



# Empowering Women in Water Diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa: A Comparative Study of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine



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# FOREWORD



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“Hydrodiplomacy” is an adaptive, preventive, multidisciplinary form of diplomacy centred on water sharing, which apart from being a source of “rivalries”, could also result in benefits. Water has been recognised, in important International Fora, as a potentially powerful instrument for peace and long-lasting international cooperation.

GWP-Med is committed to transboundary dialogue on water cooperation, considering it an inseparable part of IWRM. Apart from being instrumental in bringing together the riparians of the Drin river (Western Balkans, 2006), and servicing since then the Secretariat of the Drin Core Group (de facto Joint Body), GWP has, among other initiatives, facilitated the technical work and dialogue among Algeria, Libya and Tunisia on the North Western Saharan Aquifer System; has contributed in research and publication with UNESCO, Lebanon and Italy, on Orontes River Hydrodiplomacy (2015) and with the French Senate and MEDURABLE for the annual Conferences on Hydrodiplomacy and Climate Change in the Middle East (2015-2020).

For Hydrodiplomacy to be effective, the active involvement of many state and non-state actors is required. Ensuring the equal involvement of women, with their dynamism



Eng. Francois Muenger,  
General Director of the Geneva Water Hub

In November 2017, the Global High Level Panel on Water and Peace, an initiative of 15 co-convening countries, launched in Geneva its recommendations for a global water hydrodiplomacy of the 21st century, in its report “A Matter of Survival”. It is the first analytical reflection to date on the water and peace issues, and its positioning at the global political level.

As Secretariat to the Global High Level Panel on Water and Peace, the Geneva Water Hub globally advocates, follows up the developments and is engaged in the implementation of the Panels' recommendations. In the impressive Panel report, the gender dynamics however weakly addressed. It is a weakness that we have to correct with the developments of the water and peace agenda.

The support of this initiative to strengthen the role of women in water diplomacy is a remarkable step in addressing this issue, and we are convinced that such an initiative will increase, the overall water diplomacy capacities and will finally leverage the overall voice of women in decisional bodies.

In addition, the Global Observatory on Water and Peace, which was launched at the Dead

and talents, is critical for the success of the needed interventions at all levels.

GWP-Med and the Geneva Water Hub recognised that many of the above are still not fully substantiated and women's empowerment in areas related to water, including transboundary cooperation and diplomacy, is still much needed. Therefore, supported, financially by Sida, SDC and the University of Geneva, and politically by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), GWP-Med and GWH brought together a group of competent experts and undertook the present study, based on analyses carried out in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine.

I believe that the results will contribute substantially to more inclusive Hydrodiplomacy and promote the cause of peace and sustainable development in our region, which is "thirsty" not only for water but also for peace and gender equality.

Sea, Jordan during the 5th Arab Water Week, to create a global analytical "intelligence", and a safe space to tackle sensitive issues, has a special node that voices the reflections of women on sensitive issues of water and peace.

With our partners GWP-Med, we are committed to the development of this initiative and are expecting it to grow and include more countries in the region.

Sustainable and equitable water management in a peaceful environment is one of the vital challenges of the twenty first century, in which women water diplomats are instrumental.



## Credits:

Empowering Women in Water Diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa: A Comparative Study of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine

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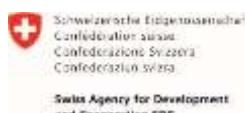
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## Disclaimer:

The co-authors certify that all sources of information used have been fully acknowledged. The co-authors are solely responsible for the content and arguments employed in this document, which do not necessarily reflect the views of the partner institutions or the focus countries..

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## INTRODUCTION

### Why water diplomacy and why emphasise the role of women in water diplomacy?

#### *Setting the stage*

When placing women, water and diplomacy in the same sentence, often enough the link among them is not easily -nor well-understood.

In 2017, the Security Council held a briefing on Preventive Diplomacy and Transboundary Waters<sup>1</sup>, emphasising the role of water diplomacy and cooperation in conflict prevention. This illustrates the growing awareness of the need to strengthen preventive diplomacy in all its dimensions and water is an integral part of this effort. ‘Water, peace and security are inextricably linked’, was the opening line of the UN Secretary General Mr. António Guterres in the said meeting.

The growing imbalance in global water supply and demand leads to tensions and conflicts and could potentially evolve into a widespread threat to international peace and security. It is indicative that for the 8<sup>th</sup> time in a row, water crises ranked as a top global risk in the 2020 World Economic Forum Report<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, water deprivation is increasingly seen as a fundamentally political and security problem, and not confined only within the realms of human development and environmental sustainability. After recognising water formally as a foreign policy issue in 2013<sup>3</sup>, the EU Foreign Affairs Council adopted the new conclusions on EU Water Diplomacy<sup>4</sup> making the case for linking water, security and peace, including the potential of

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9-B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_pv\\_7959.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9-B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_pv_7959.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>[http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Global\\_Risk\\_Report\\_2020.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risk_Report_2020.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>[https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/138253.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/138253.pdf)

<sup>4</sup><https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/11/19/water-diplomacy-council-adopts->

water as an instrument for peace.

For water diplomacy to bear fruits, the inclusive participation of all stakeholders in the process is an absolute must; including women. However, the role of women in water diplomacy related decision-making has been underestimated, despite the acknowledged essential role of women in peacebuilding, conflict management and sustaining security, as reaffirmed by the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (adopted on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2000<sup>5</sup>) and by the eight resolutions on the issue adopted thereafter<sup>6</sup>. Further emphasis on encouraging and capacitating women to take up such positions has strong merits that are yet to be explored.

The presence of women in decision-making positions in the water sector is not an end in itself and transcends the simplistic approach of securing quotas and sharing seats; it is about the need for a balanced representation of women and men in related processes at all levels and weighing their influence in shaping priorities, in pursuing common objectives and in reaching decisions. It is part of a comprehensive approach towards water security that effectively addresses diversity, inclusion, social equality, and women's role in the integrated and sustainable management

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conclusions/

<http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13991-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/#resolution>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2017/wps-resolutions-poster-en.pdf?la=en&vs=4004>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.gwp.org/globalassets/global/about-gwp/publications/gender/gender-action-piece.pdf> The GWP Gender Action Piece includes four action areas with tangible recommendations on how to drive gender equality and inclusion in water resources management.

<sup>8</sup><https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwion5yp7ezqAhWL-6QKHs1Ag8QFjALegQIAxAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww>

of water resources<sup>7</sup>.

Evidence shows that gender equality is critical to achieving the totality of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>8</sup> and the Paris Agreement<sup>9</sup>, however, related research usually focuses on how policies affect women as if they are only passive victims<sup>10</sup>. As obvious, this misses the big picture where women are also driving change.

The situation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is no different, where gender inequality concerns have traditionally taken a back seat to the “larger” or “more urgent” issues of civil wars, foreign interventions, unemployment, corruption, and authoritarianism<sup>11</sup>. When it comes to the issue of water in water diplomacy, the situation is even more dire; dedicated analyses concerning Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine are provided in the following chapters of this Comparative Study.

## Some existing initiatives supporting women in water diplomacy

Having said this, initiatives do exist supporting the role of women in water diplomacy. Among them the African Network for Women in Infrastructure (ANWIn)<sup>12</sup> was launched by the African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure

[w.undp.org%2Fcontent%2Fdam%2Fundp%2Flibrary%2Fgender%2FGender\\_equality\\_as\\_an\\_accelerator\\_for\\_achieving\\_the\\_SDGs.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1VbdhlhnDBzyghl\\_342un6](http://undp.org%2Fcontent%2Fdam%2Fundp%2Flibrary%2Fgender%2FGender_equality_as_an_accelerator_for_achieving_the_SDGs.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1VbdhlhnDBzyghl_342un6) and <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs>

<sup>9</sup>[https://unfccc.int/files/gender\\_and\\_climate\\_change/application/pdf/leveraging\\_cobenefits.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/gender_and_climate_change/application/pdf/leveraging_cobenefits.pdf) and <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/climate-change-and-the-environment>

<sup>10</sup><https://www.iwra.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/PB-6-July-2020.pdf>

<sup>11</sup><https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/brief/our-new-strategy>

<sup>12</sup><https://www.au-pida.org/news/au-commissioner-abouzeid-soft-launches-african-network-for-women-in>



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and Energy, H.E. Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid in November 2019, in Cairo, and concerns a new initiative developed by the African Union Commission and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) with the support of the Government of Germany, through GiZ. The aim of ANWIn is to provide a platform for strategic advocacy, capacity building and networking aimed at enhancing the implementation of the Programme of

At the Arab level, the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Voluntary Stakeholder Group on Disaster Risk Reduction, Arab States<sup>13</sup>, aims at strengthening Arab cooperation at national and regional levels to support the implementation in the region of the Sendai framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015, keeping gender equality and women's empowerment central to the implementation



The Dead Sea

Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA). The network aims at promoting African women's participation in infrastructure development at the national, regional, and global levels and to provide a high-level strategic engagement platform that will bring all stakeholders together for ensuring a gender responsive planning and implementation of infrastructure. Having transboundary water as one of the main sectors of PIDA, this network will be providing necessary support for African Women working in the domain of infrastructure development in transboundary water and consequently in water diplomacy.

and with particular focus on section 36a(i) of the Sendai Framework 2015, which calls for the participation of women as critical to managing risk and designing and implementing disaster risk reduction and related policies, plans and programmes and for strengthening women's capacities for preparedness and alternate livelihoods post-disaster. Guided by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change 2015, the SDGs 2015 and the UN Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration 2018, the plan of action of the Arab States Women's

infrastructure-anwin/

<sup>13</sup><http://gewe.arabwatercouncil.org/>

Empowerment Voluntary Stakeholder Group also seeks to address gender responsive climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, and migration, to achieve inclusive sustainable development goals. Moreover, aiming to promote gender balance and believing that women empowerment and inclusion in the decision-making process is key to sustainable development, the Arab Water Council promoted the Network of Arab Women in Water (NAWW) during its 5th General Assembly in Cairo, Egypt on March 16-17, 2019. NAWW is a collaborative platform established for shaping a better future for Arab Women in the Water Sector by providing opportunities for development, fostering valuable connections and collaboration, facilitating access to knowledge, ensuring effective and equal participation in leadership and decision-making.

At the Nile Basin Level, through SIWI's Shared Waters Partnership, the Transboundary Water Management department has launched a Women and Water Diplomacy Network<sup>14</sup>, inspired by the Swedish Women Mediation Network. The Women and Water Diplomacy Network consists of women working with transboundary water issues in the Nile basin, either through ministries of foreign affairs, ministries of water and environment, or civil society and academia. The main goal of the network is to connect women across borders and provide capacity-training in areas in which participants have expressed an interest. The first four-day workshop was held in Uganda in 2017 with 24 participants, who have since stayed in touch through an informal Facebook Group and different

webinars. The second four-day workshop was hosted in Ethiopia in December 2018, with several new participants joining, and the third one was held in Kenya in 2019.

## Tilting the (im)balance – the COVID-19 Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic is the greatest global shock in decades with consequences and implication that will remain in the longer term. Besides the wake-up call on the importance of ensuring access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene for all, to protect health and welfare, the crisis has put women on the spotlight in a twofold manner.

On the one hand, deeply rooted gender roles have led to heavier burden of work for women, as the main providers of family care, given the cultural and social contexts in many parts of the world and especially in places where water, sanitation, and hygiene conditions are lagging behind standard, as is the case in several parts of the MENA region. Moreover, women suffer from more insecurity, economic poverty and violence in times of crisis, as the majority of them work in the informal economy and thus, are left without alternative sources of income<sup>15</sup>.

On the other hand, the pandemic has also brought to the forefront the critical role of women's leadership in responding to COVID-19 and preparing for a more equitable recovery. Across the globe, women are at the helm of institutions carrying out effective and inclusive COVID-19 responses, from the highest levels of decision-making to frontline service delivery<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>14</sup><https://www.siwi.org/latest/successful-network-for-women-in-water-diplomacy/>

<https://www.siwi.org/publications/tapping-our-potential-womens-water-leadership-in-the-nile-basin/>

<sup>15</sup>[https://www.careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/Regional-Rapid-Gender-Analysis\\_MENA\\_10-April-2020\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/Regional-Rapid-Gender-Analysis_MENA_10-April-2020_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>16</sup><https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/policy-brief-covid-19-and-womens-leadership>

Despite revealing the great failures and dysfunctions of public policies in matters of gender equality and women's empowerment, the COVID-19 crisis is also offering an opportunity to 'build back better' by including and supporting women, and the organisations and networks that represent them, in the decision-making processes that will ultimately shape the post-pandemic future.

### What is this Comparative Study about?

In view of all above and aiming to strengthen the role of Women in Water Diplomacy with

issue.

The collaboration commenced in the form of analytical/ mapping work on the current status and challenges facing women in water diplomacy and transboundary water cooperation settings in the region, building upon a previous mapping exercise conducted in 2017 in three Levant countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine)<sup>17</sup> and adopting the same methodology of surveying and interviewing women in water-related institutions. The current effort reviewed and updated the work in the three countries and expanded the mapping to the Maghreb sub-region by



Chabrou dam, Lebanon © GWP-Med

emphasis on the Middle East and North Africa region, the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean (GWP-Med) and the Geneva Water Hub joined forces at the beginning of 2020 and initiated a partnership on this critical

including the cases of Egypt and Morocco.

The analytical work resulted in the present publication on *Empowering Women in Water Diplomacy in the MENA region: A*

entitled *Empowering women in water diplomacy: A basic mapping of the challenges in Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan.*

<sup>17</sup> The first mapping exercise has been published as an article in the Journal of Hydrology 569 (2019) 330-346

*Comparative Study of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine* that focuses on identifying the similarities and the differences in the challenges female water experts face across the five countries and identifying the capacity building needs in terms of the various skills of a 21st century water diplomat.

## Methodology of the Comparative Study

The comparative analysis capitalises on the basic mapping exercise undertaken in 2017 in Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. More specifically, it utilises the short questionnaire that was developed to map the main challenges facing women that holds them back from having a more leading role as women in water diplomacy and decision making. The total number of questions was 18; 12 were closed questions, 2 were open questions, and the rest a combination.

The questionnaire was designed to provide specific insights into four main issues:

1. Their current status in the Water Sector in their national countries;
2. The main bottlenecks/factors holding them back;
3. Their perceptions on the role of water diplomacy; and
4. Linkages between the Sustainable Development Goal 6 and Sustainable Development Goal 5 in their daily work realm.

The closed questions for Palestine, Jordan and Morocco were analysed using the “Statistical Package for the Social Sciences” (SPSS) software; while the open-ended responses were qualitatively analysed to provide more in-depth and narrative explanations of responses. In the cases of Egypt and Lebanon, the analysis of the closed questions was conducted using Excel workbooks.

For the update of the 2017 work, the following 4 questions were shared with the respondents of the initial questionnaire in Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon, in order to assess their status three years later, in terms of job position, capacity building and its impact on their role in decision making:

1. Since filling the questionnaire, have you changed your position? Promoted? Changed institutions or departments?
2. Have you received any further training or skill development?
3. Are you more familiar and exposed in your line of work today to global frameworks, such as SDGs?
4. What do you think is still lacking in the area of empowerment of women in water diplomacy?

It is noted that the Questionnaire formed a dynamic document that was adapted and adjusted as necessary to respond to specific country contexts. For example, water diplomacy in the Maghreb is perceived as a way to resolve conflicts across users, rather than linked to transboundary water cooperation.

In all countries, attention was paid to selecting female representatives of all actors involved in the water sector including government authorities at different levels, utilities, private sector, academia, NGOs, elected women, and in the case of Morocco also female farmers. The selection of the respondents was based on the experience of the author in her country, utilising also professional networks and aiming to be as representative of the water sector spectrum as possible.

## The process for the finalisation of the Comparative Study

The draft Comparative Study was presented

in detail to the network of women involved in the country surveys, during a Consultation Workshop that took place online on 28 July 2020<sup>18</sup>. The Workshop discussed and validated the findings of the five countries' baselines, as well as the basic comparative sections across countries, while it also identified capacity building needs and ways to respond to them.

Importantly, the Comparative Study has provided the enabling environment for the initiation of a network of women in the five countries for experience sharing and peer-to-peer learning, initiating at the same time a community of practice of women in water diplomacy across the region.

The Comparative Study was further finetuned, benefitting from discussions and input received during targeted outreach and dissemination activities conducted in 2020, including:

- the IHE Delft online cross-regional workshop on '(En)Gendering Transboundary Water Governance: Feminist Perspectives on Water Conflict and Cooperation' (29-30 Sep. 2020)
- the dedicated Session on 'Women and Water Diplomacy in the MENA', organised by GWP-Med and GWH during the 3rd Cairo Water Week (21 Oct. 2020), which was the first presentation of the Comparative Study's findings in the Arab Region.

Aiming to complement the Comparative Study's section on what makes a good (water) diplomat and focusing on the gender aspect, a closed working meeting with prominent diplomats and transboundary water

cooperation experts was organised online on 11 December 2020.

Making use of the above input and reflections, the Comparative Study was reviewed and finalised in early 2021 and was formally launched during a dedicated online event taking place on 15 March 2021, as a symbolic date between the celebrations of the International Women's Day (8 March) and the World Water Day (22 March). The event was co-organised by GWP-Med and the Geneva Water Hub, within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Water Policy Framework for Actions 2030.

Through the targeted outreach and dissemination activities since July 2020, the analytical work has evolved into an Initiative aiming to support and strengthen the role of Women involved in Water Diplomacy in the MENA region.

<sup>18</sup> Information and material from the Workshop are available at: <https://www.gwp.org/en/GWP-Mediterranean/WE->

ACT/News-List-Page/strengthening-the-role-of-women-in-water-diplomacy-in-the-mena-region/

## CHAPTER 1

# Baseline on Women in Water Diplomacy in Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine

*The Chapter includes the baseline analyses of the five countries, aiming to create a common reference framework on the role of women in water diplomacy within and across these countries.*

## EGYPT

Egypt is witnessing notable positive progress on the women's empowerment. The National Council for Women (NCW) was established in 2000 as an independent national mechanism affiliated to the President of the Republic to propose the general policies of society and its constitutional institutions for the advancement of women, activating their role and empowering them socially, culturally, economically and politically, and proposing legislation and policies that support their rights. In 2018, Law no. 30/2018 was passed to institutionalise the work of the National Council for Women. Egypt launched its national women strategy 2030 (adopted by the President of Egypt in 2017) aligned with the SDGs. The Strategy is comprised of four main pillars: Political empowerment and

leadership, economic empowerment, social empowerment and protection, considering legislation and culture as cross cutting pillars. To ensure rigorous monitoring framework for the strategy, the Egypt National Observatory for Women (ENOW) was established to measure and track progress.

The Egyptian President announced 2017 as the "Year of Egyptian Women," describing expediting steps towards the empowerment of women, in addition to safeguarding their constitutional rights as a "national duty". According to the statistics featured on the NCW website, girls represent 54% of universities students and 56% of Master and Ph.D. holders. The Percentage of women Ministers in the Cabinet has increased from



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6% in 2015 to 25% in 2018. Currently, out of 32 Ministers, 8 female Ministers are appointed for International Cooperation, Trade and Industry, Planning and Economic Development, Social Solidarity, Health, Environment, Culture and Immigration. The percentage of women in the Egyptian Parliament increased from 2% in 2013 to 15% in 2018 while recent constitutional amendments in 2019 mandated a quota for

positions is 7.1%, Working in governmental agencies is 44.5%, Editors in Chief of National magazines is 18% and investors in stock exchange is 30%. A number of ministries and national entities have established women empowerment structures (e.g., Gender Units and Equal Opportunity Units) to combat workplace discrimination on one side and to promote the engagement of women in policy planning on the other side: 32 Equal



The Nile in Aswan - the 'vein of life' arriving to Egypt. ©Tahani Sileet

women requiring that 25% of all seats of the parliament be reserved for women. The women's representation in the 2021 Parliament reached 27 % (highest women's representation in the Parliament since women were given the right to be elected in 1957). The percentage of women holding the positions of: University Professors is 48.6% (2018), Deputy Ministers is 27% (2018), deputy Governors 31% (2019), members in local councils is 25%, Leaders in executive

Opportunity Units (EOU) in the ministries of Egypt and 3 Gender/women Units; Ministry of Manpower women empowerment and non-discrimination Unit; Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency (MSMEDA) Gender Unit and Federation of Egyptian Industries' Women in Business Unit.

With regards to motherhood and childhood, the National Council for Motherhood and Childhood was established in 1988 by

Republican Decree No. 54 of 1988 to become a fundamental pillar of childhood and maternity care. The new draft of the Civil Service Law grants a four-month maternity leave, in addition to the possibility to take an unpaid childcare leave for a maximum of two years at one time and a maximum of six years throughout the service period. Accordingly, it can be concluded that women's empowerment is clearly present on the National Agenda and it is supported by laws, legislations and institutions.

Egypt is one of the world's most arid Countries and faces multiple challenges in the field of water resources management. The per capita water share is currently 570 m<sup>3</sup>/yr. The gap between the consumed and available water resources is about 21 BCM/year fulfilled by drainage and wastewater reuse helping the Nile system in Egypt to reach an overall efficiency exceeding 80%. Being the most downstream country in the Nile Basin, Egypt is almost totally depending on the Nile waters originating outside of its borders with a dependency ratio exceeding 98% (FAO,2017). Therefore, great importance has been accorded to water diplomacy since early ages and this importance is considerably increasing with the intensifying pressure on the limited available water resources especially under rapid population growth and possible cumulative impact of irrigation and water infrastructure developments in upstream countries.

Egypt's geopolitical position as an African, Nile Basin, Arab, Mediterranean and Islamic country imposes the necessity of practicing water diplomacy in its different forms and at various levels. Egypt is an active member in the African Minister's Council on Water (AMCOW) in formulating the Africa Water Vision 2025, the AMCOW Strategy 2018-2030 and many other commitments on water supply and sanitation in Africa. At the Basin

level, Egypt was a main founder of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) and used to play a pioneer role since its establishment in 1999 until the unilateral signature of some Nile Basin Countries of the incomplete Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) on which Egypt and Sudan had some major concerns. Accordingly, Egypt took the decision to freeze its participation in the NBI activities and presented a preliminary proposal for future action focusing on a gradual approach to allow the initiative to restore all-inclusiveness of all member states. Nile negotiations involved Ministers and high officials from Ministries of Water and Foreign affairs together with legal experts in the respective Nile Basin Countries in addition to representatives of international organizations as the World Bank at different stages. The Nile negotiations even reached the level of Heads of States who met in the Nile Heads of States Summit on the 22nd of June 2017 in Uganda. Above all transboundary water issues, comes the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) crisis in which hydro diplomacy is practiced at a very high level of complexity and multi-disciplinarity including Ministers and high-level officials from Ministries of Water, Foreign Affairs in addition to legal, social, economic and environmental experts and academia. The GERD negotiations have even reached the Intelligence Authorities and Heads of States and Governments in the three countries in very prolonged and difficult negotiations that last for almost ten years without being resolved. The crisis now reached the African Union, and the UN Security Council and negotiations are ongoing. Moreover, various bilateral cooperation projects between Egypt and the Nile Basin Countries in addition to the new basin wide project "Establishment of a Navigational Line between Lake Victoria and the Mediterranean Sea" (VICMED) necessitate continuous practice of hydro diplomacy at different professional and



political levels. Egypt is also an active member in the Organization Islamic cooperation (OIC) Water Council as well as the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC) and hosts AMWC Secretariat in the League of Arab States (LAS). At the Mediterranean level, Egypt is an active member in the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and participates in the formulation of the UfM Water Agenda.

From the above, one can conclude that the multi-disciplinary nature and the needed skills required to practice water diplomacy represent another practical challenge not only in Egypt but in the MENA due to the necessity to have sufficient knowledge of engineering basics, principles of international water law, together with diplomatic and negotiation skills. Women in water diplomacy add another level of complexity in that matter. Although one can easily find in Egypt eminent female professional experts engaged in top level management posts in each of the three domains (water, legal and diplomatic), it is not very familiar to find a woman leading the water negotiations. On the other hand, the role of women in hydrodiplomacy in Egypt is rapidly progressing. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), female diplomats exceed 33% of new diplomatic cadre (Shoukry, 2018). In the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation (MWRI), 41% of the engineers are women and 15% are leading high-level positions. Egyptian female professionals in the MWRI are engaged and active in many initiatives and networks aiming to build the capacity of women in water diplomacy.

Fifteen women professionals involved in water diplomacy at different levels from the MWRI, MoFA, Academia, Private Sector and NGOs have responded to the questionnaire in order to ensure good representation and to cover all the spectrum. The mapping exercise in Egypt, as seen in Fig. 1, has shown that fifty percent of respondents' age was between 40

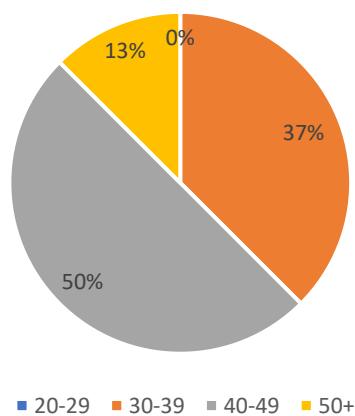
and 49 years, with a work experience of 11-20 years; 63% of whom are government employees, 44% hold a Master's Degree, 31% hold a Ph.D. and 25% a B.Sc. 38% hold a middle management position and 19% hold a senior position. The highest ratio of male to female in the workplace, as perceived by the respondents, was 38% for a 50-75% Male-Female Ratio, while it is important to note that the sum of the rest of the proposed Male-Female ratios (25-50, 10-25 and less than 10%) represent the rest of the 62%. Accordingly, women represent a majority in the workplace of the respondents. As a first finding, it can be noted that despite the high representation of the respondents in the workplace, their high level of education and their relatively long experience, their share in the high-level positions is still limited.



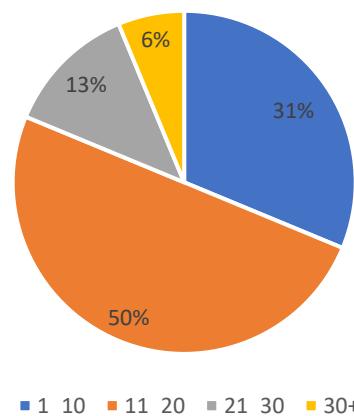
Global Water  
Partnership  
Mediterranean



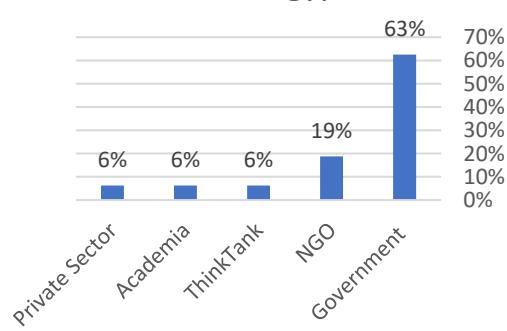
Age Group Egypt



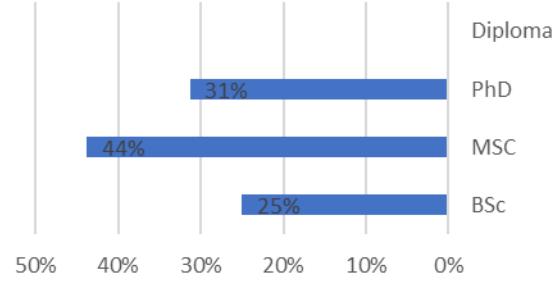
Years of Experience Egypt



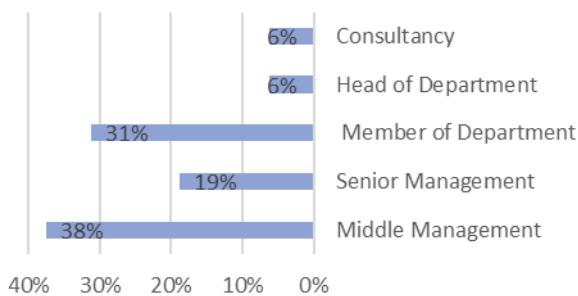
Work Place Egypt



Level of Education Egypt



Current Position Egypt



Male-Female Ratio Egypt

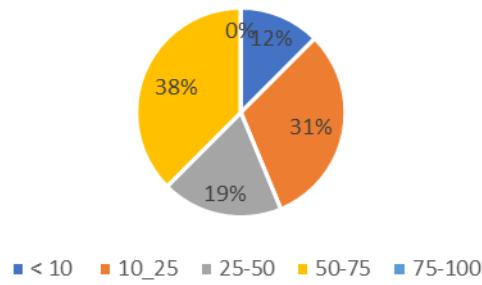


Fig. 1: Current Status of the female respondents in Egypt

## LEBANON

Lebanon ranks 145 out of 153 countries in the 2020 Global Gender Gap report based on indicators of economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health, survival, and political empowerment and scores 0.599, with one of the lowest rates of women's political participation in the region.<sup>19</sup> For example, though the 2018 Parliamentary election boasted the highest number of registered women candidates in the country's history, less than 5% of the total 128 parliamentary seats are now occupied by women.<sup>20</sup>

The Lebanese Constitution of 1926 clearly states that, all Lebanese are equal before the law without any distinction among them. When it comes to holding government posts, Article 12 of the Constitution clearly states that all Lebanese (male and female) have the right to hold public office without any inclinations except for merits and capabilities.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, Lebanon ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on 26 July 1996 and established the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) in 1998 by law 720. The Commission is directly affiliated to the presidency of the Council of Ministers. However, Lebanon voiced reservations about some fundamental articles of the Convention dealing with equality in matters of citizenship and family laws. Until now Lebanese law does not allow a Lebanese woman, who is married to a non-Lebanese to

transfer her nationality to her children, while, upon marrying a Lebanese, a non-Lebanese woman becomes Lebanese herself one year after the official registering of the marriage, according to Article 5 of Law 15/1925.

Lebanon is a country that entrusts its personal status laws to religious legislation. The Lebanese are divided into 18 religious sects each having its own set of laws and regulations. This situation contradicts the principle of equality among all Lebanese that figures in other articles of the Constitution and goes against the general principles stipulated in international charters, especially the Universal Declaration of Human Rights observed in the introduction of the Lebanese Constitution.

Since its creation in 1998, the National Commission for Lebanese Women has worked to establish a network of gender-based focal points in public administrations and institutions to work towards integrating the gender perspective into the policies and programs of these departments. As a result of this effort, some ministries have sought to establish gender committees from various departments /departments of the Ministry to promote the mainstreaming of the gender perspective.

These tools did not produce the desired results fully, and therefore had to be reviewed and analysed for difficulties that had prevented the attainment of the objectives set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action. The

<sup>19</sup> Global Gender Gap Report 2020, World Economic Forum, [http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/dataexplorer/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1611571530.2068359851837158203125](http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/dataexplorer/?doing_wp_cron=1611571530.2068359851837158203125)

<sup>20</sup> Women's Political Participation in Lebanon and the Limits of Aid-Driven Empowerment /Lebanon Support. Beirut,

January 2020 [https://civilsociety-centre.org/sites/default/files/resources/lswomensassessmentreport\\_en-online\\_1.pdf](https://civilsociety-centre.org/sites/default/files/resources/lswomensassessmentreport_en-online_1.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Constitution of Lebanon, promulgated on 23 May 1926 and its amendments 1990

<https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/lb/lb018en.pdf>

National Commission has started to adopt a new tool based on an examination of the gender mainstreaming of institutions. Furthermore, it has developed a national action plan for the implementation of Security Council Resolution No. 1325, through a participatory approach with other government institutions and civil society organizations with the support of United Nations organizations. A priority for the national plan is to increase women's participation and representation in local and national governance structures and to take appropriate

Lebanon has 3 national mechanisms to achieve the goal of equality between women and men:

In 2016, the Government of Lebanon established the Office of the Minister of State for Women's Affairs. In addition to the National Strategy for Women in Lebanon adopted by the Council of Ministers on 12/8/2012, The Ministry of State for Women's Affairs prepared the National Strategy for Gender Equality to accelerate the implementation of Lebanon's commitments to



The Assi River, the Orontes flows north from Lebanon to Syria and Turkey and drains west into the Mediterranean Sea.  
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measures to increase their participation in the security and defence sectors. In the same context, the Plan notes the need to strengthen the role of women in conflict prevention, peace mediation and negotiations.

In addition to the National Commission,

women's empowerment and gender equality. The Strategy was based on the current National Strategy for Women in Lebanon (2011-2021). The areas of action of this strategy have been adapted to the strategic objectives of the new sustainable development plan for 2030 and Lebanon's

global commitment to the goals of sustainable development. The national strategy covers 12 priority areas: poverty, legal reform, power and decision-making, education, the economy, gender-based violence, health, culture and information, environment, peace, security, crises and disasters, and institutional bodies.

In 2018, the Office of the Minister of State for Women's Affairs previously recommended to the Council of Ministers requesting the activation of a recommendation dating back to 2010 for the adoption of a quota for women in appointments in leadership positions in public institutions.

It should be noted that the proportion of newly appointed women has reached 27% in the diplomatic corps, 30% in the Electoral Supervisory Authority, 23% in the security services, 17% in the Economic and Social Council, and 11 women out of 22 in the Ministry of Culture.

In 2019, after the formation of the government, the Office of the Minister of State for Economic Empowerment for Women and Youth was established instead of the Office of the Minister of State for Women's Affairs. However, this Ministry of State for Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth was abolished in the government presided by Prime Minister Hassan Diab in January 2020.

The other 2 existing mechanisms are the Parliamentary Committee on Women and Children and Women's Department, an affiliate of the Department of Family Affairs at Ministry of Social Affairs.

It is true that the appointment of four women to the ministerial cabinet in 2016 and six

women in 2020, an accomplishment worth celebrating, marks two precedents in the country's history. However, The USAID Lebanon Gender Assessment report in 2019 identified gender gaps across six sectors: governance, workforce development, livelihoods and access to finance, water management, reforestation, and education.<sup>22</sup>

## Women in the Water Sector

The first time a Lebanese woman takes the Ministry of Energy and Water in hands was in January 2019. Nada Boustani Khouri, who was appointed as the new Minister, had been an advisor to the Ministry of Energy and Water in 2010. This appointment has opened the door for more women in decision making level, thus six women have participated in the newly formed Government presided by Prime Minister Hassan Diab (Defence, Displaced, Justice, Labour, Information, Sports and Youth Portfolios).

Most of the interviewed female professionals in the water sector, were evenly between the two age groups of 30–39 and 40+, and 67 % out of them are Government employees (Fig. 2), and unlike Boustani, most of them were not promoted since the basic mapping took place despite the fact that they are currently given more responsibilities and conducted several trainings.

Although 89% hold a master's degree and are equally involved in senior, management positions and/or are heads of department but not being part of the decision making. Furthermore, the highest perception of the ratio of male-female was less than 20% at Government level, although this ratio was perceived to be higher by interviewees from intergovernmental organisations and

<sup>22</sup> USAID Lebanon Gender Assessment, Final Assessment Report Performance Management and Support Program for Lebanon (PMSPL II) JANUARY 16, 2019

<https://encompassworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/USAID-LEBANON-GENDER-ASSESSMENT-Final-assessment.pdf>

universities.

At the Ministry of Energy and Water (MoEW), there are seven women as heads of departments, three women engineers as Heads of services within the water establishments, while most water quality officers and laboratory analysts are women. One of the interviewees emphasised that “three quarters of the Ministers’ advisors are women”, they feel frustrated because they lack the political support to be promoted and no tangible progress will take place in the foreseeable future.

Thus, one of the main limiting factors is the male dominance (patriarchal) society. Quoting an interviewee, she said: “If there are women in high level positions, they are subject to sextortion or they have to use their feminism to be or stay in decision making positions”.

In terms of diplomacy, the interviewees believed that there is no difference between women and men and the main challenge, according to the personal experience of several interviewees, is for women to build on their technical expertise through capacity building programs and training. Another senior water engineer, who has been working in the water sector for almost two decades called on other women to focus on leadership positions: “when women gain experience at the technical level, they can be involved at the diplomatic level”.

Similarly, opportunities presented by remote technologies and shared knowledge platforms provide areas where access to data and analysis is being widened and thus more people (women and men) can be engaged in processes that inform positioning and international relations. Having technical knowledge helps to build confidence in one’s recommendations within an institution that can then be used to inform inter-agency and

inter-state discussions.

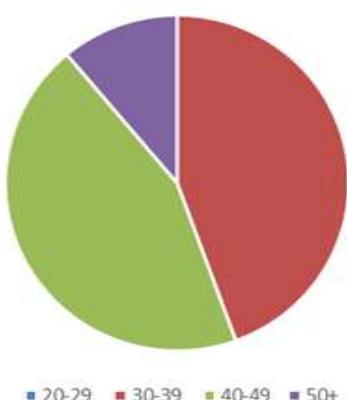
Amid that, there is a glimpse of hope for capacity building for Lebanese women working in the water sector, once the information and training centre for water professionals Centre d’Information et de Formation Aux Metiers de l’Eau (CIFME) in Lebanon (under construction) will see the light, it will include a dedicated Gender department. This Centre was launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy and Water and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).



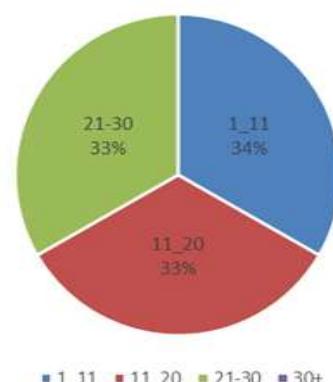
Global Water  
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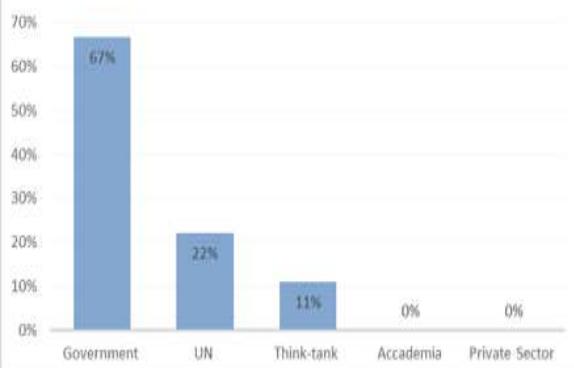
Age Group Lebanon



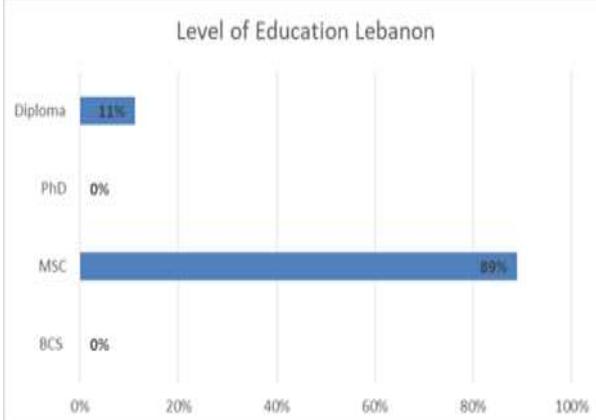
Years of Experience Lebanon



Work Place Lebanon



Level of Education Lebanon



Current Position Lebanon



Male-Female Ratio Lebanon

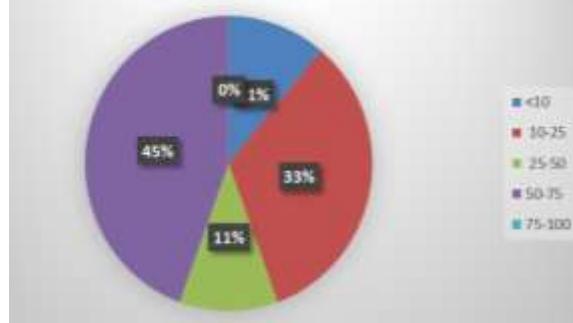


Fig. 2: Current Status of the female respondents in Lebanon

## JORDAN

Women constitute about 47.1 percent of the total population of Jordan. Although Jordan's Human Development Index places it in the high human development category, its score on the Gender Development Index (GDI), 147th out of 168, is low and points to significant gender differences between women and men in health, knowledge and living standards.

The 2020 Global Gender Gap report ranks Jordan 138 out of 153 countries based on indicators of economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health, survival, and political empowerment. The Women in Politics 2019 map ranked Jordan 132 out of 193 countries, mapping women's political participation in parliaments worldwide. This rank was achieved through the gender quota system adopted in 2003, where later revisions to the system increased the allocated seats for women from 6 to 15 parliamentary candidates. However, the Gender Inequality Index (GII) which measures gender inequalities across reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market participation, and is a measure of the human development cost stemming from gender inequality, has decreased between the year 1995 and 2016, from (0.672) to (0.461), suggesting some progress towards closing the gender gap.

Jordan ratified the revised Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2007. The CEDAW requires all signatories to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas of economic and social life. In addition, it requires that "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they

participate in and benefit from rural development".

- Education: There is a positive correlation between education and economic participation with 56 percent of employed women holding a graduate or higher degree. Twenty-two per cent of unemployed women are educated and hold an intermediate college or higher diploma.
- Unemployment: Unemployment rates in Jordan have remained between 12 and 14 percent, approximately 11 percent for males and 20 percent for women, for over a decade. Unemployment rate for the fourth quarter of 2019 have reached 19 percent. Two groups that are particularly affected are women and youth.
- Women's economic participation: The female labour force participation rate in Jordan was about a fifth of that of males (17.7 percent versus 59.4 percent). A World Bank study shows a 12.3 percent gap in average wages between men and women in Jordan, rising to 17 percent in the private sector.
- Despite many efforts directed toward enhancing women's role in the society and in the economy, there has been little progress in women's economic participation. Employer preferences based on gender stereotypes and the heavy burden that labour legislation places on businesses to protect female employees, as well as social constraints on what kind of work is acceptable for women, have repercussions in the hiring process.



- Jordanian laws addressed several issues related to women such as maternity leave, breast feeding hour, providing a suitable place for children less than four years, prohibiting the termination of jobs for women who are 6 months pregnant and above or during maternity leave, prohibiting assigning tasks that are dangerous or threatening to women's

right for voting and candidacy for the Lower House and Parliament and municipal and village councils in 1974 and 1982 respectively (CEDAW, 1997). To ensure the political participation of women, the Government took an affirmative action and amended the Electoral Law in 2003 to include a quota for women.



Dead Sea, Jordan.

health and equal treatment of men and women, with no discrimination. However, these provisions have not been sufficient for improving the participation of women in the economy. In reality, there are violations against these rights and there are no explicit statements in Labour Law that require equal pay for men and women.

- Women's political participation and representation: Women were granted the

## Women in the Water Sector

USAID is supporting a Gender Unit in the Ministry of Water and Irrigation. It has conducted a study on the status of women in the water sector. The study recommended developing a gender responsive planning and management system with the objective of enhancing training opportunities, better positions in leadership roles for women and raising gender awareness and emphasise the

capability of women to be efficient in the workplace. USAID plans to support the development of a Gender Strategy for the water sector.

Below are the Study findings:

**Gender Balance:** Women employees constitute 11% of the total employees in the water sector.

**Leadership:** Women hold 17.5% of leadership and supervision positions.

**Education:** Women are representing 39% of the total employees holding the first university degree and above.

**Working Hours:** More than 50% of women noted that the current working hours in the water sector are unsuitable for working women, due to other family and social commitments.

**Perceptions:** Water sector entities are characterised by masculinity, due to the nature of fieldwork and tasks that require physical efforts usually performed by men.

**Stereotyping:** 53.6% of male interviewees think that many women need to develop their skills and abilities to reach senior positions in the water sector.

**Training:** 43.7% of females disagree that equality is achieved regarding the training opportunities, especially for the external training

**Career Development:** 45% of females believe that men develop in their professions faster than females in their organisation

**Stereotyping:** Some say that women's leadership patterns are the result of their

emotional nature and the influence of external/personal factors on professional life

**Stereotyping:** 49% of males have agreed that women have moderate ability to perform the same duties of men with the same degree of efficiency.

Despite the fact that women hold 17.5% of leadership and supervision, almost none have reached the decision-making level. Only once, in the history of the water sector top management, was a woman appointed to the leadership position. Until now this has not been repeated.

The results of the November 2020 Jordanian parliamentary vote were disappointing, as only 15 women were elected to the 130-deputy House of Representatives, down from 20 in the outgoing body. Female candidates faced losses and, for the first time in a decade, failed to win a seat outside the 15-seat quota. In a normal democratic situation, competition between men and women should be based on qualifications and merit, but historically, women have been underrepresented, and the quota system was invented to help address that problem, but unfortunately it is not enough.

This confirms on the Jordanian political scene, increasing women's representation is not a priority. The decision-makers do the minimum to show that they support women's representation in decision-making positions, but it is not enough. The quota system, adopted in Jordan in 2001, has helped some women enter parliament, but the political role of Jordanian women is still limited although they constitute about 52% of voters. The urgent need to take effective measures to increase the representation of women in the decision-making positions.

# MOROCCO

Morocco has committed itself to a path of democratisation and modernisation of public life by establishing the respect of human rights as a fundamental pillar of the state policy. Acknowledging the fact that gender equality is a cardinal principle of human rights, multiple substantial reforms have been enacted promoting a culture of equality and equity between genders and fighting all kinds of gender-based discriminations. Furthermore, the situation of women in Morocco has undergone considerable improvement over two decades, whether it is by reforming the legislative and regulatory framework or by enhancing the equality of access to decision-making positions.

The last two decades have seen the adoption of important pieces of legislation pertaining to the principle of equality between genders, such as:

- The reform of electoral code for the first time in 2002, which introduced the principle of the quota, for the election of the Moroccan Representatives House through the adoption of the national list reserved for female (the percentage of women in the Moroccan Representatives House is currently 20%);
- The reform of the labour code in 2003, which introduced the principle of non-discrimination in access to employment, prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace and increases the duration of paid maternity leave from 12 to 14 weeks;
- The reform of the family code in 2004 preserving the principle of equality and establishing the co-responsibility of spouses;

- The review of the nationality code in 2007, which allows a child born to a foreign father and a Moroccan mother to benefit from the Moroccan nationality of his mother;
- The lifting, in 2008, of reservations in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- The adoption in 2017 of the Moroccan law on the Authority of Parity and the Struggle Against all Forms of Discrimination to achieve gender equality and parity. This law has defined the prerogatives and the constitution of this Authority, which has not been set up yet.
- The adoption in 2018 the Law to combat violence against women.
- These efforts have been successfully concluded by the adoption of the 2011 Constitution, which established the principle of gender equality in article 19 «The man and the woman enjoy, in equality, the rights and freedoms of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental character.... An Authority for parity and the struggle against all forms of discrimination is created, to this effect.

## Gender equality in public policies

In Morocco, the gender issue is beginning to occupy an important place in public policies. There is a collective awareness of gender inequalities, which is the result of long work accomplished by civil society, through a tireless claim for rights and advocacy among decision-makers and public opinion.

Several strategies have been launched and implemented to empower women and promote the culture of equality in public policies including:

- The adoption of Finance Law by the Moroccan parliament in 2015 marked an official implementation of Gender Responsive Public Financial Management.
- The implementation of Government Equality Plans of 2007\_2011, 2012\_2016

and 2017\_2021: These plans provide a framework for the convergence of various initiatives aimed at integrating the gender dimension into public policies and development programs, in perfect harmony with the requirements of the Sustainable Development Goal.

- The launch of the National Integrated Program for Economic Empowerment of Women 2030 which seeks the goal of reaching 30% of the average employment for women against 19% in 2020.

## Women in the water sector

In order to reinforce inclusive water public policy, the Moroccan ministry in charge of water launched in 2015, with the support of UN Women, the strategy of institutionalising the gender approach in water sector. This strategy aimed to contribute to the Moroccan



Mandour Eddahbi Dam, Morocco

efforts to ensure gender equality in public policies. The study, in its first phase, focused on three main axes:

1. Building the institutional capacities and ensuring the implementation of gender equality in the water sector;
2. Integration of the gender dimension in Human Resources Management and the strengthening of the equal opportunities regarding the access to decision-making positions;
3. Mainstreaming gender equality in water action plans, especially regarding the access to water and sanitation services and regulatory framework.

### Emergence of female leadership in the water sector

Despite the fact that female technical and managerial skills in the water sector are omnipresent, women were still underrepresented in decision-making positions before 2015. One of the reasons given to explain this underrepresentation was that the water sector requires a lot of mobility, in order to monitor the building sites as well as to manage the evolution of extreme situation events (drought, flooding, conflicts...).

The organisational restructuring process of the water ministry has put forward the enhancement of feminine leadership among water managers by respecting the principles of equity and equal of opportunities. Moreover, the presence of a female minister at the head of the ministry played an important role.

This process resulted in the access of women to certain decision-making positions for the very first time in Morocco, such as the General

director of Basin Agency, as well as reaching a national rate of 30% of women taking executive positions.

### For a more inclusive water legislation

The Moroccan parliament voted the new water law in 2015 after a long participatory approach at the national and territorial level. Various consultations with all stakeholders highlighted the need to integrate gender dimension in the Integrated Water Resources Management at the basin level. Consequently, this Law reserved 30% for women's associations in governance and mediation bodies (water diplomacy bodies at the national and local levels) such as the Higher Water and Climate Council, the Basin Councils and the Provincial Water Committees.

### Access to water and sanitation services for all

The water department supervises the program of drinking water supply and sanitation of rural schools. It consists of supplying drinking water to schools in rural areas and equipping them with sanitation and hygiene facilities.

As one of the reasons for the dropout of female students in rural areas in Morocco is the lack of hygiene and sanitation services, this program has been implemented by mainstreaming gender equality. All the projects were implemented by separating the sanitary facilities reserved for girls, boys, teachers and also people with disabilities.

### Some conclusions

Despite these notable improvements and progress achieved, studies keep highlighting that inequalities still persist in all areas and women are under-represented in decision-

making positions and that female representation decreases as the hierarchical rank increases.

- The latest report of 2020 of finance ministry regarding parity in the public services reflects strong male dominance in decision-making positions. Only 11.8% of women were appointed to decision-making positions between 2011 and 2020 in the government services, while the female rate in workplace is around 34.5%;
- Women's political participation remains far from parity as stipulated in the constitution (the number of women parliamentarians and women ministers remain very low: 20.51% in the Moroccan representatives House and 12.5% in the Senate House; the proportion of women in government 16%);
- Only 15% of female directors are in listed companies according to the latest statistics from the Moroccan Capital Market Authority (AMMC).

The strong male dominance of decision-making positions results in the development and the implementation of public policies that do not take into account the needs and expectations of the various components of society, especially women, and consequently has a significant impact on the empowerment of women.

Although the fundamental rights of women and men to participate in policy-making decisions has been recognised at international and national levels, in practice there is still a gap between texts and reality in the exercise of power and the taking of decisions. Profound changes are required to allow a real contribution of women to political life and effective consideration of gender equality and

equity in public policies.

## Some initial findings on current status

The analysis of the responses to the first part of the questionnaire that addressed the current status of women working in the water sector, resulted in the following findings (Fig. 4 below):

- The sample is composed of 44 respondents of different generations of female managers with a high level of qualification, more than 80% have either a Master or State Diploma in Engineering\* or a PhD;
- The public institutions (ministerial departments and others) remain the most attractive for women with a rate of 68%, this could be explained by the security and professional stability offered by the public institutions;
- The highest ratio of male-female in the workplace as perceived by the respondents was between 25% and 50%, the government still being the sector with the highest percentage;
- Despite the high qualification of the women interviewed, only 19% are in top management, while 80% of them are in middle management or outside the decision-making positions<sup>23</sup>.

In conclusion, and despite the fact that 80% of women interviewed possess high qualifications (Master or State Diploma in Engineering\* or a PhD), only 19% of them are senior managers. According to the responses, lack of opportunities and lack of support from peers remains the main factors hindering the evolution of women in the hierarchy of the water workplace.

<sup>23</sup> State engineer's diploma in francophone education is an advanced academic degree with High level of technical and

managerial qualification and highly selective process is considered from a master's degree.

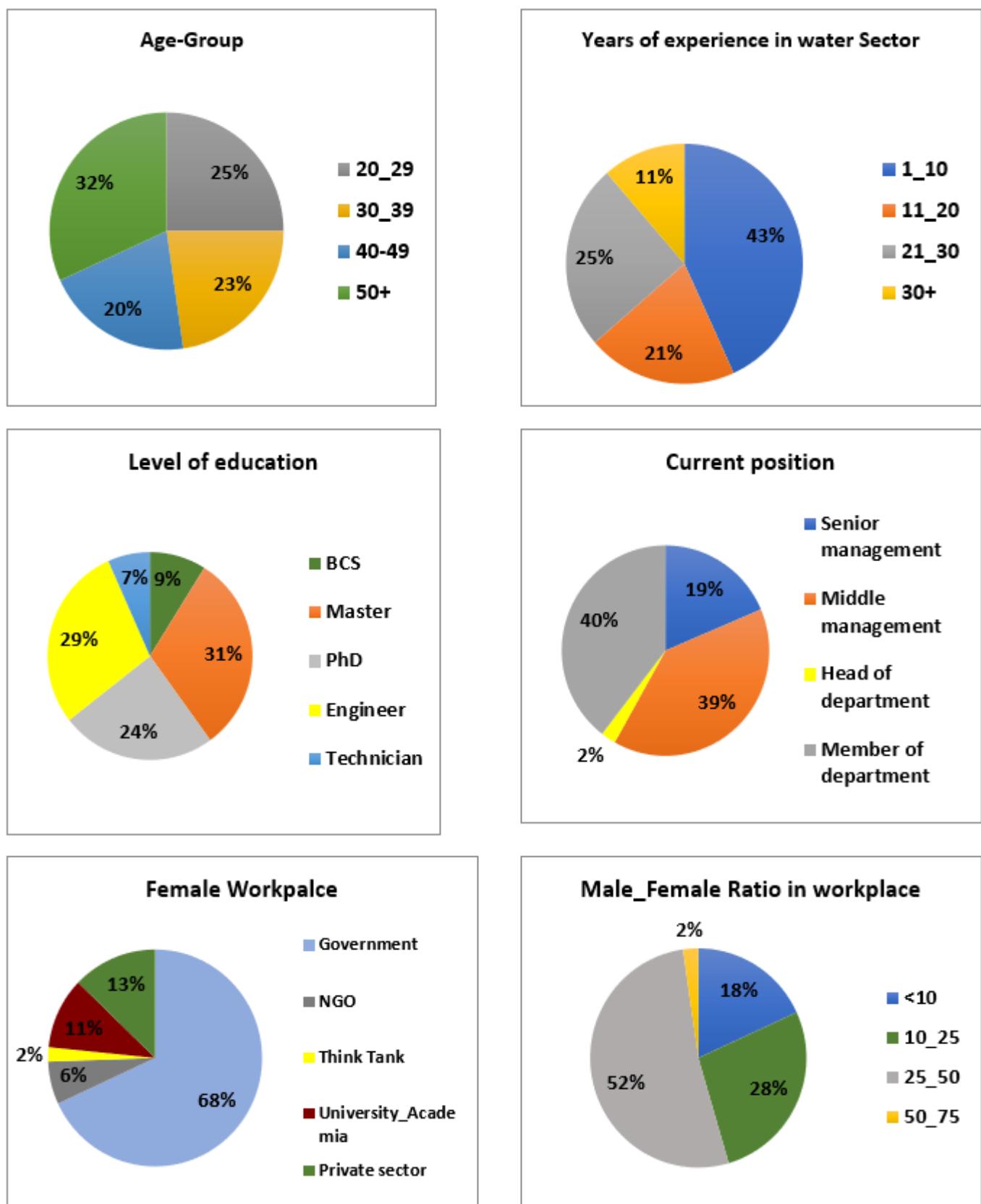


Fig. 4 Current status of female respondents in Morocco

## PALESTINE

In Palestine, the principle of equality was affirmed in the Palestinian Declaration of Independence in November 1998, which affirmed equality between women and men in its provisions. Successive drafts of the Basic Law of 2003 prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, disability, political opinion, ethnicity and race, yet declare Shari'a as a principal source of legislation. This right has been further reinforced in the amended Basic Law of 2005.



Young Palestinian Musician performing along the shores of the Dead Sea , during a sunrise concert "Al Wajd & Al Rouh"/ Al Kamandjati. ©Samah Titi

In 2003, the Palestinian Authority established the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), to ensure that women rights were achieved through laws, policies and strategies. In 2008, gender units were set up in 19 ministries to advance gender equality priorities in national policies and plans- yet to date these units' involvement in national planning cycles and in key ministry processes, is limited.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs is working together with UN-Women to strengthen their capacity. The first-ever Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy was developed in 2011 and 2 more followed suit to present.

Gender-responsive budgeting has been an official policy of the Palestinian Authority since 2009; however, implementation has remained limited. To ensure smoother progress in this area, a Gender Responsive Budgeting National Committee was established in 2013.

In December 2017, the Gender Policy Institute, a programme of UNESCO, in partnership with the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA)<sup>24</sup>, began the process of mapping of gender and women's empowerment policies endorsed by the Palestinian Government between 2011 – 2017, in order to support the whole of government in their planning, review and monitoring of gender equality and women's empowerment policies. Findings from the UNESCO/GPI 'Bridging Gender Gaps in Palestine: Qualitative Analysis of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policies, 2011-2017', were launched in December 2018. A total of 97 gender related policies, and 702 accompanying policy

<sup>24</sup> Building Gender Accountability in Palestine: Bridging the

Policy Gap, UNESCO 2019

interventions /activities were endorsed; however, only 8.9% were fully implemented, 35% were partially implemented, 35 % were not, and the remaining 19% lacked sufficient data.

In 2018, there were 24 Gender Units in ministries and non-ministerial government institutions, however, these are “marginalized and absent from the decision-making process”. In addition, a national committee for Gender was established, made up of male and female representatives from line stakeholders from the civil society, the private sector and the government.

Finally, in 2019, the first Gender Policy focused Institute was established as an autonomous entity through a government decree in Palestine, and in the whole Arab region.

*The question hence is not the lack of policies but their actual implementation and the delivery of effective changes in role of women.*

According to the statistics of 2020 on “Women and Men in Palestine” by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics<sup>25</sup>:

- The gap between men and women in the literacy rate has been decreased over the past 10 years and stand at 1.7% and 5 % for men and women respectively;
- Despite the increment of women participation ratio in the labour force in comparison to previous years; the gap remains large since men’s participation was 69.9% vs. 18.1% for women’s participation in 2019;
- The Services and other branches are the main employer sectors for employed women with 73%, also commerce, hotelier and restaurants’ sectors was 11.1%.

<sup>25</sup> Women and Men in Palestine:

<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2528.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Social and Economic situation of Palestinian Women and Girls, UNESCWA, 2015

- Women still work mainly in the traditional occupations. 64% of employed women work as technicians, specialists, and clerks;
- The gap in unemployment rates among women and men is increasing, it reached 41.9% for women and 58.1 % for men; while only 4.15% hold senior management positions;
- The percentage of employed women in the public sector was 31.4%, and 68% for employed women in the private sector;

In terms of Political Representation, “Palestinian law largely conforms to international standards regarding women’s political participation. The political rights of women in Palestine to vote and stand for election are guaranteed by General Elections Law No. 9 of 2005 that regulates parliamentary and presidential elections and by Local Municipality Councils Elections Law No. 10 of 2005. These legislative measures introduced quota systems and represent significant steps towards improving women’s political representation. Women are granted 10-12 per cent of seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council and every candidate list for local council elections must have at least one woman among every five candidates (for local councils with a maximum number of 13 seats).”<sup>26</sup>

According to 2019 PCBS data, only 5 per cent of Palestinian Central Council members, 11 per cent of Palestinian National Council members and 14 per cent of the Council of Ministers are women. “Also, 11% is the percentage of the active women ambassadors in the Diplomatic Service. Moreover, there is one woman holds the position of Ramallah and Al-Bireh governor out of 16 governors.”<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, the State of Palestine acceded

[https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/e\\_escwa\\_ecw\\_15-tp-2\\_e.pdf](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/e_escwa_ecw_15-tp-2_e.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020

<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ltc>

to Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on April 1, 2014, without reservation (first among Arab States to do so).

In relation to the water sector, in 2011, GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit) commissioned a situational analysis for women in the water and solid waste management sectors in Palestine, to be used as a baseline for the development of a strategy for women employees in both sectors<sup>28</sup>. The study found that in spite of the presence of qualified women, they remain an untapped potential due to gender-based biases including their own perceptions. The situational analysis led to recommendations at three levels; policy, professional and community. Based on the analysis, the Gender Strategy in the Environment (focusing on Water and Solid Waste Management) 2013-2017 was produced under the leadership of a National Committee comprising the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Local Government, and the Palestinian Water Authority<sup>29</sup>. The Strategy in question defined three main axes and set nine Strategic Objectives (SO); the three main axes include Policy, the empowerment of women professionals within the line institutions, and the participation of women at local level.

In 2012, the Higher National Committee was established by a Palestinian Cabinet's decision, as the entity responsible for developing, implementing and following-up on the National Action Plan and to ensure greater women's participation in political negotiations and in the peace process. The

importance of the Committee lies in its membership, which includes the various related governmental institutions and civil society actors.

"The Cabinet then endorsed the Strategic National Framework for Implementing UNSCR 1325 in June 2015, resolving that Palestine is an extension of the international community that is affected by and affects the security of its members. These circumstances have made UNSCR 1325 and its set of supporting resolutions the basis for localisation. This localization is being led by a strategic sector partnership, which will develop the responsibilities and obligations of stakeholders."<sup>30</sup>

More recently (July 2020), a virtual open day was held by UN Women and the General Union of Palestinian Women, to discuss the challenges of the implementation of UNSCR 1325 twenty years after its adoption. The National committee has submitted a report on the implementation of the 1st generation of its National Action Plan (NAP).

With respect to the current status of the women working in the water sector who participated in the mapping exercise in Palestine, and as seen in Figure 5, the highest percentage of females working on water related issues was of the age group of 30-39, with work experience of 11-20 years, 50% of whom are Government employees. Two-thirds of the respondents hold a master's degree and are in management positions. The highest perception of the ratio of male-female (the respondent's personal input on what the percentage is) was less than 10%.

mID=3679#:~:text=The%20population%20in%20Palestine%20estimated,males%20for%20every%20100%20females

<sup>28</sup> Situational Analysis for Women in the Water and Solid Waste Management Sectors, GIZ, 2011

<sup>29</sup> (In Arabic), the Gender Strategy in the Environment (focusing on Water and Solid Waste Management), State of Palestine, November 2012

<sup>30</sup> The National Action Plan for The Implementation of UNSCR 1325, MoWA, 2019

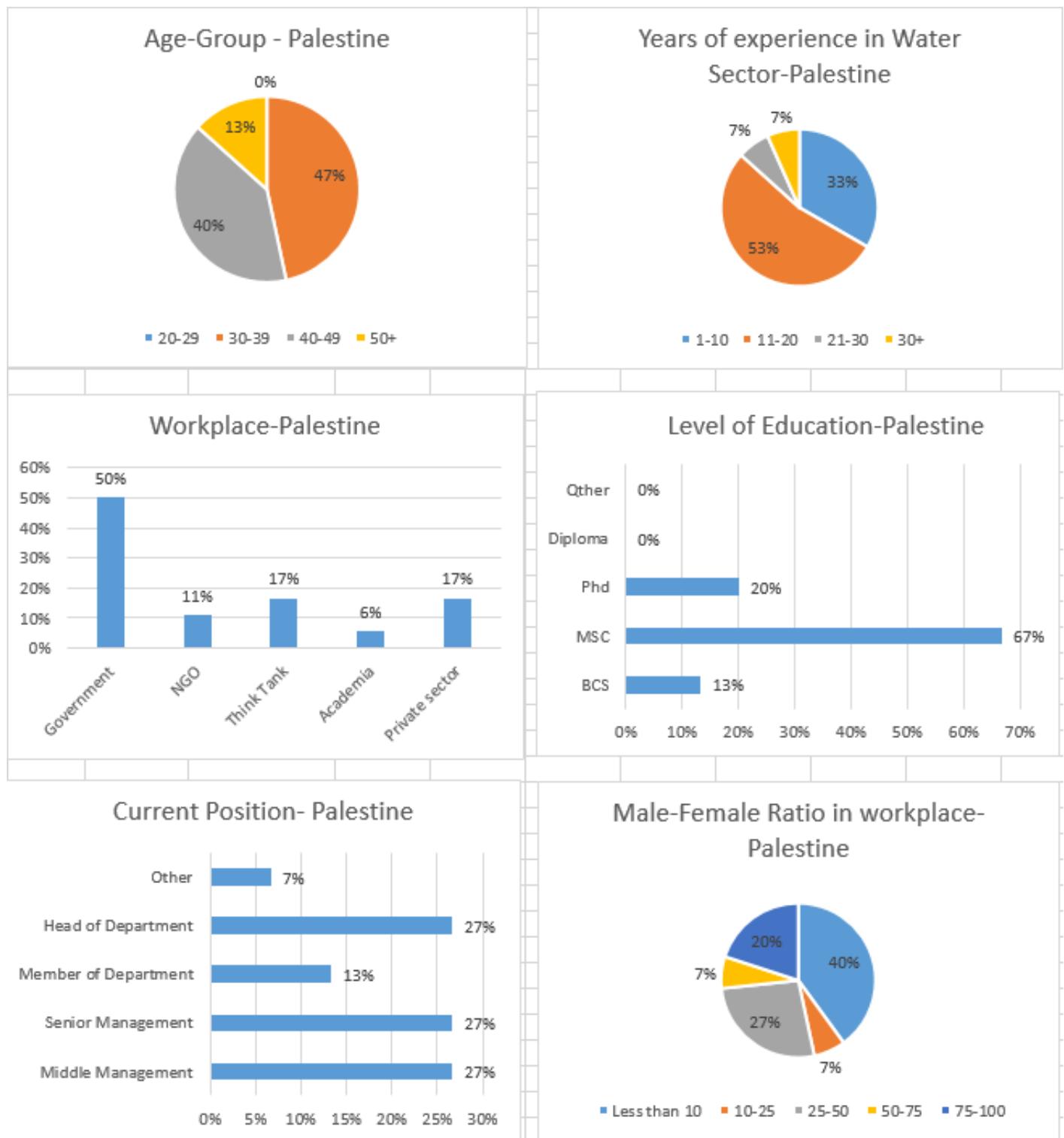


Fig. 5 Current status of female respondents in Palestine

## CHAPTER 2

### Cross-country analysis of findings

The subsequent chapter presents the cross-country analysis among the five countries to identify similarities and differences in terms of the challenges women water experts face in order to be promoted to decision-making positions in water diplomacy and (transboundary) water cooperation settings.

The purpose of this comparative section is to assess needs and identify general and targeted capacity building programs, and appropriate mentorship to the informal network of MENA women established through during the preparation of the Comparative Study.

Prior to presenting the details of this comparative section, the first part of the chapter will look into the specific country results in more depth. This will highlight the specificities of each country and will assist in explaining the differences, and highlighting the commonalities. As a first flavour of these differences and commonalities, the chapter opens with a short reference to issues of language, religion and culture and the way these characterise the MENA region.

Next, the chapter will focus on four selected areas of analysis, namely:

1. The main factors contributing to the workplace male-female ratios according to the female respondents;
2. The factors that influence the acceptance of a decision-making position, according to the female respondents;
3. The skills needed to better lead in water diplomacy positions, as per female respondents;
4. And finally, the definition of water diplomacy according to its use, as understood by the female respondents- (it is noted that the understanding of water diplomacy in

the case of the Maghreb is different and is considered as a tool to resolve conflict across users).

## The MENA Mosaic: rich and complex

The MENA countries comprise a complex mosaic of populations, with the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the region speaking Arabic, who, despite national and regional variations in dialect, share a single standard classical written version of Arabic.

Given this diversity, it is of no surprise to come across a multitude of different cultures coexisting in the region. However, it should be noted that even within the same religion, cultural norms are still different to a certain extent among the Levant (Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan), the Nile (Egypt) and the Maghreb (Morocco).

The persistence of discriminatory ancestral practices, further combined with a conservative socio-cultural context, constitute the main barriers to the involvement of women in public life in the MENA, despite the efforts made, at different levels. Women in the region continue to occupy a secondary social role, which makes their contribution to national economic growth weak, including the fluctuating water industry that can benefit significantly from a well-balanced and diverse

management and leadership.

Despite the reforms undertaken and the progress achieved towards the promotion of women's rights in the MENA region, the socio-cultural variant remains influential and significantly affects the balance of power between men and women in the decision-making sphere. The unequal distribution of domestic and family tasks within the societies of the MENA region hinder the empowerment of women and influence their access to power.

## An initial cross-country comparison

One of the first areas of analysis has been to look into the role of education and experience in the nomination of women to water diplomacy positions. Figure 6 below provides an overview, across the five countries of the baselines of the earlier chapter, and is a graphic representation of the table XX below, with a focus on: 1) Level of education and 2) Current position.

Given the key findings in the baseline in the 5 countries, we can concur that the level of education of women water experts is not necessarily taken into consideration in the promotion process or the appointment to key water diplomacy decision making positions.

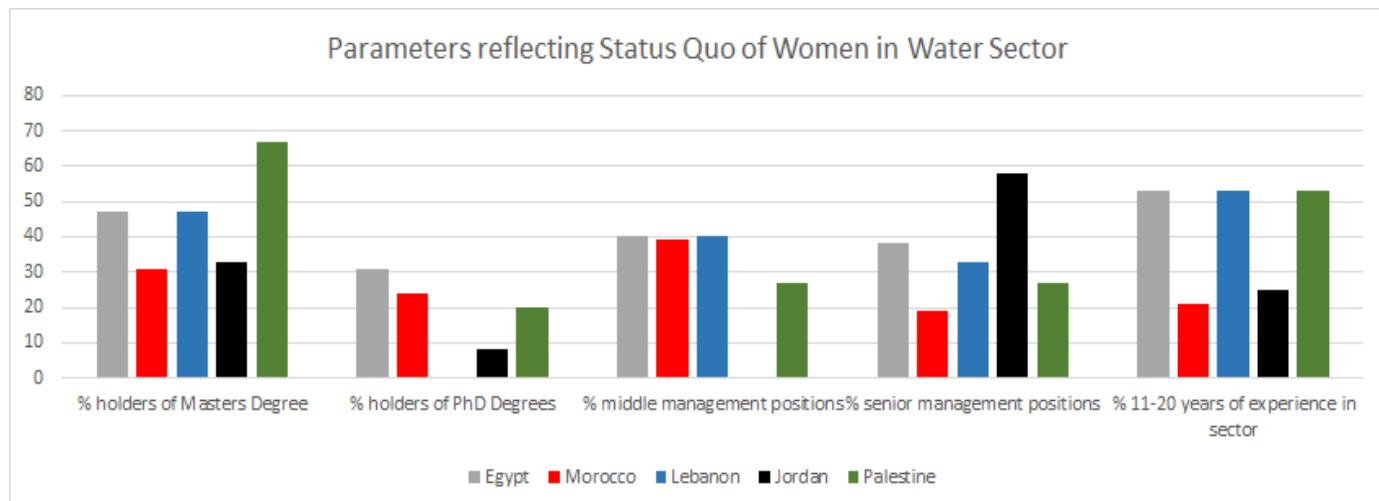


Fig. 6: Overview of the level of education and experience of women in the water sector

Country	Level of education	Current position	Years of experience (11-20)
Egypt	47% Masters' degree 27% PhD holders 27% BSc degree	40% Middle Management 20% Senior Management	53%
Lebanon	47% Masters' degree	40% Middle Management 33 % Senior management	53%
Jordan	33% Masters' degree 8% PhD holders	58% Senior Management	25%
Morocco	31% Masters' degree 24% PhD holders	39% Middle Management 19% Senior Management	21%
Palestine	67% Masters' degree 20% PhD	27% Middle Management 27% Senior Management	53%

Table 1: Summary of the level of education and experience of women in water sector in % of total respondents per country

In terms of the specifics of the countries, in the case of Lebanon, if we compare the level of education to the current position, we conclude that although most respondents hold a Masters' Degree and are equally involved as their male counterparts in senior, management positions and /or are heads of department at the governmental institutions, including the Ministry of Energy and Water, they are not automatically promoted to the first tier of decision-making. The only exception was the appointment of Nada Boustani Khouri as Minister of Energy and Water in January 2019; it is noted that she had been working at the Ministry as an advisor since 2010. Needless to say, without the political support of one of the main political parties in Lebanon, she would not have been nominated to this position. In other words, it is not only a matter of merit but, in the case of Lebanon, also political and sectarian factions' support. In contrast, when it comes to international organisations, there are more prospects for advancement for women; through the testimonies of the respondents themselves, merit comes in first place, compounded with a clear policy by UN agencies in specific that explicitly enhances gender mainstreaming in their workplace.

In Egypt, although 53% of the respondents have from 11 to 20 years of experience, and 47% hold Masters' degree, only 20% hold senior positions while 40% hold middle management positions. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, female diplomats constitute more than 33% of the new diplomatic cadre (Shoukry, 2018). In the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, 41% of the engineers are women and 13% are leading high-level positions (according to MWRI's statistics). A positive correlation exists between the level of education and the degree of seniority in the positions held especially in governmental posts. However, the years of experience do not necessarily

correspond to a promotion in a senior management position. Moreover, it is important to differentiate between holding a senior position in the water sector and practicing hydrodiplomacy. It is not necessarily the case that a person holding a senior or top management position is automatically practicing water diplomacy or leading a negotiation team at the transboundary level - especially as this task is usually led by a multidisciplinary team (water, legal and diplomats). It is to be noted that in the water negotiation teams especially, women are not sufficiently represented.

In Morocco, the largest number of respondents are middle managers or members of departments who are mostly engineers and masters' degree holders. Top management positions are assigned to highly qualified women with a Ph.D. or state engineering diploma with large experience in the water sector.

In Jordan, there is no correlation between the educational attainment and the presence of women in decision-making positions. The level of education is not necessarily the main factor for women's access to decision-making positions. The successful management of the water sector requires skills that are taught and are acquired through work that will enable the decision-maker to take the appropriate decision. As for the period of years of experience in the sector, a lower number of years is compensated for by experience over longer years in other sectors- which increases the overall competencies of the person in question. Unfortunately, the percentage at the time of preparing the study was much higher than the current situation. At present, women constitute 11% of the total employees in the water sector and hold 17.5% of leadership and supervision positions, according to the recent study on the status of women in the water sector

conducted by USAID, which was done to assess the status of more than 1,200 women working in three water entities and three companies governing and operating the water supply and sanitation services in Jordan.

In Palestine, almost 90% of the respondents hold higher degrees (MScs, and PhDs), yet less than 30% of them are in senior management and decision-making positions. It is clear that the high technical qualifications, and the experience to a less extent, are not taken into account, in the case of women water experts, when assigning decision making positions. To date, key decision-making positions including Minister of Water, Director of Water Utilities, Head of the Joint Water Committee, Head of the Water Negotiation Team, among others, has always been a male, although a basic mapping as the one conducted indicates the presence of female capacity to lead.

## Selected areas for in-depth comparative analysis

### 1) The main factors contributing to the workplace male-female ratios according to the female respondents

During the development of the questionnaire among the 3 first authors for Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon in 2017, the six (6) factors that were chosen, were those traditionally identified in overall gender mainstreaming research, including a male dominant society, the absence of the proper legal, legislative, and policy frameworks<sup>31,32</sup>. The other two factors were included in line with the working assumption that there are elements within the

control of women water professionals, that could be worked with, in order to increase the pool of female expertise in water diplomacy, and shift negative perceptions towards successful female decision makers. The choice of these factors was based on an understanding of the cultural barriers in the countries of the first mapping exercise, and the expertise and experience of those who lead the mapping in those countries.

Before embarking into a comparison across countries, the figures below present the main factors identified by women working on water issues within the five countries, contributing to the male-female ratio, described in their respective countries in chapter 1- baseline. This is an important national perspective, per the respondents to the questionnaire of the mapping, and reflects the current experiences of those women water experts.

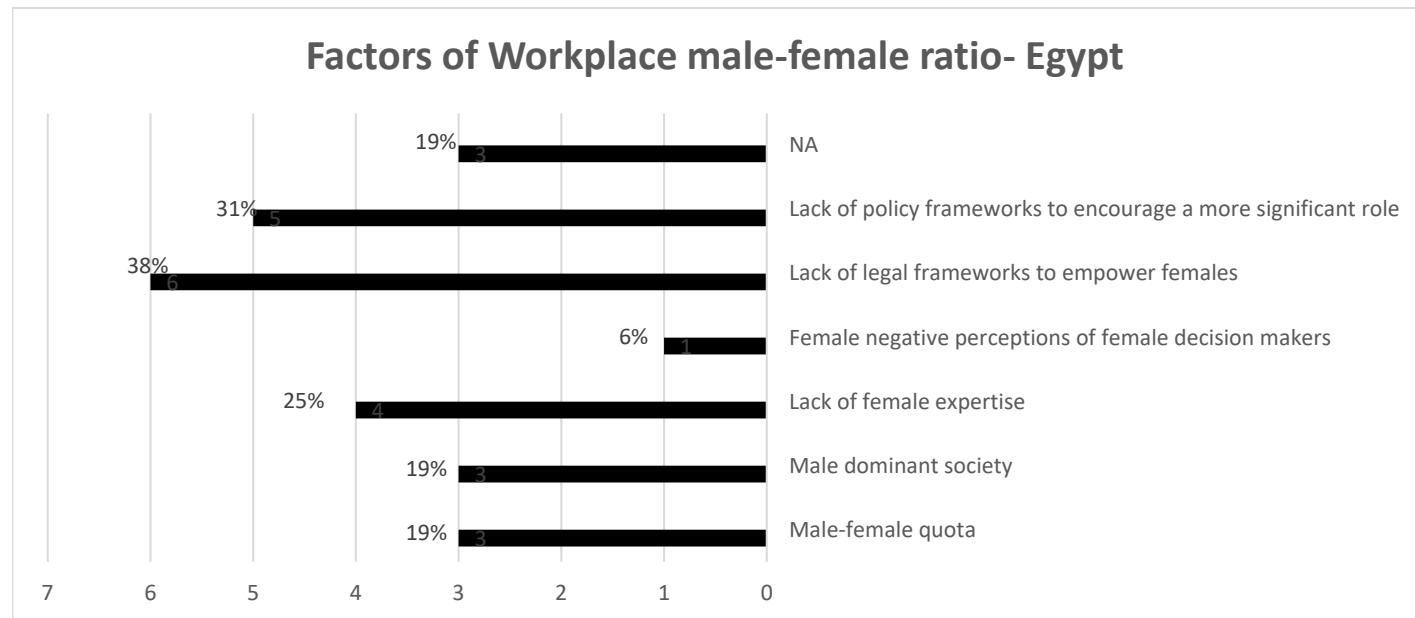
31 World Bank. 2013. Opening Doors: Gender Equality and Development in the Middle East and North Africa.

Washington DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-0-8213-9763-3. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0

32 ESCWA United Nations Economic and Social

Commission for Western Asia (2017) Women's political representation in the Arab Region E/ESCWA/ECW/2017/3 & 2017, Policy Brief Role of Women in Peacebuilding Processes, E/ESCWA/ECW/2017/TECHNICAL PAPER.5

## EGYPT



**Fig. 7: Factors influencing the male-female ratio in the workplace in Egypt**

In Egypt, since the results of Male-Female ratio in terms of numbers is in favour of the females for the majority of the respondents, it is important to note that the respondents' interpretation of the question was not related to the physical number and/or ratio (since females already have the higher ratio in the workplace), it was more related to the importance of the role of Males vis-a-vis the role of the Females in the workspace. Accordingly, 19 percent of the respondents found this question was not applicable (NA)- which means that they do not find that there is any preference accorded to men vis a vis the importance of their roles in the workplace. While for the rest of the respondents, the main factor contributing to male female ratio (of importance) in the workspace is the lack of legal and policy frameworks to empower females to hold leading positions, followed by the lack of female expertise. A confusion might have taken place among the respondents between the legal and the policy frameworks because in the specific case of Egypt, the legal frameworks are already present as earlier explained in the baseline

chapter and as re-iterated in the male/female ratios in the workplace. Accordingly, it is mainly the lack of policy frameworks that dominates the lack of male/female (importance).

The third factor featured by the respondents was the lack of expertise. Therefore, there is a great need to capacitate women in the workplace and to give them the chance to apply the acquired knowledge in an interim phase as assistants or deputies in order to gain enough experience and confidence , to support them with mentorship that prepares them to lead successfully in leadership position in the field of hydro diplomacy especially that this specific field requires large experience and practice due to the importance of transboundary water in Egypt's water security. The perception of a male dominant society and the male-female quota were awarded lower scores by the respondents. In fact, no gender quotas are applied either way since it is simply not constitutional in the first place. Moreover, there is a high-level political will and support for women empowerment in

the last decades. The issue is more likely related to the limited level of trust (in some mindsets) that a female has the required capacities and skills to achieve the target and meet the objectives and expectations in leadership and high decision-making positions, or that her family commitments

might hinder the progress and continuity of her career. A woman who has reached a leading position has to do excessive efforts to prove that she is worthy of the trust that she has been given. Very few respondents believe that there is a female negative perception.

## LEBANON

Despite the minor advancement of women in the water sector, it is still considered a male sector and the majority of Lebanese respondents (9) believe first and foremost, that the absence of a male-female quota contributes to this imbalance at the workplace, in addition to the lack of female expertise. “For now, most top management posts remain in the hands of older men – or with men linked to political entities or families. Political appointments for women in Lebanon, however, will remain limited until women decide to engage more actively and aggressively in politics” as stated by one of

the respondents who works at a UN agency. However, “This may prove difficult (or not be as interesting) for Lebanese women as the national political sphere remains largely reminiscent of sectarian politics and allegiances from the civil war where women had limited leadership roles and their status was granted with reference to a slain spouse or male peer”, she added.

A female engineer who works at the Council of Ministries has already been involved in reviewing the National Strategy for the Water Sector launched by the Ministry of Energy and

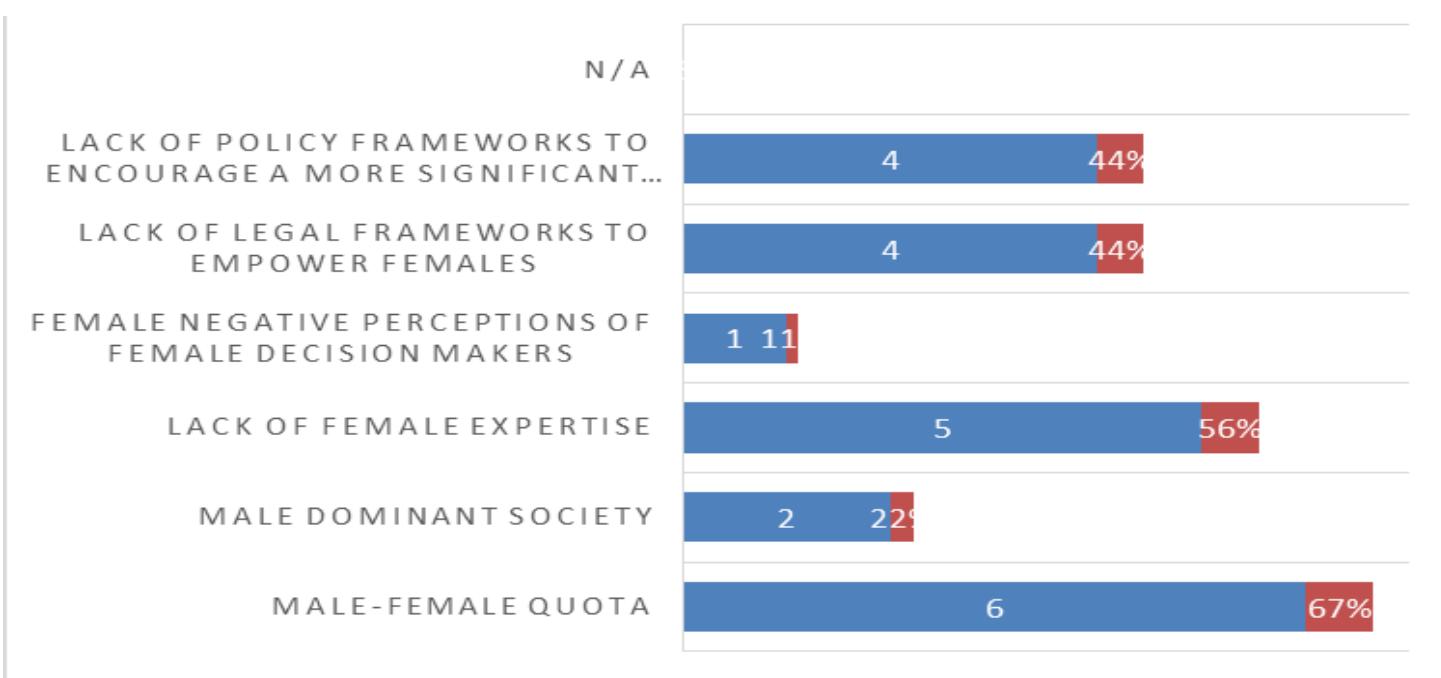


Fig. 8: Factors influencing the male-female ratio in the workplace in Lebanon

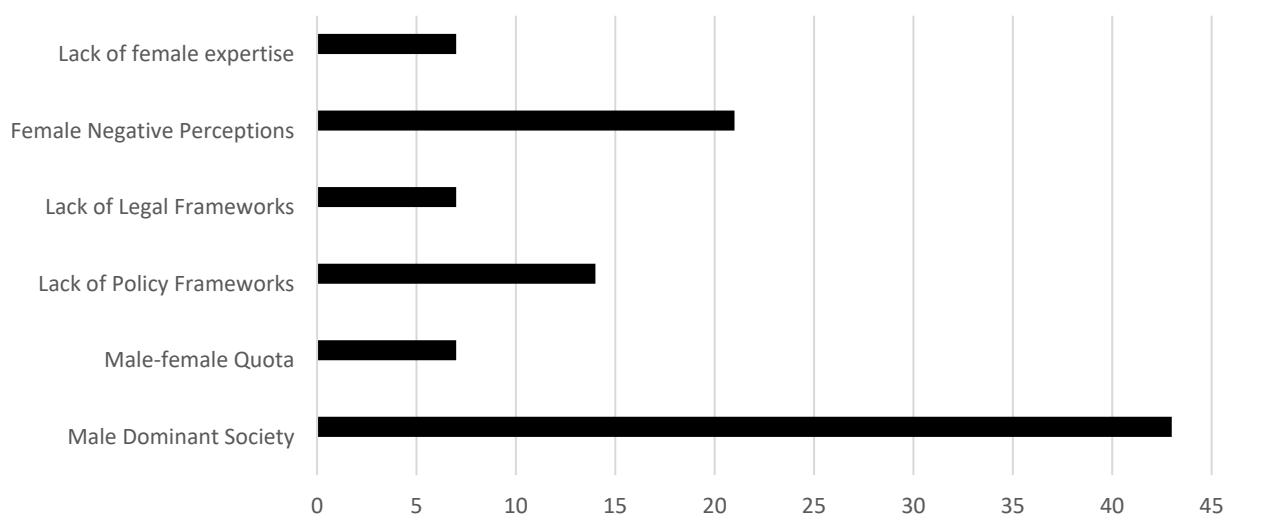
Water (MoEW) in 2010; up to date, she has not been promoted to a decision level position given the lack of opportunities. Similarly, another respondent at the Ministry of Energy and Water faced the same situation and expressed frustration against the sectarian system and the political dynamics at the Ministry level, stressing that without a quota for women, it would be impossible to witness any progress for the women of her generation. However, this challenge does not apply to UN agencies, “we have more women than men on staff” as a water expert confirmed, adding that the context is quite different.

Furthermore, the respondents also highlighted the lack of legal and policy frameworks to empower females and to encourage a more significant role. So far, it has never been a priority for the successive Lebanese Governments. It is true that many

Ministries and UN agencies and Intergovernmental organisations engaged in the WASH sector explicitly include a component for mainstreaming gender in their response plans and projects all over Lebanon; this is still insufficient if it is not interlinked with a clear policy and legal frameworks and reflected in practice. Thus, to witness more progress in this regard, one of the respondents, who used to work as an advisor to the Prime Minister, believes that the Council of Ministries needs to put the issue of attracting more women to the water sector on its agenda. In addition to that, respondents agree that to attract more women experts into the water sector, incentives should be put in place whether at the academic level or in the labour market to bridge the gap; this can only be ensured through a public policy where all stakeholders are present and involved.

## JORDAN

**Factors of Workplace male-female ratio- Jordan**



**Fig. 9: Factors influencing the male-female ratio in the workplace in Jordan**

Jordanian women have demonstrated considerable leadership in community and informal organisations, as well as in public and private enterprises. However, socialisation and negative stereotyping of women and men reinforce the tendency for decision-making to remain the domain of men. The survey results confirmed this; when analysing the responses of the survey

respondents, the majority attribute the higher male to female ratio in the water sector to a sector male dominance. The negative societal perceptions about women, according to the respondents, also play a main role in widening this gap. In terms of female expertise, the respondents are confident in their competencies and abilities at the technical level.

## MOROCCO

The analysis of the responses concerning the difficulties and problems faced by female respondents in their careers revealed a strong convergence. Two-thirds of the respondents considered that a male dominant society and the lack of policy frameworks hinder a more significant role of women, and thus contribute to a higher male-female ratio in the water sector. It is noted that in answering this question, each respondent chose only one answer and not a combination of answers.

Indeed, the major difficulties, which act as barriers to women's career advancement, are

summarised as follows:

- Gender inequality in the workplace: the lack of appreciation of female skills requires additional unfair efforts by women water experts to prove themselves. In addition, the wage inequality between genders, and unequal opportunities to access decision-making positions further exacerbates challenges;
- Stereotype and prejudices: including moral harassment, jealousy towards competent women, non-acceptance of female

## Factors of Workplace male-female ratio- Morocco

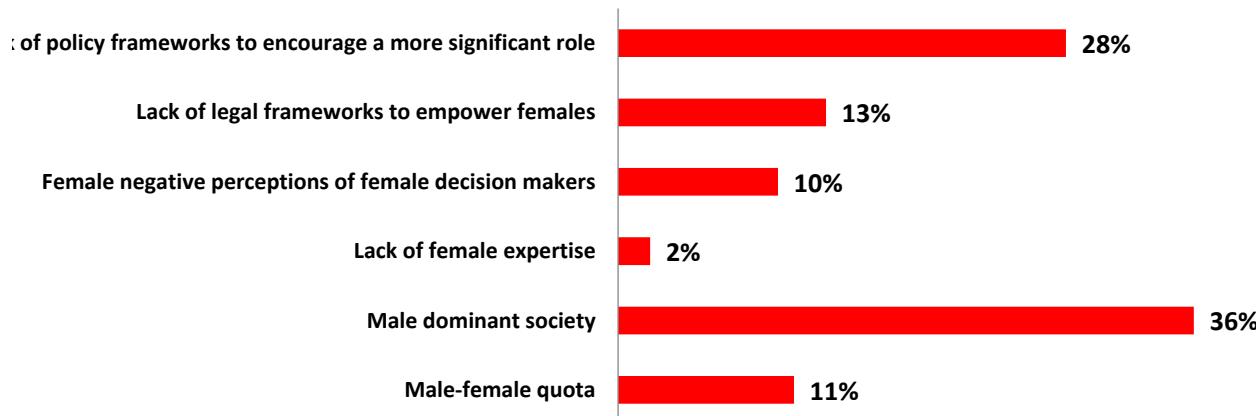


Fig. 10: Factors influencing the male-female ratio in the workplace in Morocco

leadership, prejudices concerning women with hijab;

- Lack of career planning- some positions

remain strictly reserved for men (CEO of Offices);

- Lack of mentoring and female leadership.

## PALESTINE

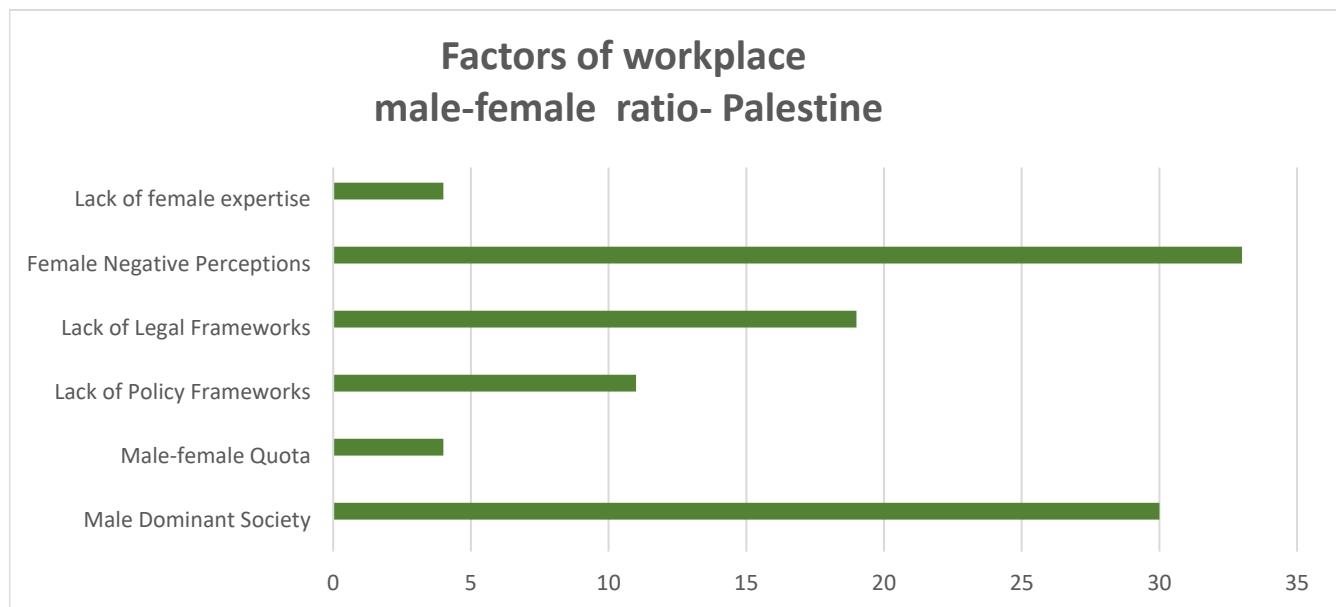


Fig. 11: Factors influencing the male-female ratio in the workplace in Palestine

As the statistics in the baseline show, the water sector and the related field work is still considered a male sector, and women employed in the sector are considered to be more suitable for the administrative and desk work. The main hindrance to the advancement of women water experts is the female negative perceptions of women who have attained higher positions, being influenced by a male dominant society. The understanding of the positioning of the male dominant society with the role of women raises eyebrows to the promotion of fellow female colleagues and is considered to be done not out of merit, but out of favouritism. It is understandable that ill-intentioned rumours, slander and scandals, negatively affect the

image of promoted women and their families<sup>33</sup>. It is striking that this factor is more important than the male dominant society in “paralysing” women and affecting their acceptance of promotion to decision making positions. The Palestinian society continues to be a conservative one, and family “honour”, and social acceptance remains a very strong determinant in social status and relations.

In relation to the quota issue, in spite of the legislation of the quota system, and the increase in the female representation in local councils, the full political participation falls short due to patriarchy, political instability, and occupation.

<sup>33</sup> Karama, 2009 Policy Brief Towards an Enhanced Participation

of Women in Decision-Making Positions in the Arab World

## COMPARISON AMONG THE 5 COUNTRIES

The previous figures discussed the main factors contributing to the workplace male-female ratios as identified by the respondents

in each country. For the benefit of comparison, all country results have been compiled in the table and figure below, providing a snapshot

	Egypt	Morocco	Lebanon	Jordan	Palestine
Male Dominant Society	19	36	22	43	30
Male-female Quota	19	11	67	7	4
Lack of Policy Frameworks	31	28	44	14	11
Lack of Legal Frameworks	38	13	44	7	19
Female Negative Perceptions	6	10	11	21	33
Lack of female expertise	25	2	56	7	4

Table 2: A summary table of the percentages attributed to the main factors contributing to the workplace male-female ratios, in the 5 countries

### Factors that affect the male-female ratio at the workplace

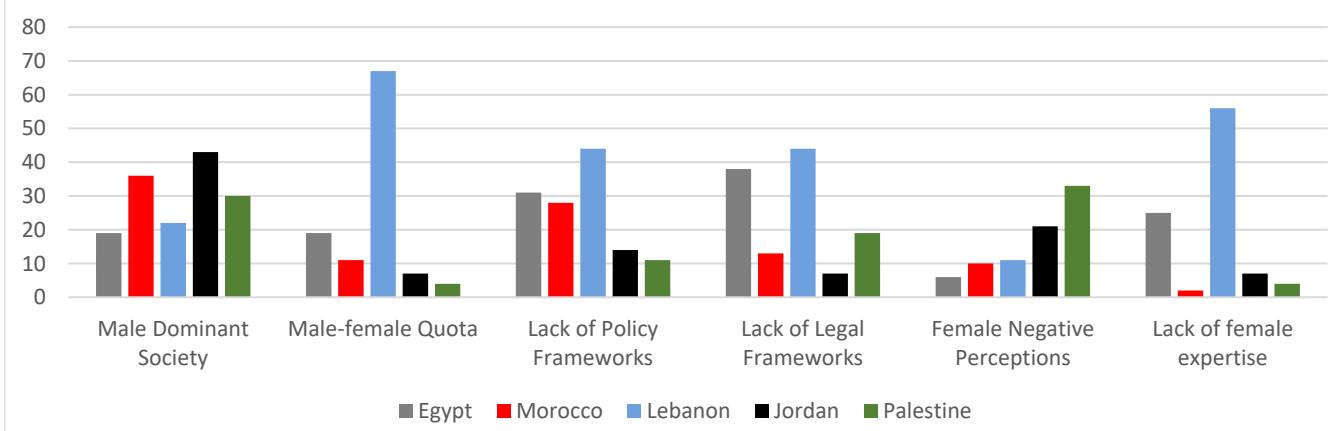


Figure 12: The main factors contributing to the workplace male-female ratios, according to the female respondents, in all 5 countries

of the situation across countries, always according to the responses of the female respondents.

Although the issue of a male dominant society is considered as a main factor in three of the countries, the lack of policy and legal frameworks was also considered an important decisive factor in the promotion of men to senior positions. Interesting are the variations -steep in some cases- across countries in the percentages concerning the male-female quota, the lack of female expertise and the female negative perceptions.

## 2) Factors that influence the acceptance of a decision-making position, according to the female respondents

While preparing the questionnaire, and for the purposes of analysing the factors that influence the decision of a female water expert in accepting a decision-making position, the factors chosen are those usually cited in the literature or those commonly expressed among working women in the region. It is also important for the purposes of the analysis to clarify what is meant by a decision-making position within the context of this mapping and comparative study. Given that the objective is to empower women in the public sector of the water diplomacy domain, then the understanding is that a decision-making position could be a Minister in one the line Ministries (primarily that of water, but also including agriculture/irrigation/environment/natural resources depending on the structure within the line Government), Head of a water related

negotiating team, Head of a regional commission or river basin organisation, Director of a water utility, among others.

Prior to the comparison analysis, the figures below portray the specific country responses, an important step towards a cross-country analysis.

## EGYPT

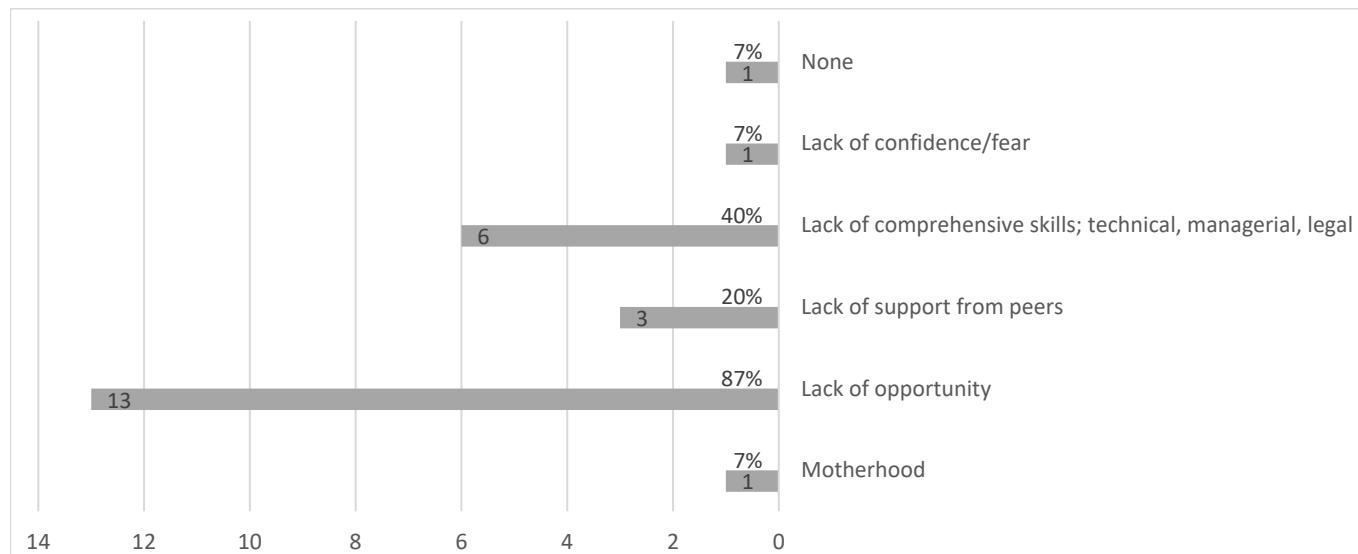


Fig. 13: Factors that affect the attainment of decision making positions- Egypt

In answering the question "What holds you back from accepting a decision-making position", 87% of the female respondents consider the lack of opportunities as the main factor; while 40% consider that they lack comprehensive skills. Lack of support from peers, lack of confidence and motherhood do not represent important factors for the Egyptian respondents. Only 7% of the respondents confirm that none of the above-mentioned factors holds them back from

accepting decision making positions. From this it can be resolved that more opportunities need to be disclosed in order to get more women involved in the decision-making process. Meanwhile, capacity building and competitiveness are key factors to overcome the lack of comprehensive skills which prevent women from holding decision making positions even when opportunities are available.

## LEBANON

The Lebanese respondents are more present in the second tier of decision-making positions as advisors to the Ministers and the majority of them said that they lack the opportunity to be promoted, while 50% of them admit that they need further capacity building in technical and legal aspects. Unfortunately,

the lack of confidence and fear is identified as the second factor. This is the subtle and unseen impact of a male dominant society, in which women are made to believe that the water (diplomacy) sector is a male one only, due to the higher qualifications of their fellow male colleagues.

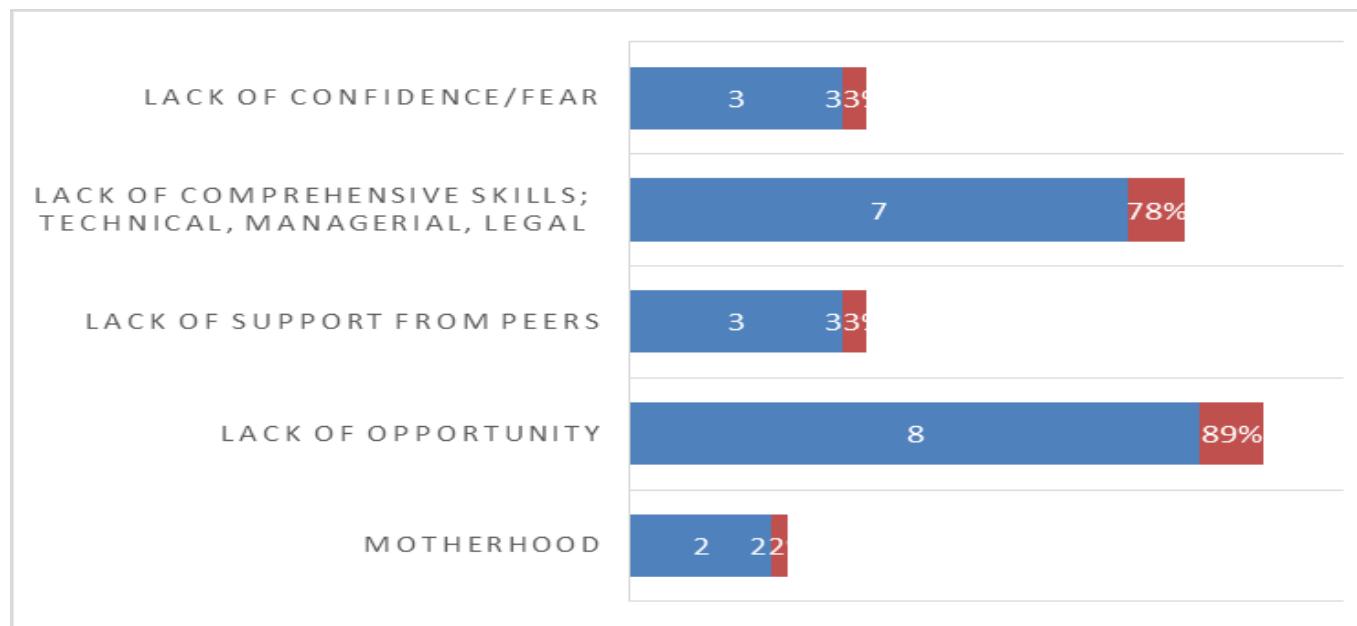


Fig. 14: Factors that affect the attainmentement of decision making positions- Lebanon

## JORDAN

According to the survey, the majority of respondents have an educational status of Ph.D., Masters', and yet are holding lower/non decision-making and leadership positions. (60%) of the respondents believed that this was attributed to the lack of opportunity; 13% chose equally motherhood and lack of confidence/ fear as contributing factors; while 7% felt that the lack of support from peers, was a limiting factor.

The misconception that the water sector is male dominated led to a missed opportunity

for many women to reach decision-making centres. Therefore, we see that many of the respondents chose the highest percentage in relation to the lack of opportunity.

Irrespective of whether women are employed outside the house, societal expectations are that women should take care of all the household chores. Men's contribution to household chores is negligible, regardless of women's work status. The long working hours make it difficult for women to juggle work, childcare, and household responsibilities.

### Factors affecting the attainment of decision-making positions- Jordan

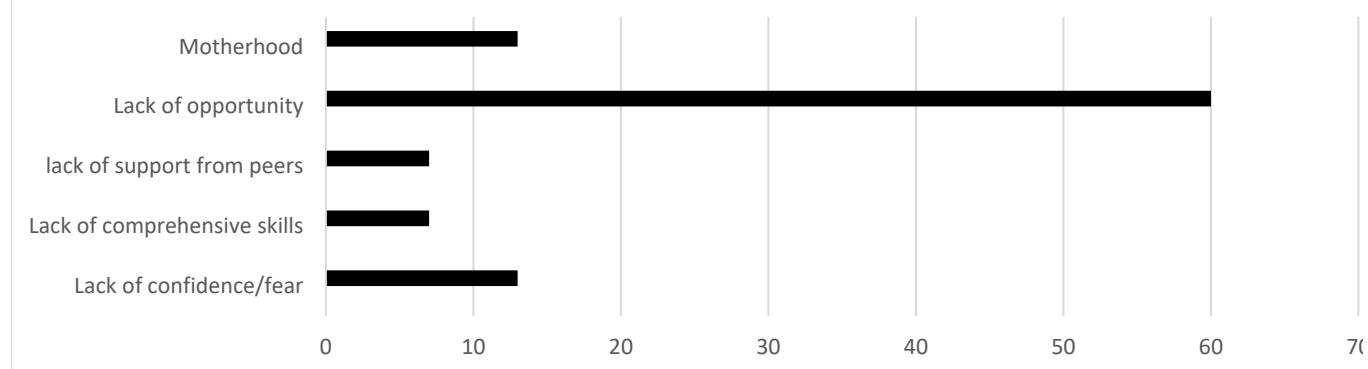


Fig. 15: Factors that affect the attainment of decision making positions- Jordan

## MOROCCO

More than 80% of respondents confirmed that the lack of opportunity and lack of support from peers remain the main factors limiting women's access to water decision-making positions. The lack of support from peers is in

line with the male dominant society, which was identified as the main factor that contributes to a higher male-female ratio in the workplace in the water sector.

### Factors affecting the attainment of decision-making positions-Morocco

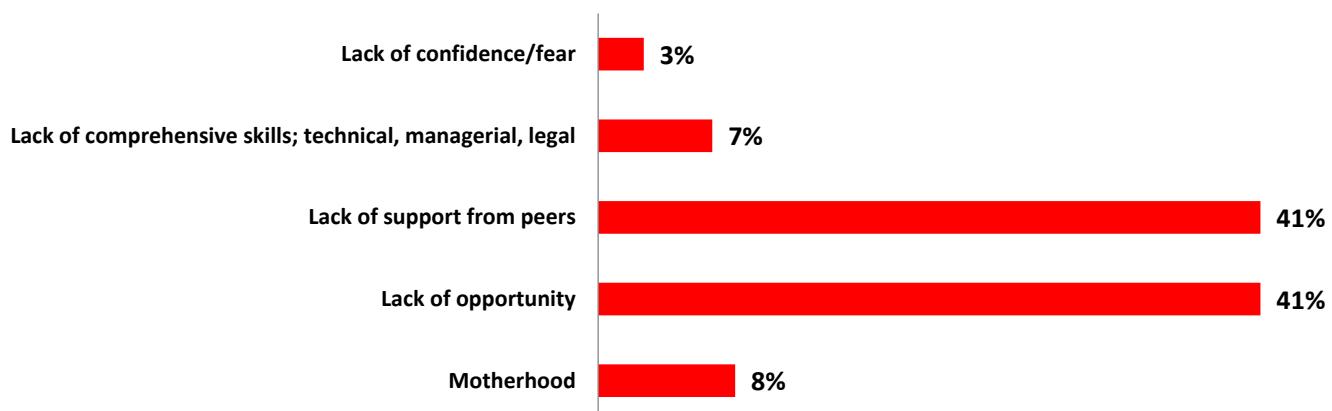


Fig. 17: Factors that affect the attainment of decision making positions- Morocco

## PALESTINE

### Factors affecting the attainment of decision-making positions- Palestine

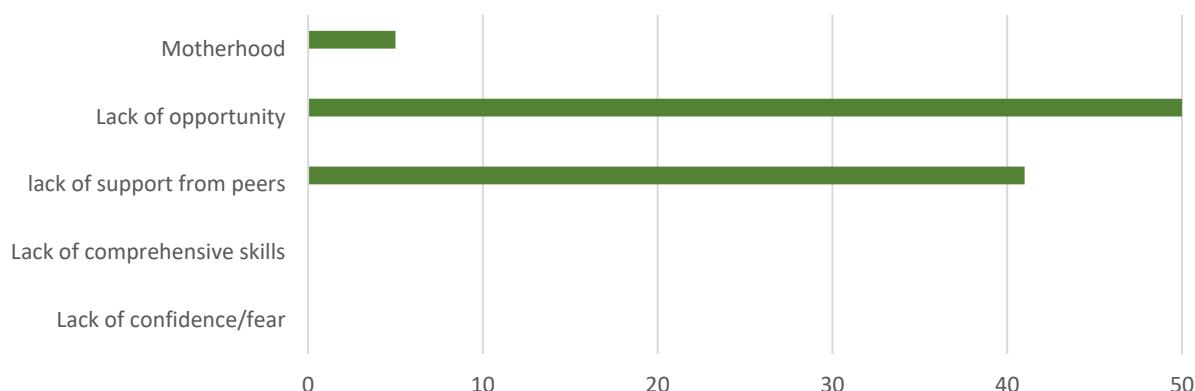


Fig. 18: Factors that affect the attainment of decision making positions- Palestine

For Palestinian female water experts, it is the lack of opportunities that poses the main challenge to them being promoted and to have a more vocal role in decision making processes. It is worth mentioning, that in comparison to the other 4 Sovereign Arab countries of the study, the Palestinian Government is young (less than 25 years), and given the political context, it is understandable that opportunities in general

are limited. Nonetheless, the opportunities are still made available to males. In parallel, peers continue to view the role of women as limited to the traditional sectors; in water sector, the view is limited to laboratory technicians, and desk work, among a few others. Furthermore, women are challenged to be in decision making positions, when they are excluded from strategic meetings, or are absent at the negotiation tables. (MoWA, 2011)

## COMPARISON AMONG THE 5 COUNTRIES

With the above understanding of the specificities in each of the five countries, the table and graph below juxtapose the

information and allow for a cross-country comparison.

	Factors that influence the acceptance of a decision-making position, according to the female respondents				
	Egypt	Morocco	Lebanon	Jordan	Palestine
Lack of confidence/fear	7	3	33	13	0
Lack of comprehensive skills	40	7	78	7	0
Lack of support from peers	20	41	33	7	41
Lack of opportunity	87	41	89	60	50
Motherhood	7	8	2	13	5

Table 3: A summary table of the factors that influence the acceptance of a decision-making position, according to the female respondents, across the 5 countries

## Factors that influence the acceptance of decision making positions

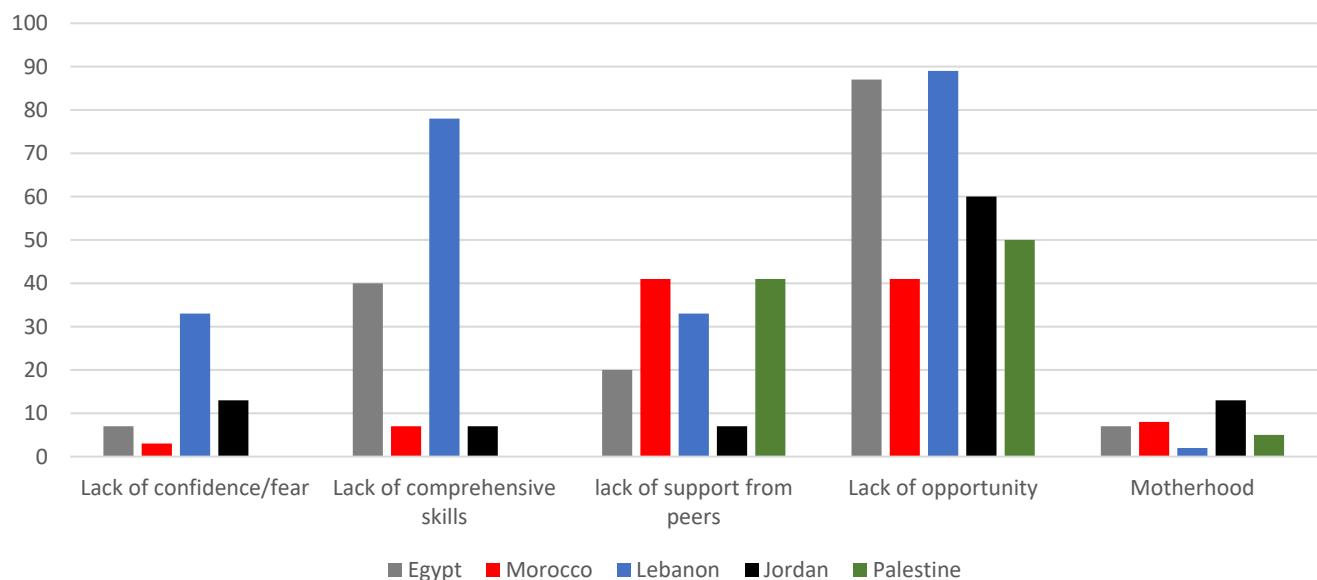


Figure 19: Factors that influence the acceptance of a decision-making position, according to the female respondents, across the five countries

The comparative graph above indicates that there is a consensus among all respondents from the five countries about the lack of opportunity for women, in comparison to those made available to male colleagues. Opportunities for promotion and advancement are biased towards men. In addition, women lack the support from their peers in actively overcoming the challenge of the absence of opportunities; this would

### 3) Skills needed to better lead in water diplomacy positions

At the time of the first mapping exercise in 2017, the traditional skills needed to meet the more specialised forms of diplomacy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, were included. This is not to be understood by the reader as a bias by the authors towards the importance of the emerging non-traditional skills; but rather as an attempt to tackle the common arguments against women having the needed

include support in engaging in continuing education and development of skills, or sharing of household responsibilities to liberate time to take on further work-related responsibilities. A third key factor is the lack of comprehensive skills, i.e., the combination of technical, managerial and legal skills that characterises those in those positions sought by women water experts.

qualifications for being water diplomats. Therefore, the fields of international law (including water), negotiations, political science, diplomacy and international relations were included as potential skills needed to better lead in water diplomacy positions.

In the literature, and when studying the skills that are needed for general management, decision-making and diplomacy positions, the chosen skills score high. In addition, knowledge of the formulation of water negotiating teams, and the experience with the ministerial water decision-making

mechanisms has emphasised the skills in the questionnaire and in the graphs below as essential.

Before embarking into a comparison across countries, the figures below map out the responses of the female water experts in each

of the five countries about the skills they feel they need to improve in order to have a more comprehensive profile that responds to the qualities and scope or work of a water diplomat; the latter will be further explored in the following chapter.

## EGYPT

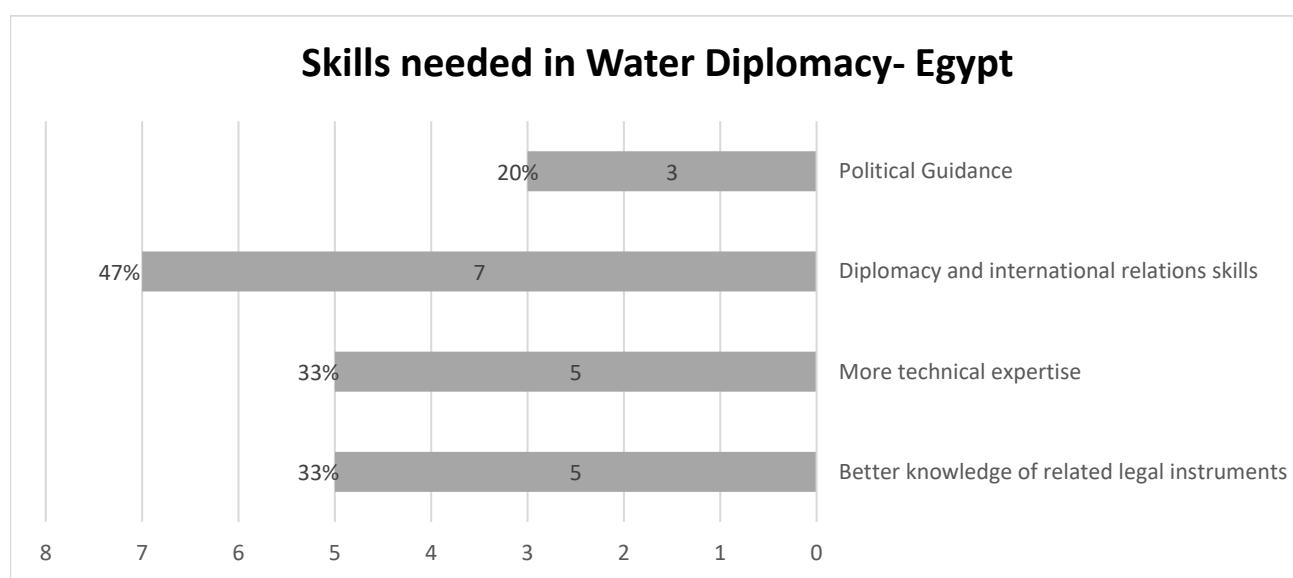


Figure 20: Type of skills deemed needed in water diplomacy, per the respondents- Egypt

Due to the diversified background of the respondents, the skills needed to better lead in a water diplomacy position were given a higher score for diplomacy and international relations- a justified result given that the majority of the respondents have an engineering background and lack diplomatic skills. On the other hand, the respondents from the political, social background and diplomatic expertise need to build their skills

on the technical (water) side. The knowledge of legal instruments is also crucial in water diplomacy, but only those who practice water diplomacy are the ones who can confirm this. The same applies for the need for political guidance. In order to have a clearer vision on the needed skills, a specific training needs assessment has to be undertaken, preferably in small group discussions, in order to cover specific fields of training.

## LEBANON

### SKILLS NEEDED IN WATER DIPLOMACY-LEBANON

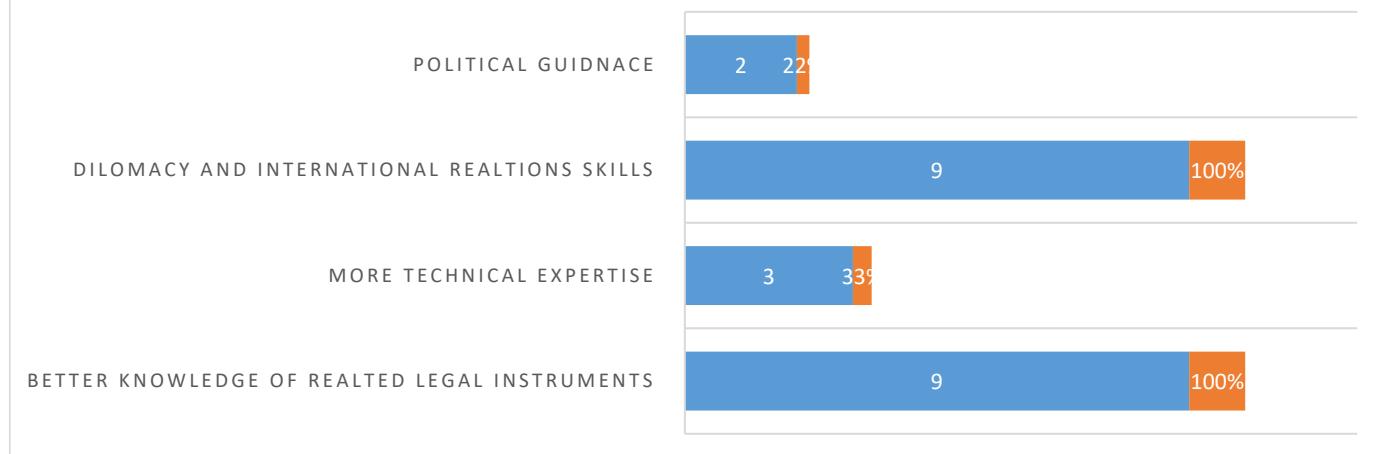


Figure 21: Type of skills deemed needed in water diplomacy, per the respondents-Lebanon

The majority of Lebanese respondents, given their technical experience, believe that with a better knowledge of related legal instruments and further specialised courses and trainings in diplomacy and international relations, they will be qualified to lead in water diplomacy. The area of water diplomacy needs to be improved, and women - alongside men - have a place in strengthening the science-base, knowledge base, trust building, cooperation, monitoring and reporting in this area. If women are not already part of an institution engaged in water diplomacy, they need to

demonstrate their knowledge of the field through various platforms and foster their professional networks. One of the alternatives proposed by the respondents might be by “engaging actively and articulately in national, regional and global meetings; like writing papers, peer reviewed journal articles, and publications; engaging in professional associations and communities of practice where their reputation can be built, which can help them to be brought in as experts or advisors or actors by governments pursuing water diplomacy”.

JORDAN

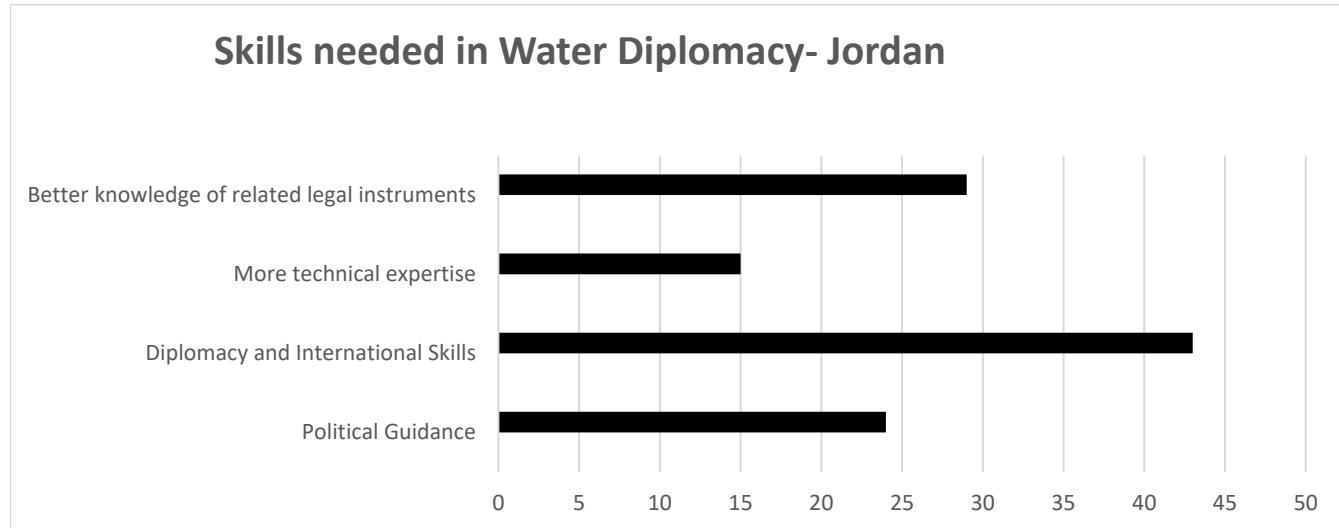


Figure 22: Type of skills deemed needed in water diplomacy, per the respondents- Jordan

The results of the survey and the responses collected, indicate that the majority stress the need to build capacity in all subjects that will qualify them to become water diplomats. The need for skills development varied and differed in according to the responses of the respondents, so that diplomacy and international relation skills and better knowledge of related legal instruments gained the highest scores, followed by political guidance, while the lowest was for

more technical expertise.

The respondents are aware of the importance of the topic and show a strong desire for acquiring the necessary skills to prepare them for this important level of responsibility. High percentages were assigned to very important skills that are not currently available and the selection of interviewees indicates their awareness and assessment of their current capabilities and needs.

MOROCCO

The majority of Moroccan respondents, regardless of their qualification and level of responsibility, recommend training and capacity building in terms of diplomacy and international relations skills as well as a better knowledge or related legal instruments in order to lead water diplomacy missions. It is noted that in this question, each respondent chose one answer and not a combination of answers.

- According to the analysis of the responses

of the women interviewed, 82% of the women interviewed have stated that they can be leaders in water diplomacy, including younger generation of managers;

- Among 18% of women who declared themselves unqualified to lead a water diplomacy mission, are in the middle decision-making positions and have extensive experience in the water sector. Fear and lack of confidence could be among the culprits;

- Capacity building in international law and negotiation skills is the most needed for women leaders to emerge and be effective in water diplomacy;
- 90% of women expressed interest in positions with more responsibility and mobility and 80% of the interviewees are willing to relocate to pursue careers in water diplomacy;

- Women with children are more likely not to show interest in such positions in the water diplomacy due to family obligations.

Ultimately, the results of the study show that the majority of the women respondents in the water sector regardless of their marital status are eager and ambitious to pursue a career, and hold key positions in the water sector, creating a balance between personal life and professional duties despite the constraints.

### Skills needed in Water Diplomacy- Morocco

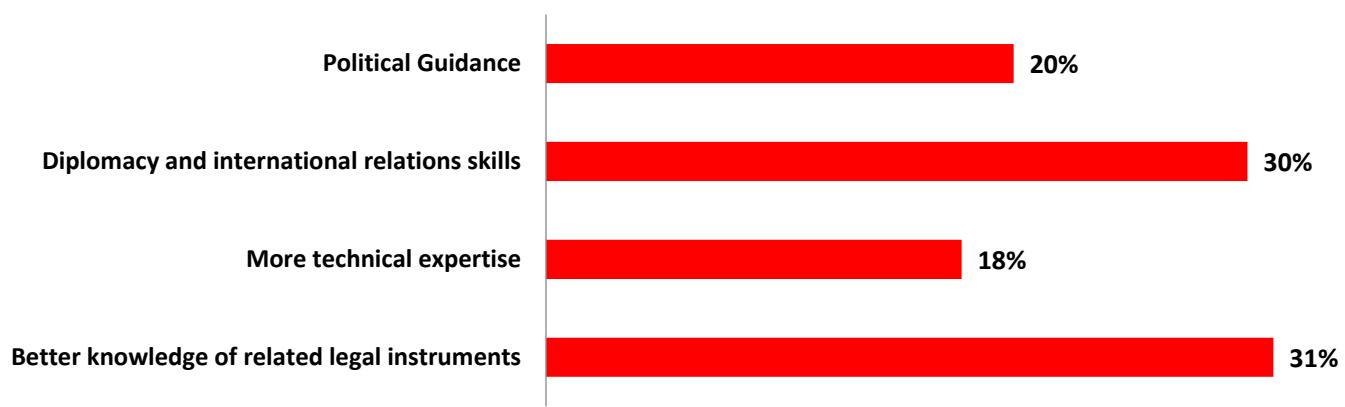


Figure 23: Type of skills deemed needed in water diplomacy, per the respondents- Morocco

## PALESTINE

Similar to the other countries, women working in the line water institutions are technically competent. The accession of Palestine to international conventions, including the UNWC 1997 Convention in 2015, among other conventions, in addition to the fact that all of Palestine's water resources are transboundary, necessitates the better knowledge of related legal instruments, and diplomatic and international relations skills for bilateral and regional negotiations with Riparian States.

The current interim water allocation

agreement and the related joint water committee has a technical mandate and is not governed by the principles of international law. However, any future water agreement with Riparian countries will be based on the global legal instruments and will require diplomatic and international relations skills. As stated earlier, although there is more participation, yet this participation remains outside the political sphere, and hence political guidance is key to decision making in water diplomacy with women around the table.

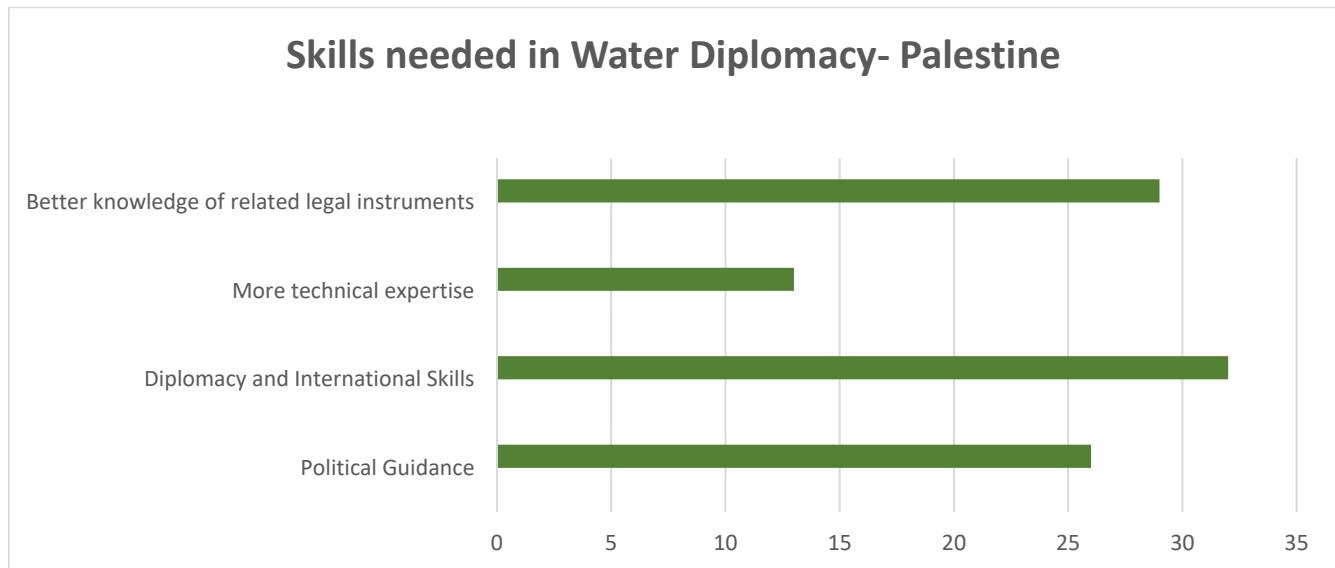


Figure 24: Type of skills deemed needed in water diplomacy, per the respondents- Palestine

## COMPARISON AMONG THE 5 COUNTRIES

The above graphs and narrative provide a glimpse of the situation within each of the five countries. Aiming to draw some comparison across the five countries on the female respondents' perceptions on the skills they feel they need to improve in order to have a

more comprehensive profile that responds to the elements of a water diplomat, the below table and graph provide a snapshot of the situation. This issue will be briefly explored also in the following chapter.

Skills needed to better lead in water diplomacy positions, as per female respondents	Egypt	Morocco	Lebanon	Jordan	Palestine
Political Guidance	20	20	22	24	26
Diplomacy and International Skills	47	30	100	43	32
More technical expertise	33	18	33	15	13
Better knowledge of related legal instruments	33	31	100	29	29

Table 4: A summary table of the skills needed to better lead in water diplomacy positions, per the respondents, across the 5 countries

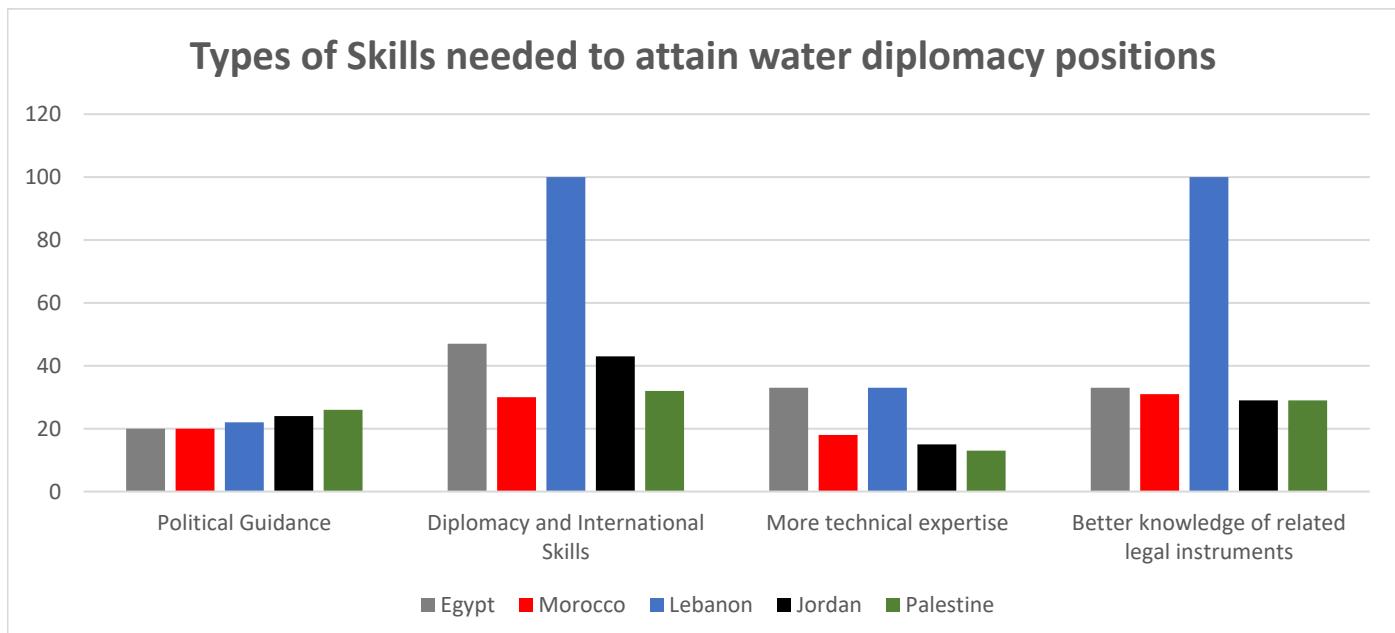


Figure 25: Type of Skills needed to better lead in water diplomacy positions, across the five countries

The figure above highlights that all of the respondents to the questionnaire in the five countries recognise the need to develop their diplomatic and international skills, as well as to acquire a better knowledge of related legal instruments. This is understandable given that the technical competency of the women of the sample group in each country is already established.

In the follow up to this comparative study and the drawing up of the action plan in terms of capacity building and mentorship, it would be possible to also tailor and respond to the specific skills needs per country.

**4) Definition of water diplomacy in terms of its use, as per the female (it is noted that the understanding of water diplomacy in the case of the Maghreb is**

as a way to resolve conflicts across users)

Up to present, there is no single agreed upon definition for water diplomacy (see below some widely used ones). The fact that water diplomacy can have different meanings to different stakeholders, including Riparian States is both an opportunity and a disadvantage. At the same time, there are commonalities across the plethora of definitions concerning the methods (diplomatic instruments), the scope (multi-track diplomacy) and the ultimate aim of cooperation, stability and peace<sup>34</sup>. It could be said that water diplomacy complements water cooperation with the use of diplomatic instruments, while it also delivers a dynamic way to uphold water cooperation and ease water related tensions<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> Grech-Madin C., Doring S., Kim K., Swain A., (2018), Negotiating water across levels: A peace and conflict 'Toolbox' for water diplomacy, *Journal of Hydrology*, Volume 559, pp 100-109

<sup>35</sup> Presentation by Yasuda Y., Senior Network & Transboundary

Water Cooperation Specialist, Global Water Partnership, entitled *Water Diplomacy: Tools and approaches*, delivered on 9-10 Dec2020 at the HydroDiplomacy training in the IGAD region

## What is hydro-diplomacy or water diplomacy?

“Hydro-diplomacy is a tool for states to balance interests related to national sovereignty while strengthening regional cooperation with countries sharing common resources. It is invaluable to ensure that shared water resources are managed efficiently, sustainably and equitable” (IUCN)

“All contact between (non)state actors and at least one state or international governmental organization over transboundary freshwater resources...” (riparian perspective – Clingendeal)

“...aiding or convincing (riparian states) as a part of national or organisational foreign and/or development policy” (this party perspective – Clingendeal)

“...a theory and practice of implementing adaptive water management for complex water issues” (TUFTS, MIT and Harvard)

“Water diplomacy is a multi-disciplinary concept that draws on technical, political and socio-economic knowledge; located at the intersect of science, policy and practice, and including both state and non-state actors.” (SIWI)

“Water diplomacy aims to promote cooperation and conflict prevention in relation to shared water resources and beyond the water sector.” (IHE-Delft)

Closely related to the specificities of the MENA region, is the understanding of hydrodiplomacy as<sup>36</sup> “based on the application of the concept of regional cooperation that creates dynamics of transboundary basin economic development. The concept of regional cooperation relies on regional cooperation framework with the aim of ensuring their domestic water needs and food security and enhance an economic development policy while preserving the international basin ecosystems”<sup>37,38</sup>

According to the GWH, hydrodiplomacy, also known as water diplomacy, is a strategic tool for reconciling conflicting interests including and beyond water, based on the increasing global recognition of the water-peace nexus/paradigm. We view water diplomacy as one form of preventive diplomacy that adopts a multidisciplinary approach and innovative tools, that uses water as a vehicle for peace and a bridge that connects the development and peace agendas. Peace, according to us, is not the absence of armed conflict but rather the prevalence of sustainable development.

Due to the different understandings of what is water diplomacy, the related question in the questionnaire was open-ended, and hence different combinations were chosen by the female respondents.

The graphs below and the subsequent narrative provide a glimpse of the situation within each of the five countries.

<sup>36</sup> Definition provided by Dr. Fadi Georges Comair, General Director of Hydraulic and Electric Resources, Lebanese Ministry of Energy and Water; President of IHP Program at UNESCO; President MEDURABLE; Honorary President of MENBO

<sup>37</sup> Fadi Georges Comair, (2018), *Hydrodiplomatie et Nexus «Eau-Energie-Alimentation»*, Editions Johanet

<sup>38</sup> Ballabio R., Comair F.G., Scalet M., Scoullos M. (Editors), (2015), *Science diplomacy and transboundary water management: The*

## EGYPT

The majority of the respondents in Egypt, recognise the importance of water diplomacy as a tool for peace building and a high-level dialogue among states on water issues primarily, and recognize its role as an exercise of benefit sharing and an attempt to progress in the face of political deadlocks. None of the respondents considers that water diplomacy is an ineffective tool in peace building. This understanding comes as a natural result of the complexity of the situation the respondents are witnessing with regards to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) negotiations with Ethiopia and Sudan, as well

as the negotiation on the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) with the Nile Basin Countries. The different percentages of choice per definition, reflect the hierarchy of priorities as well as the importance of Nile waters for Egyptians as a national security issue. Meanwhile, the fact that benefit sharing among riparians has ranked third, according to the respondents to the mapping exercise, reflects their understanding for the importance of reaching compromises and finding win-win solutions in transboundary water issues.

### Definition of Water Diplomacy- Egypt

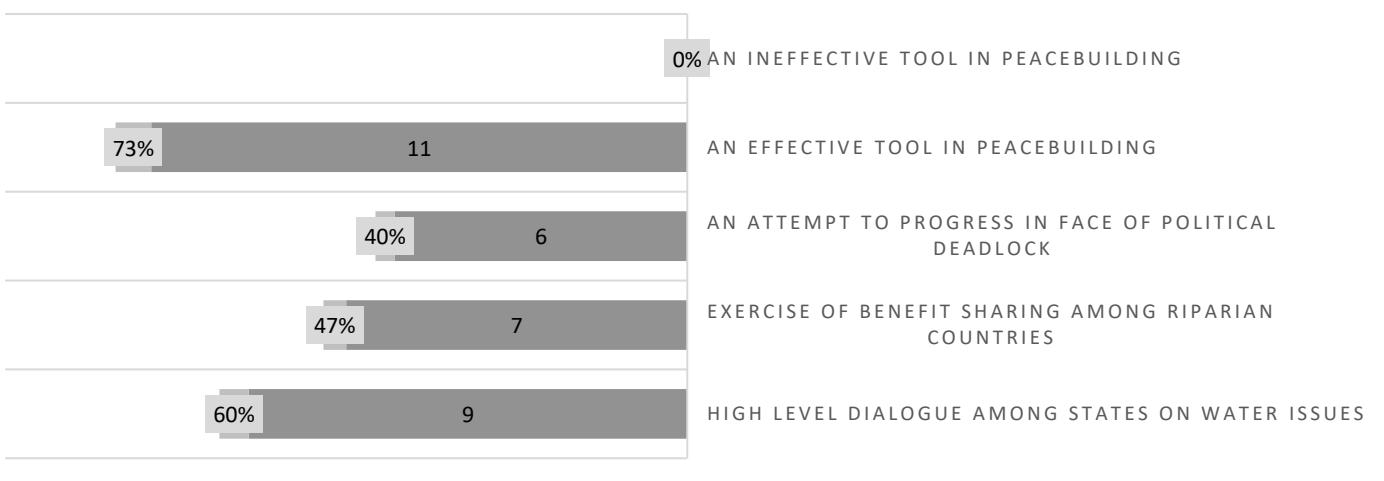


Figure 26: “How do you define Water Diplomacy?”- Egypt

## LEBANON

Most of the respondents define water diplomacy as a high-level dialogue among states on water issues and an exercise of benefit sharing among Riparian countries, while considering it, as the third option, also

as an effective tool in peace building.

The choice of the respondents is closely linked to Lebanon's adoption of a hydro-diplomacy concept in the Orontes Basin which is shared among Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey. The

management of the Orontes River was the first success of hydro-diplomacy in the Middle East, that has achieved a win-win situation, through negotiations between Lebanon and Syria leading to the 2002 Agreement, and contributing to the contributing to the reduction of injustice and inequities at transboundary and national level. The 2002 amended Agreement between Syria and Lebanon for the sharing of the waters of the Nahr el Kabir River basin was based on the UN Watercourses Convention principles, to which Lebanon had acceded in 1999, and resulted in a win-win situation for both countries.

The Orontes River case provides valid background on cooperation processes for

transboundary water resources by addressing key aspect of dealing with poor hydraulic resources in the region, limiting climate change effects for the riparian countries, improving access to sufficient quantities of good quality water for vulnerable populations, and improving water demand responses.

In addition, to support its efforts in the sustainable management of its transboundary water resources and in promoting hydro-diplomacy, Lebanon has been engaged since 2015 in an ongoing process of considering and assessing options for potentially acceding to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (the Water Convention).

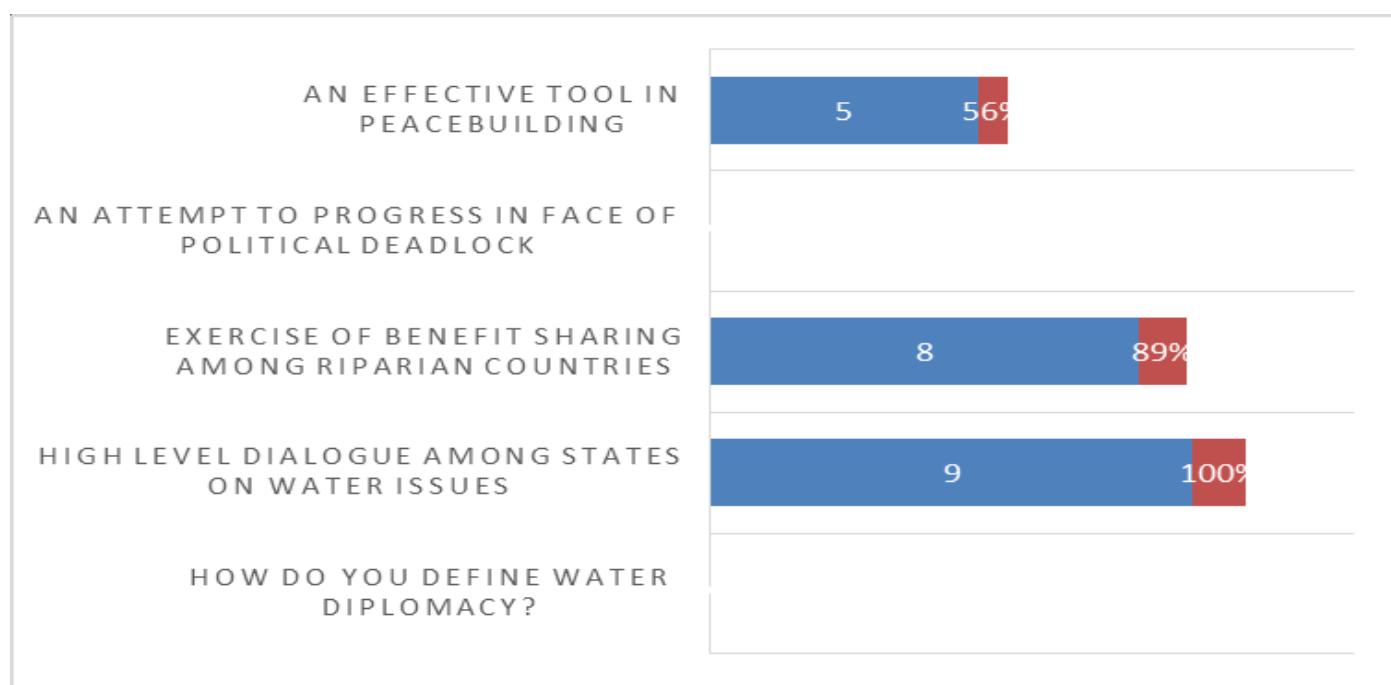


Figure 27: "How do you define Water Diplomacy?" - Lebanon

## JORDAN

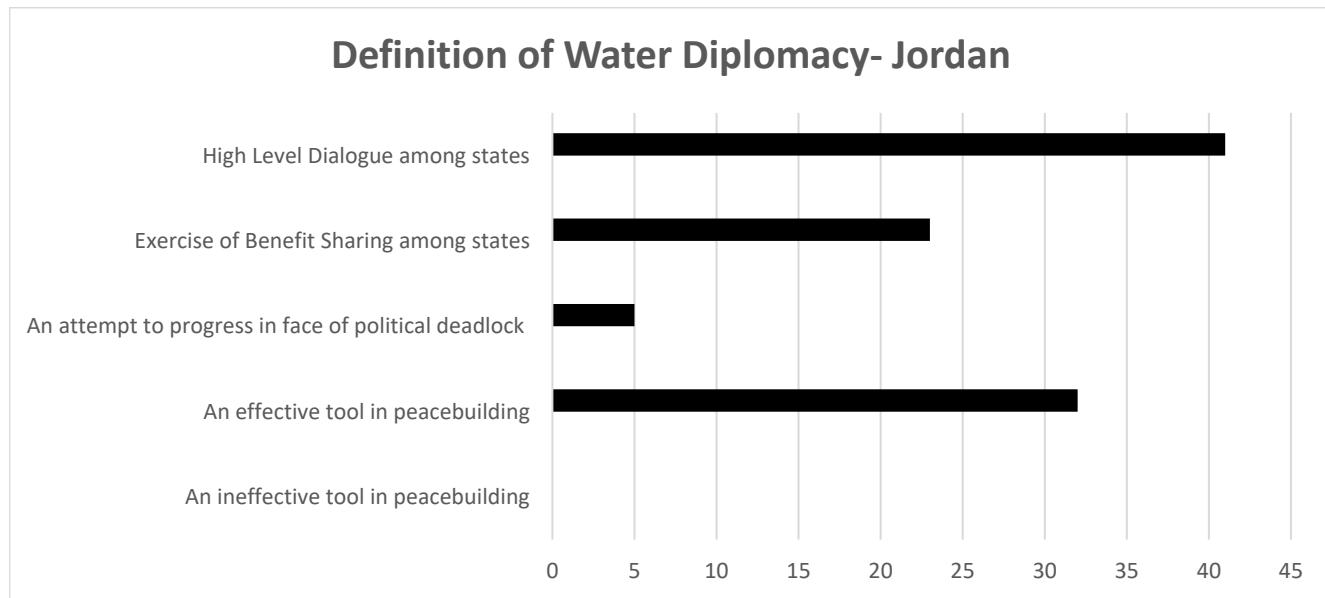


Figure 28: : “How do you define Water Diplomacy?”- Jordan

The responses of the respondents reflect Jordan’s experience with water diplomacy. The majority (41%) of the respondents believe that Water diplomacy is a high-level dialogue among states on water issues. The Wadi Araba agreement and its impact in stopping the cold war with Israel was the beginning of a long road in the hope that it will lead to a comprehensive peace. Therefore, a large percentage of the responses view water diplomacy as an effective tool in peacebuilding.

Jordan is embarking upon efforts to foster better relations with Saudi Arabia, Israel and Syria, with which it shares common water sources. Jordan is a fervent supporter of Dialogue between and among its neighbours. Jordan has therefore reached agreements on water sharing rights with Israel, Syria and a Memorandum of Understanding with Saudi Arabia. In 1994, Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty that included a detailed agreement regarding water sharing and seasonal transfers across borders. Although the agreement was bilateral and the three

other riparian entities—Syria, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories—were not included, given the political dynamics, it was a remarkable accomplishment. The treaty spells out allocations for both the Yarmouk and Jordan rivers and calls for joint efforts to prevent water pollution. This peace treaty established the Israel-Jordan Joint Water Committee (IJWC). The committee was tasked to seek experts and advisors as required, and form specialised subcommittees with technical tasks assigned. It also specified the volumes of water to be used, stored, and transferred by and to each country during a “summer” and a “winter” season, as well as joint projects to develop further water resources and prevent pollution. The terms of the 1987 agreement between Syria and Jordan defined the Syrian share of the Yarmouk and limited Syria to building 25 dams with a holding capacity of 156 mcm. The Wahda (Unity) Dam on the Yarmouk River was included in the agreement. The dam was completed in 2007. In 2007, Jordan and Syria agreed to expedite the implementation of agreements signed between the two

countries, especially with regards to shared water in the Yarmouk River Basin. The Joint Jordanian-Syrian Higher Committee was tasked with discussing how to make use of the Yarmouk River Basin water and how to

protect Yarmouk water against depletion. This also includes preparations for winter and storage at the Wahda Dam on the Yarmouk River.

## MOROCCO

### Definition of water diplomacy- Morocco

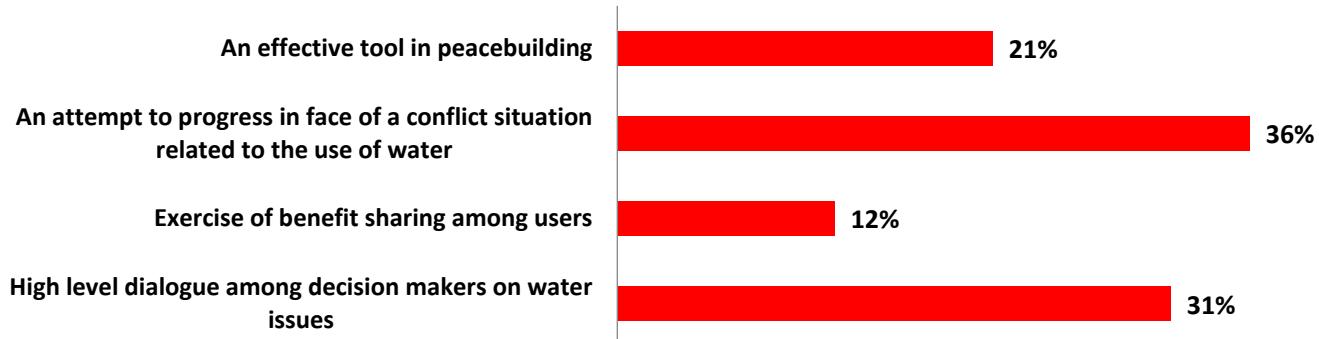


Figure 29: : “How do you define Water Diplomacy?”- Morocco

Maghreb countries are not familiar with the concept of water diplomacy, since the main strategic water resources are not shared with neighbouring countries, but the approach could have an added value in the resolution of local tensions. Despite of the fact that the concept is not very common within the Moroccan context, water diplomacy is perceived, per the respondents, as an attempt to progress in the case of a conflict situation related to water use as well as a high-level dialogue among decision makers on water issues.

Overall, in order to introduce the concept of water diplomacy and its implication within the Moroccan water community and make it more accessible, pedagogical efforts are needed to demystify the concept and make it more useful among water community, have to be pursued. A pilot approach for the implementation of water diplomacy processes within local governance bodies could be of great use, including in Basin Councils, Basins Agency's Board and Provincial Water Committees.

## PALESTINE

### Definition of Water Diplomacy -Palestine

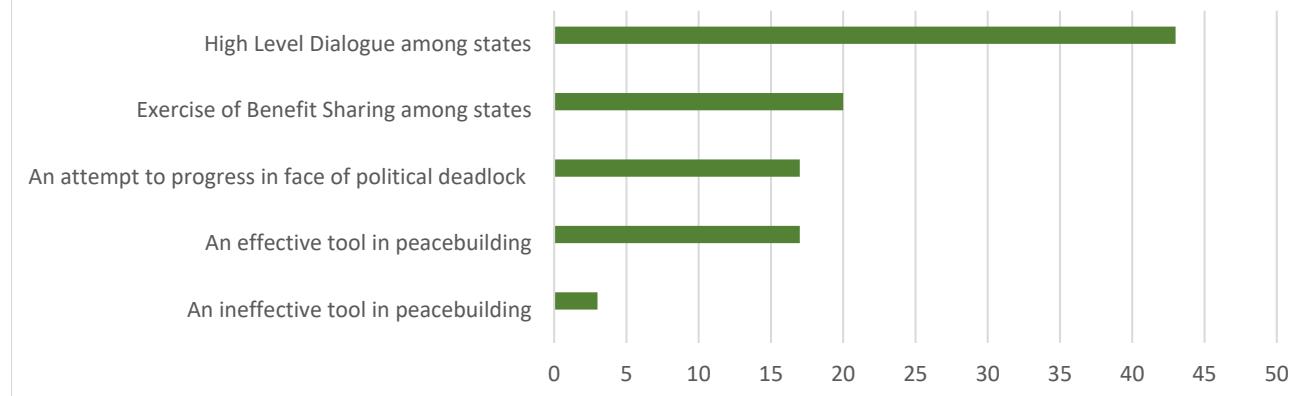


Figure 30: : “How do you define Water Diplomacy?”- Palestine

The perceived role(s) of water diplomacy is highly reflective of the dominance of hydropolitics in the region in the management of transboundary water resources (Wolf, A. 1995)<sup>39</sup>, and explains why water is one of the core issues in permanent status negotiations among the Palestinians and the Israelis. It is well acknowledged that water is life and that securing water rights, and control and management of water resources is an important pillar of viable sovereign states. (NAD, 2018).<sup>40</sup>

The choices of the Palestinian female respondents is in line with the current political context, which also affects the water sector- The Palestinian water experts, given the denial of control and access to water

resources, and driven by the limitations of a water allocation interim agreement, look less favourably to water diplomacy as an effective tool in peace building (17%), and more as a means to progress in the face of political deadlock. Given that all water resources are transboundary, a high-level dialogue with riparian states is at the core of water diplomatic efforts. Unlike the other countries of the study, Palestine has only an allocation arrangement, and not a bilateral water sharing agreement.

Women in water diplomacy in Palestine have to meet both the common challenges of shared water resources but also a complex political context.

<sup>39</sup> Wolf, A. (2009) A Long Term View of Water and International Security, Journal of Contemporary Research & Education, Issue 142, pages 67-75, August 2009

<sup>40</sup> NAD Negotiations Affairs Department (2018) Our Position Water. Available at <https://www.nad.ps/en/our-position/water>, last accessed January 2018

## COMPARISON AMONG THE 5 COUNTRIES

Table 5 and figure 31 below summarise the commonalities and differences among the five

countries in terms of how water diplomacy is viewed.

Definition of Water Diplomacy	Egypt	Morocco	Lebanon	Jordan	Palestine
An ineffective tool in peacebuilding	0	0	0	0	3
An effective tool in peacebuilding	73	21	56	32	17
An attempt to progress in face of political deadlock	40	36		5	17
Exercise of Benefit Sharing*	47	12	89	23	20
High Level Dialogue **	60	31	100	41	43

Table 5: Summary table of the Definition of Water Diplomacy, per the female respondents , across the five countries

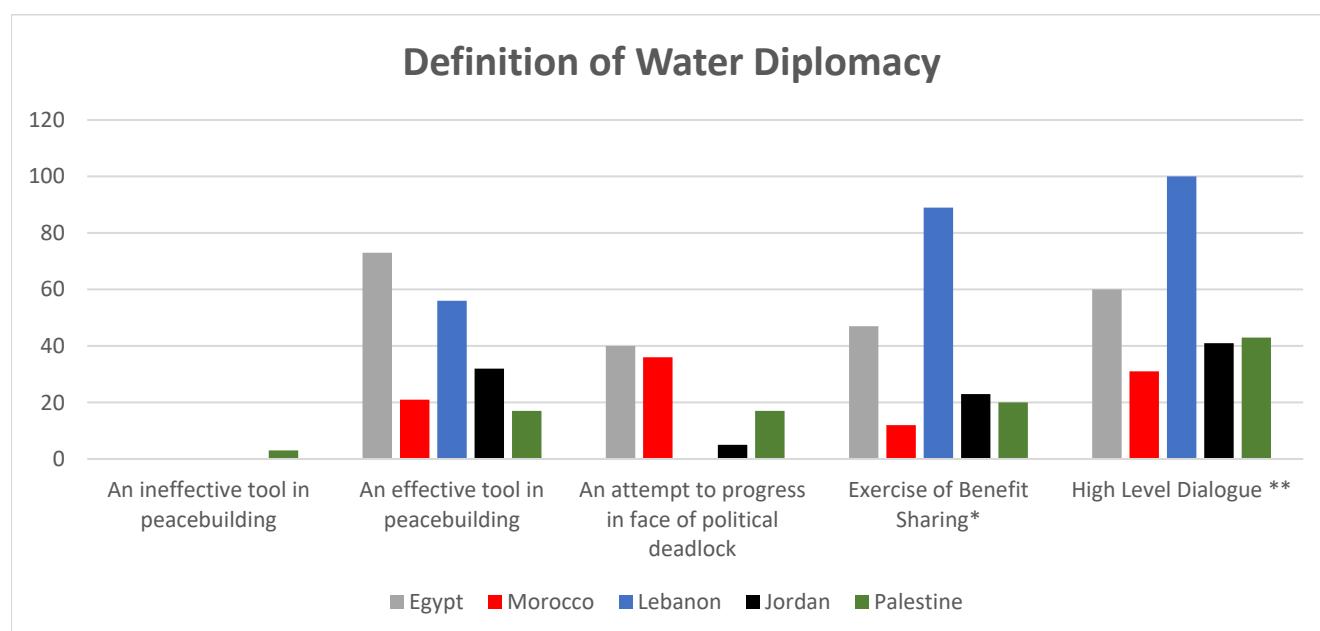


Figure 31: Definition of Water Diplomacy across the five countries

A comparison of the various definitions chosen by all the respondents in the five countries shows that the definition of water

diplomacy as a high-level dialogue among states on water issues was the most common across all five countries. The general

understanding is that water diplomacy is conducted at the State level, which limits the potential of using water as a vehicle for peace beyond the regional or bilateral level. In Morocco, there is a consensus that water diplomacy is a high-level dialogue among users, and hence is a tool for the people's diplomacy to reach common understandings among sectors and users.

This Comparative Study and mapping efforts are meant to empower women in water diplomacy at those different levels; to ensure that in the medium to long terms, women can be not only ministers or heads of delegation on transboundary water negotiations, but also directors of water user associations, water utilities, (joint) water commissions, and river basin organizations. Interestingly, and understandably, the experience of Palestine on negotiating on transboundary water resources, explains the result that it is the only country whose respondents also view water diplomacy as an ineffective tool in peacebuilding.

### **Water Diplomacy, Water Cooperation and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

Development, like water diplomacy, is also a form of preventive diplomacy. The attainment of the SDGs 2030 influence not only the development agenda, but also the peace and stability agenda, similar to the role of water cooperation. There is a general consensus that all SDGs have gender-aspects, and for nearly all development water is crucial. Therefore, part of the questionnaire to which the female water experts responded included questions on the linkages between SDG5 and SDG6.

In the Arab region, since 2014, the Arab

Forum for Sustainable Development (AFSD) is an annual high-level regional platform, where multiple stakeholders discuss coordination pathways for the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The findings and recommendations, conveying key messages from the region, are usually submitted to and presented at the annual High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council ECOSOC, ensuring that Arab countries have a voice at global level. Four countries, including Lebanon and Egypt, have submitted their Voluntary National Reviews and are committed to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven" per paragraph 79 of the 2030 Agenda.

The AFSD 2019 theme was "Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality in the Arab Region"; one of its key messages was that "All women, including those with disabilities, must be represented and participate in policymaking in order to build inclusive and equal societies in which everyone, regardless of gender or social or health status, may be empowered." The Arab Sustainable Development Report 2020 (ASDR-2020)<sup>41</sup> sounded the alarm that the region is not on track to achieving the SDGs. "The report advised that transformative change across social, economic, political, cultural and environmental dimensions is necessary."

Therefore, it can be clearly noticed that efforts are undertaken at the regional level to close the gap between SDG5 and the rest of the SDGs but a lot still needs to be achieved. Since SDG6 on water is almost cross-cutting due to the fact that water is a key factor for

<sup>41</sup> <https://asdr.unescwa.org/>

development, a special focus on SDG 6.5.1 and 6.5.2 on integrated water resources management and transboundary water cooperation respectively, is needed due to the region's geopolitical situation. Accordingly, the role of women in these two specific domains need to be more emphasised as main actors in the development process.

A water diplomat needs to be well aware of the global agendas, including the Sustainable Development Goal/Agenda 2030. Therefore, the questionnaire, included 4 questions on the inter-linkages of SDG 5 and SDG 6; one was closed while the remaining 3 were open. From the overall total of respondents in the five countries, between 60-80% confirmed the commitment to the interlinkages and understanding of the important role of the two specific SDGs in the related water issues. This is a re-assuring percentage that at least from the women perspective, the linkages between water and gender are clear and further bridging is made. The common narrative of linkages between water and women is that women are responsible to ensuring water in the household. It is noted that this section, as well as the overall Comparative Study, deal with the narrative in which women take part in the decision-making process on how to share and govern water resources.

Overall, and across the five countries, the female respondents have provided qualitative reflections and recommendations on engendering SDG6 implementation. For the 3 countries of the first mapping exercise, i.e. Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon, "different global approaches were proposed including the adoption of appropriate policies and legislative frameworks, development of gender sensitive action plans, and indicators, and raising public awareness in particular of

decision makers. In addition, and more specifically, one expert opinion was that it is better to invest at present in ensuring adequate access to safely managed drinking water and sanitation services in vulnerable communities (in households, schools, places of employment, hospitals) for women and men based on quick assessments and a set of short gender-sensitive consultations, rather than spending scarce time and resources on additional large-scale surveys and complex methodologies to compile national reports. Although it is recognised that gender and age disaggregated indicator methodologies and data collection efforts help to raise awareness, but they should be pursued as the means, and not as the goal of engendering SDG6."<sup>42</sup>

In Egypt, the female respondents concluded that although gender equality is central to all the SDGs, often women end up on the short end of the means of implementation. Although the interrelation is not clearly mentioned, women play an essential (sometimes unseen) role in water resources management especially on the local level. Moreover, being the first responsible on the education and awareness raising of the children, and being the first citizen impacted by the lack of water supply and sanitation services, she becomes one of the most important beneficiaries of the SDGs. Accordingly, they recommended that women (especially on grass root levels) should recognise the need to participate in water related issues while providing necessary frameworks allowing their participation.

This can be realised by ensuring to include the gender dimension in all future and ongoing activities, with a special focus on the role of women in this domain and ways to ensure

42 Empowering women in water diplomacy: A basic mapping of the challenges in Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan, Journal of Hydrology, Volume 569, February 2020,

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S002216941830951X>



their participation in the decision-making process. Additionally, there is a need to give a special focus on gathering gender disaggregated data and raising awareness of the importance of the topic through the work of specialised women networks and to ensure that their voices are heard. Moreover, there is a need to focus on involving women in capacity building on water management and other related sectors such as climate change and disaster risk reduction. National water resources plans should adopt tangible activities and performance indicators that interlink SDG6 and 5 to monitor and evaluate the progress achieved in this domain.

In the case of Morocco, and despite the under-representation of women in water decision-making positions, gender mainstreaming in the development of policies at the institutional level is progressing. More than 50% of respondents confirmed the implementation of the gender policy within their organisation and more than 60% confirmed their commitments in achieving both SDG5 and SDG6 in implementing water programs and projects. In addition, some are involved in programs of specific target indicators for gender mainstreaming in the water sector.

The main axes of implementation of gender mainstreaming include:

- Integrated water resource management;
- Drinking water supply and sanitation projects;
- Human Resource Management: capacity building, training and encouragement of women access to decision-making positions;
- Regulatory and legal framework.

In order to en-gender SDG 6 and achieve its

implementation, the respondents asked for the following:

- Ensuring that women's participation is taken into full consideration in the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of strategies and policies related to water.
- Mechanism between SDG 6 and the other SDGs must be put in place highlighting the interlinkages and interdependencies among goals ensuring that the gender perspective is reflected in any policy, program or law associated with the implementation of SDG6.
- More political engagement to address the financial gap in the WASH sector and to ensure women engagement and response to their specific needs in the sector.
- More capacity building and awareness raising activities especially designed for women
- Establishing a policy framework to empower women in water diplomacy and create the enabling environment for her to practice it at all levels.
- Emphasising the women's equal participation not just as actors of development or even beneficiaries but particularly as active players in all decision-making process. Rather than looking at women as part of vulnerable social groups, the goal should be to engage women in all the related elements listed in this goal (i.e.: in improving water efficiency, in improving transboundary water cooperation, etc).
- Benefiting from the experiences of developed countries

- Disaggregated data play a vital role in supporting these efforts, to enable policymakers to identify disadvantaged groups and to tailor support to their specific needs and priorities. Effective policies, strategies and subsidies must also be developed.

### Taking the cross-country analysis towards action

The above sections highlighted similarities and differences across the five countries in terms of the challenges women water experts face in order to be promoted to decision-making positions in water diplomacy and (transboundary) water cooperation settings.

Addressing the factors inhibiting female participation in decision-making positions is not an easy task. However, through targeted, tailored and hands-on capacity building and mentorship programmes, it is possible to alter and eventually change some of the factors that influence the acceptance of decision-making positions and/or improve the performance within leading water diplomacy positions. Building and/or strengthening comprehensive skills (i.e. the combination of technical, managerial and legal skills) has been identified by the female respondents across countries as the third key factor affecting the acceptable of decision-making positions. Tailored programmes, also considering individual country specificities and context, on diplomatic and international skills as well as on related legal instruments, would respond directly to the needed support identified by the female respondents across the five countries in order to have a more

comprehensive profile that responds to the elements of a water diplomat.

Furthermore, dynamic and ongoing training and capacity building on current international trends and developments, would assist female water diplomats to keep abreast with such processes and be well-placed to make use of water and water diplomacy as a tool for peace building and stability. In the case of Morocco, and the Maghreb, this could assist with expanding the concept of water diplomacy beyond its understanding as an intra-country dialogue across sectors and users. Eventually, this could also lead to reversing the view of water diplomacy as an ineffective tool in peacebuilding in the case of Palestine.

Overall, and with a forward-looking and change-induced outlook, carefully designed and meticulously delivered capacity building and mentorship programmes could tangibly support women attaining more decision-making positions and being more confident leaders in water diplomacy positions. The following chapter, delves into the skills and qualities of a good water diplomat, thus providing further context on the preparation of an integrated capacity building and mentorship programme.

## CHAPTER 3

### What makes a good water diplomat?

Chapter 3 of the Comparative Study is dedicated to identifying key attributes and qualities of a good Water Diplomat. The chapter commences with a brief literature review capturing the most important characteristics of a good water diplomat. It is then complemented with practical and hands-on insights and advice, with a focus on the gender element, from diplomats and transboundary water cooperation experts, received during a closed working meeting that was organised on December 11, 2020.

Given that diplomacy is a process that includes negotiations to avoid/manage/ or end a conflict, among others, it is useful to mention the four separate types of water conflicts concerning spatial scales that Ashton (2000)<sup>43</sup> recognised:

- a) within communities (conflicts take place over a relatively small area);
- b) between members of the same community;
- c) between communities (conflicts take place over a relatively larger scale: between communities or individuals of neighbouring

communities);

- d) national (conflicts take place among groups of communities within a country) and international (conflicts in relation to rivers which flow through international boundaries, triggering disputes rise between “upstream” and “downstream” countries).

In the MENA region however, water diplomacy is practiced at different levels in order to resolve water conflicts, which are considered of high importance and extreme sensitivity. In countries like Egypt, Palestine, Jordan,

<sup>43</sup> Ashton, P. J. (2000). Southern African water conflicts: Are they inevitable or preventable? *The African*

dialogue lecture series. Pretoria University, South Africa.

Lebanon that are the focus of the Comparative Study, where main water resources are transboundary, water diplomacy is applied at the transboundary basin level while in most of the Maghreb region, where main water resources are originating within the countries' borders, water diplomacy has a national aspect and serves more in the context of resolving conflicting priorities among different users and stakeholders. Whether practiced at the national, regional or international levels, the qualities of a good water diplomat are almost the same across contexts.

### **What does the literature review tell us about the qualities of a good (water) diplomat?**

Ambassador Robert D. Blackwill<sup>44</sup> -Henry A. Kissinger Senior Fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy Council on Foreign Relations- shared, in a document that he had prepared for Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, the experiences he acquired during his long work in Defence Departments and Foreign Capitals. The fifteen characteristics that were mentioned in the document and considered by the author to be fundamental for successful diplomats, are in line with the ones emphasised and voiced by the experts during the working meeting of December 2020. The most important of these qualities is to possess an abiding interest in and passion for the art and craft of diplomacy and international relations; ability to demonstrate an analytical temperament; and to ensure meticulous attention to detail.

Omar Al Bitar and Tom Fletcher<sup>45</sup> both made a comparison on what diplomats viewed as necessary skills needed in order to play their

roles in a manner acceptable to their officials, ranging from patience and courage to tact and creativity. From the authors' point of view, in order to be able to build a new generation of diplomats who are able, influential, and ethical, and ready to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, there is a need to develop and build capacity. Among the skills that the authors emphasised: a diplomat should be conservative and patient, neither shy, nor overly emotional, should know the customs and history of his hosts from the inside out, and should be able to position himself in the place of his interlocutor. They concluded on the necessity to empower diplomats with tools that enable them to fight for peace. They have to learn from history, the experiences of previous generations of diplomats at both local and regional levels. In this way they will be able to become diplomats that future generations will be proud to learn from.

Paule Webster<sup>46</sup> pointed out that one of the most important factors in developing the diplomatic career is the recognition of the role of diplomacy within the ruling system. He believes that for this to happen, diplomatic skills need to be learnt and cannot be inherited, passed on or be the subject of financial arrangements.

In a 2011 pilot study entitled "Water Diplomacy, a Niche for the Netherlands"<sup>47</sup>, Ruben van Gewndereen and Jan Rood from the Netherlands Institute of International Relations "Clingendael", elaborated on the potential of water diplomacy as a foreign policy niche for the Netherlands with an emphasis on how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the water sector can augment this

<sup>44</sup> Blackwill R.D., (2013), *Ideal Qualities of a Successful Diplomat*, Paper, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School

<sup>45</sup> Al Bitar O. and Fletcher T., (2017), *What Makes a Good Diplomat*, Emirates Diplomatic Academy 2017.

<sup>46</sup> Webster P., (2015), *Making Diplomacy Work: Chapter 2: Who Are the Diplomats and How Do They Operate?*

<sup>47</sup> Genderen, Ruben Van, Jan Rood (2011): *Water Diplomacy: A Niche for the Netherlands?* The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael'

potential. They enumerated the required qualities of Water Diplomats underlining that the mediators or "water diplomats" play a role in the effectiveness of water conflict mediation and can influence the outcomes. Some of these qualities include:

- neutrality toward both or all parties,
- legitimacy for both or all parties,
- status from a proven track record if it is an individual,
- interpersonal proficiency to understand interests and deal with emotions,
- technical expertise and the capacity to refer to scientific data,
- financial or political leverage and power if it is a representative of an International Organisation or a State,
- ability to build confidence and get concessions, capacity to guide negotiations to a compromise, occasional informality and shared cultures and values.

They confirmed the above-mentioned qualities through their interviews with international water experts and added that the main qualities that the mediator or mediating team needs to have, that many professional mediators lack, is technical, legal and regional river or aquifer basin know-how. The possibility of a water mediation team is mentioned, since the combination of diplomatic, legal, regional, hydrological knowledge and skills are hard to find in a single person. The interviewees also indicated that a multinational team of experts is considered more than one of government representatives.

Pohl and Swain<sup>48</sup> confirm that transboundary waters constitute a promising entry point for diplomats aiming for high peace dividends, warranting strong interest from foreign policy makers. Yet there is a lack of agency at the international level. They argue that foreign policy makers can and should do more to realize these dividends by exerting political leadership in fostering inter basin cooperation and integration. They propose a number of specific instruments of engagement. They recommend that in order to improve synergies across different sectors, knowledge needs to be distributed more effectively – knowledge about water cooperation to foreign policy decision-makers and knowledge about foreign policy making to technical experts.

The resolution of water conflicts should include capacity building and training in negotiation theory and related skills; water diplomats must be proficient in the skills of mediation, litigation, arbitration, and negotiation, to be able to write water agreements for managing international waters cordially and effectively (Zeraie et al, 2020)<sup>49</sup>.

## Hands-on insights from diplomats and practitioners

A closed virtual working meeting on *Strengthening the role of Women in Water Diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa: Learning/ Reflections from diplomats and transboundary water cooperation experts* was organised on 11 December 2020 (10:00-12:00 CET). The objective was to learn and capture the reflections and advice of diplomats and transboundary water cooperation experts on what makes a good (water) diplomat and

<sup>48</sup> Pohl, B., & Swain, A. (2017). Leveraging Diplomacy for Resolving Transboundary Water Problems. In Islam S. & Madani K. (Eds.), *Water Diplomacy in Action: Contingent Approaches to Managing Complex Water Problems* (pp. 19-34). London, UK; New York, NY, USA: Anthem Press.  
Retrieved March 9, 2021, from

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1jktqgh.8>

<sup>49</sup> Zareie, S., Bozorg-Haddad, O. & Loáiciga, H.A. A state-of-the-art review of water diplomacy. *Environ Dev Sustain* 23, 2337–2357 (2021).  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-020-00677-2>

focusing on gender aspects. This meeting was attended by a panel of diplomats and water experts who have held or continue to hold a high-level position in diplomatic spheres.

The esteemed professionals involved in this learning experience that complemented the Comparative Study, included (in alphabetical order):

- Ms. Francesca Bernadini, Independent consultant on environment, water and climate change, former Head of the Secretariat of the Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health, UNECE
- Ms. Mbarka Bouaida, Head of Regional Council of Guelmim Oued Noun (elected body), former Minister delegated in charge of Foreign Affairs
- Mr. Vangelis Constantianos, Executive Secretary/Regional Coordinator, GWP-Med
- Ambassador Khouloud Daibes, State of Palestine Ambassador in Germany and former Minister of Tourism
- Ms. Chahra Ksia, Expert in Hydrodiplomacy, Former President of Arab Water Security Center, League of Arab States
- Ms. Roula Majdalani, Leader, Climate Change and Natural Resources Sustainability Cluster, UN ESCWA
- Dr. Jasmine Moussa, Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations in Geneva
- H.E. Marwan Muasher, Vice President for Studies, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and former Foreign Minister of Jordan

- Mr. François Münger, Director, Geneva Water Hub

The discussion and the exchange revolved around three main questions:

1. In your experience, what are the key qualities/attributes of a good (water) diplomat?
2. Regarding the Comparative Study's survey findings on skills, and based on your own experience, are the identified skills relevant and sufficient or/ and what more is needed?
3. Which skills have assisted to overcome specific challenges faced as a female diplomat? (for the female respondents). Skills of female (water) diplomats that have impressed you (for the male speakers)?

The following section provides highlights of the valuable inputs regarding the skills and attributes of a good water diplomat, and have been grouped under the sub-headings below:

### Core skills and general background

Diplomatic skills encompass specific academic skills and abilities that enable diplomats to manage professional relationships during negotiations. The main skills of a good water diplomat, highlighted by the invited speakers, are summarised as follows:

- Possess the ability to show evidence of a good academic performance in different aspects of negotiations: technical, social, environmental, legal and International Water Law, in addition to good drafting skills and research, and the knowledge of foreign affairs, history and culture are highly important.
- Need to be totally familiar with the socio-political and cultural environment of the

region.

- Possess the ability to mobilise knowledge and ensure understanding of and for all partners.
- Provide attention to detail, as the problem would not be in the general principles or guidelines - the devil is in the detail.
- Be able to pick up the right issues and know what and up to what extent to offer (red lines)
- Need to wear different hats to understand the complexities of water diplomacy and work as a team leader to integrate and balance all the expertise.

### Communication skills and personal development

Developing strong communication skills is one of the priorities of a good diplomat. It helps better understand the counterpart(s) and to build trust and respect. Indeed, the recommendations of the diplomats and experts during the workshop were as follows:

- a) Improving the communication skills for a diplomat assists in the development and maintenance of a good relationship and creates communication bridges at different levels and with various interested groups (Universities, women, youth and civil society organisations, private sector, etc.).
- b) Building and investing time to maintain trust over the course of negotiations.
- c) A skilled diplomat is one that not only understands the position of his/her country but is able to articulate it

fluently and concisely to the other party(ies)/state(s).

- d) Speaking in the language of the other, in a language they understand, can be key to successful negotiations.
- e) A good diplomat has to possess a proactive personality, which helps to create conditions for solving problems and offering innovative and out-of-the-box solutions.
- f) Succeeding in a diplomatic role necessitates being flexible to go beyond the initial positions entrenched, and being knowledgeable about national interests (both of own country and other party) in order to find acceptable options and provide a range of alternatives and scenarios.
- g) Charisma and personal trait can have an important impact on professional success.
- h) A good diplomat must show a high degree of insight. Understanding different views and interacting with diverse audiences enhances the scope to introduce new proposals.
- i) Overcoming ego is highly important during negotiations because it often blows the message and becomes a weakness.
- j) It is key to avoid being emotional, otherwise the diplomat jeopardises losing the argument/position made. At the same time, it is imperative to respect the emotions of others.
- k) Acknowledging the difficulties in accessing the negotiation sphere, women need to be willing to go the

extra mile to prove themselves in the negotiations field.

- l) A successful diplomat is able to say no with a smile; the tone of delivering the message firmly and clearly with a smile is essential.
- m) Ensuring a participatory approach that includes the voices of all stakeholders and matching the evolving context of diplomacy that aims to be more inclusive and diverse.

### Women's specific skills

Women diplomats are playing an active role in various diplomatic spheres. They typically bring to the negotiation table specific characteristics, which are valuable elements for consensus building.

Indeed, several qualities of a good diplomat are possessed by women naturally, such as:

- Women have the natural ability to build trust among societies, people, families and across countries (between the 2 parties of a conflict).
- Women have the ability to combine analytical and constructive thinking.
- Women diplomats benefit from being more patient and having better skills at listening, in order to influence, persuade and negotiate.
- Women can pass a negative message more easily because they are perceived not to be harsh.
- Women diplomats show a greater understanding of sensitive issues by using their sixth sense and are able to command a superior reaction time when needing to

act fast.

However, women in diplomacy, according to the esteemed diplomats and experts attending the working meeting, need to develop additional skills, including:

- The ability to go outside of one's comfort zone;
- Leading and acting differently in order to change the structure of power, by providing more opportunities for other women to be represented at different levels of decision making and establishing networks;
- Be informed; a woman diplomat who puts forward an argument based on technical knowledge, will not be unheard;
- To identify innovative ways to support changes in both the cultural settings and in the legislative environment in order to advance gender equality.
- To adopt digitisation and advanced technological tools that bring additional perspectives, from which women can benefit significantly.

### Concluding the journey for the qualities of a good (water) diplomat with some quotes

#### H.E Marwan Muasher:

*"From my experience working in the government, there is nothing that shuts men off other than finding themselves in front of informed women; when women have the technical skills, all the stereotypes that men have about women just disappear"*

#### Ms. Roula Majdalani:

*"I would definitely propose to move into selecting topics for knowledge products, for*

research where the role of women is very apparent... linking the capacity building in water diplomacy with the global agenda... women need to be linked with the global process”

#### Ms. Francesca Bernadini:

“There is a need to explain international water law in different manners. Why is it useful? Why do we all gain something from observing these rules?...It is a process and not a set of pre-made arguments”

#### H.E. Ambassador Khouloud Daibes:

“Women are still invisible in the public sector and we have to empower them ... we need to look for other aspects ... how ready are women to take responsibilities? How ready are our societies to provide support?... the most important issues: education and culture”

#### H.E Mbarka Bouaida:

“It is very important to have the knowledge and technical background but it is not enough ... we need to lobby more... we need to change the culture... lobbying is as important as changing culture and to fight the silent violence against women in decision-making positions, which is felt much more than in other mid-senior positions”

#### Ms. Chahra Ksia:

“Civil societies are very important...we have to encourage women to study science and to specialise in water science...and push them to be leaders while also be able to work as a team”

#### Dr. Jasmine Moussa:

“It is not possible for someone to have skills in everything...we need to learn from each other within the negotiation team...I benefitted to much from my colleagues in the Ministry of Irrigation”

#### Mr. François Münger:

“Water diplomacy is not just negotiating between countries at the high level... water diplomacy means also resolving local water conflicts...from this initiative you should consider taking advantage of women diplomats at the local level...this initiative should push women to get access to the power in the field”

#### Mr. Vangelis Constantianos:

“Women today are educated well in all new approaches ... when we have women and men standing together side by side in a diplomatic arena, knowledge and skills that they can both have and develop are the mean elements that will put forward who is taking the lead... Education is the key element”



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# CONCLUSION

## Taking stock of the process and taking action

The Comparative Study aimed to shed light on the link across women, water and diplomacy, and on the barriers that keep the role of women in water diplomacy related decision-making largely underestimated.

The Comparative Study has discussed the challenges to the attainment of more women decision-makers in water diplomacy and transboundary water cooperation settings, in five Arab countries in the MENA region, including Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine. It builds upon a previous mapping exercise conducted in 2017 in three Levant countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine) and adopts the same methodology of surveying women in water-related institutions. The focus of the Comparative Study is to identify the similarities and the differences in the challenges female water experts faced among the five countries, and to identify the capacity building needs in terms of the various skills of a 21st century water diplomat.

The development and finalisation of the Comparative Study involved the following steps:

- Preparing the first draft of the Study, by conducting the surveys in Egypt and Morocco and reconnecting through a targeted follow up with the respondents in Jordan and Palestine, and the interviewees in Lebanon.
- Organising an online Consultation Workshop on 28 July 2020, with the network of women involved in the country surveys, that discussed and validated the findings of the five countries' baselines, as well as the comparative sections across countries, and also identified capacity building needs and ways to respond to them.
- Further finetuning the chapters, benefitting from input and feedback received during outreach and dissemination activities conducted in the latter part of 2020,

including:

- the IHE Delft online cross-regional workshop on '(En)Gendering Transboundary Water Governance: Feminist Perspectives on Water Conflict and Cooperation' (29-30 Sep 2020);
- the dedicated Session, organised by GWP-Med and GWH, on 'Women and Water Diplomacy in the MENA' during the 3rd Cairo Water Week (21 Oct 2020)<sup>50</sup>, which was the first presentation of the Comparative Study's findings in the Arab Region.
- Complementing the analysis on the qualities of a good water diplomat with input and reflections received during a closed working meeting with prominent diplomats and transboundary water cooperation experts on what makes a good (water) diplomat focusing on gender aspect (11 Dec 2020).

Based on the above, the Comparative Study was reviewed, revisited and finalised.

In short, and besides an Introduction and Conclusion, the Comparative Study consists of the following three chapters:

Chapter 1, includes the baseline analysis of the five countries, aiming to create a common reference framework on the role of women in water diplomacy within and across the five focus countries.

- Like in several parts of the MENA region, the five focus countries have made progress in eliminating gender disparities in public life. Substantial legislative,

regulatory and institutional reforms have been carried out aimed at promoting women's economic empowerment and encouraging women's access to decision-making positions. Furthermore, women's access to political decision-making positions has improved, both at the level of government as well as at parliamentary level. It is notable that several strategies and programmes, aimed at the transversal integration of gender equality in public policies and the reinforcing of gender equality in institutions, were also implemented in the five countries.

- However, progress with improving the influence of women in major political decision-making, remains slow. According to the input from the female respondents in the five countries, women are increasingly present in the water sector with high-level qualifications, while the public sector remains the most attractive for them.
- Despite their high qualification and skills, women, in the water sector for the five countries, remain a large minority in decision-making positions. Sexist stereotypes and lack of equal opportunities block their careers. The 'glass ceiling' is still very apparent for women trying to break into top management.

Chapter 2 contained a comparative analysis among the five focus countries to identify similarities and differences in terms of the challenges women water experts face in order to be promoted to decision making positions in water diplomacy and (transboundary) water cooperation settings. The purpose of this comparative study is to be

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.gwp.org/en/GWP-Mediterranean/WE-ACT/News-List-Page/women-in-water-diplomacy-in-the->

mena-region/



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able to propose general and targeted capacity building and mentorship programmes.

- The comparative analysis is an important step in understanding the differences in scale of the challenges common to the region across the five countries. It enables the recognition of the challenges that are outside the scope of the Capacity Building and Mentorship, which the Comparative Study has concluded to, but also provides a positive outlook on interventions that can assist in the process of empowerment of women in water diplomacy in the short- to mid-term.
- It is evident that across the five countries, with variations, there is a need and opportunity to improve the comprehensive set of skills of a water diplomat, through a tailored capacity building and mentorship programme.
- The additional acquiring of needed skills will increase the pool of female expertise, provide more opportunities, raise confidence, and have an impact, even if slow and gradual, on the perceptions of women leaders and decision makers, both to men and women.
- The different understandings of water diplomacy provide an opportunity to develop more collaboration and negotiation scenarios in transboundary water cooperation.

Chapter 3 focused on the qualities of a good (water) diplomat.

- It commenced by identifying types of water conflicts at the spatial scale, emphasising the different levels of water diplomacy practice domains in the MENA region according to the hydrological conditions of each country.

- Then a literature review, on the most important characteristics of a good diplomat, was presented, along with the outcomes of a closed working meeting with diplomats and transboundary water cooperation experts organised in December 2020 to deliberate on the topic with a focus on the gender aspect.

- The esteemed diplomats and experts provided valuable inputs regarding the skills and attributes of a good (water) diplomat, framing them under wider categories of core skills, communication skills, and skills specific to women. They converged on the necessity to have passion for the art of diplomacy; demonstrate analytical skills and good academic performance in different aspects of negotiations; ensure meticulous attention to details; be verbally fluent and concise; come across as neither shy, nor overly emotional; be patient, proactive and flexible, and knowledgeable of the other party's customs and history in order to find acceptable options and provide a range of alternatives; furthermore, be able to say no with a smile.
- Female (water) diplomats or mediators bring to the negotiation table skills that can be valuable for consensus building. For example, women have the natural ability to build trust, to combine analytical and constructive thinking, have better listening and negotiation skills, and show a greater understanding of sensitive issues. At the same time, additional skills that would benefit female water diplomats, include the ability to go outside one's comfort zone, to identify innovative ways to support changes in cultural settings and to open up to digitisation and advanced technological tools. A female water diplomat who is informed and puts forward an argument based on technical

knowledge, will make all the stereotypes that men have about women disappear.

Further to the analytical work, it is important to note that the Comparative Study has provided the enabling environment for the initiation of an informal network of women in the five countries for experience sharing and peer-to-peer learning, further giving birth to a community of practice of women in water diplomacy across the region.

Moreover, through the outreach and dissemination activities, the analytical work has evolved into an Initiative to support women involved in water diplomacy in the MENA region, led by the 6 co-authors of the Comparative Study and with the institutional co-ordination and support of GWP-Med and the Geneva Water Hub.

## What's next?

The launching of the Comparative Study is being complemented by targeted dissemination efforts, including selected publications like the MEDRC Transboundary Waters Practitioners Briefing Series, the First Analytic Annual Report of the Global Observatory on Water and Peace, the IHE book on '(En-)Gendering Transboundary Water Governance', to name a few already in progress (as of the time of this publication).

## Linkages with media and journalism

Although the role of the media in achieving gender equality has been recognised already more than 26 years ago in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action<sup>51</sup>, there has been little -if any- progress on this strategic objective.

Until now, three themes describe how media represent gender across the world. First, women are under-represented, which erroneously implies that men are the cultural standard and women are unimportant or invisible. Second, men and women are portrayed in stereotypical ways that reflect and sustain socially endorsed views of gender. Third, depictions of relationships between men and women emphasise traditional roles and normalise violence against women.

In the MENA region, *The Men and Women for Gender Equality programme* of the UN Women's Regional Office for the Arab States supported the establishment of the UN Women Regional Office for Arab States' Gender Innovation Agora as a platform for youth advocates across the region to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in their national context, where media outlets, journalists and media students are being engaged by the programme to promote gender-sensitive reporting and monitoring.

Having a wider regional scope, the Circle of Mediterranean Journalists for Environment and Sustainable Development (COMJESD)<sup>52</sup>, was established in 2002 jointly by the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE) and GWP-Med. The Circle is an active forum for regular exchange of information and views about crucial Euro-Mediterranean environmental and sustainable development issues, the promotion of capacity building of media professionals and the organisation of joint and concerted actions. The aim is to strengthen the capacity of information and communication experts for sensitising and informing Mediterranean societies, improving

<sup>51</sup>

[https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing\\_Decl](https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Decl)

aration\_and\_Platform\_for\_Action.pdf

<sup>52</sup> <https://mio-eclsde.org/our-networks/>

democratic and participatory processes by involving all, including women, youth and marginalised groups, and in directing more effectively the flow of information produced by scientists, NGOs, etc. to decision-makers, ultimately influencing policy formulation and policy implementation. At present, the Circle is composed of 61 Journalists from around the Mediterranean.

The MENA region benefits from a number of ongoing initiatives and processes that focus on water, media and gender, and with which synergies will be explored, including:

- “The Blue Peace Media Lab has been developed under the umbrella of the Blue Peace Initiative and aims to promote sustainability in water management and cooperation in the Middle East, with a particular focus on activities in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Iran and, to a more limited degree, Syria. The assumption is that successful joint management of scarce water resources will promote dialogue and lasting peace in the region. Only an informed public can constructively influence policy dialogue on water-related issues. This why the role of media professionals and journalists is crucial to foster grounded knowledge and information-sharing in the region.”<sup>53</sup>
- In summer 2020, the Regional Program Energy Security and Climate Change Middle East and North Africa (KAS - REMENA) of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and CEWAS held jointly a Water Journalism Academy “to involve and work with media enthusiasts to engage in in-depth reporting on pressing water and sanitation matters across the MENA

<sup>53</sup> Fact Sheet, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

<sup>54</sup> <https://womanity.org/media-coalition-against-gender-inequality/>

region.”

- Linking will be explored with the work of networks and individual organisations on media and gender, for example The Womanity Foundation<sup>54</sup>, the Al-Fanar Media<sup>55</sup>, Revolve Magazine<sup>56</sup> as well as the Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ)<sup>57</sup>, to name a few.

The above are solid steps in the right direction, even if there is still a long way to go. Media can be a soft power utilised to advocate for gender-mainstreaming in water diplomacy. Thus, by highlighting the main barriers, journalists in collaboration with experts could explore the means to overcome them and identify opportunities, being inspired and benefitting from other countries in the region and beyond that have succeeded to benefit from women’s inclusion in water negotiations and water governance overall.

### Linkages with relevant stakeholders and organisations

The Initiative intends to be open, inclusive and cultivate synergies and operational linkages with similar-minded networks, organisations and institutions. There is significant value in the network, through the use and sharing of information gained, enhancing regional dialogues around shared waters, increasing the number of women engaging in high-level basin negotiation processes; and strengthen political dialogues and willingness to cooperate among women water leaders. With this in mind, the Initiative aims to continue investing on and expanding its network by:

- Focusing on effective internal and external communication to ensure that

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.al-fanarmedia.org/about/>

<sup>56</sup> <https://revolve.media/magazine/>

<sup>57</sup> <https://en.arij.net/site-message/>

the messages come across loud and clear.

- Developing and/or strengthening partnerships with organisations and actors working for the empowerment of women in water diplomacy, including through joint activity lines.
- Cultivating operational linkages with other processes/initiatives working on water diplomacy and gender.
- Engaging, meaningfully, more young female professionals in water diplomacy processes.
- Offering communication skills training and use of media to members of the women network.

## Work in 2021 and beyond

The Initiative's Action Plan for 2021 and beyond includes:

- ✓ Analytical Work on:
  - Deepening the existing analysis in the five countries by getting additional perceptions
  - Expanding with additional country

analyses (including Tunisia, Algeria and more, while the inclusion of Iraq and Syria will also be explored depending on politico-security developments)

- ✓ Targeted Capacity Building, with emphasis on opportunities arising from operational synergies with partners.
- ✓ A practical Mentorship Programme, involving a series of bimonthly 60-Minutes sessions with prominent diplomats and transboundary water cooperation experts.

Through hands-on and pragmatic support, mentoring a minimum of 50 women over a 3-year period, the Initiative aims to transform the informal network of MENA women that was created as a result of the Comparative Study's work, into a dynamic and growing Community of Practice working on Gender and Water Diplomacy in the MENA region.

The Initiative is committed to actively work for making a change and transform the informal network of MENA women that was created as a result of the Comparative Study's work, into a Community of Practice working on Gender and Water Diplomacy in the region in order to contribute to the promotion of the role of women in water diplomacy.