



# GENDER, WATER, AND AGRICULTURE – ASSESSING THE NEXUS in Palestine

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Gender-responsive water and agriculture assessments study the relative situation of women and men in different communities regarding water access, governance and usage. This is to ensure that water resources are managed in a way that is sustainable and inclusive in the project areas and that women and men are benefitting equitably from these resources.



## MAIN FINDINGS

### GENDER AND AGRICULTURE

- Agriculture is a key sector in the Palestinian economy, contributing around seven percent of the country's gross domestic product. However, in the agricultural sector, women's employment is mainly only through their unpaid work on family farms.

Even though 84 percent of the adult family agricultural workers are women, they are usually deprived of any financial returns for their work, despite that work having helped to increase profits for the family.

- Stereotyped gender roles are deeply entrenched in Palestinian society, including in the agricultural and water sectors. The assessment found that women are primarily responsible for managing domestic water and small-scale agricultural land, while the irrigation of productive agriculture and large-scale livestock rearing is largely the responsibility of men.

### GENDER AND WATER ACCESS

- Women and men's access to water sources is different. The majority of male and female informants reported that men have more access to water resources.

The inequity in water distribution is on two levels. Firstly, between poor water resourced small-scale family plots and large productive farms with wells, and secondly, the gender discrimination by water suppliers in terms of the time slots.

### GENDER AND WATER GOVERNANCE

- Water governance is not gender sensitive. The absence of women's representation at the higher levels of water management means that their voices are not so far being heard in the decision-making process.
- The Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) lacks a gender department, despite the important role it could play in identifying gender needs and directing gender-responsive plans. National policies refer to some interventions directed towards women in the agricultural sector, but there is a gap between policies and actual implementation.
- Gender stereotypes are being reinforced in the water programme interventions. This is due to a lack of understanding of gender issues among government and non-government employees, which affects the quality of water training provided to women and men in local communities. Capacity building for men focuses on using technology, rehabilitating wells and maintaining water pipes. Women are limited to managing and marketing small-scale agricultural projects and household water management, complementing their domestic reproductive role.

### GENDER AND LAND OWNERSHIP

- The majority of the women surveyed do not have land registered in their name. The general perception was that land ownership applies to all family members, even if the land is registered in the name of a man in the family.
- The assessment found that the majority of women who receive land in their inheritance are given unproductive waste land, far from water sources and unsuitable for agriculture. This increases the obstacles to women's equitable access to water resources and contributes to their long-term poverty.
- Ensuring sufficient and sustainable water supplies for all Palestinians in the future is a major challenge because of: a) Israel's occupation policies in Palestine; b) Palestinian population growth; c) the impact of climate change on the environment; and d) poor water infrastructure.



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# RECOMMENDATIONS

## POLICIES AND LAW

- Ensure that gender is mainstreamed in all national Palestinian government ministries, institutions and national strategies, and not relegated as a marginal issue in gender units.
- Ensure a greater participation of women in decision-making in the agricultural and water sectors in order to benefit families and whole communities in Palestine in the long-term.
- Amend the criteria for joining the Water User Associations to ensure that membership is not conditional to land ownership, as this can exclude women from participation.

## CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

- Build technical and managerial skills for women as professionals and technicians in the water sector by developing their competencies and expertise.
- Develop non-traditional training programmes in water and agriculture for young women and men based on their needs and skills level.

## ENHANCED NETWORKING AND COOPERATION

- Link the Ministry of Agriculture, the Environmental Quality Authority and the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) with universities and technical and vocational education and training institutions so that water and agricultural issues can be integrated into their curricula and encourage more participation of women and youth in these programmes.
- Request that the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Cluster develops guidelines for productive water programmes from a gender perspective.



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**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa

RNE-WEPS-NENA@fao.org

<https://www.fao.org/in-action/water-efficiency-nena/en/>

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

Cairo, Egypt



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