

**Strengthening the Role of
Women in Peace Building
through Community-Level
Natural Resources
Management**

17 Oct 2022
Cairo Water Week



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Context

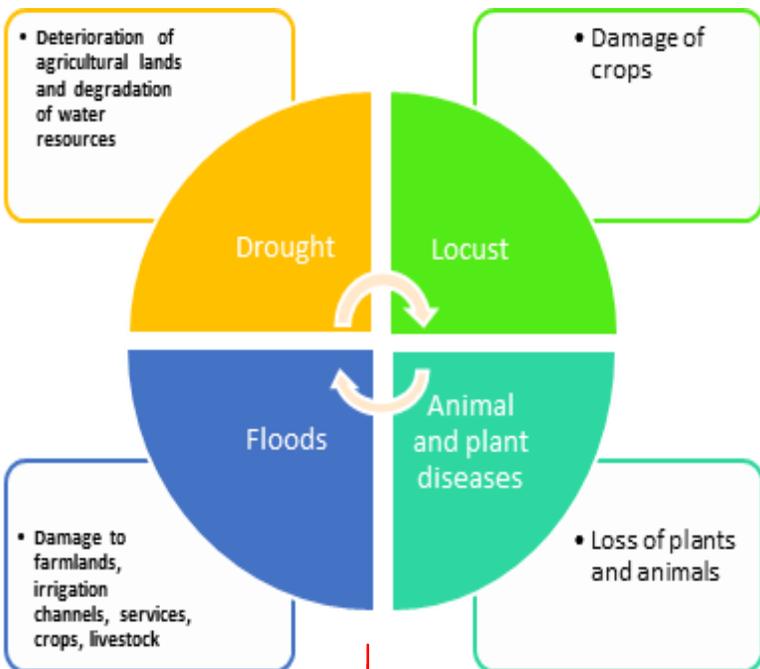
- ▶ Yemen is one of the most water-stressed countries.
- ▶ Since 2015, the conflict has damaged much of the country's critical Water infrastructures.
- ▶ Water conflict in Yemen is prevalent, claiming thousand of lives each year.
- ▶ Key drivers of water conflict are lack of public water regulation, loss of customary water regulation systems, collective responsibility and revenge norms, small arms proliferation, and the existence of powerful vested interests.
- ▶ The merging of water resource conflicts into wider, destructive social conflicts can end in collapsed production systems, uprooted communities and chronic insecurity.
- ▶ Poor households are especially vulnerable to these shocks.
- ▶ Women are also disproportionately affected by diminishing access to water and water conflict.

Context

- ▶ Gender relations in Yemen are shaped by diverse religious, cultural, social and political traditions across the regions, between rural and urban areas, and between different tribes and generations.
- ▶ For the last 10 years, Yemen has ranked last out of the 144 countries included in the 2016 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index.
- ▶ 2019 Equal Measures 2030 Gender Index ranks Yemen 126th out of 129 countries.
- ▶ Women and youth represent 60% of the agricultural workforce, however they are largely left out of resource management and conflict resolution processes.
- ▶ At the same time, women have a traditional role in conflict resolution, taking the role of impartial actors mediating between conflicting tribal or other groups.

Hazards interact with each other to exacerbate the situation for communities

Ongoing Conflict



- Adding more deterioration of farmlands due to high prices of fuel for pumping water for irrigation
- High labor cost,
- Un availability of inputs such as seedling, fertilizers and significant increase of their prices.
- High cost of transporting agriculture products to nearby markets.

No budget allocations for government institutions.

- Can't carry out their regular activities
- No Agriculture extension activities.
- No programs to combat plant and animal diseases.
- Can't provide agricultural inputs.

- No operational DRR system.
- No coordination among different bodies at all levels,
- DRR related strategies, policies, and regulations neither implemented nor updated.

All these hazards interact with each other to exacerbate the situation for communities and result in a combination of negative consequences on people and their ability to cope and adapt to such impacts

Low resilience and adaptive capacity

Results:

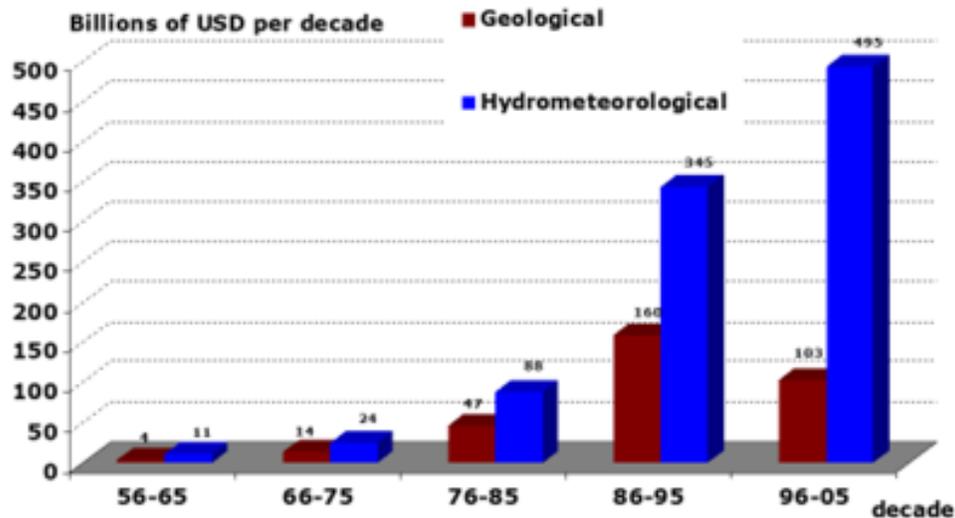
Loss of livelihoods, food insecurity, deterioration of health, malnutrition and starvation

High Vulnerability

FLOOD Economic Impact

Economic Losses Related to Disasters are on the Way Up !

الخسائر الاقتصادية المتعلقة بالكوارث بتصاعد مستمر



Source: EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database - www.em-dat.net - Université Catholique de Louvain - Brussels - Belgium

- ▶ About 40,000-50,000 ha of terraces damaged by heavy floods
- ▶ About 40,000-60,000 HHs lose their income
- ▶ About 100,000 ha have direct damage by erosion and indirect damage of the spate irrigation structure
- ▶ About 80,000-120,000 HH lose their income
- ▶ Estimated cost for Rehabilitating irrigation Canals \$ 50,504,075
- ▶ Estimated cost of damages to Greenhouses \$ 3,075,000.00
- ▶ Estimated cost of damages to irrigation systems \$ 5,740,000.00



AL-THA'LEB CASH FOR WORK BENEFICIARIES WORKING ON CONSTRUCTING GABION BASKETS 2019



CASH FOR WORK BENEFICIARIES WORKING ON THE REHABILITATION OF THE FALG AL NEENO WATER CHANNEL WITH SUPPORT OF FAO ENGINEERS. 2019

To address these conflicts, FAO supported the revival of over 100 Water User Associations (WUAs) in Sana'a and Lahj, Hadramout, Dhamar, Abyan, Ibb, while also building their capacity in project administration and conflict resolution.

FAO established Women Water User Groups and Conflict Resolution Committees (CRCs), with equal female and male representation.

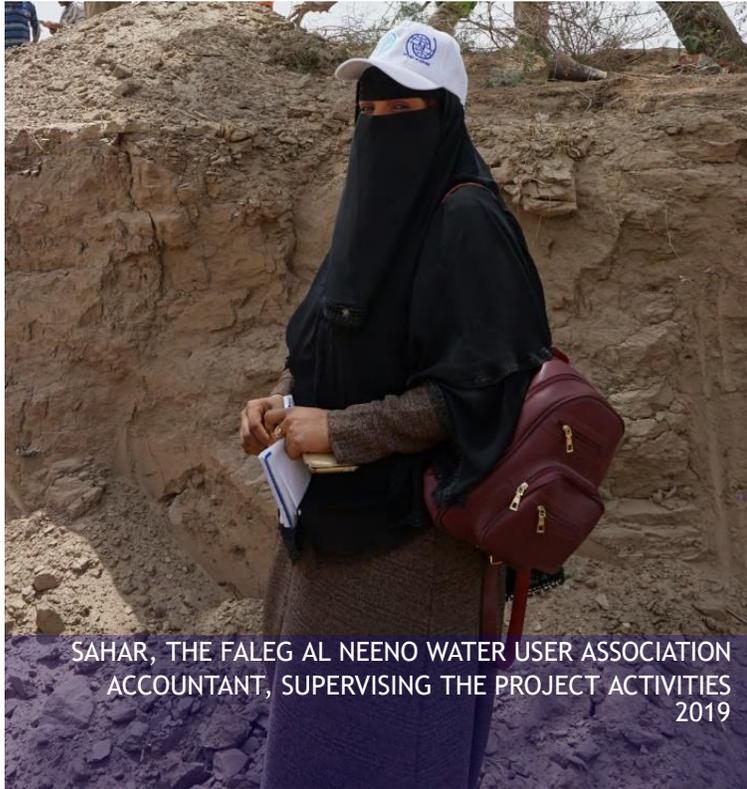
The WUAs were trained on conflict resolution, gender responsive actions, and water rights.

Women assumed leading roles in these processes and in mobilizing community members in support of agreed resolutions to local water-based conflicts.

The WUAs facilitated resolutions to 30 local conflicts.

With the help of FAO engineers, the WUAs implemented solutions in the form of water infrastructure rehabilitation to increase sustainable access to water, enable fair distribution and prevent future conflict through DRR measures (e.g., flood protection).

Following the intervention, the WUAs reported reduced conflict, increased access to irrigation water and an expected increase in local agricultural production.



SAHAR, THE FALEG AL NEENO WATER USER ASSOCIATION ACCOUNTANT, SUPERVISING THE PROJECT ACTIVITIES 2019

FAO worked with the Faleg Al Neeno WUA to enhance their gender inclusivity and promote the involvement of women in the WUA's activities. The Faleg Al Neeno WUA recruited Sahar Said Babahar as their accountant, a key role in the admin side of their work. Apart from her administrative work, she provided field oversight and monitoring. When asked about the impact of the project, she said that "the biggest impact [on the community] was the team spirit among the women and men working together".

Wasafi is the Chair of the Al-Arais CRC. She comes from one of the local farming households and lives with her three daughters. She explained how the relationship between the farmers and local households used to be peaceful before the start of the conflict in Yemen. However, with lack of resources and poor infrastructure maintenance, the water channel became a source of dispute within the community. The floods would get so bad that families living near the channel would sometimes have to relocate children to their friends and relatives' houses. As a result of the intervention, "the neighbors are now happy that their houses won't flood," she explained, "and the farmers have more water for irrigation."



WASAFI, THE CHAIR OF THE AL-ARAIIS WATER USER ASSOCIATION CONFLICT RESOLUTION COMMITTEE. 2019

The Al-Malakah Dam

Case Study



- ▶ The AlMalaka Dam was built in 2002 at the Al-Malakah chapter of the Bani Al-Harith District in Sana'a; nearly 350 farmers were set to benefit from it.
- ▶ However, a dispute among farmers led to the death of a villager.
- ▶ Community leaders issued a customary tribal decree banning the use of the dam, laying waste to nearly 170,000 cubic meters of water per year - much of it lost to evaporation. The amount would be sufficient for irrigation of 34 hectares of land.
- ▶ Through funding from the UN Peace Building Fund (PBF), FAO worked to resolve the conflict through:
 - ❖ Resuscitating the traditional mechanisms of resolving conflicts through community dialogue,
 - ❖ Empowering women to take active roles in these processes (institutionalizing their role through minimum 30% female membership in the Board of Directors),
 - ❖ Improvement of water infrastructure (shallow wells) to elevate the low level of water at the deep wells and increase access to water.

Disaster Risk Reduction as a means to Resolving Conflict in Yemen



Strengthening the Role of Women in Peacebuilding Through Natural Resources Management at the Community Level in the Rural Areas of Sana'a and Lahaj in Yemen project was implemented by FAO between 2018-2020.

- ▶ The project addressed various causes of water conflict:
 - ▶ In Sana'a, water sources were mainly dams shared between community members, with communities distant from dams often unable to access enough water. To prevent conflict escalation, tribal leaders had released decrees that forbade all conflicting parties from using the disputed water sources.
 - ▶ In Lahj, farmers that lived near the water canal headworks had the advantage and ability to control the stream of water, with some upstream farmers blocking water from reaching other farmers downstream. This created tensions between upstream and downstream farmers.
 - ▶ In addition to poor water infrastructure, disputes over water escalated due to unregulated water extraction, overexploitation, diversion, and hindered agricultural production.

Climate Change Mitigation in Tarim, Hadramout



- ▶ FAO implemented the next phase of the PBF-funded intervention in Tarim, Hadramout from 2019 - 2020.
- ▶ FAO established 6 WUAs, WWUGs and CRCs to resolve the long-standing water conflict, caused by the partial collapse of the spate irrigation system due to floods, leading to unequal access to water resources between upstream and downstream farmers.
- ▶ Through mediation and rehabilitation/construction work on the irrigation system, the project successfully resolved the conflict.



- ▶ In addition, the project had a climate change mitigation component:
 - FAO partnered with the Seiyun Agricultural Research Station (SARS) to plant 10 000 Sidr tree seedlings along Wadi Thabi, establishing a practical model for the integrated management system of floods and climate change mitigations at Wadi-Thebi flood course.
 - Furthermore, the provision of locally produced Sidr tree seedlings to communities for reforestation allows them to restore the green cover of spate irrigation areas experiencing partial vegetation degradation and to protect rangeland from erosion.
 - Sidr trees are also used in honey cultivation, a traditional livelihood in Hadramout.

DRR in Conflict-affected Communities

- ▶ The country's DRR profile was developed to provide an overall background. Hazard, Vulnerability, and Capacity Assessments were completed through a combination of desk-based and participatory methods which informed the identification of DRR gaps and needs at the institutional and community level.
- ▶ A priority hazard (floods) has been identified and designed piloted community-based disaster risk reduction activities that could be integrated into ongoing emergency and resilience programs for flood mitigation infrastructures. Pilot activities were complemented with relevant training to ensure increased awareness and understanding of DRR and sustain management of shared resources. Concurrently, local stakeholders were also trained on various elements of disaster risk reduction, contributing to the revitalization of early warning, communication, and extension of support to communities.



Conclusion:

With the ongoing conflict and deployment of men to front lines, women may be required to assume new natural resource management roles, either by taking up alternative income-generating activities or by moving into traditionally male sectors in order to compensate for loss of revenue.

However, their communities often see the changes in women's roles as merely a consequence of the context they are facing rather than a long-term change that they are accepting of.

The “Strengthening the Role of Women in Peacebuilding through Natural Resources Management at the Community Level in the Rural Areas of Yemen” project used an innovative approach focusing on reviving the traditional role of women in Yemeni culture in conflict resolution and water conflict management to bring transformative change.

an opportunity to work on or to enhance the **local peace prospects**, which is highly relevant in Yemen as the overall conflict shows no sign of resolution. While national peacebuilding efforts continue, communities in the rural areas remain key to the repair of the social fabric and the improvement of their own livelihoods.

An emerging bottom-up and systematic pathway to peace was established. This happened through the institutionalization of the traditional role of women in water conflict resolution in rural areas through the Water User Associations (WUAs), which set a precedent for women's leadership role in larger peacebuilding efforts.

Recommendations

- More focus should be given to women empowerment based on their roles in natural/ water resource management and conflict resolution:
 - **Particularly, to make peace inclusive, engaging rural women from traditional/farmer communities should be considered, leveraging their roles in natural/ water resource management and conflict resolution in larger peacebuilding efforts.**
- More cooperation and cross-cutting efforts between different humanitarian, development and peace agencies are needed to capitalize on the role of women in natural/ water resource management, disaster risk reduction (DRR), conflict resolution and peacebuilding.
- When addressing legal, social or institutional barriers to women empowerment, consider barriers faced by rural women, taking measures to enhance their role and productivity in natural resource/ water management and DRR, which is critical to post-conflict economic recovery in Yemen.



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