



Union pour la Méditerranée
Union for the Mediterranean
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**Discussion Forum on
“Gender Dynamics & the WEFE Nexus in the Mediterranean: focus on economic
empowerment through a business-centric approach”**

Draft Concept note & Agenda

Monday, 13 May 2024, 11:00- 12:30 CET

Background:

The 5th edition of the Mediterranean Water Forum served as a pivotal platform for addressing the complex challenges posed by the water scarcity in the region. A notable highlight of the forum was the successful convening of a side-event specifically focusing on the interplay of Gender with the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus framework, organised by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Secretariat, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) and the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR).

This interactive session discussed with more than 65 stakeholders the challenges and opportunities for ‘gendering’ the WEFE Nexus framework. Through panel interventions and exchanges with the participants, it was possible to enhance the understanding of the role of women in the WEFE Nexus and to advocate for a gender-transformative approach in the formulation of policies and decision-making processes at various levels.

The participants acknowledged that sustainable development and gender equality are intricately linked. Despite this recognition, the discourse on sustainable development often overlooks the issue of equal access to natural resources, especially for marginalised groups like rural women.

The interconnection of energy, water, and food is undeniable. However, the management of water and the broader water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus predominantly remains a male-dominated domain. To shift this paradigm, gender mainstreaming stands out as the primary tool for attaining gender equality and redistributing power and influence.

Moving beyond and eradicating gender stereotypes and biases, a transformation of gender norms is needed, a paradigm shift and eventually a cultural and behavioural change in the Mediterranean region. Leveraging the rich cultural and artistic heritage of the Mediterranean, which is the cradle of diverse civilizations and cultures, art can play a pivotal role in fostering this change. Inspired by the Medusa Nexus concept, which challenges conventional notions of power and gender roles, art can serve as a potent tool for catalysing societal transformation. Through artistic paintings and modern portraits, the Medusa Nexus concept offers a platform to challenge embedded patriarchal systems and promote inclusivity and diversity to ensure successful WEFE Nexus experiences in the Mediterranean region. The essence of the Medusa concept is to engage with the complexities of gender dynamics and environmental sustainability through artistic exploration, to permit an open discussion aiming at inducing a behavioural change capable of leading to a social acceptance of the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus. This could pave the way to move up the gender ladder, and finally adopt gender-transformative approaches.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Water Agenda, through its thematic area on the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus, acknowledges that more effort is needed to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into all policies, programmes, and initiatives related to water,



energy, food, and ecosystems, and to strengthen the actions towards sustainability and gender equality.

Importantly, the interactive session resulted in the formulation of a series of recommendations aimed at advancing gender equality within the WEFE Nexus. These recommendations emanated from a collective understanding of the urgent need to act and to empower women and bridge existing disparities in resource access, technology utilization, and leadership representation, also within the UfM Water Agenda. The list of recommendations is provided as an Annex.

Why this discussion forum?

In the aftermath of the 5th Mediterranean Water Forum, and aiming for action on these recommendations, it's increasingly evident that a specific mechanism should be placed to advance gender equality within the WEFE Nexus. This mechanism should entail the interests and activities of businesses into the management and governance of water, energy, food, and ecosystems, encapsulating a business centric WEFE Nexus approach.

Women are central to efficient resource management, drawing from their traditional roles as primary caretakers of households. Their expertise in optimizing water, energy, and food resources at the household level and on the fields can be invaluable when applied to business operations within the WEFE Nexus. By integrating women's perspectives and leadership into decision-making processes, businesses can enhance resource efficiency, generate income, reduce waste, and mitigate environmental impacts.

Prioritizing gender equality in business operations and decision-making, can ensure more equitable resource distribution and enhance productivity. Moreover, empowering women economically through equal opportunities in leadership and entrepreneurship strengthens communities and fosters resilience. Businesses, as drivers of innovation, can harness diverse perspectives to develop sustainable solutions for water scarcity, energy efficiency, and agriculture. Additionally, integrating gender considerations into business practices can lead to the creation of bankable projects that are not only financially viable but also socially and environmentally sustainable.

Hence, a business-centric approach to the WEFE Nexus can seemingly contribute to advancing gender equality across the sustainable development goals and thus towards regional stability, prosperity and peace.

In this context, a 1,5 hour virtual discussion forum is organised on Monday, 13 May 2024, 11:00-12:30 CET to shed some light on the practical way forward. The session will have simultaneous English-French interpretation.

Objectives:

The discussion forum seeks to explore the business centric WEFE Nexus approach that provides a sustainable mechanism for accessing diverse financial resources, achieving efficient economic empowerment and mitigate environmental impacts. By doing so, we aim to generate tangible change within the WEFE Nexus from a gender's lenses. The objectives of the webinar are:



1. set up actions for short-term implementation and identify action plans to improve business centric WEFE Nexus.
2. Showcase case studies highlighting women's roles in the business centric WEFE Nexus. These case studies provide insights into ongoing and upcoming projects to inform discussions on challenges, successes, and lessons learned in the business centric WEFE Nexus.
3. Discuss avenues for integrating short-term action plans into policy frameworks and on-the-ground practices.

Propose the following:

1. To discuss among a panel of experts the context of a business-centric approach for economic empowerment of women and for promoting gender equality within the WEFE Nexus frameworks
2. To share case studies highlighting the value of gendered WEFE Nexus applications. These case studies will provide insights into ongoing and upcoming projects to inform discussions on challenges, successes, and lessons learned in the business centric WEFE Nexus.
3. To discuss the elements of an action plan for moving forward with the implementation of the business-centric approach.

Expected Outcomes

-Emphasizing the translation of discussions into tangible policy approaches and community initiatives.

Co-Organisers:

- UfM Secretariat
- PRIMA Foundation
- Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med)
- Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR)

Provisional Agenda

Monday, 13 May 2024 11:00-12:30 CET	
11:00-11:15	<p>Welcoming Moderated by <i>Dr. Ali Rhouma</i>, Project Officer, PRIMA Foundation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mr. Almotaz Abadi</i>, Deputy Secretary General in charge of Water, Environment and Blue Economy, UfM Secretariat • <i>Mr. Octavi Quintana Trias</i>, Director of the Secretariat, PRIMA Foundation • <i>Dr. Anthi Brouma</i>, Deputy Regional Coordinator, GWP-Mediterranean • <i>Dr. Soukeina Bouraoui</i>, Director, CAWTAR
11:15-11:35	<p>Setting the scene</p> <p>Interactive segment with the participants Facilitated by <i>Eng. Doha Zamel</i>, External Water Consultant, WEBE Division, UfM Secretariat</p> <p>Setting the scene – some brief reflections by <i>Dr. Anthi Brouma</i>, Deputy Regional Coordinator, GWP-Mediterranean</p>
11:35-12:25	<p>Panel exchanges on a business-centric approach for engendering the WEFE Nexus (35min) Moderated by <i>Dr. Ali Rhouma</i>, Project Officer, PRIMA Foundation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ms. Yasmine Abdelmaksoud</i>, Senior Technical Manager, Centre of Applied Research on the Environment and Sustainability (CARES), The American University of Cairo, Egypt • <i>Mr. Juan Manuel Revuelta</i>, CEO, Foundation Finnova • <i>Ms. Inmaculada Paniagua Brieva</i>, Technical Advisor for Middle East and Asia, AECID, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, Spain (TBC) • <i>Dr. Ghazi Abu Rumman</i>, Head of Jordan Operations, GWP-Mediterranean (TBC) • <i>Dr. Fadi Comair</i>, Cyprus Institute, (TBC) • <i>InnovAgroWoMed</i> project coordinator in Tunisia (TBC) <p style="background-color: yellow;">Options for the policy level: Egypt-MWRI, Malta-EWA; Lebanon-MEW; Options for the business sector: BioAzul (Bonex); Finova AECID Input from case studies: Matchmaker; Ghar el Melh; InnovAgroWoMed</p> <p>Interactive discussion (15min)</p>
12:25-12:30	<p>Take-away messages & closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cawtar • GWP-Mediterranean • PRIMA • UfM Secretariat



ANNEX - Recommendations from the 5th Mediterranean Water Forum side event

The interplay of Gender with the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus framework was the focus of the side event *Gender Dynamics and the WEFE Nexus in the Mediterranean* held within the framework of the 5th Mediterranean Water Forum, on Monday, 5th February 2024, between 11:30-13:00, and co-organised by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Secretariat, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) and the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR).

This interactive session discussed with more than 65 stakeholders the challenges and opportunities for ‘gendering’ the WEFE Nexus framework. Through panel interventions and exchanges with the participants, it was possible to enhance the understanding of the role of women in the WEFE Nexus and to advocate for a gender-transformative approach in the formulation of policies and decision-making processes at various levels.

The following recommendations -in random order- were suggested to urge the need for ‘gendering’ the WEFE Nexus, also within the UfM Water Agenda:

1. **Sex-disaggregated data:** A thorough understanding of gender issues at various levels requires gender-disaggregated data. Only with this type of data can policy makers be aware of the existing situation and can design gender-sensitive policies and strategies. In addition, gender-specific datasets linked to WEFE Nexus are important to understand what differences arise from gender-specific productive roles, different perspectives of resources, access, and decision-making mechanisms with respect to resource management and use. There is a need for institutions and statistical systems to provide gender-disaggregated data and accurate/reliable information.
2. **Governance reforms using the gender transformative approach for integrated WEFE planning and policies:** Institutional and legislative reforms remain a priority in most Mediterranean countries. An inclusive and participatory process, with the involvement also of civil society, research institutes, and the private sector, is essential for sustainable policy development, planning and for creating an integrated vision that considers the expectations of both women and men.
3. **Capacitation:** This concerns on the one hand targeted capacity building and training programmes/courses/session, and on the other, hands-on training to enhance the skills and competences of women in areas such as leadership, entrepreneurship, and project management within the WEFE Nexus. Furthermore, capturing and imparting the essence of traditional know-how, with emphasis on nature-based solutions/frugal innovations, needs to be also part of the capacitation.
4. **Empowering women to take up leadership positions:** besides the capacitation, invest on scientific diplomacy and other innovative mechanisms to gender institutional policies at different levels, including the Union for the Mediterranean Water Agenda and Financing Strategy.
5. **Gender-focused financing:** gender-focused financing and gender budgeting within projects are largely missing and need to become a priority. Creating a sustainable mechanism for accessing financial resources of different types is necessary for true economic empowerment.



6. **Women entrepreneurs:** Assist women entrepreneurs in accessing new markets and exploring international opportunities. Provide resources and support for exporting products or services regionally/globally. Implementing frugal financial models, such as microfinancing and community savings groups, can empower women entrepreneurs in the WEFE Nexus. This enables them to access capital for implementing innovative solutions, fostering entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency.
7. **Frugal WEFE Nexus innovation:** Promote community-driven frugal innovations that empower rural women in sustainable water, energy, and food management practices within the WEFE Nexus.

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