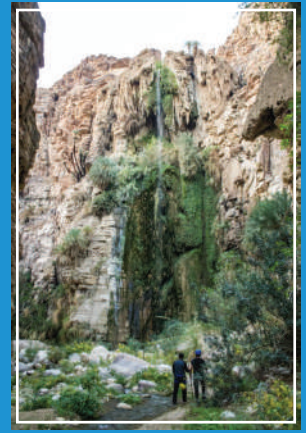
Mumia Falls Cooperative Organization also launched the Nature Shop inside the Visitors' Center; that sells organic and home-made products supplied by local women of Mumia, like Jameed and the Moringa tea that is rich in its nutritional, health and medical benefits. MINARET Collaborated with local women's organization for the creation of items for the center like providing handmade products and organic items.



Jordan

Adding Mumia Eco-Tourism Center in Al-Karak on the Jordan Trail

Mumia Eco-Tourism Center in Al-Karak, managed by the Mumia Falls Cooperative Organization, is now added as a side trail of the Jordan Trail under Region 4. This step was essential in building the capacities of the center in the eco-tourism sector as this will support MINARET's other efforts in the marketing training and will bring more visitors to the center to experience MINARET's successful socio-economic activity



Marketing Campaign to Promote Mumia

Jordan

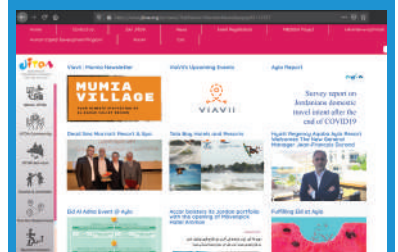
Mumia Organization was connected to tourism operators that cater to local tourists in Jordan such as www.Jannah.jo, this is being done with the support of Viavii.

The media campaign included:

- Conducting trainings in marketing, packaging, ecotourism, and gender mainstreaming
- Creating marketing and business plan
- Creating social media pages for outreach
- Connecting the center to local tour operators
- Creating advertisement for the center that has received significant recognition and admiration



Tourism operators' newsletter sent to local tour operators



Mumia Newsletter displayed on JITO's website for local tourism operators in Jordan.



The Mumia video published at the end of June 2020 - <https://minaretproject.com/videos/>

Socio-economic in Lebanon Launching of Revolving Fund in Jdaideh 30 October 2020



The “Village Small Loan Program” was launched in Jdeideh Municipality in the presence of The Baqaata Women’s Organization, municipality members, the Shouf Biosphere Reserve team members and media.



The aim of this meeting was to inform the community of Jdeideh about this new initiative, managed by The Baqaata Women’s Organization, and provide them with the brochure and documents needed in the application process that will be effective as beginning of next year.



The revolving fund for The Baqaata Women’s Organization (BWO), has been financed by the savings generated through MINARET’s intervention when solar panels were installed to reduce diesel costs for the organization.

Launching of Souk El Ghalli in Jdaideh, Lebanon

Souk El Ghalli was launched in August 2018 in cooperation with Al-Shouf Cedar Society (ACS), SIF and the Bakaata Women Organization. Local producers present all of their products in this market, that is being held every year.



Tunisia

Socio-economic in Tunisia

Nature Hub in Tunisia

Focusing on Biodiversity, Climate Change, Renewable Energy and Eco-friendly Food Production;

The Nature Hub in Monastir was established in cooperation with MAVA Organization, that will be the largest of its kind in North Africa, to host a Youth Capacity Development Center for academics and students, a Nature Shop for small enterprises and local women and a Research Center to study marine ecosystem.



Rainwater Harvesting for the Olympic Stadium in Monastir



Rain Water Harvesting Pilot Project for the stadium

This project will enable the efficient use of water in irrigating the local stadium grounds instead of using potable water that costs around \$2000 a month for a total of \$24,000 a year, in addition to saving the fresh water resources in Monastir.

Water Well for the Voice of the Child Organization



Renovated a Water Well for the Voice of the Child Organization.

This project will reduce the annual spending on electricity and water for the Voice of the Child Organization.

And the generated savings will be used to support the work and safety of Birbasha Women Local Organization; working in plastic waste sorting.

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Access to Finance

Access to Finance is the tool that enables municipalities to fulfill their SECAP actions and commit to the Covenant of Mayors requirements by implementing projects that contribute to GHG emissions' reduction as well as climate change mitigation. The Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAP) will support municipalities in their efforts in seeking grants or investments from funding agencies, international donors, financial institutions and/or the private sector.

MINARET conducted "Access to Finance" Intervention in Municipalities through several activities including the assessment of the legal and regulatory environment pertaining to allowing each municipality to engage in financing and investment activities, setting up investment funds, build public private partnerships and community private partnerships to support profitable investments for the municipalities and build capabilities at each municipality to enable profitable engagements with the private sector.

The ultimate goal behind this engagement was to change the mindset of municipal leaders and entice them to engage in investment-worthy opportunities using municipal assets to create a sustainable source of revenue for their municipalities.

End-Term Evaluation for MINARET

MINARET started an End-Term Evaluation by beginning of October 2020.

In order to: appraise the extent to which the project's objectives have been achieved and evaluate the overall impact of the project in the intervention areas.

It will focus on the long term effects and impacts, sustainability nature of project components as well as the development of methodology within MINARET over time, innovation and ways in which MINARET has responded to changes in external circumstances.

The evaluation will be conducted in the three targeted countries of MINARET (Jordan, Tunisia, Lebanon) to look more in depth at project components, their relevance, impact and sustainability in coordination with MINARET management.



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المركز الوطني لبحوث الطاقة / الجمعية العلمية الملكية - ص.ب. 1945 الجبيهة - عمان 11941 الأردن، تلفون: +962 6 533 8014 / 42 فاكس: +962 6 533 8043
National Energy Research Center / Royal Scientific Society (NERC/RSS) P.O.Box: 1945 Jubeiha, Amman 11941 Jordan Tel: +962 6 5338014/42 Fax: +962 6 5338043