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RENÉ MOAWAD FOUNDATION (LEBANON): PRESENTATION, PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES ON GENDER ISSUES AND WORK PLAN FOR GEWAMED

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1. RMF GENERAL DESCRIPTION

RMF is a Lebanese non-governmental organization created in 1990 whose mission is defined as follows:

- To promote the social, economic, and rural development of Lebanon.
- To contribute to building a responsible civil society that will strengthen national unity and promote democratic values and social justice.

Since its inception, the RMF has developed numerous projects in the following four sectors.

Health

After the end of the war in 1991, only a few medical facilities remained operational in North Lebanon due to the physical destruction and/or lack of financial means. Most of them belonged to the private sector and thus were not affordable for the majority of the local population. In order to provide healthcare services to these needy populations, RMF opened a dispensary in Zgharta. Over the past decade, it has expanded the range of its services to include a pharmacy, a lab, a dental clinic and an ophthalmologic clinic, in addition to offering general and specialized check-ups. As part of the expansion of services, three mobile clinics were equipped to reach populations in remote areas; they serve 115 villages.

The dispensary also participates in nation-wide vaccination campaigns and awareness campaigns. Each year, more than 40,000 consultations are made.

Agriculture

Agriculture is one of the main economic sectors of North Lebanon. About 70% of the population depends either directly or indirectly on income from this sector, even though it has become less competitive in recent years due to the high costs of production and the low valorization of agricultural products on the markets. Various factors play a part in stifling the development of the agricultural sector such as the lack of an agricultural policy and extension services, the lack of mechanization, and the difficulty in accessing credit. Consequently, the living conditions of rural families have worsened leading to an increasing rural exodus of mostly young, high-skilled people.

RMF's Agricultural Center of the North (ACN) was created in 1994 with the objective of helping small-scale farmers increase their competitiveness by reducing their costs of production and increasing the final products' added value. Services provided to farmers have been progressively widened and now include, among others, mechanization services, extension programmes and counseling, a large-scale refrigerated storage unit, and a conditioning workshop. An experimental nursery and a pilot farm as well as a dairy processing unit complete the facilities. In the long-term, these experimental projects will lead to a diversification of crops and varieties and will contribute to the reduction of the gap between consumers' demand and local supply.

Each year around 3,000 farmers benefit from the various services provided by RMF.

Social

The focus of RMF's social development programme is on educational activities with annual vocational trainings (computer science, graphic design, sewing, agro-processing, etc.) and the economic and social empowerment of women through literacy campaigns, gender awareness sessions, and the study of basics economics.

During the past few years, a special effort has been made to reintegrate working children into the formal or informal education cycle and to support children at risk of dropping out due to learning difficulties or financial reasons.

A center dedicated to working children has been opened in 2005. Run by a team that consists of specialized educators, social workers, a psychologist, a lawyer and a family doctor, the center provides non-formal education services such as literacy classes, handicraft classes, as well as helping teenagers reintegrate the formal educational sector (vocational programmes). The center is located in Bab El Tebbaneh, which is the poorest area of Tripoli – the second city of Lebanon in terms of population – and where the percentage of working children is the highest in all of Lebanon.

Currently, 120 children aged from 10 to 14 are enrolled in the daily courses. Special attention is paid to girls, as their dropout rate is higher than that among boys and they often end up working as maids or charged with household chores at a very young age. However, their work is less perceptible than boys' who work in garages or workshops where they have to deal with a hazardous environment. On a nation-wide level, a programme aiming at combating child labor includes, beside an advocacy component, literacy and vocational programmes as well as remedial classes.

A youth community center has just been inaugurated in Mejdlaya (North Lebanon). It hosts training rooms, an industrial kitchen for vocational training with a showroom where local products are presented to the public, a restaurant, a new information and communication technologies center, and a daycare center. This youth center is also used as a meeting point for youth clubs, local associations, and other members of the community.

Democracy and Human Rights

The objective of this programme is to provide civil society with tools for the consolidation of democratic practices. Conferences and workshops relating to public concerns such as the participation of women in politics and economics, gender issues and human rights were organized throughout Lebanon (Table 1).

Table 1. Events carried out by RMF

Date	Title	Number of participants
12/13/14 feb 2001	Introduction on the concept of gender	21 women from local associations
12/13 July 2002	Economically empowering women	31 women
21/22/23 Feb 2003	Women, gender and social development	26 participants
4/5 April 2003	Women, gender and development	37 participants

3 issues of *Hurryat* were specifically dedicated to:

- *Women's progress* (1997),
- *Women, Politics and Empowerment* (1998), and
- *Human Rights in 50 years* (1999).

A study on the problem of working children was conducted which was followed by the implementation of literacy campaigns, vocational counseling, the organization of extra-curricular activities and awareness sessions on children's legal rights.

A public legislative forum, which includes parliamentarians, academics, experts, union representatives, civil society activists, and private and public sectors stakeholders, aims at researching and debating draft laws.

Since 2003, RMF has been helping in the creation of human rights clubs in schools which provide a platform for debates on citizenship, human rights, and democracy and which are part of the awareness and advocacy campaigns. In 2005-2006, 21 clubs consisting of more than 500 teenagers aged from 12 to 18, were active all over Lebanon.

2. PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES IN GENDER AND/OR WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Literacy and Economic Literacy Classes

Organized on a yearly basis in North Lebanon, these programmes specifically target rural women; the rate of illiteracy among women being double the men's rate in North Lebanon. In addition to "traditional" literacy classes, a component, which focuses on economic issues that women need to deal with, was added in response to women's demands.

Trainings Workshops

In partnership with the Center for Research and Training on Development (CRTD), RMF engaged in a series of training workshops including training of trainers, qualitative tools of research, advocacy, gender and strategic planning, communication and economic literacy that were organized in the Middle East and North Africa region. In addition, several local workshops were carried out on gender and development, targeting field staff of local NGOs and associations.

A series of conferences and seminars targeting students, professors, media and liberal professions were held to promote the political participation of women.

RWIGAT (Rural Women Income Generating Activities Project) – (Sept 2004/Sept 2005)

This one-year project, funded by IFAD through the Ministry of Agriculture, was carried out in partnership with another Lebanese NGO with the general objective of contributing to a sustainable rural economy that strengthens the social and economic fabric of local communities and ultimately plays a prominent role in the overall development of Lebanon's economy and society as well as empowering rural areas by targeting rural women with regard to:

- Improving the living standards of the poorest strata.
- Strengthening rural women's capabilities leading to economic empowerment.
- Organizing rural women, either through promoting group formations and/or strengthening the local rural associations and community based organizations.

The activities carried out during this one year project are:

- Identification of local Cooperatives, Associations and groups.
- Identification of 25 Income Generating Activities (IGAs) which are intended to enhance the productivity of selected groups.
- Execution of administrative-support training, subject-specific training and marketing training as part of the capacity building programme.
- Preparation of technical abstract materials in Arabic.
- Implementation and supervision of IGAs.

Networking and Training Rural Women's Cooperatives to Build Marketing Capacity – CoopNet (Oct 2005 – Sept 2006)

Following up on RWIGAT and based on its experience, the goal of the project targeting rural women cooperatives is to provide organizational development for and create a network of 25 rural women's cooperatives to address their marketing and sales needs. The goal therefore consists of two components, each of which has its own objectives, defined below.

- Organizational development: build the capacity of 25 rural women's cooperatives in business communication, marketing, group management and accounting.

- Networking: creation of a network of rural women's cooperatives for collaboration and the exchange of information that would expand their marketing and sales capacities beyond those of a single cooperative.

The activities to be carried out are:

- creation and support of a network,
- organization and implementation of specialized workshops (accounting, marketing, business communication skills, HACCP process among others).

RMFs experience in water related projects is limited to small-scale infrastructure improvements, such as the construction of wells and of networks allowing access to potable water or for irrigation purposes.

3. PROPOSITIONS TO PROMOTE THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE FIELDS OF WATER RESOURCES

- At the organization level: capacity building and exchanging experiences will improve the consideration of gender issues throughout the entire project cycle, especially during the assessment and evaluation phases.
- At the national level: dissemination of information and data, awareness on gender issues in terms of water resources management targeting all the stakeholders, advocacy activities to promote the role of women.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES – 2006 WORK PLAN (DRAFT)

Activities to be implemented according to the work packages are:

- Implementation of country information knowledge base / review paper.
- Establishment of a National Central Focal Point.
- Participation in Final Plan for using and disseminating knowledge and exchanging information.
- Report on raising public participation and awareness at different society levels.
- Organization and implementation of a national seminar.
- Report on the existing national and regional policy.
- The creation on a website, as Lebanon was not defined as a priority country, is not budgeted but we might be able to create an additional page to RMF website that would be dedicated to GEWAMED but in any case all the information will be forwarded to the regional website.

Additional activities that might be implemented:

- Fields survey in a sample of villages to collect detailed data.
- Implementation of a GIS to map national and local data.

Available Budget (in euro):

- Direct cost: 44580
 - ❖ Coordination: 28 500
 - ❖ Travel and subsistence: 9080
 - ❖ Other costs: 7000
- Indirect cost: 4275
- Total: 48 855