

Gender Dynamics and the WEFE Nexus in the Mediterranean

Concept Note & Agenda

1. Introduction:

The Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus represents the interconnectedness of water, energy, food, and ecosystems, emphasising the need for sustainable and integrated management of these resources and their governance. It also presents a dynamic context where water diplomacy, entrepreneurship, research, and innovation converge as catalysts for sustainable development.

Through history, women have played pivotal roles as primary users, managers and caretakers of water resources. Despite this, their significant contributions, their involvement in water diplomacy and other development activities related to the WEFE Nexus remains constrained.

Recognising the gender-specific challenges impeding women to have a role in water leadership is a first step to bridging the gap and unlocking the full potential of women as leaders within the WEFE Nexus.

2. Background:

i. Water scarcity in the region

Water scarcity is a growing problem in many parts of the world. Climate change, population growth, economic development, urbanization, and unsustainable water use practices are among the factors contributing to this issue. The situation is more exacerbated in many Mediterranean countries as the region is one of the world's climate change hotspots warming 20% faster than the global average. Furthermore, the conflicts some countries in the region are experiencing have curtailed the little water available. Women are particularly affected by water scarcity because they are often responsible for collecting and managing water for household use.

Addressing water scarcity and enhancing access to safe water in Mediterranean countries requires acknowledging the distinct challenges faced by women. This involves boosting women's involvement in water management and decision-making processes, investing in infrastructure for a dependable water supply, and offering education and resources to advocate for sustainable water use practices.

ii. The UfM Water Agenda

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) has been actively working towards enhancing regional cooperation, dialogue, and the implementation of projects and initiatives with tangible impact on the citizens of its member states since 2008. This is to address the three strategic objectives of the region: stability, human development, and integration. Since its inception, the UfM has prioritized promoting Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and ensuring access to water resources and affordable water services. This has been accompanied by efforts to address climate change impacts and promote action on adaptation policies and practices. To this end, the UfM Ministerial Meeting on Water in April 2017 called for a UfM Water Agenda to enhance regional cooperation towards sustainable and integrated water management in the UfM region. The UfM Water Agenda, under the leadership of the Hashemite

Kingdom of Jordan and the European Commission, has been structured in four thematic areas: Water and Climate Change Adaptation (W-CCA); Water-Energy-Food-Environment (WEFE) Nexus; Water-Employment-Migration (WEM) Nexus; and Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). Additionally, a Financial Strategy has been developed to support the implementation of the UfM Water Agenda.

The UfM has recently developed a 5-year strategy for youth engagement in the water sector in line with the WEM Nexus objectives to address youth unemployment and to promote gender equality. Furthermore, a publication on ‘Empowering Women in Water Diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa: A Comparative Study of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine’ was launched by GWP-Med and the Geneva Water Hub, within the UfM Water Policy Framework for Actions 2030.

Furthermore, gender and the water sector, are both priorities areas for the Spanish Cooperation; the issue of access to water and sanitation is addressed using a human development and rights-based approach, making a decisive commitment to focus globally on the water sector, and considering the aspects of IWRM (Integrated Water Resources Management) and governance. In 2019, the MASAR WATER programme for the Mediterranean, was launched. MASAR WATER's overall goal is to contribute to sustainable water management in the Mediterranean region.

3. Objectives:

The main objectives of the event are to:

- a) Explore the challenges and opportunities that women encounter in accessing resources, technology, and leadership positions within the WEFE Nexus. Gain inspiration and food for thought through insights from ongoing initiatives and projects, along with information on accessing financing.
- b) Receive input, through an interactive process, on ‘gendering’ the UfM Water Agenda, with emphasis on the WEFE Nexus thematic priority.
- c) Enhance the acknowledgment of women's contributions within the WEFE Nexus and advocate for a gender-transformative approach in the formulation of policies and decision-making processes at various levels. Share proposals and suggestions for consideration and subsequent action at the 5th Mediterranean Water Forum and beyond.

4. Expected Results:

- a. To increase awareness at all levels, and particularly among the policy and decision-makers, about the critical role of women in achieving WEFE Nexus goals, leading to greater support and investment in gender-inclusive initiatives.
- b. To improve and facilitate access for women to resources, training, and technology, enabling them to participate more effectively in water, energy, and food systems.
- c. To empower women as leaders in diplomatic processes, contributing to comprehensive and sustainable solutions within the WEFE Nexus.
- d. To strengthen partnerships and collaborations among stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and civil society to support women's empowerment in the WEFE Nexus.

Co-Organisers:

- UfM Secretariat
- Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID)
- Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med)
- Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR)

Pre-final Agenda

Monday, 5 th February 2024 11:30-13:00 Tunis time	
11:30-11:45	<p>Welcoming and opening section: <i>Mr. Almotaz Abadi</i>, Deputy Secretary General in charge of Water, Environment and Blue Economy, UfM Secretariat (name tbc), Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) <i>Dr. Anthi Brouma</i>, Deputy Regional Coordinator, GWP-Mediterranean <i>Dr. Soukeina Bouraoui</i>, Director, CAWTAR</p>
11:45-12:50	<p>Gender Dynamics and the WEF Nexus in the Mediterranean</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Setting the stage: the WEF Nexus and Gender</i> ✓ <i>Experience from case studies</i> ✓ <i>Opportunities and priorities from strategic and financial partners</i> ✓ <i>Gendering the UfM Water Agenda & the WEF Nexus priority</i> <p><i>Moderators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Eng. Doha Zamel</i>, External Water Consultant, WEBE Division, UfM Secretariat ○ <i>Dr. Anthi Brouma</i>, Deputy Regional Coordinator, GWP-Mediterranean ○ <i>Dr. Soukeina Bouraoui</i>, Executive Director, CAWTAR <p>Setting the stage for Gender in the WEF Nexus Framework (20min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Medusa and the WEF Nexus Atlas: <i>Eng. Doha Zamel</i>, External Water Consultant, WEBE Division, UfM Secretariat ● Choosing characters – reflections on the Medusa for gendered WEF Nexus <p>Panel exchanges on the challenges and opportunities for gendering the WEF Nexus framework (25min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Ms. Sihem Filali</i>, <i>Head of the Central Governance Unit</i>, Ministry of Environment, Tunisia ● <i>Ms. Itaf Ben Abdallah</i>, <i>Senior Advisor</i>, HER division, UfM ● <i>Ms. Amal Azab</i>, <i>Deputy technical Director</i>, Arab Water Council ● <i>Prof. Ali Rhouma</i>, <i>Project Officer</i>, Thematic area: Nexus, PRIMA Foundation ● <i>Ms. Abir Ben Romdhane</i>, <i>MedYWat Coordinator</i> ● <i>Ms. Inmaculada Paniagua Brieva</i>, <i>Technical Advisor for Middle East and Asia</i>, AECID, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, Spain <p>Interactive discussion (20min)</p>
12:50-13:00	Take-away messages & the way forward

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