SEIZING THE MOMENT:
A STEP CHANGE IN JORDAN’S WATER MANAGEMENT
IN THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL TRANSITION

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Water, Trade and Sustainable Development Workshop
CONTEXTUALIZING JORDAN WATER SCARCITY:
Recognising politics must drive solutions

**CLIMATE CHANGE**
- “Rio cannot afford to ignore politics”...Can we collectively challenge vested interests to move towards a more constructive politics?” *(World Today, 2012)*

**MENA**
- “Reforms need political as well as technical champions” *(World Bank on MENA water, 2007)*

**JORDAN**
- “Jordan’s water strategy is politically challenged and its water crisis cannot be resolved by water reforms alone.”
- “There is urgent need for a bold new approach that links political reform to a mix of water solutions ..” *(Valerie Yorke, 2013)*
Recognising politics must drive solutions

- Jordan’s water problem
- Meeting the challenge: governance; part of the problem
- Political dynamics, ‘political bargains’, and water
- Politics must drive solutions
**THE PROBLEM IS STRAIGHTFORWARD: DEMAND EXCEED SUPPLY**

Realistic picture of water balances 2015-2025*

**Supply**
- Safe yield + projects (committed / financed)
- No RSDS conveyor before 2025

**Demand**
- Capped agriculture - 700 MCM
- Demand exceeds renewable supply by growing margin

**Deficit**
- 2015 300 MCM
- 2020 469 MCM
- 2025 630 MCM

**Virtual water (2008)**
73% of water footprint (6.27 BCM)

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**Summary of Projected Supply (safe yield/projects underway) and Demand 2015-2025**

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<tr>
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<th>2015</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2025</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supply (safe yield/projects)</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected demand</td>
<td>1229</td>
<td>1398</td>
<td>1559</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deficit</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>630</td>
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* Source: Author’s projections based on MWI Water Balance 2010-25 (2012)
PROBLEM IS POLITICALLY COMPLEX
Power asymmetry, international cross border flows feed uncertainty

- 90% arid (ann. rainfall declining)
- 4th most water deprived (refugees)
  -> per cap 145 CM / yr, and falling
- 80% supplies = surface & renewable groundwater,* but
  - significant proportion trans-boundary
  - Jordan downstream
  - no bilateral accord on joint management (Syria);
    unsatisfactory accord (Israel)
- 8% supplies = fossil water* (SA / no accord)
- Climate change (threat multiplier)

* 2010 figures
PART OF THE PROBLEM: GOVERNANCE
Policy record over two decades: disappointing outcomes

PLUS SIDE

- Commitment / strategies target:
- Demand management
- Reformists in sector
- Royal Water Committee
- Donor-Jordanian collaboration

> Some progress:
- Senior decision-makers involved
- Infrastructure (WWTPs)
- PSP impacts – NRW reduction; safer drinking water
- Slowdown in depletion of aquifers (Groundwater Law, HWF)
- Modest decline in Ag’s share to the advantage of municipalities

Source: MWI Water Budget 2009/2010
MWI Water Resources Directorate open files, 2011
II. GOVERNANCE; PART OF THE PROBLEM
Policy record over two decades

BUT

- WRM efforts fail to produce hoped-for improvements
- Data reflect dangerous trends:
  - declines in precipitation, surface water
  - water use -> mainly low value & inefficient agriculture (66% water; 3.5% GDP)
  - groundwater over-abstraction -> depleting aquifers
  - municipal supply intermittent -> pollution & health risks
  - poor cost recovery; state subsidies unsustainable
  - widening deficits; water constraints inhibit growth

Explained by:

- Partial, uncoordinated reforms;
  - weak water institutions no match for powerful vested interests who resist reforms (tariffs, well regulation, crops, PSP)
- Impact of non-water policies (agriculture, trade, finance, interior) on outcomes
- Donors’ failure to make conditionality stick
‘AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH’: POLITICS DRIVE POOR WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- Asymmetric power: Israel (hegemon); Syria (upstream); S. Arabia (shared aquifer)

- History of regime, survival strategy, cooption of social groups, patronage / rents
  - Political bargain ties traditional landowning elites /merchants -> networks of ‘shadow state’
  - social contract binds people to throne; with privileges / benefits exchanged for allegiance;
  - Water provision integral to exchange (political tool, asset, cheap service)
  - Restructuring of political bargain -1989 -> entrenching anti-reformist groups with interests in allocations, subsidisation, light regulation
  - Resilience of complex web of power in face of Arab Spring
    - Throne enjoys legitimacy; reluctant to devolve power ; divide & rule
    - Tribal elite want more power, but don’t want to share it
    - Insufficient bottom up pressure – weak parties, communal divides; no agreed agenda

- Strategic location and donor support -> postpones crises / difficult choices

- Crises of monarchy and state only a matter of time?
WATER DEFICIT CHALLENGE CAN BE MET
Bold political approach - prioritising water - must drive solutions

Only new ‘political bargain’ can drive ‘step change’ in water governance; technical solutions not enough

National leaders must:
- put water at top of national agenda (strategic significance for national security & socio economic development and centrality of non-sector policies for regional / national WRM)
- formally mandate integrated planning - prioritising water at true cost, aligning management with policies to deliver economic growth
- act now to put water sector on politically, financially, environmentally sustainable path, priority to:

A. Exploiting scope for indispensable demand / supply side efficiency improvements  (Short-long term)
- NRW reduction to conserve low cost water / raise revenues : 55->80 MCM (2020->2025)
- Cross-sectoral Highlands Water Strategy with ‘carrots and sticks’ to increase irrigation efficiency & productivity, conserve renewable low cost supplies, protect aquifers, enhance adaptive capacity
- Increased wastewater treatment / re-use in agriculture - 40->130 MCM (2015-2025)
- Attention to revenue raising -> study of tariff & tax restructuring for fairer targeting of subsidies

B. Pursuing affordable new water supply projects  (Medium-long term)
- Desalination plant at Aqaba (100 MCM)
- Public commitment to to RSDSWC subject to consultations (530 MCM)
WATER DEFICIT CHALLENGE CAN BE MET
Bold political approach, prioritising water to drive solutions

C. **Endorsing / supporting regional initiatives to manage shared resources sustainably**
   
   *(Medium-long term)*
   
   - pursue bilateral accords to close medium-term deficit (Israel - 50 MCM, Syria 100 MCM)
   - Help lay foundation for Regional Water Community through supporting initiatives to advance regional vision on shared resources
   - support studies on inward transfer of Turkish water, lest RSDSWC idea fails

D. **Intensifying international diplomacy in support of above**
   
   *(Short term->)*
   
   - Draw on improved inter-ministerial communications / shared single source data
   - New PM to join Water Council; technicians posted to Royal Diwan, foreign & finance ministries;
   - Negotiate new frame with donors for cash transfers & reform-related conditions / ensure it sticks
Thank you

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Total water resources
892 MCM (2010)
The National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCR) are a research instrument of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).