

## **Recommendations for the Mediterranean Water Forum, December 6-8, 2021**

On November 30, a network of professionals from some 20 organisations<sup>1</sup> working in the water sector held a meeting on the theme of **“Overcoming Resistance to Change and Building Effective Coalitions”** in the interrelated fields of gender, water, and security. Participants made the following recommendations to be presented to the Mediterranean Water Forum, with a view to contribute to advancing a more progressive agenda.

### Background

In March 2021 several organisations working on interlinkages between gender, environment, and climate, met for a three-day Global Learning conference arranged by Sida (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). The Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa<sup>2</sup> acted as a MENA-hub focusing on gender, water and security<sup>3</sup>. Development partners attending the meeting expressed an interest to maintain contacts and continue experience sharing. This resulted in the development of an informal network of professionals active on gender, water, and security in the MENA region, with the Dialogue Institute acting in a co-ordinating role.

The purpose of the network is to create a platform for sharing information, experiences and ideas, to develop relevant policy recommendations, and to strengthen connectivity amongst professionals and organisations across the region with like-minded agendas, contributing to effective advocacy, and ultimately supporting efforts to solve the complex and often inter-connected challenges in the fields of climate, gender, and security.

### Recommendations

#### **1. Improving inclusivity and committing to real change**

- a. Push for the inclusion of more women at policy and decision-making tables, including at higher levels (not only as part of technical support teams). Draw on the growing resource base of competent women professionals in different fields.

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<sup>1</sup> The network includes organisations such as the Arab Water Council, Berytech, CEWAS, CIHEAM, EcoPeace, Geneva Water Hub, GWP-Med, IEA, IWMI, ONEE, Sida, SIWI, UfM and Wana Institute.

<sup>2</sup> For more information about the Institute, please see [Dialogue institute - Sweden Abroad](#)

<sup>3</sup> Summary report from the MENA hub sessions is available on our website: [Gender, climate and security – report from MENA hub on development - Sweden Abroad](#).

- b. Emphasize more strongly the importance of inclusive participation by both men and women, including by better highlighting the different – and valuable – perspectives that women bring to the table.
- c. “Walk the walk, not only talk, the talk”. Go beyond policy documents stressing inclusion of women and make sure it is not just “ticking a box” but a true commitment to an inclusive approach.

## **2. Using best-in class methodologies and adopting new approaches**

- a. Have a structured approach, which starts with diagnostic part to provide evidence, mobilises stakeholders and creates targeted working groups, works step-by-step to institutionalise the issue at stake, and carries out advocacy at the local and policy level.
- b. Involve women pro-actively at the design stage of projects and make sure that a gender lens is applied throughout a project cycle.
- c. Work simultaneously internally (within organisations) and externally (through one’s programmes and projects) using a gender transformative approach for making a change.
- d. Switch from the perspective of “analysing the impact of climate change on women” to one exploring “which contribution can women make to tackle the challenge of climate change.”

## **3. Strengthening advocacy and changing the narrative**

- a. Highlight positive and inspiring “success stories” of inclusive participation, i.e. use story telling in advocacy work both to “open eyes” and to inspire change. Role models (male and female) can play a crucial role in a change process.
- b. Work on changing the narrative, making sure that women are not portrayed as “vulnerable groups”, but as actors, whose knowledge, experiences, perspectives, and ideas could benefit the whole society.
- c. Identify and support male and female champions. These change agents can help drive real, meaningful, and sustained transformation.

## **4. Developing more robust and useful data**

Collect and analyse more gender-disaggregated data (data collected and tabulated separately by gender), which allows for the measurement of male-female differences on a variety of social and economic dimensions. Gender-differentiated information is a pre-requisite for effective, appropriate, and evidence-based analysis and policy proposals.

## **5. Working more effectively with stakeholders**

- a. Involve local communities and grass-root organizations at an early stage in process design.
- b. Train people from the community and make them ambassadors at the local level to accelerate change on the ground.
- c. Partner with international donors in coalition building for change.
- d. Ensure that donors continue to push for inclusion of a gender dimension in all projects, but make sure to anchor in the local context and to move from “vulnerable women” to women as agents of change.

## **6. Supporting the development of female human capital**

- a. Ensure meritocratic and objective recruitment processes, greater transparency, and other good-governance reforms that allow women and men to be hired and promoted on equal terms. Women are well-educated, competent, and have sufficient experience, but need institutions that allow them to develop and thrive.
- b. Establish modern working conditions, where women feel comfortable and can participate on equal terms, and concentrate work to normal working hours, where all staff can participate equally.
- c. Help emerging female leaders, for instance through professional networks that create safe spaces for women to exchange experiences and learn from each other. Peer-to-peer activities, capacity building, and mentorship can also be very useful.

## **7. Prioritizing education**

- a. Focus on the education of girls especially in rural areas. Act locally and take the cultural context into consideration.
- b. Include gender equality and gender balance in educational curricula for schools.