MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN MIDDLE-EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Lessons Learned and Success Stories
Mainstreaming Gender in Development Projects in Middle-East and North Africa: Lessons Learned and Success Stories

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FOREWORD

Any meticulous reader might ask himself/herself what is the link between KariaNet and the subject of this publication. A simple answer is that both programmes were funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). However, the real link goes beyond.

KariaNet is a regional network designed to enhance knowledge sharing and promote experience and information exchange among IFAD-funded rural development projects in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It seeks to strengthen networking among all its member projects, through an intensive use of ICTs for knowledge sharing. Furthermore, in order to enhance knowledge sharing, KariaNet assists its member projects in strengthening their capacities for a better management of their accumulated knowledge, and the systematisation of documenting their good practices and success stories.

According to the Needs Assessment Study undertaken by KariaNet in the early stage of its first phase, gender mainstreaming appeared to be one of the priority areas, where some member projects developed a tangible experience - hence knowledge - and where others were in need of such experience to upgrade their approach for gender involvement in the "daily life" of their developmental activities.

In this context, and given the fact that mainstreaming gender in IFAD-funded projects in the region was backstopped by an important IFAD Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region since the last seven years, KariaNet's Coordination Unit find it imperative to review the experiences of its "GM-champion" member projects. This is the "meeting point" where KariaNet and the subject of Gender Mainstreaming in NENA link together...

In addition to the consultancy that reviewed the experiences of four KariaNet "GM-champion" member projects, i.e. two in Tunisia and two in Sudan, the present publication takes also advantage of the review of the IFAD Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region conducted recently by IFAD. Indeed, the latter programme was the "inspiring source" for all GM activities undertaken by KariaNet member projects.

By publishing this document, and regardless of the mere technical character of the topic, KariaNet seeks to achieve the following objectives: (1) contribute to diffuse a culture of documentation, and hence of knowledge sharing between its members; (2) foster dissemination of success stories developed by its members throughout their regular practices and activities; (3) make these experience available to other parties that might need them, and hence facilitate their up-scaling.

Dr. Mustapha Malki
Regional Coordinator of KariaNet

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1 As the title of this publication suggests, MENA stands for Middle East and North Africa is an IDRC acronym. It coincides with the IFAD-use acronym of NENA (Near East and North Africa). Both are used interchangeably in this publication.
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIDOS  Italian Association for Women in Development
AUB  American University Beirut
AMRDP  Al-Mahra Rural Development Project, Yemen
CAWTAR  Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research
CMADP  Coastal and Midland Agricultural Development Project, Syria
CPM  Country Programme Manager
FAO  Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FIRDOS  Fund for Integrated Rural Development of Syria
IFAD  International fund for Agricultural Development
GAD  Gender and Development
GSP  Gender Support Program
GUSW  General Union of Syrian Women
IGA  Income Generating Activities
IRDP  Idleb Rural Development Project, Syria
M&E  Monitoring and Evaluation
NENA  Near East and North Africa
NGO  Non-Governmental Organizations
NKRDP  North Kordofan Rural Development Project, Sudan
PCU  Programme Coordination Unit
PoA  IFAD Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA region
PRDVT  Projet de Développement Rural des Vallées du Dadès et de Tafilalt, Morocco
PDRTT  Projet de Développement Rural de Taourirt-Tafilalt, Morocco
RADP  Raymah Area Development Project, Yemen
SKRDP  South Kordofan Rural Development Programme, Sudan
UNIFEM  United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNDP  United Nations Development Fund
UNOPS  United Nations Office for Project Services
WFP  World Food Program
WID  Women in Development
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This publication reviews the experience of Gender Mainstreaming in some IFAD-funded development projects in Middle East and North Africa. It also documents success stories and lessons learned from them. The document goes five years back in history when the Programme on Mainstreaming Gender in Near East and North Africa region was launched by the Near East and North Africa (NENA) Division of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Chapter 1 reviews the philosophy, objectives, components, and expected outcomes of IFAD Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region. It details the different types of activities to enhance IFAD-funded projects' capacity in the region for promoting GM in their operations.

Chapters 2 and 3 look into the outputs of IFAD Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region at the projects' level with a particular reference to rural women. Chapter 2 presents the main changes influenced by the aforementioned programme on the projects' operations and philosophy of action. Chapter 3 documents some success stories of rural women that were targeted by the GM activities of some IFAD-funded projects. Each story ends with the lessons learned and some feedback from the target audience.

Chapter 4 highlights the main lessons learned as well as innovations experimented in the previous endeavours relating to gender mainstreaming, gender sensitization and women empowerment. The chapter starts with citing the critical factors for a successful GM application in a development project, as perceived by the different stakeholders including project staff, partner agencies, and beneficiaries at the various projects visited. It finally overviews the lessons learned and innovations devised in the field of gender mainstreaming, gender training and sensitization, as well as women economic empowerment.

Chapter 5 ends with a gender analysis of IFAD Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region. The final section provides suggestions as how to capitalize on the enabling factors in the region in order to coach the progress of gender mainstreaming in the region.
CHAPTER I

WHEN AND HOW WAS GENDER MAINSTREAMING STARTED IN THE REGION'S PROJECTS?

1.1 - Introduction

This chapter reviews the main features of the IFAD-NENA Gender Mainstreaming Programme. It is divided into three sections. Section 1.2 provides the background on IFAD-NENA Gender Mainstreaming Programme. It starts by defining the overall philosophy of gender at IFAD and identifies the main components of the programme, namely: Gender Mainstreaming, Technical Assistance to rural women activities, and Knowledge Generation. It reviews the planned activities of the programme, its outputs, and the expected impacts, and ends with the implementing partners and arrangements.

Section 1.3 gives a brief account on the achieved results and reviews the programme's initiatives implemented in NENA.

1.2 - IFAD Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region

1.2.1 – Overall Philosophy of Gender at IFAD

In the last decade, gender mainstreaming has been an integral part of IFAD strategy, operations and efforts to achieve a sustainable and equitable reduction of rural poverty, especially among rural women. This reflects the importance that the Fund ascribes to improving the social and economic conditions and status of rural women, and hence to ensuring that both women and men equitably benefit from development interventions in rural areas.

The main instrument used by IFAD to mainstream gender in its funded projects was its Plan of Action 2003-2006 on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in IFAD’s Operations. This plan provides an institutional framework for the entire process, with specific requirements for monitoring and accountability.

Simultaneously, several specific programmes have been implemented by IFAD since 1997 to strengthen the effectiveness of IFAD-funded projects in the area of gender mainstreaming and

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2 A mid-term review of the Plan was recently undertaken to measure progress in relation with the Fund’s organisational procedures and mechanisms for gender mainstreaming. It was conducted on the basis of the indicators and targets established by the Plan and for which a baseline study was undertaken in 2003 (reference) to assess the performance of all stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Plan.
women's empowerment with a view to reduce poverty in rural areas. The issue of effectiveness was considered not only in terms of IFAD field operations but also in terms of learning, innovation, and influence on policy and institutions. One of the specific programmes implemented within the framework of this plan was the Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region.

The programme included different components of gender mainstreaming in IFAD field operations, technical assistance for rural women's activities to improve their access to productive assets, knowledge generation, and vulnerable women empowerment. The actions implemented conform with the three main dimensions of the abovementioned IFAD Plan of Action, namely improving the well-being of rural populations; improving women access to economic opportunities; and increasing women decision-making.

The programme aimed at enhancing the capacity of IFAD, borrowing governments and IFAD-funded projects' staff in terms of gender analysis and addressing the different and complementary roles of women and men in agricultural production; thus tailoring project services to the needs of men and women producers.

Expected to be carried out in ten countries, after an initial pilot phase to be implemented in two countries, the specific objectives of the programme are: (i) greater ability of concerned IFAD, government and IFAD-funded projects' staff to analyze and address gender-related constraints and opportunities in the design and implementation of projects; and (ii) increased access by women in IFAD target group to resources required to increase economic productivity.

**1.2.2 - Main Components of the Programme**

1. **Gender mainstreaming.** The activities were designed to start first at IFAD Headquarters. An orientation session for IFAD NENA Division's staff members was held to help them internalize the programme objectives and activities. This briefing session helped clarify the terminology and related concepts, and outlined why and what can be done to reach women through "gender mainstreaming".

At individual country level, the programme sought to identify existing activities to increase awareness on and sensitivity to gender-related issues during project implementation. The programme provided assistance to help national counterparts overcome their difficulties when gender-related issues arise during project implementation. In this context, gender analysis training workshops were organised at the "best-fit" timing – i.e. when the projects were preparing their annual work plans – so that the principal output of the training would be a "gender-sensitive" work plan, agreed upon by the project management for implementation in the subsequent year. International and local technical advisors were recruited to provide assistance in identifying customised solutions to potential technical, social and organisational problems associated with gender constraints.

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2. **Technical assistance to rural women's activities.** The activities were determined on the basis of the results of the gender analysis and the workplan of gender-mainstreaming component. In the review of 18 projects carried out prior to the programme design, eligible and potential areas for technical assistance were identified. These areas included: (i) support to marketing of outputs produced by women; (ii) women's access to and use of rural financial services; (iii) enhancement of crop and livestock production skills; and, (iv) functional literacy. In addition, almost all funded projects were in need of assistance to design and operationalise a more "gender-sensitive" Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) system.

Through local technical assistance, the programme provided coaching and regular training to individual projects. Training themes were mainly planning and implementation of activities wherein projects needed to improve their ability to assist women beneficiaries. The programme also provided projects with some "technical support" funds to undertake activities that were overlooked when preparing the project budgets.

3. **Knowledge building.** The programme gave attention to two types of activities related to knowledge generation: the first focused on management of knowledge acquired while implementing the programme; the second related to the M&E of the programme itself. In terms of knowledge management, the programme sought to identify and document "successful stories" throughout the implemented activities. It aimed at summarising, documenting, and disseminating information gathered from workshops, specific training modules, technical assistance missions, and studies undertaken among IFAD partners in the region. Pertinent documents were circulated among partners in the region in both printed and electronic forms through selected websites. Finally, the programme contributed to: (i) to the development of electronic databases and information exchange in the region, including a "listserv" e-mail network among IFAD projects; (ii) direct dialogue and interactive dissemination of information, training materials and ideas among projects. On this latter issue, the main supporting tool was the organisation of regional workshops (the first in Rome in 2002; the second in Damascus in 2005).

### 1.2.3 – Main Activities of the Programme

The major activities implemented to provide projects' support were as follows:

1. **Developing a training curriculum on gender issues in Arabic.** This activity was piloted and coordinated by North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP) in Sudan, and resulted in a manual shared with IFAD-funded projects and partner organisations.

2. **Supporting women-managed small livestock enterprises.** This activity, carried out in collaboration with FAO Animal Production Group, included: (i) identifying and addressing the gender constraints facing such enterprises; (ii) providing women with appropriate processing technologies for livestock products; (iii) facilitating women access to markets; and helping women manage their cooperatives more effectively. Collaborating projects in this activity are Coastal and Midlands Agricultural Development Project (CMADP) in Syria.
3. **On-going joint initiatives** with 8 selected projects in the region to improve project effectiveness in the implementation of a specific activity that is relevant to improving of women livelihoods or to "empowering" their participation in community management. These initiatives aimed at consolidating or complementing projects' work with women beneficiaries.

Activities suggested by the programme were primarily oriented towards capacity building. IFAD, along with partner agencies and IFAD-funded projects' staff, sought to improve knowledge and skills for addressing gender issues in integrated rural development projects; documentation, testing and dissemination of these approaches; development of a gender-mainstreaming strategy that addresses the specific context of the NENA region; and development of a resource base that supports gender mainstreaming at IFAD and its funded projects.

### 1.2.4 – Programme Outputs and Expected Impact

Major expected outputs and benefits of the programme are listed in Table 1 below, which gives a clear comparison of what was planned and what was really achieved. At the same time, the expected programme outcomes were:

- Project design and implementation reflect the results of gender analysis and address gender-specific problems.
- Investment activities in all IFAD-funded projects explicitly provide ways and means for women participation by the end of first year of collaboration between any funded project and the programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Mainstreaming – Planned Outputs</th>
<th>Gender Mainstreaming – Achieved Outputs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased awareness and improved skills and knowledge and better perception of NENA staff achieved with regard to gender analysis and gender mainstreaming in IFAD projects</td>
<td>One day meeting with CPMs portfolio managers of the cooperating institutions and consultants on advanced gender analysis in June 2006.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two Lunch-time seminar on practices and issues in gender mainstreaming in NENA Region April 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Arabic, English, French glossary of gender terminology with checklists, appropriate to regional needs, published.</td>
<td>Cancelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core training material for training of projects and counterpart staff in gender analysis and mainstreaming developed by the first project year, with country and project specific modules.</td>
<td>Gender training manual in Arabic prepared by the North Kordofan Rural Development Project. The training curriculum developed in collaboration with the International Centre Development Studies of the University of Khartoum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An estimated 15 new projects designed by IFAD using gender analysis so that related issues are fully mainstreamed into project activities.</td>
<td>The number of designed projects over the period 2002-2007 has incorporated gender consultants on at least formulation or appraisal mission. The compliance with the gender checklist is generally high for gender analysis and the gender strategy but relatively low on operational measures to support the gender mainstreaming strategy proposed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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4 Annual Programme of Work and Budget, 2003, Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region, TAG 494.
1.2.5 - Implementation Partners and Arrangements

The programme, planned for 5 years as a technical assistance grant, was launched in 2001. It was co-financed by IFAD and Italian and Japanese Trust Funds.

The programme was designed to work in close collaboration with IFAD NENA Division staff, IFAD-funded projects, and cooperating institutions. It sought to support a series of interventions that would help existing IFAD-funded projects meet their objective of poverty reduction more effectively and equitably. In consultation with the projects, a collaboration plan, tailored to the needs and strengths of each project, was developed. This plan focused on training, technical assistance, and pilot activities at community level to provide services that were not included in the loan agreement but thought to be deemed necessary for the achievement of project objectives.

The programme was designed to be directly implemented by IFAD in order to allow NENA staff to benefit more. At the same time, the immediate proximity of the programme direction to NENA Country Programme Managers (CPMs) would result in greater harmony between the programme and the day-to-day IFAD operations (i.e. project design, implementation and follow-up of the portfolio). For this purpose, a Chief Technical Advisor/Gender Specialist was recruited for five years and posted at IFAD NENA Division. IFAD Technical Advisory Division assumed, in collaboration with NENA Division, the co-supervision of the programme, providing technical backstopping and facilitating cross-fertilisation between the programme and similar programmes of other IFAD regional divisions. The Chief Technical Advisor/Gender Specialist selected, in each country, a partner NGO or organization that would provide direct technical support and other forms of assistance to the programme partner projects in that country.

6 These were support to local women development units; country and regional study tours to exchange experiences on specific gender-related topics; documentation and dissemination of experiences through a newsletter and/or web page; assistance with the development of AWPBs to incorporate measures that will increase project effectiveness in reaching and working with women meaningfully; and scholarships to project staff and local counterpart agencies to attend training on gender issues.
The management of the programme was carried out by an Implementation Support Specialist (ISS), with the support of a Programme Assistant, and a Monitoring and Communication Consultant. This position was created as a result of the fact that the Chief Technical Advisor was assigned additional CPM tasks. This arrangement went from 2003 to 2008.

1.3 – Highlights of Achieved Results

The programme was developed on the basis of a study of NENA Division portfolio. Hence, it aimed at strengthening IFAD-funded projects to enable both women and men to benefit from programmes of poverty reduction, contribute effectively to their implementation, and hence improve household food security in NENA countries. In order to achieve this, it was necessary that the on-going projects improve their performance with respect to reaching and involving rural women in their operations. It was also necessary that IFAD improves its capacity on gender analysis and incorporation of the results of such analysis in the design of future projects.

The programme was designed to achieve its stated objectives over a five-year period. Table 2 introduces all initiatives the programme supported during this period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative No.</th>
<th>Initiative Title</th>
<th>Initiative Recipient</th>
<th>Initiative Objective(s)</th>
<th>Initiative Output(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Gender training curriculum in Arabic</td>
<td>North Kordofan Rural Development Project, Sudan</td>
<td>Strengthen capacity of community facilitators that interface with the community &amp; development agencies, to integrate issues of women's development &amp; empowerment in a systematic way in their work.</td>
<td>Training package with illustrated examples and audio-visual aids, highlighting concepts of gender relations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 02             | Knowledge generation on gender issues, potential responses, and strategies | South Kordofan Rural Development Programme, Sudan | Develop viable and sustainable interventions in favour of women within the context of SKRDP. | • Case study on gender issues in 4 farming systems  
• Gender issues are integrated in SKRDP planning and monitoring systems, and consistent with SKRDP gender mainstreaming strategy.  
• Women entrepreneurship is diversified & women achieve a certain degree of economic & social empowerment. |
| 03             | Improving the profitability of small dairy enterprises | Coastal & Midlands Agricultural Development Project, Syria | Develop the profitability of the small dairy enterprises in Hama, Homs, Tartus and Lattakieh governorates and increase women access to income generated from this type of enterprise. | • Improved milk quality  
• Increase in milk farm gate price in relation to improvement in milk quality.  
• Improved valuation of women's labour on the farm. |
### Initiative No. 04
**Initiative Title:** Community Organization Strengthening Programme  
**Initiative Recipient:** Al-Mahra Rural Development Project, Yemen  
**Initiative Objective(s):** Assist in financing self-reliant & gender sensitive community organizations in the villages targeted by the project  
**Initiative Output(s):**  
- 40 women and men community development committees developed leadership, programmatic and financial capacity to pursue development work in a way responsive to the needs of both women and men, and promoting women livelihoods improvement and social status enhancement.  
- Committees achieved a significant autonomy and reduced their dependency on project resources and technical support.

### Initiative No. 05
**Initiative Title:** Women Self-Empowerment Project  
**Initiative Recipient:** Sohag Rural Development Project, Egypt  
**Initiative Objective(s):** Provide supplementary support for the village infrastructure component in the SRDP to increase benefits accruing to women from the availability of new utilities and social services.  
**Initiative Output(s):**  
- Approximately 4,500 women obtained ID cards and improved their access to services and mobility  
- Approximately 900 women enrolled in literacy classes  
- Approximately 150 very poor women assisted to access utilities or education services  
- Civil engineering department addressed women concerns in the design and maintenance of infrastructure projects.

### Initiative No. 06
**Initiative Title:** Support Programme to women Organization  
**Initiative Recipient:** Raymah Area Development Project, Yemen  
**Initiative Objective(s):** Build up the capacity of two women organizations to better respond to economic needs and opportunities of women  
**Initiative Output(s):**  
- 2 women associations of Khawla Bent Al Azwar and Al Hiyaka improve their managed capacity & gained financial autonomy  
- Women in the communities served by these associations enabled to generate a higher income or food security from the productive activities they are engaged in.

### Initiative No. 07
**Initiative Title:** Appui aux activités de promotion féminine et aux organisations communautaires  
**Initiative Recipient:** Integrated Agricultural Development Project in the Governorate of Siliana, Tunisia  
**Initiative Objective(s):**  
- Improve the skill base of rural women  
- Develop capacity of local organizations to respond to women's technical needs.  
**Initiative Output(s):**  
- 275 women acquired technical skills that allow them to be economically active  
- 10 local organizations developed specific backstopping activities to improve women livelihoods.

### Initiative No. 08
**Initiative Title:** Appui a la vulgarisation des techniques de transformation  
**Initiative Recipient:** Integrated Agricultural Development Project of Zaghoun, Tunisia  
**Initiative Objective(s):** Diversify extension services with a view to improve women's skill base.  
**Initiative Output(s):**  
- Improved quality, hygiene and productivity of processing activities undertaken by rural women.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative No.</th>
<th>Initiative Title</th>
<th>Initiative Recipient</th>
<th>Initiative Objective(s)</th>
<th>Initiative Output(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 09            | Gender Empowerment Programme                                                      | East Delta Newland Agricultural Services Project, Egypt    | Provide technical and financial support to promising and leading community organizations to improve their capacity of response to community needs in a sustainable and equitable way for women and men.                                                   | • Gender Analysis Report  
• 7 community organizations have developed the leadership, programmatic and financial capacity to pursue development work  
• Improved quality standards and sales of production activities and other enterprises undertaken by Community Development Associations. |
| 10            | Micro-finance initiatives (Pilot Sanduq) contracted to the Fund for Integrated Rural Development of Syria (FIRDOS) | Badia Rangelands Development Project, Syria                | Provide credit to poor rural men and women in Al Gharawi village to pursue on- and off-farm income generating activities                                                                                                                                                        | • A detailed socio-economic assessment report in the project area  
• A pilot sanduq at Al Gharawi village active and serving the local community  
• A poverty result-oriented monitoring system for the pilot sanduq. |
| 11            | Programme d'utilisation du don du FIDA pour l'appui des activités féminines dans les Vallées de Dades et de Tafilalet | Grant Agreement with Catholic Relief Services for the benefit of the Offices Régionaux de Mise en Valeur Agricole of Tafilalet and Ouarzazate, Morocco | Improve the capacity of the Offices Régionaux de Mise en Valeur Agricole of Tafilalet and Ouarzazate to mainstream gender into their operations.  
Sustain the impact of the IFAD financed projects on rural women and organizations                                                                                                                                 | • Staff and management sensitive to gender mainstreaming  
• Offices activities provide women with access to diversified and higher value rural enterprises  
• Women cooperative and producer groups working effectively  
• Vocational centres working effectively with higher quality training and improved financial management capacity. |
| 12            | Building the capacities of rural women cooperatives & production units in Lebanon  | Centre for Research and Training on Development, Lebanon    | Provide support to women cooperatives through training and on-the-job technical assistance.  
Develop the skills of 2 to 3 core members of each women cooperative production units  
Expanding the business linkages of women cooperative & production units  
Building organization skills & capacities  
Facilitating the implementation of knowledge & skills gained.  
Ensuring that gender is mainstreamed at all levels.  
Strengthening capacity for local resource mobilization.  
Contributing to ensuring long-term financial sustainability.                                                                                                                                 | • Expanding the business linkages of women cooperative & production units  
• Building organization skills & capacities  
• Facilitating the implementation of knowledge & skills gained.  
• Ensuring that gender is mainstreamed at all levels.  
• Strengthening capacity for local resource mobilization.  
• Contributing to ensuring long-term financial sustainability. |
CHAPTER II
HOW DID GENDER MAINSTREAMING INFLUENCE PROJECTS' OPERATIONS IN THE REGION?

2.1 - Introduction

This chapter explores the influence of gender mainstreaming programme on IFAD-funded projects' operations in the region. It contains two sections. Section 2.2 identifies GM impact on main IFAD partners and on policy environment. Section 2.3 reviews the effect of the programme on the status of gender awareness among projects' staff and institutional counterparts and their capacity to address gender issues.

2.2 - Impact on IFAD Partners and Policy Environment and Constraints

A clear output of the programme is the greater awareness among community leaders and extension staff of gender issues. In many cases, women access to resources and their participation in community organisations remarkably improved. This is well evidenced by North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP) as a result of the development and testing of a gender-oriented rural development curriculum and a training manual. NKRDP mid-term review made the following recommendations:

- Job descriptions of the extension staff should be reformulated to include gender mainstreaming;
- Direct and regular communication should be established with the Gender and Women Development Officers; and,
- Greater attention should be given to technology and productive techniques that alleviate women's workload7.

In Yemen, four female coordinators were recruited by Al Mahra Rural Development Project (AMRDP) to serve in the project area. An awareness campaign was carried out by AMRDP in six districts in order to encourage Community Development Committees (CDCs) to legally register as associations, and hence become potential candidates for grant financing of income-generating activities (IGAs). This campaign was successful, and many women CDCs were duly registered8. Special emphasis is given in Yemen to strengthening community organizations,

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8 Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region (activities under TAG 494 / IT 034 / JP 028) - Progress Report for the period January to August 2004.
especially women organisations, and creating an enabling environment within Project Management Units (PMUs) to improve performance of the women development teams.

Current levels of support of women CDCs established by AMRDP were considered unlikely to help these nascent organisations develop into self-reliant organisations. To remedy this situation, AMRDP recruited additional female extension agents to backstop newly-established women CDCs in other villages.

In the Raymah Area Development Project (RADP) in Yemen, the implementation of women development activities was weak and dispersed due to logistics and management-related reasons. Corrective measures were taken, including transportation to the field, provision of office space, enrolment of the team leader in a training programme on approaches to women development, and scaling-up of the team into a department that is directly accountable to the project manager9.

To enable localities to perform an expanded development role in South Kordofan Project in Sudan, an extension team was established in each of the five selected localities. The teams are composed of at least a team leader, and a male or female extension agent. SKRDP funded extension facilities, vehicles, equipment, training, staff salaries and allowances, and operations10.

To have easy access to the stock of regional human capacity and to provide more effective support, the programme developed a database including consultants, sample terms of reference, background documents, etc. to support the design, implementation, supervision and monitoring of IFAD-funded projects.

Different management models have been applied in the different countries. For example, to achieve its women empowerment objective in Morocco, the Office Régional de Mise en Valeur Agricole de Tafilalt (ORMVA), in charge of implementing the Projet de Développement Rural des Vallées du Dadès et de Tafilalt (PDRVDT), created a Women Development Unit within its agricultural extension and vocational training department. This unit was responsible of setting-up appropriate extension programmes for women and coordinating all related activities undertaken by governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the area. It conducted a study on rural women in the project area, analysing women’s overall conditions and their relations with their environment. An intensive extension programme was developed, women extension agents were appointed in women's centres, and a monitoring and evaluation system was designed11.

Operations in Morocco are further illustrative of how different institutional arrangements are proving to be either enabling or hindering factors for the effective implementation of women development activities. Certain implementing partners, such as the ORMVA de Tafallalt, have developed innovative mechanisms for women outreach. It also documented the best practices in outreach and development of rural women that could be shared with other NENA

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9 AWBP, 2003, Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region, TAG 494.
10 Ibid.
projects\textsuperscript{12}. Other partners, such as the Direction Provinciale de l’Agriculture (DPA) d’Oujda, in charge of implementing the Projet de Développement Rural de Taourirt-Tafraalt (PDRTT), are still trying to find the optimal work organisation. Although recruitment of women extension agents was intended to be a temporary measure, the project has invested in training these young women so that they could also build a career for themselves\textsuperscript{13}. The difference between the two institutional arrangements is that the first enjoys a greater financial autonomy.

Cultivating synergies with NGOs and intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) enhanced impact, provided that respective areas with comparative advantage are identified. An appropriate choice of partners requires sensitivity to the advantages and pitfalls of different institutional models. Experience shows that the gender focal-point model is rather weak if not accompanied by extensive gender-training activities at all levels of an organisation. Moreover, gender units often suffer from insufficient resources and relative isolation\textsuperscript{14}.

Although significant changes may have been observed in many projects, the issue of lack of qualified female staff to maximise gender mainstreaming effort must be noted. To do this, the projects have exerted tremendous efforts to recruit women facilitators, trainers and extension agents. However, progress has been uneven because there are relatively few, qualified women rural specialists, and those qualified are a bit reluctant to work in remote inaccessible project sites, such as in the cases of Yemen and Egypt’s new land areas. This is further exacerbated by the limited financial incentives offered to such qualified staff in these areas\textsuperscript{15}.

### 2.3 - Impact on Gender Awareness and Capacity to Address Gender Issues

In this section, the programme impact on gender awareness among projects’ staff and institutional collaborators and their capacity to mainstream gender in their daily work is reviewed, using the SWOT analytical framework (i.e. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats).

#### 2.3.1 - Strengths and Weaknesses of Projects Performance

The strengths and weaknesses have been assessed in relation to the themes of project design, project documentation and Project Coordination Unit (PCU) commitment for gender mainstreaming (see Table 3).

\textsuperscript{12} Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region (activities under TAG 494 / IT 034/ JP 028) - Progress Report for the period January to August 2004. IFAD: Rome.


Most of the strengths are found to lie in the project design. The IFAD Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region is multifarious; providing for both direct assistance and training. It is well integrated within the main projects, demand driven and participatory in nature, thus ensuring transparency and efficiency.

The project design, however, implied several weaknesses. The baseline data were only quantitative. The design did not allow enough exchange of experiences among projects' stakeholders and few workshops held were too short to achieve the expected outcomes.

The main strength of project documentation attributed to the progress achieved during the project life phases. Again, the high focus on the collection of quantitative data is perceived as a weakness.

The commitment of the PCU to gender mainstreaming is considered a strength, especially with regard to the support provided to the branches and the involvement of the head of the PCU himself/herself in many of the gender activities. The PCU role, however, had several weaknesses with respect to monitoring which was not performed in a gender-sensitive mode, was more numerical and then was faced with additional complications due to lack of transportation means. Additional weaknesses are found to be in the coordination among the PCU and the other local IFAD projects as well as with the central department levels.

Table 3 - Strengths and Weaknesses of Projects Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Project Design** | • The program design includes direct assistance and training.  
• Link projects with local organizations either Non-governmental or Governmental. Associations have proven to be highly effective mechanisms for combating poverty.  
• Projects are demand-driven and present services required by women. Thus, project targets crucial domains such as income generation affecting rural households.  
• IFAD Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region is well integrated within the main project through the community development component.  
• Project funds for the gender programme facilitated transportation of change agents as well as the availability of training aids.  
• Incentives received during extension service sessions attracted beneficiaries.  
• The adoption of participatory approach encouraged local villagers, especially male members to better understand the projects, and hence enabled female participation.  
• Project adopts the participatory approach throughout its components. The annual plan is prepared together with local communities. Thus, the project builds the capacities of the local communities in planning and implementing the activities.  
• Participatory principle also requires transparency. Accordingly, the project retains a high credibility, as the project rationale is always clear to the community. | • Baseline data incorporate only quantitative gender analysis  
• No workshops were specifically planned for exchange of experience or information in project design.  
• The project did not focus enough on marketing, including both demand and supply sides.  
• Fixed budget line items prevent project management from implementing services deemed necessary for project activities, i.e. agricultural pathways to access remote villages.  
• Training and awareness sessions are too short to help absorb information or to cover material. Awareness sessions in first aid were too short to acquire any skill. |
2.3 - How Did GM Influence Projects' Operations in the Region?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Project Documentation</strong></td>
<td>• Significant advancement in the way gender issues and women empowerment are addressed throughout the project cycle starting with project design, budgeting, staffing, implementing, and monitoring.</td>
<td>• Too many countries in NENA.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Log frame includes quantitative indicators</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• No documentation available on training provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PCU Commitment to Gender Mainstreaming</strong></td>
<td>• Women in Development officer supports women in development staff at governorate level.</td>
<td>• Work is mainly output-oriented and not outcome or impact-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Project staff have become familiar with gender. They adopted a participatory gender-sensitive approach and discuss with the village committee their prioritised needs.</td>
<td>• Monitoring is limited to quantitative data.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Presence of project’s manager in almost every initial activity and the inauguration of training courses, added to the project credibility among the local inhabitants and to the women component in particular.</td>
<td>• Monitoring of progress of beneficiaries is done on an ad hoc basis, and is limited to only comments on the field visits.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Training material on gender mainstreaming was intensified in the final training course only. Training days and specialised materials on gender were increased only for the last group (20 trainees).</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Extremely low awareness among staff members about IFAD Gender material on the web site. For most of them, Internet access is not available.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Scarce opportunities for interactive dissemination of information among project branches (only during training workshops).</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of coordination among IFAD-funded projects in the same country.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Monitoring by the project is complicated due to lack of transportation means and termination of the contracts of female staff members.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• IFAD Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region was more focused on the beneficiaries at the local level. It did not work at the directorate and the central level. The directorates were invited only as participants in the IFAD workshops and missions.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>• The project was unable to cover all the demands for credits.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Some aspects of gender mainstreaming in M&amp;E are still unfulfilled. The present monitoring systems need to become more gender-sensitive. Unfortunately, the projects do not keep track of all the changes achieved and hence missing out on many actual accomplishments.</td>
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2.3.2 - Opportunities and Threats for Projects Performance

Project contexts provided several opportunities that were supportive of the project's performance (e.g. availability of the local institutions and national mechanisms, existence of strong networking among local decision-making bodies, such as farmers union, extension units, political parties, village elders, as well as the existence of the national strategy for women in agriculture).
Several external factors, however, were threatening the performance of the project (e.g. passivity of few local communities, low compensation provided by the government, and frequent wars in the region). Table 4 illustrates the details of the main opportunities and threats.

Table 4 - Opportunities and Threats for Projects Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Widely spread extension units increase the local support in addition to the already formed local women groups which became the link between the Ministry and the local community.</td>
<td>Gender as a concept is sometimes misunderstood as a new fashion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good cooperation between project and women union representatives at village level. Thus, training courses and seminars organized are interchangeably attended.</td>
<td>Official compensation assigned by the government for consultants is very low.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Already existing gender awareness among some ministerial staff.</td>
<td>Some communities are “closed communities”, unwelcoming to new ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many communities show good cooperation due to high level of education.</td>
<td>The war in Lebanon led to numerous delays of the training workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong networking among local decision-making bodies such as farmers' union, extension, political party, village elders, etc.</td>
<td>There is a strong trend of passivity among local population due to the reliance for decades upon the State in everything.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local State’s policies necessitate the eradication of illiteracy before joining any initiative (e.g. Syria)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Ministry of Agriculture has developed a national strategy for rural women development.</td>
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CHAPTER III

HOW DID GENDER MAINSTREAMING INFLUENCE RURAL WOMEN'S LIFE IN THE REGION?

3.1 - Introduction

The chapter is not about macro-trends on changes in rural women's life in the region. It introduces a sample of success stories that developed as a result of positive changes introduced by some IFAD-funded projects, which collaborated with the IFAD Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA region. The success stories have been chosen from among others in such countries as Tunisia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

Three of the success stories portray individual ones, while the other three portray group success stories. The core activities around which the successes revolve include animal production, and Internet and media businesses in Tunisia; dairy production in Syria; forest planting and rainwater harvesting in Sudan; and a women-managed mini-market in Yemen.

All stories have been selected as they were found to have excelled among the rest of the other initiatives. Thus all were able to solve a recurring context specific problem, had a vast effect as they not only improved the living conditions of the concerned entrepreneurs but also that of their surrounding co-villagers. The authenticity of success is amplified a thousand times, given the fact that it marks its hero's first initiative. Thus, those entrepreneurs, who can be heralded as pioneers, have been successful as they grasped the support opportunities offered by the projects to overcome their problems, turned these into triumphs of improving their livelihoods.

The narration of the success stories begins by shedding light on the context surrounding each initiative and describes the start-up situation of each endeavour. The stories, then, proceed by disclosing the role performed by the story champion as well as the support the project was able to offer to ignite the heroin's enthusiasm. Once success began to show up, the stories move on to portray the impact of success on the present day situation of the entrepreneurs. The stories end up with quotes said by others or by the champions themselves, and finally highlight the main lessons learned on gender mainstreaming.
3.2 - Siham, An Empowered Woman Entrepreneur

Siham, a 37-year old female farmer, lives in the small mountainous village in Jaroud, 30 km from Zaghouan, Tunisia. She is one of the most singled out female beneficiaries of the Integrated Agricultural Development Project of Zaghouan Governorate (see box).

Siham is a daughter of a small farmer who owns a 4-hectare plot of titled land, and who has a large family of 8 children. Given the difficult economic conditions of her father, she was forced to leave school when she was in the sixth grade. Though she might be considered as resource poor, Siham proved to be richer in her enthusiasm and potential, i.e. her immaterial resources.

The story of Siham with Zaghouan Project goes back to 2002, when she was chosen, along with six other female farmers, to join the Local Development Committee (LDC) and became the "extended arm" of the local community members and the project. As a committee member, Siham received training on participatory approach and gender mainstreaming, sponsored and organized by Zaghouan Project. In 2003, Siham participated in the awareness raising sessions about micro-credit and the Credit Component of Zaghouan Project. In addition, she attended a two-week training course on basic principles of animal production and how to maximize economic returns from small ruminants in order to prepare her credit repayment.

With the support of the project, Siham managed to expand her activities through increasing her flock size and diversifying the types of animal production in her small enterprise. In a period of two years and a half, she received three in-kind credits, and because of her credit trustworthiness, the size of the loan she receives increased every time. For the first time, Siham received four ewes for a value of 800 Tunisian Dinars (TND), while for the second and third times, she received 5 sheep of a value of 1,000 and 1,100 TND respectively. At the end of this cycle, Siham succeeded in expanding her flock up to 16 sheep.

With the profit she earned from her small enterprise, Siham not only started a new type of activity, namely rabbit raising, but also bought many home devices such as a fridge, a television set, and an electric oven. In order to show her gratitude to her father, and making him feeling that she is an additional "economic" actor at home, she bought him a mobile phone which was more expensive than her own. Given her transportation needs to and from the field where her sheep graze, Siham bought, a few months ago, a horse to draft a cart that she uses for her transportation.
Because Siham proved to be a genuine catalyst encouraging her community members to receive loans and repay them on accrual dates, the project decided to reward her by granting her a latrine and a water reservoir with a capacity of 10 m³ to help her alleviating the burden of the daily water carriage, as well as improve her and her family's living conditions. The 'majen' - or water reservoir in the local language – that the project constructed for her near her father's house was an incredible support for her farming activity. She now has water throughout the year and is exempted from carrying the water over long distances as she used to do in the past. At present, during summer time, she pays 45 TND every 20 days for a truck to deliver and fill the reservoir with the water. In wintertime, she practices some water harvesting techniques and the reservoir is filled with "free of charge" rainwater.

In Tunisia, as may be the case in any other Arab country, customs and tradition in rural areas prescribe that females, especially those living in the wilderness, should remain at home, be provided for by their guardians and perform in-house works. The social and economic support Siham received from Zaghouan Project provided the guiding force for Siham to break this perpetual "marginalization". Instead, she has become independent, earning her own income, and acquiring new skills as she goes alone to the market. She has also enhanced her self-confidence and felt encouraged to express her opinion freely and openly, be it at home and in the community. According to one of her male colleagues in the LDC, "Siham is a living example of the interdependence that exists between male and female community members".

When she speaks about her experience, Siham thinks her success has illuminated her, making her wiser in several aspects. "Success is always a collective endeavour which no one has the right to claim it for himself/herself", says Siham. Accordingly, everything that she owns is supposed to be for everybody's benefit. She never says this is mine, but "ours".

The second lesson she learned out of her success is to maintain a high respect for the tradition of her community. She firmly believes that "honouring one's parents is an asset through which one can access to the entire world". To show her father a constant gratitude, Siham still hands over all her profits to him.

On the professional side, Siham mentions that her business has taught her several lessons. The first lesson is that she has to be always prepared to face problems beforehand, so as not to be frustrated and panic when they happen. The second one, according to her, is that one needs to stay focused on what he/she does by sticking to the original idea of the initiative. She strongly believes that "if one has decided to purchase sheep, he/she should continue working with sheep rearing and not get diverted by other projects. He/she should listen carefully to the advice provided by the project staff. Regularly attending the meetings keeps us informed about the latest issues, which could be of great importance to our activities and projects".

The success of Siham has taught the management and staff of Zaghouan Project several lessons regarding gender mainstreaming, namely:

- Support to beneficiaries must be provided on a regular basis and maintained through (i) organising regular visits to them in their project sites; (ii) providing advice to them on different technical and economic issues; (iii) acting as exemplary models; and (iv) bringing visiting guests to their project sites as these motivate them to talk about their experiences, and open new horizons and potential opportunities for expanding their small businesses.
Praising successful achievements through recognizing and honouring the "successful" beneficiaries should be a rule in development projects, as this further motivates them to expand.
3.3 - Jalila, the Community Devoted Entrepreneur

The story of Jalila, a young female vibrant entrepreneur, living in the Emada of Wadi El Kheil in Tataouine governorate, looks like a dream that came true. Graduated in 2000 as Bachelor from the High Institute of Technology, Jalila tried for many years, full of optimism, to get a job in the civil service, but in vain. However, she was not discouraged and, being very enthusiastic, she invested her time in giving private lessons to young pupils. In 2003, after she attended a one-month training course in communication and computer use held in Djerba, her life started to change.

In October 2004, a ray of hope appeared on the horizon when a team of PRODESUD Project visited Jalila. They quickly sensed the vibrant spirit of the young entrepreneur. They recommended her to attend a twenty-one day training course on "How to start your enterprise", organized by the Tunisian Ministry for Employment and Youth Vocational Training.

After the successful completion of the course, Jalila, again with the support of the project, managed to overcome the first obstacle, namely her ignorance about the whereabouts of micro-credit schemes. In December 2005, the project "linked" her to the Banque Tunisienne de Solidarité (BTS), which agreed to study Jalila's request. At that time, Jalila was thinking of setting up an Internet café in her village.

After reviewing her project, the bank decided to grant Jalila a loan of 8,160 Tunisian Dinars (TND), with a repayment period of 8 years after a grace period of 2 years. Accordingly, the loan will have to be repaid by 2015 at an interest rate of 5%. To ensure that Jalila's micro-enterprise will have a good economic and financial return, the project prepared a feasibility study for Jalila's initiative, as well as a market study to assess the demand of the villagers for this service.

Relying on the support of her mother and sister, her own social engagement and PRODESUD Project support, Jalila decided to make her own dream a reality. She started a small Information and Internet Center to serve the children of her village. She quickly rented a shop in her village, bought four computers and the necessary devices for the Internet connection, as well as all required accessories. During the first months of her center's operation, Jalila succeeded to expand the size of her clientele, most of which decided to take monthly membership cards at Jalila's center.
Since the start of her project, Jalila opens the center on a daily basis from 8h30 in the morning until the sunset, 7 days a week, even during feast days and summer vacations. Together with a female assistant whom she recruited, they assist pupils to use computer software to do their homework and to get prepared for their exams. Most of her young clients are schoolchildren who purchase monthly membership cards and visit the center three times a week. So far, Jalila has successfully finished her first year’s repayment and makes a profit between 200 and 350 TND per month. This regular income enables her to repay her monthly instalment in time and allows her to contribute, with her fiancée, in the preparation of their forthcoming home. She also plans to use a share of her profit to expand her business and customer base.

Jalila’s successful business initiative empowered her, spurred the likelihood for her to serve her community and increased her self-worth. Her sense of achievement prompted her to approach the Local Development Committee and volunteered to become the female representative member of the community in this committee. Her primary task in this committee was to link the women of her community with the project, acting as their extended arm. The local committee lately inaugurated a sewing center, wherein Jalila has a supervisory function, an additional task she performs out of love for her community and devotion to good cause of women welfare.

Speaking about her experience and business initiative, "the joy and satisfaction I receive through the service I provide to my community members are my driving force", she says with a smiling face but nevertheless full of emotion. According to a male community member, "Jalila’s enterprise is serving all community members, not only the pupils and the youth, but anybody seeking Internet connection". Members of PRODESUD Project team add that "Jalila’s initiative has come to the service of the poorest families of her community, the ones who cannot afford to own a computer at home".

Jalila’s success provides lessons for many of us in terms of gender mainstreaming, namely:

- It is important to build a strong synergy between women business initiatives and the local community needs. Project management can support entrepreneurs in assessing beforehand the community needs by conducting surveys ahead of programming project activities.
• Combining entrepreneurship with voluntarism strengthens the connection between the business owner and the local beneficiaries. Participation of business owners in the community affairs nurtures the business owner's love for community and creates the sense of ownership among the beneficiaries of the business initiative.
3.4 - The forest of Togaza village: a woman initiative

Prior to its start, the North Kordofan project realised, through evidence from field studies, that the state of social services is rather poor across the entire project area, and that only 6% of the villages were served by NGOs, Government and UN Organizations. An exercise of Community Capability Assessment measured provided some indicators for all communities in the project area, such as autonomy, initiative taking, ability to manage funds, ability to organize, ability to manage communal land resources. Looking back to these indicators and previous achievements, all communities scored an average of 43 points out of 100. This average score meant that there was a need to support the operation of community organisation, in terms of management and administration including holding meetings; accounting/financial aspects and reporting.

At each targeted village, the project encouraged setting up a Village Development Committee (VDC) with its sub-committees, as the basis for community participation in the project development activities. The VDC, a sort of "village board", consists of 5 members, of which at least 2 members are women. Under the VDC umbrella, many sub-committees operate in different fields, namely Finance; Natural Resources; and Women Empowerment & Services. All these sub-committees form the Executive Group of the VCD. Each consists of a maximum of 13 members, of which at least 30% are women. All members of the VCD and sub-committees are elected by the beneficiaries that are willing to co-operate. The responsibilities of the VDC are as follows:

- Mobilization of human and financial resources within the village;
- Operation and maintenance of the village utilities;
- Management of the village sanduq (revolving fund); and,
- Supervision and ensuring sustainability of development activities.

To improve VDCs and their sub-committees' performance, the project trained them in management and administration, including holding public meetings; book keeping; accounting/financial management; credit principles and lending procedures; simple feasibility studies; and reporting. In addition, the project allocated line item grants for essential social and environment sub-projects. Communities were mobilized to make their self-help contributions in various forms (in-cash, material, labor or services). Community contributions exceeded 25% of total agreed-upon costs, in most cases.

Few years later, a similar Community Capability Assessment was carried out again to check the changes in all the abovementioned community indicators. The results showed significant difference between villages participating in the project activities (average score of 68 points) and the non-participating villages (average score of 43 points at the project start).
Togaza is one of those remarkably successful villages located at Um Ruwaba District, 60 kilometers south from El Obeid. The village has 80 households and lacks all types of infrastructure. Most of the inhabitants depend on agriculture and livestock rearing (cattle, sheep, and goats) for livelihood.

When IFAD-funded North Kordofan Rural Development Project (NKRDP) was introduced to the village in 2000, all inhabitants were illiterate and lacked all types of health care services and animal veterinary care. During a three-day workshop organised by the NKRDP, the project staff explained to the community members the project objectives and plans. At the workshop, a Village Development Committee (VDC) was elected, and the village problems and needs were prioritized. Among the problems identified by the local villagers, the scarcity of the pastureland and the moving sand were considered of paramount importance. An action plan was drawn up by the project and the VDC.

According to the findings of the NKRDP, 85% of rural households depend on firewood for cooking the main dish, which is made from sorghum and millet while only 32% of rural households depend on charcoal for making other food, tea and coffee. The majority of rural households (particularly women and children) were found to be spending the morning for collection of firewood and generally do this every 2-3 days.

To protect their pastureland, villagers decided to minimize firewood cutting and resort instead to the use of butane gas containers (cylinders). Here they were supported by the project with a fund of 6,000,000 SDD, to buy containers and build a storage room for them. The containers were given on a loan basis to the villagers, who repaid very fast.

The price of a gas container is 18 SDD (9 US Dollar) and serves for 40 days while the price of a sack of charcoal is 30 SDD (15 US Dollar) and serves between 7 -10 days.

Thus, the introduction of the butane gas as fuel for the stove did not only save women’s time (at least 3-4 hours a day usually spent on firewood cutting), but can save 1 SDD (half a US Dollar) per day. This achievement prompted neighbouring villages to repeat the experience.

The village women, whose awareness was raised, began to get alerted to their next threatening problem, namely the problem of the sand dunes moving towards their village. As they realized that this problem needs to be combated, they took the initiative and called for a village meeting to collectively discuss the issue and attempt to find a solution. It was in this meeting that the idea for the forest came out. During this meeting, the villagers decided that the best tree species to plant is the "Neem". Its wood can be used in house building. In addition, it has an ability to continue growing, even after the top is cut.

The enthusiasm that women have shown during this meeting prompted one of the male villagers to donate 3.50 feddans of his own property to establish the forest. Hawa, a female member of the Natural Resource Sub-committee of the VDC volunteered to take the responsibility of collecting funds from the villagers.
Because most of the male household heads work outside the village, fund collection is performed by female community members. Thus, over the last four years, 65 female community members became responsible for the collection of the weekly 1,000 SDD over a period of 9 months (from October to July). Collected funds are used to cover the costs of seedlings (or transplants) and the water costs for irrigating the forest. During the fall season, villagers are exempted from contribution, as irrigation is done with rain water.

All community members volunteer to share tasks and responsibilities in the forest "project", whereby they adopt a clear, gender-sensitive division of labor. While everybody is involved in planting the forest, women and children are assigned to irrigate the land and men supervise their work. As the forest "project" was "institutionalised" in the village, fund collection for the forest needs is performed by the female members of the VDC’s Natural Resource Sub-committee. For instance, Hawa is in charge of collecting funds for forest inputs and Um El Hussein assumes the function of collecting funds to cover the monthly salary of the guard recruited to watch over the forest.

The forest has become the collective asset of the village and it is expected to give a profit of an average of 100 SDD per tree after seven years. Out of 600 trees planted so far, 400 trees are growing healthier. Plans have already been made to use the profit generated from the forest to build a school and a mosque, as well as other charitable purposes or emergency casualties. Because it is a "collective action" initiative, strongly perceived as a collective asset, the forest is well maintained and guarded by everybody. Thus, it happened that one time, the animals of a villager were found eating the leaves of small trees, villagers rushed to the village head to place a complaint about that. The villager whose animals have found in the forest was judged to pay for the caused damages, but then exempted and forgiven. After this incident, all villagers collectively decided to plant additional tree species, namely "Al Sayal" and "Al Haraz" on the edges of the forest, given that their harsh leaves could help protect the forest from the camels.

Villagers and North Kordofan project’s appointed extensionists still recall the reluctance of the community members at the project start to partake in village meetings, if they are attended jointly by male and female members. Today, all villagers smile when they proudly state that the situation has changed. According to a female villager, all villagers are accustomed to convene on a monthly basis and sometimes even twice a month if there is any urgent matter that needs to be discussed. More interestingly, every Friday during the holy month of Ramadan, each house in the village prepares some food and brings it to the collective meeting space where they all share Iftar together.

For the villagers, the main lesson learned is that regular meetings among all concerned parties are key to the successful accomplishment of any work. According to a male villager, "the
learning experience can be made much easier if people are given the chance to watch any of the previous experiences anywhere else”.

The unique lesson they extract from this experience is expressed in the words of Mohamed El Noury, the head of the VDC: "In the past, women did not have any role to play, and even if they had one, we (men) did not accept it. But now we (men) have seen that they (women) think correctly. It is the frequent meetings that we attend together that made us understand that any work is achieved only when all the team members work together”.

As for the project management and staff, several lessons about gender mainstreaming can be drawn out of this success case study, namely:

- Village Development Committees (VDCs) should be mobilized to solve their own problems while strengthening their self-confidence and their collective spirit, as well as enhancing women participation. To accomplish this, the capacity of the committees should be measured through key milestones such as:
  - regular meetings and reporting to measure day-to-day management performance;
  - consultation for problem-solving purposes and enhancement of women participation to measure the relationship with the village general assembly;
  - allowing women to take on leadership roles to measure the understanding of gender mainstreaming; and,
  - Mobilisation of local resources for assessing financial self-reliance.
- Village selection should focus mainly on those who are really show genuine interest and willingness to participate and contribute.
- Project staff should maintain their faith, confidence, trust in local villagers, and be patient when guiding them.
- Social returns on investment must be taken into consideration when measuring the impact of any activity. Such returns can be seen in social and educational values introduced (e.g. the level of participation of both men and women in village initiatives, the created space for dialogue among them, attendance of meetings, self-reliance and self-confidence of women in assuming responsibility of initiatives).
3.5 - Mariam: When Water Harvesting Expertise Becomes Female

At Khor Fadila village, situated around 34 kilometers to the southern part of the Administrative Unit of El Abassiya in South Kordofan State, lives Mariam, a female pioneer in water harvesting techniques.

Mariam's story goes back to 2003 when South Kordofan Rural Development Project (SKRDP) was introduced to the villagers. Mariam was selected by the community members to act as the Agricultural Demonstration Officer. For her community members, Mariam was among the first priority people, given her miserable living conditions. As an illiterate divorcee, Mariam was living together with her 6 children and struggling very hard to make both ends meet. With no education, no assets and no resources, she was entirely dependent on the gracious benevolence of her community members and on the meager revenues she made through working as an irregular wage labourer.

Together with two other female farmers from the neighboring village of Tajmala, Mariam was invited by the project team to attend the 4-day training workshop organized by SKRDP at Abbaseya on water harvesting techniques. The training was primarily practical-oriented, and succeeded in capturing the interest of all participants and hence could successfully deliver the required knowledge and skills.

According to the project staff, Mariam showed great enthusiasm during the training workshop. She remarkably managed to maintain a high spirit, even after the training was over. Because of her strong engagement, the project staff decided to provide further support to Mariam. Hence, jointly with the project team, Mariam was able to fulfill the first requirement for the project support, solving an issue that could have been a serious obstacle towards her eligibility for the project support, namely her inability to provide any land title. For this, the project staff encouraged Mariam to make arrangements with the village Sheikh so that he leases her one feddan out of his land for one year. Once she had that piece of land, the lease of which was registered under her own name, Mariam received from SKRDP the wooden triangle for measuring the "contour" lines and an amount of peanut improved seeds. In addition, the project provided support in reclaiming the land through the removal of stones. Even after soil preparation and seed planting, the project team continued to assist Mariam through regular weekly visits until she was able to adopt the water harvesting techniques and apply them on her own land.
At the end of the first cropping season in 2004, Mariam was able to harvest 723 kilogrammes of peanuts per feddan. In comparison, her neighbouring farmer, who did not apply the water harvesting techniques, harvested only 106 kilogrammes of peanuts per feddan. Three years now after her adoption of the water harvesting techniques, Mariam harvests every year 650 kilogrammes of peanuts per feddan in average, while her neighbouring farmer only gets an average of 172 kilogrammes of peanuts per feddan.

Mariam's initiative had a far-reaching effect, not only impacting her personally, but benefiting her family, the neighbouring communities and SKRDP as well. After this first success, Mariam became more enthusiastic. She had regained her self-confidence, and started to improve her own livelihood and that of her children. Thus, she joined the literacy program and encouraged her children to join the village school and attend the literacy classes. From the profit she made in the first year, she bought nine goats. She used the second year's profit for buying a draft animal for her cart and some building material. The profit of the third year was used to buy a milking cow. With the constant support of the project staff, Mariam was then enabled to buy the land from the village Sheikh.

Mariam not only benefited from the SKDRP but also became a great support for the project. Building on the participatory concept adopted by the project, beneficiaries who adopt new technical packages would further the dissemination of these technologies to other neighbouring project beneficiaries. Doing this, they would capitalise on the well-linked community development approach of 'Al Nafir', a concept whereby farmers help each other. From this perspective, Mariam was able to transfer her knowledge, through non-conventional training, to other 88 male and female farmers in the neighbouring villages where to she travels very often.

Even though the project encouraged Mariam to ask for fees against the services she delivers in the neighbouring villages, she kept refusing to ask for money. As a project staff explains: "To show her appreciation for the knowledge gained and her loyalty to her co-villagers, Mariam transfers her expertise voluntarily and does not charge any fee for the visits she undertakes to the neighboring villages". Adding to this, Mariam says: "I travel miles and miles to my neighbouring villages, especially during the rainy season to share my knowledge with others and I am grateful to the yearly profit I regularly get from my crops, thanks to the use of the newly-acquired water harvesting techniques".

Three main lessons can be drawn out of this success story and be used to guide future gender mainstreaming programmes, namely:

- Involvement of female beneficiaries in any project activities can be significantly increased if the project provides the required solutions to facilitate women access to the necessary assets that make them eligible for technical and financial project support. There is a striking evidence in the particular case of Mariam when the project made arrangements...
with the village Sheikh who first rented a piece of land to Mariam and agreed afterwards to sell it to her.

- The best integration of female beneficiaries into the mainstream of any development work can be achieved when women farmers, like their male counterparts, participate in dissemination of newly-introduced technologies and in sharing knowledge with their community members. As the case of Mariam shows, not only they become publicly appreciated for the services they deliver, especially when it is voluntarily done, but they themselves feel empowered when they perform this role.

- Involving both a man and a woman as advisors in water harvesting techniques is a clear demonstration to the local communities that both men and women can develop similar expertise and qualification if given equal opportunities to do so.
3.6 - Fatima, the Women Dairy Milk Entrepreneur

In its target area, the Central and Midland Agricultural Development Project (CMADP) in Syria sought to improve women access to resources needed to increase their economic productivity. In order to do this, the project supported men and women capacity-building in the fields of dairy production, handling, processing and marketing.

As a result, around 1,200 female farmers benefited from the project between 2004 and 2006. They received credits and attended capacity-building sessions on dairy production improvement. Preliminary results reveal that more than 50% of them managed to increase their income, due to the improved quality of milk and cheese products.

Fatima, along with her family enterprise, was distinguished as one of the "reference" cases of the project, for having successfully introduced tremendous changes within the small dairy enterprises. Changes lived up to the point that female and male members of the enterprise both actively participated in decision-making over the use of returns on investment.

Fatima is a female farmer who only completed her basic education. She lives together with her husband and their eight children in Ein El Dahab village16 in Tartous Governorate.

In 2006, Fatima attended one of the CMADP training courses in dairy production improvement, tailored to dairy producers. Meanwhile, one of her brothers attended another of these courses, tailored to intermediaries in the marketing of dairy products. Immediately after they both finished their courses, they gathered with their other 3 brothers/sisters and "brainstormed" about establishing a family business for dairy processing. The initial capital investment, required for their project, was jointly and quickly secured. The cattle stalls of their parents' house was reconstructed, refurbished, and turned into a work place for processing, including the necessary measuring equipment which they received from the CMADP. Hence, the whole preparatory period did not take too long and, within few weeks, the enterprise was ready to start.

Fatima showing her fresh dairy products

16 The village has a population of 700 inhabitants and has no health clinic, which is considered a problem for the inhabitants who have to travel distances to get medical care.
Since the start of the enterprise, Fatima has had a long working day of 17 hours, which stretch over the whole day. In fact, Fatima’s day starts at 4h00 AM when she wakes up to milk her cow, gets the milk to the workshop, and supports her brother in the preparation of the products to be marketed. Once this is done, Fatima rushes for a couple of hours to take care of her family and clean her house. At 9h00 AM, Fatima returns to the workplace to resume her work until 2h00 PM, when she returns to her home to prepare lunch for her family. At 7h00 PM, she walks over again to the workplace to proceed with the production until 9h00 PM.

The division of labor in this family enterprise is a very classical one: women are responsible for the tasks performed in the private sphere – within the household – while men are in charge of the tasks to be performed outside the household - in the public sphere. Thus, while Fatima and her two sisters prepare the dairy products at the workplace, one of the brothers collects the milk from the villagers, and the other distributes and markets the dairy products in Homs. Because the dairy products they produce usually exceed the capacity of the "pick-up" wagon owned by her brother, he is obliged to drive the way to the market twice a day. The accounting and bookkeeping role is performed by one of her sisters, who keeps strict and timely records on everyone’s working hours, inputs purchased, and other cost elements.

The small plant processes everyday 125 kilogrammes of milk. Her brother – the intermediary – collects fresh milk at LS 14 per kilogramme and sells it to the plant at LS 15. After subtracting transportation costs, the net profit is equally divided into 5 shares. Usually the daily revenue for each one is around LS 100.

The advent of the project had its remarkable impact on each of Fatima’s family members. Fatima, who has been raising cows since 5 years, got herself a credit from the project to buy a cow. She received a loan to be refunded within a 6-year period and every 6 months she pays an installment of LS 9,000 from her own earnings. Fatima is entirely responsible for the care of her cow. With her high entrepreneurial spirit, Fatima managed to combine her present revenue with her earlier savings and bought herself a piece of land in her own name, which she planted with apple trees. Because her husband supports her in the maintenance of her agricultural land, Fatima is able to work as a wage labourer on her co-villagers land.

As for the male members of the enterprise, the initiative had incurred new changes in the lives of her 2 brothers. One year before the family members started their enterprise, the 2 brothers migrated to Lebanon, and once the enterprise started, they decided to come back to Syria and partake in this business.
Seven years ago, Fatima had joined, together with other 25 women from her village, the village women committee, which was established by the Syrian Women Union. Through the visits of the project staff to her village and her regular participation in training sessions, Fatima developed a great awareness about gender equality and the important role of women in the society… to the point that she became a woman activist. Accordingly, when Fatima knew that her husband had registered his land titles in their sons' name, she decided to pass her land title in future to her daughters, should they marry poor husbands and be in need of assets.

Besides her entrepreneurial spirit and her active engagement, Fatima prefers to enjoy the safety of a regular salary, as she says: "It is my dream to become one of these days an employee in a milk factory in my village, which would gather the milk from the villagers and process it. This would be of great benefit not only to me but to the other villagers as well, for whom I wish the same peace of mind as I wish for myself".

This case study brings forth several lessons in gender mainstreaming:

- It is important to involve both male and female family members in the training for income generating activities and micro-enterprises as this guarantees males' approval and support in the running of the enterprise.
- Male and female beneficiaries should be involved in the establishment of enterprises as equal partners where all assets, labor division and revenues are equally shared among them.
- The project's support for female beneficiaries needs to be resumed even after they have embarked on their enterprise. Women need to be encouraged to become better risk takers and be motivated to maintain themselves in the market.
3.7 - The Al-Rahn Community Development Association in Yemen: An Empowered Women Group

Al-Mahra Rural Development Project (AMRDP) was designed to provide support to community development committees it helped establish in the project area. To do this, the project built a start-up capital to ensure sustainability of the organization and its services. It commissioned a regional consultant on gender analysis and enterprise development to provide technical support to the community members. In addition, the project recruited, at the end of 2003, 4 development coordinators and assigned them the responsibility of supporting the women development committees. The coordinators received training in report writing, communication methods, Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) techniques and development of feasibility studies. The grants provided to finance income-generating activities were geared at meeting a wide community benefit, particularly in relation to women's livelihoods and social status. Consequently, 4 women associations were initiated by this programme and received funds for income generating activities.

Al-Rahn Community Development Association (CDA) is one of the most successful associations that were initiated through the project. It is indeed a success story for it demonstrates how, in the context of a patriarchal society as in Yemen wherein it is still a main challenge to have women in leadership positions, women have become enabled decision-makers, capable of running their own institutions and enlarging their businesses.

The story starts in July 2004, with the registration of Al-Rahn CDA, named after the village's name, which is located in Al-Mahra Governorate, in the southern part of Yemen, near border with Oman. The association was initiated in a General Assembly of 60 women, and is governed by a board composed of 9 women and 3 male supervisors.

As soon as the association got registered and opened its own bank account, it was contracted by the AMRDP and became eligible for the project support. However, before receiving a grant from the AMRDP to start a micro-business, the association had to be "transformed" into an enabled institution. Hence, the project organised a training course for its board members on the preparation of annual work plan, technical proposal writing and management.

Having finished their training, board members summoned the other association members and conducted together a situation analysis wherein they assessed their problems and prioritised their needs. The result of this assessment soon revealed that women's linkage to local markets, especially to national markets, was a serious challenge, given the prevailing socio-cultural norms on women mobility, the limited access to credit, strongly linked to the system of land inheritance, and the fact of being totally disconnected from the marketing process.
Accordingly, the association members decided unanimously that their first priority would be to venture into the market and hence agreed to use their grant to open a grocery shop in their village, to be operated and managed by the association's members. The grant fund was used as seed money to refurbish the shop, buy grocery items and pay the rent of the shop as well as the salaries of the shop keepers.

Because their association was a formal, recognized body, its members arranged to participate in other capacity-building and skill-enhancing workshops. Some members attended training courses on pottery making and broom making out of palm leaves. Each member who attended a training course was required to transfer her knowledge to the others who did not attend. Production started in a collective way whereby women members formed two sub-groups, each for pottery and broom production. Product marketing was also undertaken in a collective way by sending the finished products with a driver from Al-Rahn to a woman relative in Al-Ghayda, who was in charge of marketing the products in return of 30% of the profit. Also the driver is always reimbursed for his costs.

Because of the increased access of the association to different income sources and its active, dedicated involvement in decision-making, the self-confidence of its members has been greatly enhanced. This "snowball" effect could be observed in the members' increased access to decision-makers, such as the Ministry of Social Affairs and many donors. When the association members found that the rent they pay for the shop consumes a large portion of their profit, they rushed to the Ministry of Social Affairs asking for possible solutions to exempt them from paying the rent. Encouraged by their enthusiasm, the Ministry of Social Affairs contacted the local authorities on their behalf and the latter granted the association a piece of land to build their premises.

The appointment of qualified executive board members increased the leadership skills and abilities of the association. Women's capacity was so strong that they not only were successful in managing their projects but were also, as expressed by them, "able to solve men's problems too". This ability was more evident when the association members searched around for additional items to enlarge their business and increase their profit. They found out that they could invest in selling diesel to the fishermen boats.

Rejoiced and heightened sense of accomplishment experienced by the association members could best be illustrated in their
own quotes. According to two board members, "we, women, have become an authority". Another board member added: "women have proven to have their brains in their heads". Furthermore, two members of the General Assembly contributed to the description, saying: "it looks like someone who was locked at home and then was released". Meanwhile, another member goes on saying: "we have developed ourselves and became famous as the girls of Al-Rahn due to our achievements which made us well-known to people. In the past, we were not able to achieve anything". Finally, the chairperson of the association concluded: "Before, I could not move. Now, my husband can proudly say that his wife is the president of the association".

The lessons learned from this success story, in relation to gender mainstreaming, are as follows:

- Economic empowerment of women through women groups is better than working with individuals. This case shows that being collective makes women stronger than being individualistic.
- Women associations do not only need funds to start their micro-businesses but need capacity in management, computer skills, gender and community participation, as well as communication skills, lobbying and negotiation skills, as well as persuasion abilities.
- It is important to recruit community extension staff and train them in the best way before they start supporting local communities.
- The annual action plan, the project designed together with the associations, equipped these associations with a good practical tool, enabling them to learn how to prepare such a document in the future and how to measure their performance.
CHAPTER IV

WHAT LESSONS WERE LEARNED FROM GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE REGION'S PROJECTS?

4.1 - Introduction

This chapter portrays some success stories developed as a result of changes brought by the programme at the project level. The lessons learned, through the success stories and recommendations presented below, are derived from the IFAD's review on impact assessment of the IFAD Programme of Action to Reach rural women in NENA Region as well as drawn from the visits to 4 KariaNet member projects (i.e. Zaghouan and PRODESUD in Tunisia, and North Kordofan and South Kordofan Projects in Sudan).

The chapter is composed of three sections. Section 4.2 portrays the critical factors which contributed to the successful application of gender mainstreaming. It reviews the factors elicited by the IFAD's review at both institutional and beneficiary levels, and presents the drivers of success at the above-cited four KariaNet member projects. Section 4.3 reviews the learning and innovations accumulated through the IFAD Programme of Action, and explains the mechanisms developed to promote information exchange and knowledge sharing. It also gives a general account of the lessons learned in terms of gender mainstreaming, gender training and sensitization, and women economic empowerment as expressed by the various project staff and beneficiaries. The lessons, as presented in this chapter, have been compiled, analysed, synthesised and collated under main themes. The detailed information about the learned lessons, and the originating project as well as the stakeholder who brought it forward, are provided in the annexes.

4.2 - Critical Success Factors for Gender Mainstreaming

4.2.1 - Adoption of a Participatory Gender Mainstreaming Approach

Projects should adopt a participatory and inclusive working approach. Right from its very start, any project should genuinely implement this approach in order to create a sense of ownership among the beneficiaries, and increase their appreciation of their own capabilities. Thus, local gender units should be incorporated and enabled to play a prime role in the project. Likewise, the project should select its team members from among the local community members. The newly recruited staff should receive capacity-building training before they start their real field work.
Projects should adopt the principle of Gender Mainstreaming throughout components and processes. This is to ensure that both men and women are well represented in the project planning, in the Project Management Unit, among the extension staff, in the community development committees and in all project activities.

The participatory approach should also be used during the regular visits by the project staff to the project areas. The visits will have to be regular, frequent, brief and conducive to a quick follow-up with the beneficiaries. Such visits are likely to help in:

a. Encouraging local community members to adopt a structured approach to pursuing their endeavours;

b. Providing quick responses to their concerns before problems get aggravated; and,

c. Establishing rapport to create strong working relationships between the project team and the community members.

4.2.2 - Sound Collaboration among Stakeholders

Projects should strive for the creation of a common vision among all stakeholders. Thus, trust should be nurtured among all relevant partners, especially between the project and the local community as well as between the project and the local authorities. All parties involved in project implementation should seek to speak the same language about gender concerns. Special attention should be given to the selection of the suitable candidates and the exclusion of local partners with less capacity.

4.2.3 - Provision of Support in Capacity-building

Capacity building should be provided on two levels:

a) **Project team members**: The support of the Project Managers for gender concerns is crucial, and hence they, together with the project team members, should be well equipped and trained to apply participatory approaches and gender analysis. The training in gender concept and participatory approach should also be provided on a regular basis. In addition, gender team members should be supported with means and tools to monitor the implementation and assess the impact of the project activities. The lessons learned on Gender Mainstreaming should then be scaled-up and scaled-out.

b) **Project beneficiaries**: Before the actual start-up of the project, awareness sessions should be organised for the benefit of local communities in order to inform them about the support for skill enhancement offered by the project and the different credit and training facilities available in the country. Different types of training can also be useful (e.g. study tours to other similar projects to get beneficiaries acquainted with other successful models). The project can also prepare handouts, which include guidelines about possible income-generating activities and disseminate them among the beneficiaries. Very active community members can be rewarded by granting them exposure to **international experiences**, which they can share with their community members upon
their return. They may be asked to compare what they have seen abroad with their domestic situation and to recommend certain improvement to their project management. Extra support or 'push' should be provided by the project for female community members to enable them to participate in project activities. Thus, project team should constantly encourage female community members to attend all the training courses offered to the local committee and to participate in the field day activities. The training provided for female beneficiaries should be of high quality and hence should extend over a longer period of time to cover both theoretical concepts and their practical application. At the end of the training, the participants must be tested to receive a certificate, which will enable them to access a credit from the bank to start a small business. Some female beneficiaries may be given a chance for learning by doing and, if proven efficient, be nominated as executive board members. This is expected to increase women's leadership skills and abilities, and enable them to lead other projects.

4.2.4 - Provision of Financial Support

Banks may be encouraged to grant small credit, if NGOs are involved directly or indirectly in gender mainstreaming initiatives. When NGOs participate in credit disbursement or repayment collection, they should be entitled to a percentage of the interest rate. Beneficiaries are also encouraged to embark on new enterprises if the collateral and guarantee requirements are made easier.

4.2.5 - Working in Accordance to Project Environment

The project can be successful in its endeavour if it copes well with its working environment at both the local and the policy levels.

a) **At the local level**: If the project interacts well with the local branches of women organisations working in the fields of education, health, poverty reduction, environment, political participation, and legal rights, a collective effort would emerge. Likewise, it may coordinate with local marketing cooperatives as an outlet for women. It may also facilitate access to a special corner at village weekly markets for the same purpose. It should respond to the needs of the local community and focus more on young men and women who are especially receptive to any new knowledge and skill acquisition.

b) **At the policy level**: A convergence between project initiatives and the general legal context is an important factor of success. The project can flourish very well if it operates in an environment where there is a national support for women development, or if the project's objective is in line with the current national policy. In the case of Tunisia, the project coincided with a national policy striving to combat unemployment. In 2006, it also happened that the government issued a decree to encourage the creation of local NGOs at the level of each "muatamadia" (i.e. a district) in all governorates. For instance, the Gender Officer in Zaghouan project in Tunisia, being a member in the National Committee for Women Development, acts as a good link between the project and the national authorities.
4.3 – Learning and Innovation

This section responds to the outcomes expected from the knowledge management component of the IFAD Programme of Action as listed in the log frame, and to the following questions: What new knowledge has been gained as a result of the programme? How has it been validated, disseminated and used (primarily by the actors involved in the learning experience, beneficiaries, field staff, project staff, implementing partners and institutional counterparts, and finally by IFAD and development practitioners).

4.3.1 – Mechanisms for Information Exchange and Knowledge Sharing

At IFAD-NENA level

A survey of regional gender programmes conducted in 2005 found that 85% of the respondents have easy access to Internet. However, 50% have not used the gender webpage on IFAD website and only 33% have accessed the webpage more than once. This suggests that a more active and updated gender webpage would become a central source of information and for knowledge sharing17. Hence, it was imperative to create a webpage on gender mainstreaming in the Near East and North Africa region as the primary platform for disseminating practical experiences in outreaching and working with women in NENA18.

The base document for dissemination of information regarding the IFAD approach for gender mainstreaming, women development and empowerment in NENA region – titled “Empowering Rural Women and Men for Equitable Development in the NENA: An Outline of Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Recommendations for the Future” – was finalized, translated into Arabic, and disseminated to IFAD-funded projects in NENA region, partner NGOs, and government offices during the first quarter of 2004. The paper was subsequently used as a basis for an e-discussion on “Women as Agents of Change in the Rural Development of the NENA Region” in preparation of a regional workshop on the same topic. The e-discussion addressed three main themes of equal importance in NENA region: (1) Institutionalising gender equality in rural development policies and implementation mechanisms; (2) Promoting equitable access of women and men to assets and resources; and (3) Empowering rural women via participation in institutions, civil society and decision-making19.

Moreover, cross-fertilisation lunch seminars were organised at IFAD, focusing on exchanging experiences in gender mainstreaming between different regional divisions. In this context, two lunch seminars were organized in collaboration with the gender focal point of IFAD Asia Division: the first focused on a cross-regional "Comparison of Organization of Local Committees"

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18 Annual Programme of Work and Budget, 2003, Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region, TAG 494.
with case-studies from Sudan and Mongolia; the second focused on "Bridging the gap between trauma-healing and empowerment: gender sensitive insights from the Palestinian experience" 20.

At projects' level

Different projects have developed different mechanisms to promote information exchange and knowledge sharing. The subsequent sections and Boxes 1 and 2 highlight the most important mechanisms developed so far.

**Research and methodological documents:** In Sudan, the gender-training curriculum, developed in Arabic by the NKRDP has been integrated into the overall implementation of the loan in this country. Moreover, the IFAD-NENA Programme also collaborated with a regional institution assigned to assume M&E in four IFAD-funded projects in this country, with particular reference to the monitoring of gender issues in those projects.

**Training:** A number of study tours were organized for project staff, extension workers and target beneficiaries. The SKRDP in Sudan organised a study tour of 15 project staff to visit MYRADA, an IFAD partner in India that was in charge in organising women into Self-Help Groups. The study tour turned to be very useful to the Sudanese project. Moreover, IFAD West and Central Africa Division successfully tested the hiring of Moroccan rural couples as extension workers in the Oasis Project in Mauritania.

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**Box 1 - Mechanisms to promote information exchange and sharing of lessons: the case of Syria**

**At the project level:**

Exchange of information and sharing of lessons with relevance to the IFAD Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region among IFAD projects were found to be very weak. In fact, there is no formal mechanism specified, but rather left haphazardly and as need arises.

In general, within and between the two projects of CMADP and IRDP, project staff were found to retain very strong informal ties with each other. Thus, information exchange is done over the phone and in few instances. Communication takes place on daily basis among some staff members. According to the two project managers, a joint workshop would have been very fruitful at the start-up of both projects.

Exchange of information on a larger scale was primarily performed among staff members of the governorates during the training courses. The Women and Community Development Team leader in CMADP shared her experience in gender issues during the training courses, while the extension staff shared their experience related to animal production through PowerPoint presentations during the courses. The films produced in Homs about animal nutrition and processing were presented during the coffee breaks of the training courses.

**At the beneficiary level:**

In IRDP, village members enjoyed their participation in the committees as they learned from each other and from the services provided by the project. One of the active male members in one of the village local committees indicated that he attended the training sessions provided by the project at the neighbouring villages, so as to obtain the maximum of knowledge possible. The experience he obtained was later shared with his village committee members.

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Mainstreaming Gender in Development Projects in MENA

Box 2 - Mechanisms to promote information exchange: the Case of Yemen

There were basically three different mechanisms adopted by the AMRDP for the information exchange. Each of those mechanisms targeted a different level and had a special focus.

A. Mechanism among IFAD-funded projects’ staff

Attendance of workshops: The IFAD/NENA conference on Women as Change Agents (Damascus, Syria, May 2005) was attended by the Project Manager and the Gender Team Leader, who prepared a case study about capacity building of women associations. The project has earlier participated in the workshop on Rural Development, Gender, and Participation, which was held in Rome in 2002. Both workshops have been useful in providing a better understanding about the IFAD gender program as well as other similar projects in the Arab region, thus easing the start and enhancing the execution of the IFAD Programme of Action to Reach rural Women in NENA Region.

Exchange of visits among IFAD-funded projects: An exchange of visits occurred in 2005 among RADP and AMRDP projects. It was a beginning of an exchange mechanism that was never effected. The drive and the necessary funds to carry out further exchanges were apparently missing. Moreover, the difference in the nature of the populations between Al-Mahra governorate (a coastal area) and those of Raymah (a mountainous area) seemed to have minimised possibilities for exchange of experience. There was no exchange at all between the new Dhamar project and AMRDP. Representatives of the two projects said that they only met each other during the IFAD conference in Syria prior to the start-up of Dhamar project.

Exchange of correspondence between projects’ staff and IFAD headquarters: The exchange of faxes and other forms correspondence between AMRDP staff members and IFAD headquarters has been very educative for the team members, enabling them to carry out their own plans.

B. Exchange Mechanism for Partners (NGOs and Local Authorities)

A study tour to Al-Hudeida, Taez and Sanaa governorates was conducted to the benefit of 17 participants from among the representatives of the women NGOs, local authorities and staff members of the Al-Mahra governorate. It exposed the participants to the experience of other women organisations, including visits to poor communities and some income generating projects. The tour provided a goods opportunity to know each other more closely which smoothed their work relations and left them with good souvenirs. Interviewed participants, however, felt that they only visited few initiatives, such as building of dams or drilling of wells, which they can never adopt in their environment, as they live in a different context.

C. Exchange Mechanism for Immediate Beneficiaries

Exchange of visits among female board members of the Women Associations first took place through the encouragement of the Gender Team Leader of AMRDP, so that female members of advanced associations could share their experience with the newly formed associations or groups. Later, members of those groups continued to exchange visits on their own initiatives.

4.3.2 - Lessons Learned in Gender Mainstreaming

The lessons learned by the projects are centred around three main themes, namely:

a) **Best Practices on the Involvement of Local Communities in Gender Mainstreaming:** The lessons assert that experience in gender mainstreaming is best achieved if local communities are given the chance to "learn by doing" and practice what they have learned. This type of participatory approach is successful in outreaching both men and women and assessing their needs and priorities. This practice reinforces the staff’s self-confidence to repeat the same experience. It also helps the local community appreciate the role of women.

One of the wisdoms gained indicates that one should "**always make sure to have heard women's voice, for men are more outspoken and tend to speak on behalf of women**". The following example illustrates this case in point. In one of the villages in Syria, the female project officer met with the village head to invite the community members to organise women’s literacy programs. The village head firmly rejected the idea, claiming that women in his village do not need education. Secretly, however, his wife rushed behind the female extension officer before her departure just to inform her that women are willing to pay out of their own income in order to receive literacy training.
In addition when searching for female candidates to participate in project activities, it is preferable to look for women with some education as they provide good entry points to access other female community members. Educated female community members have also proven best in incorporating male and female community members in project activities.

**Introduce the concept of "zoning" into the project design.** Each zone in the project area has to be handled differently and according to its specificities. A rule of the thumb is that there is no "on size fits all" approach to the various project areas. Once the specificities of the zones have been identified, it is important to encourage female beneficiaries to resume their activities according to the culturally-accepted gender-based division of labour. Thus, projects do not always need to introduce new activities to the area. Projects support can take the form of providing guidance in product quality improvement.

**Allocate a special budget for the support of the gender concerns in any project.** This allows project management more flexibility in the selection and planning of the project activities.

b) **Dissemination of new Information to local communities:** Before the project begins with any initiative, it is best to establish and nurture trust with the local community members. Trust can be built during preparatory work with the village members through a discussion on long-felt problems and the suggestion of solutions thereto. This provides a gateway for the communities to air their grievances and to predispose them for new ideas.

**Gender is about men and women.** Men must always be put in the picture. Thus, it is best to enter any village through its male community leaders, as they need to be convinced first before any work is introduced to that community. In addition, the key to increase recognition of gender concerns is how those concerns are handled. Therefore, while focusing on women, it is important to remember that men also have their problems.

To disseminate information to the local communities, several practices have proven quite successful:
1. Arrange for successful pioneers to travel around the villages to act as living example of success;
2. Involve NGOs because they are more efficient; and,
3. Engage local community members in the dissemination of the new knowledge as information is likely to be more accepted if provided from within the community.

c) **Interaction among Partners:**

**Integration between various local authorities** is very crucial. It capitalizes on the experiences of the local authorities and enriches the project in various ways. First, it creates complementarity among the collaborating partners. As such, the weakness of one partner can be covered by the strength of another. For example, the Banque Tunisienne de Solidarité (BTS) was found to have faced problems in the collection of its disbursed loans. The project offered to collaborate and become responsible for the work at the grassroots level (i.e. selection of candidates and monitoring of small businesses), thus allowing the bank to focus entirely on its financial operation. Second, focusing on local authorities is
useful as it guarantees close proximity to the local communities. It builds on their good experiences and ensures the projects' sustainability, once the project is over.

When initiating cooperation with partners involved in the project, all must agree on a common working philosophy and approach, and then sign an agreement, specifying the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders; the timeframe for each item on the implementation plan; and the exact quantity of outputs, if any, expected from each activity (e.g., 4 training courses will be implemented for the benefit of 25 female and 20 male beneficiaries after 3 months of the project start-up date).

**Communities need to develop a sense of ownership of their projects.** This necessitates that the communities be involved throughout all the project's phases: from the start in the assessment of resources (both physical and human), to the prioritised list of community problems, and finally to the plan implementation and follow-up. This will certainly help build and reinforce mutual trust between the project and the target audience. Participation of both male and female community members in the decision-making processes should be permanently observed.

### 4.3.3 - Innovations Tested in Gender Mainstreaming

Various innovations have been tested by the projects and proven successful in gender mainstreaming, including institutionalisation of local committees, design of tools, and, initiation of action mechanisms.

a) **Institutionalisation of local committees**: The local committees were institutionalised at the village level and varied by the type of membership.

Thus, there are “women-only committees”, which are composed of female volunteers who are known to be dynamic and willing to serve their communities. Those committees proved to be very essential in linking the local community members with the project before and during the implementation. In fact, working through those committees made implementation much easier. Women-only committee members have always made themselves available to serve their communities.

The second type of local committees is dominated by male members but the by-laws require that women be fairly represented in certain committees (e.g. development committees).

The third type of village committees includes a good number of both male and female members. This ensures some measure of emphasis on women-related development issues. It also indicates that the status of women is improving as they play greater role in community and household decision-making and development.

b) **Design of tools**: One of the innovations of the projects was the design of a Gender Training Manual that covers five broad areas, namely:

1. Extension services in agriculture and animal production;
2. Gender and development, focusing on mainstreaming;
3. Microfinance (covering credits & rural entrepreneurship);
4. Management and project cycle; and,
5. Human rights, with a special focus on women rights.

The manual is very much tailored to the needs and specificities of the local context, and includes case studies and examples from the local communities. Building this manual was, by itself, a learning process. A phase-wise approach was followed, involving various stakeholders.

Together with the manual, the project prepared several short documentary films, used as tools during the gender courses.

c) **Initiation of mechanisms**: Four innovative mechanisms were developed:

1. **Invitation of volunteers from the Rural Development Department of the National University**. During the summer vacation, volunteers are invited to assist in the project. Upon their arrival, they receive intensive training and are distributed in pairs to the sites where the project works. There, they promote knowledge in such issues as adult literacy and AIDS combating.

2. **Formalisation of partnerships among different actors involved in training and rural finance services**. This process followed a phase-wise approach. First, the project elaborated on the concepts and discussed the framework of partnership. Second, verbal negotiations were conducted. And finally, the agreements were prepared and signed. The final product was a multilateral agreement with models of feasibility studies for different women enterprises.

3. **Inclusion of female members in all project activities and local committees**. To enhance women roles in the development of their communities, the project has promoted the participation of women throughout all the project stages. The involvement of women started early enough during the problem identification stage. Here, the project assessed the present situation of women and gathered information about their daily activities with a view to attend to their specific needs.

4. **Public participatory monitoring**. Through this mechanism, the project monitors the implementation of its activities. Almost 70% of the community members (male and female alike) attended those public meetings, held twice a year at the village's school.

### 4.3.4 - Lessons learned in Gender Training and Sensitisation

1. **Eliminate confusion about the term "Gender"**: Some projects indicated that the term "gender" itself needs to be cautiously dealt with. There seems to be some difficulty in understanding it. Therefore, it is suggested to best use the concept of "women issues". The following quote, made by a project staff, illustrates this point very well: "Gender is often understood as women only… It is best to explain gender in the context of our own culture and social norms, promoting equality among males and females… It is better to use familiar terminology to leave no room for misconception… Include religious scholars to clear any possible religious misunderstanding".
Other lessons learned emphasise that the gender concept needs to be adapted to local social and cultural traditions. For example, the Islamic perspective of equality for both men and women must be underscored. Others denoted that their local communities dislike the terminology of "women empowerment". Instead, they were found more receptive to terms such as "women development".

2. **Recruit local trainers on gender mainstreaming**: Some projects found that local trainers on gender mainstreaming are more acceptable to the target audience. A local person can draw best on the local context and prove that it is not a foreign agenda. In addition, some lessons reveal that women participation increase when the trainer is of the same gender. Discussions are also said to have been more lively and open.

   It is also advisable to bring in other agencies to speak about their experience and to invite Islamic scholars or preachers to assist in gender-training workshops.

3. **Invite all potential stakeholders to the training courses**: Those include project staff, village committees, directorates of agriculture, directorates for water resources, other governorate-level officials, farmers union, women union, youth union, local media, extension services. Invitation of the Extension Directorate and Women Directorate in the Ministry of Agriculture should be envisaged. Men and women must be on the list of invitees to any gender training because there is a tendency to associate gender training with women and hence only female trainees are sent.

4. **Dedicate time for knowledge sharing**: At any gender training, it is imperative to foster knowledge sharing among the participants. Women voices need to be heard. They have a lot to say but have little chance to say it during daily life. Therefore, training courses should give them the opportunity to speak out.

   Training courses should as well be organised several times even for the same audience. A one-time training will not achieve the desired impact. It is also important to bear in mind that there is still much gender training and sensitization needed on the local level.

   Gender training courses provide an opportunity to involve local open-minded high-ranking decision-makers in the country and invite them to provide their support for the gender causes. The following case illustrates how a gender-training course, organized in Yemen, gave the right impetus for the creation of such a gender support group thus increasing the potential for sustainability.
4.3.5 - Lessons learned in Women Economic Empowerment

1. **Fulfil women's immediate practical needs**: It is advisable for the projects to start with the fulfilment of the immediate practical women needs. Those are easily accepted by the local communities and do not upset the power balance between men and women. Women in the villages, they argue, feel very isolated and hence would appreciate any support provided for them.

2. **Then, move to the women' strategic needs**: For example, women need to be supported to challenge the traditional gender division of labour and improve their social status. Accordingly, they expect the projects to refrain from encouraging traditional initiatives for women such as sewing, carpet weaving or tricot. Previous studies indicated that such classical female activities have a very low potential of success. Women also believe that they are stronger as groups than as individuals.

By the same token, it is essential to provide a place for women to meet, as they have no place to socialise and to overcome their isolation at the villages. Women feel that they need to be part of a network within which knowledge can be shared. In Syria, the centre funded by IFAD and AIDOS is now considered a meeting place for women and a source of information about new ongoing activities.

Some projects concluded that men must be involved from the very beginning. This is likely to guarantee their approval for women to attend the courses and reduce the possibility of impeding future progress. Likewise, the initial awareness raising effort should not exclude men, nor should the services the project intends to provide. However, always provide the credit in women's name, monitor on a daily basis, and make sure that women remain responsible for the actual implementation of the enterprise.

Newly introduced enterprises for women can be supported through: a) Facilitating access to licenses for their businesses and granting them legal status. The support can be through linking women with the concerned ministries; b) Updating of enterprises, as female entrepreneurs need to start something innovative and modern especially the younger ones; c) Providing a demonstration model of any initiative that is introduced. In Syria, for example, milk processing pilots were very effective in understanding the techniques. AS the saying goes: "seeing is believing".
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 - Introduction

This final chapter is composed of two sections. Section 5.2 provides a brief gender analysis of the IFAD initiative, i.e. the Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region, while Section 5.3 presents the recommendations that can inform and guide future gender mainstreaming initiatives in the MENA region.

5.2 - Main conclusions

IFAD Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region has substantially created a substantial momentum after the achievement of its objectives. The programme has contributed to improving the effectiveness of the Funds' regional loan portfolio in addressing gender dimensions and empowering women. Even though the component on technical assistance for rural activities accounted for a small portion of the budget items, it had the maximum impact on the improvement of women's empowerment. This is because the component addressed critical areas for the improvement of the projects' effectiveness in reaching out to rural women. This component has had a tangible impact on the immediate beneficiaries. It resulted in increasing women's skills and income, and enlarging their access to assets, which contributed well to enhancing their decision-making powers. As a result, women's overall status has improved remarkably.

Gender mainstreaming component has succeeded, to a very large extent, in developing both IFAD's and its partner agencies' familiarity with the gender conceptual wisdom, with a positive implications on their analysis of gender roles and needs, women's access to resources, poverty alleviation, and household food security measures.

Knowledge-building component paved the way for policy dialogue. It enabled the exchange of experience among the projects and many decision-makers in the region. Much more support would always be needed to keep this momentum going.

Despite the numerous achievements, there exist several obstacles that still need to be addressed. Fortunately, there are also some key issues enabling women social and economic empowerment in the region that need to be captured.

The following section presents recommendations for the future and identifies some supportive opportunities for the successful outreach of rural women in the region.
5.3 - Recommendations

The following recommendations relate to investments, partnerships and support mechanisms needed to promote Gender Mainstreaming throughout the projects in the region.

5.4.1 - Suggestions for Investment

Marketing is a very crucial domain where there is a high demand by both male and female entrepreneurs. One of the vital support mechanisms could be the creation of *Marketing Support Associations* to upgrade entrepreneurs’ understanding of market needs and of quality as the key to market access. Specifically, marketing associations can provide support through:

- Studying the consumer preferences;
- Providing broader access to markets information. Telecentres can be utilized as an IT service hub. Bangladesh, India and Zambia are good examples where telecentres were used to promote knowledge sharing;
- Providing business development through connecting the local producers with their counterparts abroad.

Projects’ extensionists must be provided with the needful means of transportation to outreach rural women at their remote villages.

5.4.2 - Key Partnerships for Gender-Sensitive Investments

- Building strong partnerships with the different stakeholders (e.g. women national and local organisations, Women’s Union, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Endowments, etc.) and coordinating with policy-making individuals and commissions, known for their support to gender mainstreaming and women empowerment.
- Promoting women’s economic empowerment, especially through women groups, as they have proven to be stronger than individual initiatives.
- Encouraging women to attend community meetings either in pairs or in groups.

5.4.3 - Support Mechanisms

a. **Capacity-building**

- Building the capacity of women associations in the fields of management, computer skills, communication skills, and advocacy and lobbying skills.
- Setting up women’s marketing cooperatives and building their capacities so as to enhance women’s access to markets.
- Enhancing the capabilities of women working in the Civil Service and bequeathing them the skills needed for mainstreaming gender across the various levels of decision-making.
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• Enabling agricultural extension services to include rural women in their programmes for variety selection, multi-cropping, and crop diversification practices.

b. Training

• Holding briefing sessions with policy makers and decision takers to secure their support for gender mainstreaming and women empowerment.
• Organising training courses in marketing skills, product development, and creative approaches to business management.
• Arranging out-of-country observational study tours for extension staff to acquire more knowledge.

c. Knowledge Documentation and Sharing

It is important to work on gender mainstreaming at all levels, including policy-making. This can be done through mainstreaming human rights into the work plans of gender units of the Ministries of Agriculture, and informing policy makers of the various rural women problems. It is also important to systematically collect qualitative and quantitative data about successful projects in the Arab region and publish them in a regional report. There are numerous examples of projects whose results derive to be shared in the region, such as the goat-raising project implemented by the Nour El Hussein Foundation in collaboration with the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development in Jordan21.

d. Support in Project Design

• Ensure that in the project's log frame clearly identifies the domains and markers of project impact. This is intended to help quantify the results and formulate the indicators. To assess the impact, use the framework for gender analysis to determine the difference that the interventions make to the beneficiaries, their households, and the community. Impact assessment studies should be longitudinal and use comparison groups over a minimum of three years. Large survey data will complement those collected from a selected sample or extracted from studied cases. Indicators must include qualitative and quantitative outcomes. Also make sure that project staff have acquired the needed capacity/skills for the development of appropriate indicators.
• Allocate adequate budget for gender training. Funds for gender mainstreaming should be retained as separate line items in order to avoid being transferred to other components.
• Introduce a multitude of non-traditional initiatives to create a wider and more sustainable impact. Encourage projects to introduce activities that are relevant to their environment. In Syria, for example, the governorate of Idleb is rich with archaeological sites (approximately 60% of the Syrian archaeological sites are situated in this governorate). Thus, ecotourism-related activities would be very relevant in this governorate. Successful

21 In this project funded by the Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development, women are given loans in kind; each woman receives three pregnant goats, medications for the goats, feed for 6 months, and money to build a shelter. After 3 years, women pay back their loans.
initiatives may include eco-lodges run by the villagers. Latakia's villages are famous for their agricultural production (i.e. vegetable crops and citrus orchards). Tartus, on the other hand, is famous for its woods and olive trees. It is, therefore, vital to study consumer preferences in terms of quality, taste, price, design, and packaging. Likewise, in Tunisia, the PRODESUD project is planning to train young men and women to become tour guides.

In addition, there are certain factors affecting rural empowerment and hence need to be specifically addressed in all future interventions such as women's reproductive health, economic rights and literacy.

e. **Towards a Women Enabling Policy Environment**

For the coming phase, women must be encouraged to fully participate in and benefit from increased growth and employment. They must be supported in overcoming their own constraints. Enhancing women's employment in the productive sector can only be attained by a policy environment that views women as active economic producers who can contribute to the increase of the Gross Domestic Product in a sustained and meaningful way. Such support can be provided through:

- Consolidating landholdings with a view to encourage joint ownership between men and women.
- Encouraging sharecropping arrangements. So far, there is no law guaranteeing the rights of women in sharecropping. If a legalised system is in place, women can play a more active role in agriculture. The system should enable them to access and be in control of productive assets, and enter into sharecropping arrangements with their male relatives.
- Conducting a wide survey to assess women's involvement in the informal sector to inform future policy interventions for providing them with more legal and social protection until they eventually integrate into the formal sector.
- Lobbying for the reform of labour laws, employment acts, trade union acts, and for a small and micro–enterprise creation policy to enable women become active in local councils, especially at the district level.
- Sensitising decision-makers through: (a) introducing gender budgeting in the High Institute of Finance where the financial officers of the ministries are trained; and, (b) lobbying for more adequate budgetary outlays for gender focal persons and women's departments in the concerned ministries.

f. **Support for Government**

Support for the Governments is required in order for them to develop their capacities to draw up gender-oriented policies. The fundamental issue here is the attempt to increase productivity through technology transfer and increased opportunities for both men and women.
ANNEXES

The annexes present some brief information on the most important lessons learned and innovations made in Gender Mainstreaming by the projects involved in the MENA region.
Annex 1 – Critical Success Factors in Applying Gender Mainstreaming

1.1 - For Project and Counterpart Staff
   For project and counterpart staff, success Gender Mainstreaming is likely if:
   • There is a strong sense of ownership of the project by the counterparts as well as a strong institutional approval of the project initiative.
   • The Project Manager supports the gender concerns;
   • Local partners with less capacity are excluded;
   • Local gender units are involved from the start and if their capacities are enhanced to play a greater role in local development;
   • Local gender team members are supported with means and tools to monitor implementation and impact of the project activities;
   • Lessons learned on Gender Mainstreaming are scaled-up and
   • All involved parties in project implementation have the same understanding of the gender concepts.

1.2 - For Beneficiaries
   For projects' beneficiaries, success in Gender Mainstreaming is more likely if:
   • Villages are located on the main road, have active extension units, and host a good number of educated villagers with a high level of gender awareness;
   • The project focuses on the younger generations, being more receptive of new knowledge and skills;
   • Women are recruited as executive board-members;
   • Local branches of women union are available in the governorates and are actively working in education, health, poverty reduction, environment, political participation, legal rights and media;
   • There are local weekly markets in the area;
   • There are local farmer's cooperatives that support the marketing of women's output; and
   • The Project recruits female staff members from the project area and trains them before they start their work.

1.3 - South Kordofan Project in Sudan
   For South Kordofan Project staff, success in Gender Mainstreaming is more likely to strike if:
   • A participatory approach is adopted by the project and genuinely implemented to increase the sense of ownership among the beneficiaries, and make them fully aware about their own capabilities.
   • If few active community members receive are exposed to international experiences. Upon their return, they can share the new experience with their community members. (Several candidates were invited to travel to Jordan and India and upon their return were requested to share their experiences their community members. They were also asked to make comparison between the international and domestic experience and to suggest future recommendations for the SKRDP);
• The project team constantly encourages female community members to attend all the training courses offered to the local committee and to take part in the field day activities; and
• Gender Mainstreaming is performed throughout the different levels of the project (In South Kordofan Project, women and men are represented in the project planning, in the Project Management Unit, among the extension staff, in the community development committees and in all project activities).

1.4 - North Kordofan Project in Sudan
For North Kordofan Project staff, success in Gender Mainstreaming is more likely if:
• If regular visits to the project area are organized to follow up with the beneficiaries. Such visits help:
  a) Encourage local community members to adopt a disciplinary approach to implementing their endeavors;
  b) Provide quick answers to their concerns before problems exacerbate and
  c) Establish rapport, thus creating strong familiar working relationships between the project team and the community members.

1.5 - PRODESUD Project in Tunisia
For PRODESUD Project staff, success in Gender Mainstreaming is more likely if:
• Project team members are well equipped and trained to apply participatory approaches and gender analysis;
• There is a consistency between project initiatives and the general legal context. (For example, the current national policy of Tunisia to combat unemployment is very much in line with the project’s objectives. In a similar move in 2006, the government issued a decree promoting local NGOs at the level of each ‘Muatamadia’ (i.e. a district) in all governorates. As a consequence, while there was only one NGO in 2000. Six have been established NGOs in 2007 and are functioning);
• Regular monitoring is performed within short intervals to assist women and provide them with immediate support when needed;
• Trust is established among all relevant partners, namely between the project and the local community as well as between the project and the local authorities;
• Extra support or ‘push’ is provided by the project for female community members to enable them to participate in project activities;
• Financial support for NGOs is provided by national banks (According to the Tunisian law, NGOs are not entitled to lend money to their member. In order to integrate NGOs in the credit disbursement scheme, the 5% interest rate collected from the beneficiaries are now divided between the Tunisian Bank (2%) and the NGOs (3%). An additional incentive was provided to the NGOs. An NGO is granted 20 TND for each new client they introduce to the credit program);
• Collateral and guarantee requirements are easy (According to the Tunisian law, the bank requires neither collateral nor guarantors. The only guarantee needed is an official certificate signifying the completion of a course in the skills required to establish a micro-enterprise);
• **High quality training is provided for women.** (The training course provided for women in handicraft production is geared towards quality production. It lasts for 11 months and entails classroom and hands-on training. At the end of the training, trainees sit for an exam and receive a certificate, which qualifies them to receive a loan from the bank);

• **The project conducts awareness sessions before the training courses** to familiarize the local communities with the skills offered by the project as well as the various credit and training facilities available to them. After the successful completion of the course, the trainees visit some successful projects to get acquainted more with keys to success.

1.6 - For Zaghouan Project in Tunisia

For Zaghouan Project staff, success in Gender Mainstreaming is more likely if:

• **Regular training on gender concepts and participatory approaches** is conducted for the project team members from the start;

• There is a **national support for women development** as this increases the awareness on a national scale about the importance of women development;

• The **project staff in charge of gender is a member in the National Committee for Women Development** (as such, she can be a good link between the project and the national authorities);

• The **project prepares guidelines for models of potential income generating activities** and disseminates them among the beneficiaries.
Annex 2 – Details of lessons learned

2.1 - Lessons Learned in Gender Mainstreaming

2.1.1 - Common Lessons Learned

- *Learning by doing* is the best means to gain experience in gender mainstreaming. It provides the staff with self-confidence. Neglecting field visits may result in failure of the project. This is because such visits help address any probable weaknesses.
- The participatory approach is a key to outreaching both men and women in the local communities and discussing their needs and priorities. It also helps the local community appreciate the role of women in development.
- Document success stories and invite the pioneers to travel around the villages to act as living examples of success.
- Allocate a special budget for the support of the gender issues in any project. This allows project management more flexibility in the selection and planning of the project activities.
- Before any initiative in the village, do preparatory work with the village members.
- Involve NGOs because they will be your partners.
- Information is likely to be more accepted if provided from within the community.
- It is vital that both male and female community members participate at the decision-making process throughout the process.
- Listen to women's voice, as men are more outspoken and tend to speak on behalf of women. (In one of the villages in Syria, the female project officer met with the village leader to invite the community members to attend women's literacy program. The village Sheikh, however, declined her proposal, claiming that women there do not need any education. Secretly, however, this man's wife rushed behind the female extension officer before her departure to inform her that women are willing to pay out of their own resources just to receive literacy program).

2.1.2 - Lessons Learned from North Kordofan Project in Sudan

- Gender concerns should be handled with caution. While focusing on women, it is important to remember always that men also have their problems.
- Always enter any village through its male community leaders as they need to be convinced first before any work is introduced to that community.

2.1.3 - Lessons Learned from South Kordofan Project in Sudan

- Introduce the concept of "zonation" into the projects, because each zone in the project area has to be handled differently and according to its specificities. Thus, there is no single remedy that can be applied throughout all the project areas. This is particularly true under the prevailing conditions in South Kordofan where the opportunities and priorities vary between the groups and places.
- Encourage female beneficiaries to resume their traditional activities based on their local gender division of labour. The project can then support the inhabitants in the improvement of the quality of the service or product they provide.
• **Always search for the educated females** in the communities as they provide good entry points to access other female community members. They are also good at merging male and female community members in project activities.

2.1.4 - Lessons Learned from PRODESUD Project in Tunisia

• **Build partnerships among agencies that can complement each other.** Thus, the weakness of one partner can be outweighed by the strength of the other partner. (For example, the Banque Tunisienne de Solidarité (BTS) was facing problems in the collection of its disbursed loans. Thus, the project offered to collaborate and become responsible for the work on the grass-root level, (through selection of candidates and monitoring of small businesses), thus allowing the bank to focus more on its financial function).

• In designing contracts with stakeholders, each item in the agreement should specify for each activity the length of its duration, its frequency, the exact dates for the start and end of each activity (For example, state that 3 months after the project begin; a number of 4 training courses will be held for a period of 9 months; and each will be implemented for the benefit of 25 female and 20 male beneficiaries).

• **Encourage communities to own their projects.** This necessitates that communities be involved throughout all project phases and a direct link be maintained between the community and the project. All activities must be well-coordinated. Thus, community participation includes: the assessment of their physical and human resources, identification of the problem and finally the actual implementation. Accordingly, the trust between the community members and the project is well maintained and their relationships are strengthened.

• **Integrate the various local authorities.** This is intended to promote the capabilities of every partner. Capitalizing on the local experience of the local authorities enriches the project in various ways. It provides proximity to the local communities, because local authorities are very close to the local communities. It also gains a solid foundation as it builds on the already existing experience of the local authorities and finally, the involvement of the local authorities safeguards project sustainability, as they will always be there to continue with the local communities once the project terminates.

2.1.5 - Lessons Learned from Zaghouan Project in Tunisia

• **Establish and maintain trust between the project and the local community members.** The trust is built by sincerely attempting to solve community problems.

• **Initiate a solid cooperation with the other partners** by inviting them to work with you on one joint working philosophy and approach.

• **Start with the building a good spirit among the project team members.** This spirit of teamwork will very soon be reflected in the relationship between the team and the local communities.
2.2 - Lessons Learned from Gender Training and Sensitisation

2.2.1 - Lessons learned by project staff

- **Avoid using the word "gender"** as it seems that the concept is widely misunderstood. Instead, use "women issues" instead. According to several project staff members in the various countries, "Gender is often understood as women only"; "It is best to explain gender in terms of our own context and show that our culture and social norms promote for equality among males and females"; "Use familiar terminology to break the wall"; and "Include religious scholars to lecture and clear possible misconception".

- **Include in any gender training, in addition to project staff, all other cooperating stakeholders**, such as the local village committees, the Agricultural Directorate, the Farmers Union, Women's Union, and irrigation districts, local media, and youth union, the governorate as the implementing agency, Extension staff and women Departments in the Ministries of Agriculture.

- **Gender training needs to be conducted several times** even for the same audience. A one-time-training will not achieve the desired impact.

- **Number of Female participants increases when and if the training courses is provided by female facilitator.** Discussions will then be more lively and open.

2.2.2 - Lessons learned by counterparts and government agencies

- **Emphasize the need for both men and women** to attend gender training, because there is a tendency to associate gender only with women and hence only female trainees are sent.

- **Adapt the gender concepts to local social and cultural traditions.** For example, highlight that Islam emphasizes equal opportunities for men and women. There are some misconceptions about the phrase ‘women empowerment’ and a more preference for ‘women development’. It is also important that Islamic Scholars (Ulama) or preachers be invited to cover and discuss specific topics at gender training workshops.

- **Approach like-minded high-ranking (national decision-makers and invite them to provide their support for the gender issues.**

- **Promote public awareness nationally and locally.**

- It is crucial to **give participants in gender training the chance to listen to each other's practical experiences.** Women need much visibility, especially those who have a lot to say but have little chance to do so during daily life. Gender training should provide an opportunity for them to do so.

- **Recruit for the training, trainers from the same area, for this is certain** to enhance program acceptability by the target group. A local person can draw on examples from the local context and prove that it is not a foreign agenda.

- **Bring in other agencies** to speak about their experience.
2.3 - Lessons Learned in the field of Women Economic Empowerment

2.3.1 - Common Lessons Learned by Project Staff

- **Refrain from encouraging traditional initiatives for women** such as sewing, carpet weaving or tricot. Previous studies have revealed numerous times that such classical female activities have a very low success potential.
- **Women groups are stronger** than individual women.

2.3.2 - Lessons Learned by FIRDOS in Syria

- **Always involve men from the start of any project.** This is expected to guarantees their approval of women attending the courses and lessens potential problems, were they not been involved. Likewise always, conduct awareness raising campaigns for men and provide similar projects for them as well. Wait until businesses become successful and use success to motivate other people to join. However, make it clear that credit will be provided in a female beneficiary’s name. Monitor on a daily basis, and make sure that women remain responsible for the implementation of the enterprise.
- **Secure a place for women to meet. Local women might not** have place to socialize and to break down their isolation in the villages. They need to feel part of a network or of a wider process. In Syria, the centre funded by IFAD and AIDOs is now considered a meeting place for women who visit the centre to inquire about new ongoing activities.
- **Support female entrepreneurs helping in licensing their businesses so as to become part of the formal sector.** The support can be through linking them with the ministries concerned such as the Ministry for Social Solidarity and Home Trade in Egypt.
- **Update the list of enterprises.** Young Female entrepreneurs need to be introduced to something innovative and economically feasible.
- **Appreciate any form of support provided to rural women.** This should motivate others to follow suit and would help break down barriers to women involvement in development.
- **Always provide a demonstration model of any initiative that is introduced.** In Syria, for example, the demonstration labs for milk processing were very effective in understanding the techniques. Seeing is believing!
- **Train men in gender to pave the way for entrepreneurship among men and women alike.**
- **When introducing new gender concepts, concentrate more on trust-building mechanisms through providing basic infrastructure services such as digging wells or building schools.** This is excepted to make the local people more receptive to new concepts.
- **Start with the fulfilment of the actual gender needs to increase acceptability by the local communities.**
Annex 3– Innovations Tested in Applying Gender Mainstreaming

3.1 - Innovations tested by the CMAD Project / Syria
Right at its very inception and before embarking on implementation, C/MADP began with the formation of Women Village Committees. These village committees were composed of female volunteers who were known to be dynamic and willing to serve their communities. Those committees proved to be very instrumental in linking the local community members with the project before and during the implementation. The committees were initiated through the support of the local extension units which saved the way for the advent of the IFAD Programme of Action to Reach Rural Women in NENA Region and encouraged other female volunteers to participate. CMADP has now 625 local women village committees.

Likewise the IRDP project adopted the participatory approach and introduced the concept of Local Village Committee, with the only difference that, in this case, committees were composed of both male and female members. The project requests that female membership should account for at least one quarter of the total membership before the group is recognized by the project management. In each community the project organized a series of 10 meetings in the community. Usually, the actual committee is formed after the second village meeting. In the later meetings, this newly formed local village committee designs the three-year action plan for the village.

Emphasizing the need for both men and women to become members in the village committees community addresses a strategic gender issue. It enables women to perform a community management role, or even more to partake in community politics. In this sense, the project minimized the gender gap in the communities and upgraded women status.

3.2 - Innovations tested by South Kordofan Project in Sudan
Recruitment of Volunteers from the Rural Development Department of El Ahfad University.
Since 2003, the project introduced the volunteerism scheme whereby between 30 to 160 female volunteer students were enabled to join the SKRDP during the summer vacation. Volunteers are invited to join through an announcement in the local radio. Upon their acceptance, they receive a 21-day training course organized by the project. After the training, the volunteers are distributed in pairs and assigned to the villages where the project works. There, they provide their knowledge to the community members in issues such as adult literacy and AIDS combating.

3.3 - Innovations tested by North Kordofan Project in Sudan
- NKRDP has used the MENA Fund to produce a Gender Training Manual. The manual covers five broad categories, namely: 1) Extension services in agriculture and animal raising; 2) Gender and development, focusing on mainstreaming; 3) Microfinance (covering credits & rural entrepreneurship); 4) Management and project cycle; and, 5) Human rights, with a special focus on women rights. The manual is very much tailored to the needs and specificities of the local context. It includes case-studies and examples from
the local communities. Publishing the manual was in itself a learning experience. It was the fruit of joint work by various stakeholders.

- The project owns several short documentary films such as "Amira" and "Women from Kadrouka", which are used during the gender courses implemented by the project.

3.4 - Innovations tested by PRODESUD Project / Tunisia

- **Formalisation of Partnerships among the different actors involved in training and rural finance services.** This process needed joint work over the past 3 years as follows. In 2005, the project discussed the concept of a partnership. In 2006, agreements were deliberated verbally, and finally, in 2007, the contracts were concluded and signed. Through this experience partnership agreement template and Samples of feasibility studies for different women enterprises have been jointly produced.

- **Initiation of Development Committees with a mandatory female membership.** So far, the project has succeeded in starting 25 local development committees and in 13 of those committees, there was at least one female member as required.

- The project plans another innovation namely capacity building for tourist guides especially for the desert safari. At present there are four interested candidates, three females and one male, and will begin as soon as a critical mass is formed.

3.5 - Innovations tested by Zaghouan Project/ Tunisia

- **Inclusion of female members in all project activities and local committees.** To enhance the role of women in development, the project has promoted the participation of women throughout all the project stages. During the problem identification stage, the project was concerned with assessing the present living conditions of women by gathering information about their daily activities, their problems as well as their specific needs. Like PRODESUD, Zaghouan Project made it imperative for all development committees to have at least one or two female members.

- **Public participatory monitoring:** Monitoring activities' implementation is performed on a wide scale and involves by 70% of the local community. It uses the participatory approach whereby meetings attended by the local community members, are held twice a year, either at the village school or at the guest reception room of a key community leader.
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