

Session 10c: Site-Visit Exercise

PART I: THE SCENARIO

You will visit the Al Tabieleh School Construction Site, which will be similar to the project your Technical Team Lead (if USAID) or COP (if IP) has advocated for in the Yarmouk Basin.

Your Team Lead/COP just informed you that next week's meeting to discuss the environmental and climate risks of the proposed projects, and the environmental compliance and CRM implications thereof, will actually have to be pushed up to this afternoon; a delegation from Washington will be coming in tomorrow, and will demand the Team Lead's/COP's full attention. However, your findings must be submitted next week, and the Team Lead/COP will need to first discuss your analysis!

You thus only have 2.5 hours to prepare before your 10 minute meeting briefing!

PART II: PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

Umm Qais Secondary School Construction

With a young population—42.2 percent are 14 or younger, while 31.4 percent fall between 15 and 29 years of age—nearly one-third of all Jordanians are enrolled in educational facilities. Education access is high, with approximately 95 percent enrollment for school-aged children. However, many challenges still face Jordan's schools. More than 50 percent of the students in Jordan are learning in overcrowded conditions, particularly in urban areas, where the average classroom size is 46 students. However, this does not take into account the influx of Syrian refugees which, according to the MOE and UNICEF, have placed an additional burden of 120,000 registered Syrian children on Jordan's public schools as of 2014.¹

In an effort to address concerns with overcrowded classrooms and sustain high education access in the face of recent population increases, and in support of the Government of Jordan's Education Reform for a Knowledge Economy (ERfKE) strategy through capacity building of teachers and administrators, and school construction and renovation, USAID has identified need to construct a new school in Umm Qais.

After consideration of their options, USAID has decided it would like to emulate the approach and design taken at Al Tabieleh (see Figure 1).

¹ <https://www.usaid.gov/jordan/cdcs>

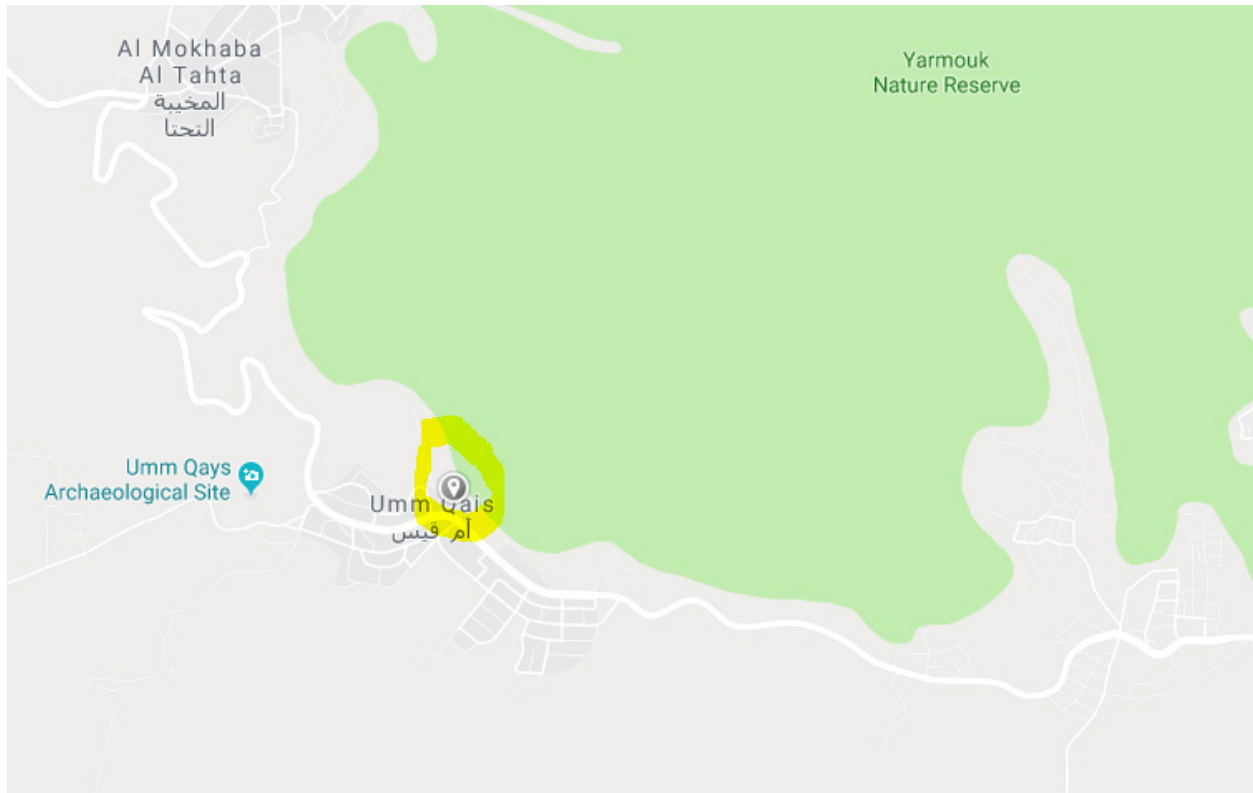


Figure 1 - Proposed Site of School Construction

PART III: SITE OVERVIEW

LOCATION: The Yarmouk Basin is situated in the northwestern corner of the country and covers an area of about 1160 km². It has the fourth and tenth largest cities of Jordan; Irbid (population 307,480) and Ramtha (population 74,901).

The site is located near the historical city of Umm Qais, near to the Yarmouk River and in close proximity to the Yarmouk Nature Reserve. Umm Qais is best known for its proximity to the ancient archeological ruins at the city's western edge.

GEOGRAPHIC CONDITIONS: The Yarmouk Basin features mountainous plateaus comprised of basaltic rock in the western region, while the eastern steppe features expansive plains. The official catchment boundary is defined by Golan Heights in the west and the Jabal al Arab Mountains in the east. The nearby Yarmouk Nature Reserve is 20km² in size, situated in the western region of the basin and characterized by mountains covered with deciduous oak trees, at elevations reaching up to 500 m above sea level. Water runoff and erosion from the adjacent Yarmouk River have formed small and medium valleys, which flow down towards the river. The water that is accessible from the site location originates from water sources in Jordan and in the eastern Golan in Syria. The Yarmouk River formulates approximately 49 km of the Jordanian-Syrian border and runs along the Israeli-Jordanian border prior to adjoining the Jordan River, south of Lake Tiberias.

CLIMATE: Given its relatively small size, there is a fair amount of climate variability across the Jordan River Basin, creating numerous microclimates. The region is predominantly semi-arid, with average

temperatures exceeding 26°C. Precipitation varies substantially, with northern areas at times receiving more than 1,000 mm of rainfall annually, while southern and eastern regions of the basin can receive as little as 100 mm. The Yarmouk Nature Reserve typically receives 400 mm of rainfall annually. The majority of precipitation is concentrated in the winter months, from November through March.

LAND USE: Natural forests and open areas comprise roughly 60 percent of the Jordan River Basin. The Irbid Governate is heavily agrarian, and commonly cultivated crops include olives, fruits, nuts and wheat. The basin's agricultural activities range from rain-fed olive groves, orchards, and vineyards in the higher elevation to field crops (wheat and rain-fed vegetables in the Irbid area), to irrigated vegetables, citrus, and bananas in the vicinity of the Yarmouk River and the northern Jordan Valley.

There may be need for improved land policy to help manage urban expansion from extending onto the settled plateau landscape unit and the cultivated and rangelands plateau unit. Otherwise, the area of the agricultural activity would decrease considerably, as would groundwater recharge. Additionally, conservation of the forested upland may be strengthened via increased designation of conservation area to protect from further construction or industrial activity.

WATER USE: Water is diverted from the Yarmouk River and used for irrigation of crops in the Irbid Governate. Overall, the water quality in the Lower Jordan River Basin is very low. Water diversion projects exacerbate water scarcity concerns, which are prevalent throughout the country. High population growth, the depletion of groundwater reserves and the impacts of climate change are likely to further aggravate the situation in the future.

In Jordan, the increase in water demand, in addition to water shortage has led to growing interest in wastewater reuse. There are wastewater treatment plants in Irbid, Amman, Al Baqa as well as other locations, though the Government of Jordan has been seeking to revitalize, improve wastewater management infrastructure throughout the country.

DEMOGRAPHICS: Communities in the Basin are predominantly agrarian oriented; Agriculture is a focal point of the economy comprising more than 80 percent of the region's GDP and more than 40 percent of cultivated crops are exported.

Education: Ninety nine percent of Jordanians ages 15-24 are literate, and 88 percent have received secondary school educations.

Unemployment: Between the years 2005 and 2017, the average unemployment rate was 13.4 percent. As of the third and fourth quarters of 2017, Jordan's unemployment rate was 18.8 percent.

Population Growth: Jordan is currently experiencing rapid population growth with an annual growth rate of 2.2 percent. Irbid is the third most densely populated region of Jordan, after Amman and Zarqa respectively. The population in Umm Qais is ~6,100, having doubled over the past 20 years.



Figure 2 - The Yarmouk Nature Reserve



Figure 3 - The highland forests

PART IV: THE EXERCISE

Working in your groups:

1. Define the “Actions” that will be undertaken, corresponding the activity, informed by the site you visit Tuesday afternoon.
2. Using the CRM screening table template provided, spend **up to 1 hour** preparing a preliminary CRM screening table.

*Because time is so limited, you will not have time to complete an entire CRM screening table. **Instead focus on completing one or two rows in their entirety** for the risks your group considers to be of highest concern.*

3. Define key environmental impacts, determine the applicable environmental threshold decision, and articulate all corresponding environmental compliance requirements. Briefly elaborate how the environmental impacts, and associated ETD, identified will translate to each corresponding requirement identified.

As with the CRM table, you will only have time to highlight a selection of the environmental impacts that the proposed project could introduce. The environmental impacts identified should reflect those of greatest significance in the estimation of your group, and should be sufficient to establish the ETD you identify.

Based on the ETD you identify, you should be able to describe what the subsequent requirement(s) is/are and, for each requirement, briefly describe or illustrate how the environmental impacts you highlighted will be treated.

For example, if you determine that the ETD should be Negative Determination with Conditions, then describe the appropriate next steps regarding environmental compliance documentation, and responsibilities for both USAID staff and implementing partners. If you determine that the ETD should be Positive Determination, describe the required environmental impact assessment process requirements and corresponding environmental compliance documentation, and the required areas of expertise for ensuring appropriate consideration of key environmental issues, and the environmental issues of greatest importance.