

## **BRIEF OVERVIEW ON THE CURRENT SITUATION ON GENDER AND WATER MANAGEMENT IN EGYPT**

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### **1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION ON WATER SOURCES AND USAGES**

In Egypt, water resources are limited to the Nile River, deep ground water in the Delta, the Western Deserts and Sinai, rainfall and flash floods. The Nile is the main conventional source of fresh water stored in the Lake Nasser to meet needs with Egypt's annual share of water, which is currently at 55, 5 billion cubic meters. Egypt receives ca. 98% of its fresh water resources from outside its international borders. The Nile is shared by 9 other African countries and an estimated 460 million people depend on it, which is expected to double within the next 25 years, thus making an agreement on the sharing of water resources a sensitive matter.

Non-conventional water resources include agricultural drainage water, desalinated brackish groundwater and or seawater, and treated municipal waste water. Desalination of water has been given low priority due to this high costs.

Water requirements are continuously increasing due to population increase and improving standards of living, as well as the governmental policy to reclaim more lands and encourage industrialization. Agriculture is the largest component of the water demand in Egypt, as it consumes more than 85% of Egypt's share of Nile water annually. Municipal and industrial requirements represent a smaller portion of Egypt's total water requirements. Water supply and sanitation is managed by the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and new Communities.(MHUNC).The Ministry of Water resources and Irrigation (MWRI) is responsible for ensuring water of an acceptable quality for the water treatments plants. (UNDP Human Development Report 2005).

Table 1. Patterns of Women's Water management

Sector	Household Water Consumption	Animal Water Consumption	Agriculture Water Consumption
Urban Sector	<p><i>Often:</i> Repair of water tabs/</p> <p><i>Always</i> Discharge of waste water in slums</p>	Watering Poultry and small animals	
Rural Sector	<p><i>Always:</i> Discharge of domestic waste water either in street, canal , trenches or fields</p> <p><i>Seldom</i> Wash clothes or dishes in canal is done when women have a light load in their household chores as it is considered a recreation to meet with other women.</p> <p>Women do not cooperate directly in water management on community level, in case of installation or repairing of sewage system.</p>	<p><i>Always:</i> use of water for small animals (goats &amp; Sheep&amp; poultry)</p> <p><i>Sometimes:</i> Drinking for buffaloes &amp; cows especially when close or in the house.</p> <p>Bath cows and buffaloes in the canal or using ground water</p> <p>Water used during bread baking is health &amp; given to animals to drink</p>	<p><i>Often:</i> open water to the field</p> <p>Supervise water in the field. More responsible when land is planted with clover or cotton and men if vegetables)</p> <p>Arrange with and pay laborers</p> <p>In lower Egypt dig &amp; clean ditches</p> <p><i>Sometimes:</i> Participates on the household level on the selection of the crop and the time of irrigation.</p> <p><i>Seldom:</i> Participates in Water user Associations</p> <p><i>Seldom/Never</i> Attends or receives information from Irrigation Extension staff</p>
Desert Areas	<p><i>Always:</i> Discharge of domestic wastewater. Water used for washing vegetables is given to animals to drink</p> <p><i>Usually:</i> Arranging for household water</p>	<p><i>Always</i> responsible for watering small animals and sometimes camels</p>	<p><i>Sometimes</i> Use water for the small garden behind their houses (if available)</p>

## 2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND OR SUPPORT FACTORS

- In November 2001 by Ministerial Decree # (465) a **Gender Focal Point** was established at the Central Department of Irrigation Advisory Services (IAS) of the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation. The mandate of the Gender Focal Point is to coordinate and communicate with all IAS activities, the training centers of MWRI, projects and activities related to participation in irrigation and drainage management, promoting the exchange of information and experiences. b.) Building capacities of MWRI staff and farmers in gender concerns, c) support the gender dimension in various IAS activities, d) collect and analyze data concerning women participation in the management of irrigation systems and suggestion strategies for more participation, support the

development of policy of gender of the MWRI and e) provide support to rural women leaders to more effectively participate in irrigation and drainage activities.

- In June 2004 Egypt developed its **National Water Resources Plan** (NWRP) "Water for the Future", which uses a multi-stakeholder approach led by the MWRI). The Stakeholders include all water-related Ministries, users, NGOs, academics and the private sector. The plan includes a section on Gender issues under the enhancement of stakeholder involvement. It thus states the policy principles on what the plan will pursue with respect to gender issues namely:
  - 1) Equal opportunities for men and women with regard to involvement in discussion and decision-making on water use and resources issues, b) dissemination of information and communication c) active participation in decision making bodies dealing with water resources and irrigation management.
  - 2) Equal benefits for men and women deriving from effective and efficient water resources management.
- Recognizing the need to mainstream women's concerns and needs in agricultural policy and practice, the Ministry of Agriculture established in 1992 the **Policy and Coordination Unit for Women in Agriculture** (PCUWA) ,(known as the *gender unit*) with Research and Strategy Development as one of its three main wings Strategies of the PCUWA for the 1990s include:
  - a) developing proposals to conduct critical research on women in agriculture;
  - b) assessing training needs in MOALR for gender analysis and women in development;
  - c) c)establishing women's focal points in other national and line ministries;
  - d) developing mechanisms to allow rural women, groups and associations to participate in the work of the unit; and
  - e) ensuring that WID issues are considered and incorporated into agricultural policies and programmes.

A number of innovative projects have been designed to increase women's access to agricultural resources and services. The Project on *Productive Activities for Women Settlers in New Lands* involved women in identifying their needs and priorities and in planning, organizing and implementing women's development centers for income-earning activities As a result, the first women's cooperative society, the Agricultural Cooperative Society for Food Security, was formed. An ILO-supported project included training in income-generating skills, awareness meetings and provision of credit, and an FAO-supported project trained women in food industries, poultry and livestock raising, and provided loans for small productive projects.

- Several **International Joint projects** are involved in mainstreaming gender in water management and are active in various governorates in Egypt. (Water Boards Project active in Beheira, Kafr El Sheikh, El Sharqia, Qena and Nubareya; Fayoum Water Boards Project; Center for Rural Development Researches at the Faculty of Agriculture Cairo University; Social and Institutional Initiatives in Irrigation Management in the Mediterranean Zone active in Fayoum, Behera and Minia.
- **Women working in agriculture** constitute 67% of total female labor force and formed 51% of total workers in agricultural sector.(Labor force sample survey 1988)21% of the total female labor force in agriculture are children between the ages of 15-19 versus 13% of males.(National Council for Women 2002)

### 3. CHALLENGES

- Persistently perpetuating stereotypes affect drastically the mainstreaming of gender at various levels and reiterate women's invisibility and lack of recognition of their important role.

#### Examples of stereotypical quotes

*"Women's role in Irrigation is confined to the preparation and transportation of food to their husbands or male family members in the fields"*

*"Water Management is primarily a man's job and thus we only need male Irrigation and Drainage Engineers to reach the male farmers in the fields."*

### **On the Field Level**

- A very low percentage of women own land in their names (5- 13% usually of the study samples). Lacking the title in one's name prevents the active participation in Water User Associations as well as receiving a loan for the purchase of water pumps in one's name.
- Lack of visibility of female farmers' role in the process prevents women from speaking up. Thus there are women-specific problems related to water management such as night irrigation, which women fear very much. Another female –specific problem, which remains untouched, is the lack of supervision on the station operator, who enjoys the liberty to charge different prices to different farmers.
- Women are more difficult to reach than men. They are not free and are not used to participate in the presence of men.
- Women's participation is often only rhetoric only and not practiced in reality.
- Men do not necessarily convey the information they have received from the extension staff to their female household members.
- Women are mostly interested in pollution.

### **On the Institutional Level**

#### *A) Ministerial/ Governmental*

- Vertical hierarchy: there is a clear marked gender division of labor in the concerned Water institutions. Males are predominantly occupied in hard-ware jobs such as engineers, technicians and drivers, female staff members are represented in the soft-ware, namely the secretarial, administrative and librarian jobs. (feminization of administrative posts which are also perceived as secondary nature).
- Horizontal hierarchy: All senior positions head of institutes and main departments of the Ministry are head by male Employees and a rare representation of female employees in decision-making posts of sub-departments and or meetings.
- As a result of the gender division of labor, it is only male staff who work as extension staff who go out to the field to meet with farmers and convey new knowledge and information to them.
- Lack of transportation and accommodation facilities in the field impedes female extension staff or engineers from conducting field trips.

#### *B) Water User Associations / Boards*

- Female members are restrained in their participation through cultural barriers and stereotypes as mentioned before; through organizational barriers (are not assigned senior positions, meetings are conducted at unsuitable times for women usually late at night, in remote areas; social barriers: due to lack of education, experiences and knowledge female members are overheard , marginalized and excluded.

### **4. LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT FEMALE'S PARTICIPATION IN WATER BOARDS IN FAYOUM (AS EXPRESSED BY FEMALE MEMBERS THEMSELVES)**

- Female members like male members have to attend implementation of construction works as well as follow up on construction work. They also have to monitor the cleaning of canal twice a month.
- Female members have to understand the finances of the construction works before and after they are implemented.
- To encourage villagers to cooperate with female members, make villagers aware of the accomplishments that have been done before.
- When everyone understands fully the role of female members they want to participate with her.
- Men and women are involved in water management and thus they have to participate in water boards.
- It is not important that the female members are educated. It is more important that they are active in their participation in water boards.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

### A) Ministerial Level

- Conduct a stakeholder analysis to demonstrate the different levels of involvement and participation of both men and women at the different levels and then design strategy to promote equal participation.
- Allocate sufficient resources to the Gender Focal Unit. Support can be in the form of knowledge, expertise, tools and funds.
- Investigate the constraints impeding the execution of the policy objectives on both the field and the institutional levels and investigate measures needed to overcome barriers.
- Mainstream gender concerns in the research programs of the Ministry.

### B) Extension

- Assess constraints impeding female Extension staff from conducting field trips.

### C) Training

- Conduct training in the application of practical gender tools to suit the different demands required on each level. (for example policy makers, technicians, extension staff, water users, and primarily gender focal point)

### D) Community level

- Investigate local communication channels.
- Simplify Information to women
- Design awareness raising campaigns that can advocate for the importance of women's role in water management. Change can be driven through legislation and regulation in the wider society and by policy and procedures in organizations. Advocate for models of how the ideal water user association can be suitable for both men and women. Design strategies to strengthen women and activate their participation in water management institutions.

### E) Monitoring and Evaluation

- Design and gender sensitive Monitoring and Evaluation system which includes qualitative and quantitative indicators.

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