

Israel-Palestine



The Dead Sea

The Dead Sea is the terminal lake of the Jordan Rift watershed and is shared by Israel, Jordan and Palestine. Its surface area is currently about 420 m below sea level, which makes it the lowest point on earth. The most visible and most disturbing degradation is the **decline of the Dead Sea water level and volume**. Since around 1970 the water level of the Dead Sea has fallen by about 25 m, about half of this alone in the last 20 years: in the past few years the rate of decline was 80-100 cm per year.

The basin plays a major role for the regional economic activities: **agriculture, industrial** (mineral extraction and water bottling) and **tourism**. Over the next few years, plans for foreseeing further tourism and industrial development in the area including the construction of over 50,000 new hotel rooms are on hold due to formation of sinkholes along the seashore.

As part of the Dead Sea research Project, a **Focus Group Meetings** involving different Ministries, regional (Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian) local boards and research institutions were organised. The parties **discussed different plausible alternatives** for solving the environmental and economical problems focusing on the provision of "new water from outside", including rainwater harvesting and wastewater treatment and reuse and the Red-Dead Canal project

Ranked as one of the best possible alternatives is the canal between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea ("Red-Dead Canal"): a 240 km conduit expected to replenish the missing inflow from the Jordan River, using the gravity pressure for desalination through reverse osmosis, and for production of electricity. Costs are estimated to be around 3 billion dollars.



Among the questions that remain unclear are the environmental impacts of the canal (e.g. the chemical changes of the water due to the mixing of Red Sea water with Dead Sea water).

DSS tools and approaches in Israel and Palestine

Even if experiences of DSS tools to manage water issues can not be quoted for these two countries, several experiences of decision support approaches have been experienced in the past. They include:

- *Government reports targeted to policy makers*
- *Involvement of multilateral organizations as the World Bank and UNESCO in decision making processes*
- *Transboundary cooperation between Israel, Palestine and Jordan in assessing the Red-Dead canal option.*

Keywords: Conflicts, Scarcity, Public Participation

Further readings; See the NOSTRUM-DSS Israel/Palestine National Report, available at <http://www.nostrum-dss.eu>
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