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Gender Assessment

Tarim District, Hadramout Governorate

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Assessing the Roles of Women and Youth in Water Management and Conflict Resolution under the 'Water for Peace in Yemen: Strengthening the Role of Women in Water Conflict Resolution and Climate Change Mitigation' Project

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Executive Summary

This gender assessment was conducted under the ‘Water for Peace in Yemen: Strengthening the Role of Women in Water Conflict Resolution and Climate Change Mitigation’ project, implemented by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), with funding from the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The project aims to reduce the degrading relations between community members and the re-emergence of conflicts over water-resources by enabling women and youth, and other marginalized members of conflict-affected communities to play an important role in the facilitation of conflict-resolution in a peaceful and inclusive manner. The assessment was conducted to make recommendations for project implementation, as well as future interventions by diverse stakeholders.

Interviews were conducted during this assessment, involving stakeholders in the agricultural and water sectors in different parts of Tarim District. A total of 11 interviews were conducted with beneficiaries from the agriculture and water sectors (four men and four women) aged from 25 to 45 years. Three interviews were carried out with community leaders, including members of the local authorities, civil society, and irrigation and water associations. Additionally, a number of meetings were held with decision makers from the agricultural and administrative sectors.

The farmers and community leaders who were interviewed for this assessment believe that traditional gender roles have changed in the district, particularly in the agriculture and water sectors following the 2008 floods, which washed away the soil in many fertile areas and destroyed many houses. There have also been other reasons since the outbreak of the 2015 conflict in Yemen, including economic crises, the displacement of people from other governorates and a lack of job opportunities, which have affected the conventional roles of women and youth. Women play a primary role in agriculture in the district, such as caring for livestock. Youth, on the other hand, have development and craftsmanship roles, as they have abandoned agriculture due to poor participation, a decline in vegetation, water shortages and soil erosion.

Conflicts in agriculture and water sectors are often caused by soil erosion, floods or drains blocked by trees or rubble. They can occur because of the urban sprawl that has taken over agricultural land, watercourses in the valley and traditional irrigation channels. Other problems are caused by the random drilling of wells in the region. These reduce the amount of ground water in the district, which results in a decline in vegetation. Such problems are getting worse due to a lack of intervention by competent authorities from the agriculture and water sectors, as well as from civil society associations and institutions. As a result, stakeholders resort to centuries-old traditional laws (rules) to help them solve their problems. The stakeholders fear that if the law takes its course, it may take a long time to resolve a problem. Indeed, problems could become worse without the active participation of diverse stakeholders, including women and youth. However, the participation of women occurs rarely and there are less recent examples in contrast to few recent examples of youth participation.

The assessment reviews the primary gender roles in Tarim District. Among the primary issues relating to gender roles are legal rights, violence against women and girls, and participation in decision-making related to the lives of women and youth. The assessment also considers expanding the participation of women and youth in water management and the resolution of water-based conflicts. It reviews the social status of women and youth and the changes that have taken place in other sectors over the past five years. Some of the general aspects of gender roles in Tarim District include the following:

- **Women’s participation requires community awareness by local authorities, social leaders, religious scholars and civil society leaders.**

The conservative community in Tarim District may not accept the noticeable presence of women or their broad participation in different aspects of life, due to tradition and criticism from religious scholars, who have authority and power in this society. Therefore, women’s participation has been reduced to women-based associations, whose work is limited to supporting women. Moreover, women are involved, and in small numbers, only in the education and health sectors. They are hardly active in other sectors of practical significance.

- **Women could take on many agricultural and community tasks, yet they have few rights, such as the right to make decisions.**

Landowners and farmers often undermine the tremendous efforts made by women in the agricultural sector. Their efforts should be rewarded by higher wages or by taking into account their social status as mothers and caregivers and for their work at home and on the farm. Such efforts could also be rewarded by recognising women’s rights to education and to leadership positions, both in the public and the private sectors.

- **Lack of legal awareness**

The lack of legal awareness among men and women is a major obstacle, preventing many from enjoying their rights that are guaranteed by law. Women, whose right to litigate is guaranteed by law, are denied access to justice, due to customs and tradition. Moreover, women are often denied their basic rights, such as the right to inherit land and property. Honour-related crimes are often hidden and never brought before the courts, as they are internally resolved between families.

- **Youth can create new developments and enhance the professionalism of society**

High levels of educational attainment, wide-ranging knowledge and open minds have helped youth to lead all aspects of civil society. Moreover, youth have contributed to industrial and scientific innovation by the private sector. However, they have often been restricted by parental authority, in terms of decision-making at the family level and their right to property. Society does not provide youth with opportunities to express their opinions and ideas, despite that the local authority is working to create outlets for them. However, in general, everyone has a part to play in involving youth in decision-making and allowing them to be represented in all sectors without undermining their experience.

- **Poor intervention by competent agricultural associations and executives in tackling the issues faced by farmers**

The lack of intervention by competent agricultural authorities on the issues faced by farmers, along with the negative impression of the work of agricultural associations, has led to distrust between associations and some local stakeholders. Agricultural associations, on the one hand, believe that farmers sometimes do not engage with them, because the farmers are too busy working. On the other hand, farmers believe that the associations do not fulfil their basic duties in helping farmers, such as by providing fertiliser and helping them to buy seeds. Moreover, the Office of Agriculture does not communicate with farmers because of its limited operational budget. Therefore, farmers solve their problems on their own without consulting the competent authorities in the public sector or civil society.

- **Class divisions in agriculture**

The majority of women working in the agricultural sector are from the lower socioeconomic classes. Women from well-off families do not work in farms; however, women from tribal families work on their own farms, provided that male outsiders are not present.

- **Limited participation of women in agricultural production and markets**

Men are usually in charge of managing a farm and selling agricultural produce, such as livestock, in the local markets, because women mostly do not own farms or livestock. This is due to legal restrictions that prevent women from inheriting or owning a farm. Most women working on a farm are poor and do not own the farm. Although women from well-off families can inherit farmland from their fathers or husbands, they cannot act as farm owners. In contrast, Bedouin women, who own livestock, can sell their livestock to a relative, but at a marketplace, they can sell produce only with the help of their sons or husbands.

- **Limited participation of women and youth in water management and conflict resolution**

Water management is primarily carried out by men. The exceptions are women who have inherited farmland and do take charge of water management. Women's role is non-existent in resolving water conflicts and challenges. Youth participate in water management for a farm as the representatives of their parents, but they are often excluded from resolving water-related conflicts, as these require familiarity with the traditional customs. The elders consider that young people have limited knowledge and experience of the traditional rules. Women are not involved in resolving water-related conflicts, as per the customs of the society. However, in some rare cases, women have participated in resolving water-related issues, e.g., they are consulted about inherited customary rulings in some regions in Tarim, such as the Wadi of Al-Dhahab.

This gender assessment study concludes with a number of recommendations for enhancing the participation of women and youth at the community level, in terms of decision-making and peace processes. The assessment further suggests ways for resolving water-related conflicts, for example those caused by water shortages and flood damage.

Introduction

Tarim is one of the major districts in Wadi Hadramout. According to a census of Tarim District, it had an estimate population of 154,273 in 2018.¹ Social, traditional and religious attitudes cast a long shadow on gender. Religious perspectives and social traditions mean that Tarim is unique among the districts in Wadi Hadramout. It is considered to be the spiritual home of some eminent religious scholars of Islamic history, such as Sheikh Al-Haddad and Sheikh Ali Al-Jafri. Moreover, Dar Al-Mostafa, the biggest religious school, locally and internationally, is in Hadramout.

This conservative social reality directly influences the educational behaviour of boys, girls and youth – as the society is governed by customs and tradition, which men and women – and the family in general – have to follow. Women, youth, and children are often not given a chance to realise their full potential or take part in other scientific and practical activities in the district. Women and youth can participate in education only in the cities and must participate in agriculture in the rural areas. However, the participation of women and youth in Tarim seems to vary to a great extent, particularly in terms of women's participation, rights and decision-making. More often than not, women's participation appears to be indirect when it comes to basic roles assumed by women in agriculture and water management and their access to resources.

The resources of Tarim District are based on the taxes and exports of agricultural and craft products. Altogether, 70% of the population in the district work in agriculture and on crafts, while 30% work in other sectors.² With the expansion of the population and the degradation of the farmland, as well as the 2008 flood crisis and water scarcity, the amount of seasonal vegetables has decreased, except for products such as onions, livestock feed and pumpkins. Moreover, the local markets in the district are full of vegetables imported from other governorates, which has had an impact on agricultural production and farmers in the district. Families working in agriculture have also been affected because the landowners were forced to downsize the number of farmers. Therefore, women have come to be the majority of the workforce in the agricultural sector, followed by the youth. Moreover, the role of the youth has decreased gradually, following the decline of the sector. The youth, instead, have taken up manual work, and administrative and industrial occupations.

Methodology

This assessment aims to identify gender roles, traditions and customs, the various social and economic inequalities, the differences in leadership roles, and inequality in granting access to the services and resources in Tarim District.

¹ The 2018 census of Tarim District, Tarim branch office, Central Statistical Organisation (SCO)

² Legal Advisor Khaled Howaidi, Director of Tarim District, Head of the Local Council, Tarim

The assessment was largely based on the differences in gender roles. Interviews were conducted with various stakeholders from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Water and Sanitation Corporation and the Central Statistical Organisation (SCO), in addition to key informant interviews with target men and women (Table 1). Interviews with eight women and men working in the agricultural and water sectors were conducted, including landowners and workers, aged between 25 and 45 years, in addition to three community leaders from the local authorities, the local community and water and irrigation committees. Moreover, the assessment relies on official figures³ for the district for the sectors where most of the women and youth work. The assessment targeted the following sites and neighbourhoods in Tarim District: Mashtah, Wadi Al-Dhahab, Eidaid, Al-Rahabah-Jaiy, and Tarim.

Table 1. Number of men and women in the target areas, based on 2018 data supplied by the SCO office in the district.⁴

Area	Number of Target People		Work Sector
	Men	Women	
Mashtah	1	2	Farming and ranching micro-businesses (selling cosmetics, henna and black cumin)
Wadi Al-Dahab and Thebi	1	0	Agriculture and water committees
Eidaid area	1	0	Agriculture and education
Al-Rahabah-Jaiy	1	2	Farming and ranching
Tarim	2	1	Local authority, civil society

³ The 2018 census of Tarim District, The Central Statistical Organisation (SCO), pages 8 and 9, Tarim branch office.

⁴ ibid

The Roles of Women and Youth

Women and youth in the society

Despite the traditional milieu in Tarim society, women in Tarim have made a significant contribution on a societal level. In addition to their normal, stereotypical, roles as mothers and housewives, women have often been active members of several projects and initiatives in recent years.

Women are considered to be the main labour force in the agriculture and livestock sectors, even if they do not own farmland or livestock in most rural areas, except for the Bedouin communities living near the mountains and hills surrounding the district. In these Bedouin communities, women can inherit farmland, either from their husbands or from their fathers, and can own livestock as well, which can be a source of income, particularly on anniversaries, marriage ceremonies and social occasions. Throughout the year, women prepare the land for sowing by removing grass and they take part in the harvest. The ages of the women working in the agricultural sector vary. There are many elderly women (aged 45–60 years), who have extensive practical experience, and fewer younger women (aged 25–40 years). The role of young girls working in agriculture has declined, except for girls from families that own land or families that are in need. Moreover, as the number of young adults working in agriculture has decreased, farmers have resorted to recruiting children instead, particularly during the harvest. Many young girls are enrolled in schools and, as a result, farm work is no longer of interest to them. After completing her education, a girl usually gets married. During the first few years of marriage, she might be required to work on the farm of her husband's family, if they have one. However, if after about two years she becomes a mother, she would stop because she would need to take care of the children and the house.

Early marriage is one of the social obstacles that have diminished the roles of girls in Tarim and prevented them from continuing their education. The religious orientation and social traditions in the area insist that girls are married as soon as they reach puberty. Although early marriages still occur in Tarim, the rapid changes in the world in recent years and the integration of young people into cities have encouraged many girls to join primary and secondary schools. In total, 1366 girls were enrolled in secondary schools for the academic year 2017/2018. They are both single and married girls.⁵ In contrast, 3017 boys were enrolled in primary and secondary schools. Moreover, adult women have also joined literacy education centres. In total, 2750 illiterate women joined these centres between 2017 and 2019, compared to 65 men who enrolled in literacy education.⁶

Low-income families face challenges in enrolling their girls in education, especially if the girls want to go on to higher education. However, as the number of educated young men has increased in the district and as their traditional beliefs have changed, some of them have begun to encourage their wives to complete their education. Some families now insist that their daughters must complete their education after marriage.⁷

Young men had more opportunities in the past to work in agriculture, but their current role in this sector has diminished significantly. Many young men now complete education at a higher level and often go to

⁵ Office of the Education Ministry, Central Statistical Organisation, Tarim branch office, page 22

⁶ Literacy Education Office, Central Statistical Organisation, Tarim branch office, page 22

⁷ Interview with women community leaders, Wadaa Al-Jahi, Deputy Principal of Tarim High School for Girls

live in other societies in the cities, so they prefer to work in sectors other than agriculture. Some of these young men have become doctors, engineers or managers. The young men who do not find work in modern sectors or are unable to work in agriculture due to water shortages and the degradation of agricultural land may turn to craftwork or manual labour, such as traditional craftwork and house building. Water shortages and the degradation of agricultural land have reduced local exports, and many landowners have sold their land instead of cultivating it.

Because of their education, many of the young men lead new developments in Tarim. They participate in community youth initiatives, including health awareness projects, neighbourhood clean-ups and delivering aid to families. Such projects are usually funded by personal efforts or contributions from civil society and through participation in community-based initiatives such as relief projects of all kinds, projects for orphans such as those run by the Al-Ma'roof Association, and the cash-for-work projects run by the Social Fund for Development.

At the family level, most young people, boys in particular, are still subject to parental authority even if work and marriage opportunities are available. The father still receives the wages of his sons, whether they are married or single, and sees to the needs of the house and the needs of his sons and their wives.⁸

“Young men have been given the right to pursue their university education, because the fathers believe that their income from employment (salaries and work incentives) due to their educational attainment will be placed at their disposal. On the other hand, many girls are prevented from completing their education, because it is thought that their income from any future employment would go to their husbands and children. For this reason in particular most girls are married off uneducated.”⁹ However, this denial of education to girls is no longer endorsed by many fathers, except those who are of less progressive mindsets and/or profit-oriented. Moreover, there are other underlying reasons why women are restricted to certain jobs, based on the inherent community customs and endorsed by religious scholars, who believe that if women are in work, they may mix with men and that a women-only work environment is best for women. As a result, women rarely have administrative positions at government institutions.

⁸ Reports from interviews with the community leaders in Tarim

⁹ Ibid

Participation and access

Leadership and decision-making

Women and youth make up 70% of the population in Tarim, but their limited participation in sectors other than agriculture is a significant challenge. In agriculture, women and youth make up 60% of the labour force.¹¹ However, even in this sector, their role is limited and they are excluded from many aspects of it because they do not own land or livestock. If their families own farmland, they work only to meet their social responsibilities to their family. They make up 7% of the government administrative employees in the district, mainly in the education and health and population departments.¹²

The involvement of women in decision-making varies at the family level. It is mainly restricted to internal issues between women within a family. Sometimes they are consulted by men. In most of Hadramout, even if women are consulted about a family matter, the final decision is made by the men in the house even if their opinion is different. In residential neighbourhoods, some women, particularly elderly women, may consider disputes within a group of women. These women may resolve family issues raised by other women, and they are often the wives of decision-makers in the neighbourhood, such as sheikhs and community leaders.

Women have a limited role at the community level, and not many women participate in high level decision-making in the district, such as within local authorities or other governmental structures, except for community-based women associations. Examples of such associations include Al Mustaqbal Association and the Hadrami Women Association. This women's sector is favoured in Tarim as long as it does not involve working with men. "Women are the public face of these associations in executive or CEO capacity, but the decision-maker is always an

Women leaders in agricultural groups (a study)

In a study of the agricultural sector, it was found that some women became leaders of women's groups working in agriculture, especially during the harvests that occur throughout the year. A group may consist of 40–50 women workers.

These women leaders work to arrange, divide and manage the work among the women farm workers. They are delegated to communicate with the farm owners. They make the decisions, manage the group, distribute their wages and advocate for their rights, if needed, directly with the owners. This is an adaptation of an ancient custom and it reflects the real ability of women to lead in Tarim District, despite the prevailing beliefs in the area.

It is unknown when this ancient custom began. These groups are established only when there is work, and the leader works to bring her group together. Women can continue to join the group until the work is complete.¹⁰

¹⁰ Interviews with community leaders

¹¹ Water for Peace Project, Empowering the roles of women and young people in water-arising conflicts and their resources, page 2

¹² Census Results 2018, page 15, Central Statistical Organisation, Tarim branch office

invisible man, who cannot be seen to be an integral part of a women's association governance,"¹³ stated Wadaa Al-Jahi, a female community leader.

Patriarchy is the prevailing form of decision-making in Tarim. Hence, it constitutes a major obstacle to the participation of young people in decision-making, at the family level in particular. The father is the key decision-maker in a family and if there is any participation at all, it usually occurs when the father is absent from home and in matters relating to work, especially agriculture.¹⁴

Because of the improvements in the education system in Tarim, young people have taken on leadership roles in the society. Young people had previously been excluded from such positions because of a lack of confidence placed in them by the elders or a lack of experience. They now occupy administrative positions in the local authority, security forces, army, civil society and development projects.

The new roles that young people have outside the patriarchy have made them successful. Some young people own agriculture businesses, such as plant nurseries, while others have established organisations for development and water management. Some young people from the tribal community have succeeded in integrating the popular arbitration system into the new civil society groups. An example of this is the national community committees in Wadi Al-Dhahab, which include young people from different parts of society, who play a key role in decision-making according to the customs. Their success in this experiment has encouraged them to think about expanding the scope of their efforts by establishing a water and irrigation association for the entire governorate.¹⁵

Participation in agricultural production and agricultural associations

Agricultural production is widespread in Tarim. There are many products, such as vegetables and plants, which were previously common in the local markets in the district. With the passage of time and the damage to agricultural land, whether by soil erosion or lack of water, farmers no longer opt to produce some vegetables and are content with the seasonal production of vegetables such as onions, citrus fruits and some animal feed plants. They also have sheep and camels. Livestock and crops are the most important sources of income for families working on farmland.

Types of agricultural micro-businesses run by women

1. Marketing and selling henna, black cumin and ghassah (leaves of the sidr [*Ziziphus vulgaris*])
2. Selling craftwork products made out of palm leaves
3. Investing in livestock

"I leave for work from six in the morning and come back home around noon or sometimes around eleven am. I get only 1000 riyals per day, in addition to what the landowners give us to feed our sheep," stated Hana'a, a 40-year-old woman and farmer.¹⁶ Hundreds of women work for farmers for little pay, half of which goes on transportation. Due to the lack of work opportunities on the farms in Tarim and the lack of

¹³ Interviews with community leaders

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ An interview with civil society leader Abdullah Jameel

¹⁶ An interview with female leader Wadaa Al-Jahi

demand for agricultural labour in the whole of Hadramout Wadi, women sometimes have to travel to areas outside Tarim, such as farms surrounding the city of Seiyun. Most of the large farms are concentrated on the outskirts of this city. The travelling is expensive and stressful for the little they earn during working hours. Girls may contribute to agricultural work during harvest seasons and school vacations. Some of them work as part-time shepherdesses from 3 pm to 6 pm to help their families.¹⁷ That women and young people do not own agricultural land is a problem and explains their absence as sellers from markets. Women's work is, thus, limited to harvesting, mowing grass and sowing, while young people cut down large trees, water the land and participate in the harvests.

Men have the right to sell and negotiate for agricultural produce, particularly those who own farms and are not hired as farmers. Most farmers prefer to sell their crops on the farm through mediators who negotiate with the farmers over the value of the crops and the market price. The mediators then hire workers to harvest the crops, paying also for their transportation and food, while the farmers receive only the value of their crops. For the farmers, selling this way saves on labour expenses.

Some men who own small farms, have their family members including women, men and youth harvest the crops. One family member is given the task of selling the crops in the central market in Seiyun or through intermediaries in the farming sector.

¹⁷ An interview with men and women working in the agricultural sector

The Civil Association for Water and Irrigation

Many years ago, a civil committee of local people was formed in Thebi in Wadi Al-Dhahab. Its main objective was to facilitate and oversee irrigation, agriculture and grazing, in addition to other relevant issues in the entire region. During the socialist era, such national committees became agricultural cooperatives. However, following Yemen's reunification in 1990, these committees resumed their work and prioritised issues relating to water and agricultural soils, among other problems, which included preserving the vegetation cover, especially the trees that provide a source of income for some families, such as sidr and sumr trees. Such national committees also laid down laws that govern the grazing rights of livestock owners in the region.

The efforts of the Wadi Al-Dhahab committee led to the establishment of the Civil Association for Water and Irrigation in 2019. Its members include owners and users of farmland and water, whether from torrential rain or groundwater.

The association has 56 members, 42 men and 14 women.

The following are among its major objectives:

- Optimising the use of the available water resources
- Water management and maintenance of irrigation facilities
- Rationing water consumption and conserving water resources
- Raising awareness on how to improve irrigation efficiency

The most important works carried out by the association are as follows:

- Studying the redevelopment of the spate irrigation system in Wadi Thebi
- Awareness-raising meetings with water users on the rationing of water consumption
- Participating in workshops carried out by the Environment Authority, particularly with regard to water and rainfall
- Working and coordinating with the Water Resources Department to train and improve the performance of the members of the association

The roles

Women members of the association work on awareness and media programmes in the field, targeting women working in agriculture or participating in community action. On the other hand, men (of all ages) take part in all activities of the association, including administrative duties, executive tasks and awareness programmes.

The situation is different for young men. Although fewer young men work in agriculture than women, they do not participate in the markets as workers. Rather, they work as landowners or mediators. Some of them may interact with the relevant associations. However, effectively, women do not interact with agricultural associations, unless they inherited farmland from their husbands. Therefore, women can only take part and participate if they are succeeding members.

In general, the participation of women and their interaction with agricultural societies is absent in light of the weak interaction of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation Office with their problems and the lack of associations specialized in the agricultural field whose duty according to community leaders is to work with farmers in providing subsidized seeds and fertilizers without limiting their role to working on agricultural expansion programmes. The Agricultural Cooperative Association, the only agricultural association operating in Tarim, has approximately 1,600 farmers as members. At one time, seven elderly women were members, but only as successors to their late husbands. Three of these women died, so only four remain as members of the association. Even if other agricultural associations start to operate in Tarim, their interactions with the farmers will not be their core role, but merely one of their objectives.

Of the water and irrigation associations, only one is relevant for youth and women in Tarim District, namely the National Association for Water and Irrigation, which was established as an extension of the National Committee in Wadi Al-Dhahab. Since its inception, this association has been working to raise awareness on water-related issues. However, the roles assumed by young men during the implementation of the

association’s projects are generally more interactive than those assumed by women, for reasons related to the nature of the activities and the limitations to women.¹⁸

Many young men and women participate in agricultural projects funded by donor organisations and agencies and implemented by local partners. An example of such a project is one funded by the World Food Programme and implemented by Al-Khair Relief Coalition. The project team are removing sesbania trees from watercourses in wadis in a number of districts in Hadramout, including Tarim. In total, 420 women and 280 young men are working on this project. Such a large number of women taking part in a project is novel. Mohammed, a farmer and the head of the National Association for Water and Irrigation, believes that this project must find radical solutions. He explained: “If an entire sesbania tree is not cut down including its roots, more sesbania trees will grow in its place. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that the implementing agencies develop sustainable solutions for this project, but will this be done by them? I do not know.”¹⁹

The director of Tarim District believes that such projects are good, as they provide work and participation opportunities for women. He stated: “We really suffer from the problem of sesbania trees. Just cutting these trees down is useless unless drastic measures are taken. Many landowners have successfully uprooted these trees and cleared their land without causing harm.”²⁰

The Road of Wadi Thebi

An asphalt road was approved at the top of one of the hills overlooking Wadi Thebi. The contractor excavated and removed soil from the area surrounding the watershed and the channels in the wadis that irrigate several agricultural areas when it rains. The local stakeholders asked the contractor to stop the work, which they feared would alter the watercourses, thereby leading to sweeping torrents. The contractor has stopped, but the damage has already been done. The beneficiaries complained to the relevant authorities, the Office of Public Works in Tarim and the Office of Agriculture. The authorities, however, have failed to address the issue seriously by repairing the damage caused by the excavation and landfill work. Moreover, the rains have caused further damage to the agricultural areas. This issue persists due to the negligence and failure of the authorities to fulfil their duties towards the farmers and due to the silence of the agricultural associations, which have not yet intervened in support of those affected.²¹

Table 2. Level of women’s and youth’s participation and interactions with the water and irrigation associations and institutions.

Institution, association or organisation	Participation and interaction		Obstacles
	Women	Youth	
Agricultural and productive associations	Weak	Weak	• Social traditions and customs relating to women

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Director of Water & Irrigation Association, Mohammed Al-Ameri

²⁰ Interview with the director of Tarim District

²¹ Director of Water & Irrigation Association, Mohammed Al-Ameri

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of capacity building for members in the association • Failure to involve women • Being content with existing membership • Failure to interact with women and youth in allocating work
Water & Irrigation Association	Weak	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to expand women membership in the associations • Failure to empower women to join the administrative board • Quickly establishing associations • Limited number of programmes
International organisations working in the agricultural sector	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of participation of educated girls from Tarim in the management of agricultural and development projects run by international organisations due to the negative social attitudes on women co-working with men

The legal status of gender and access to resources

The legal rights of women in Tarim are often violated, although the law guarantees their rights. Traditional methods prevail in solving women-related problems within families. Many divorce-related issues are not brought before the courts. In all cases, a male guardian must represent the woman involved, as the community considers it shameful for a woman to go to a court of law. In rare cases, however, women in Tarim with sufficient education have been allowed to plead at court. Most honour cases, in which girls or boys are the victims, are not brought before a court of law. Some cases, particularly with girl victims, are resolved within the family. In Tarim, a house often has an extended family, including uncles and their sons. The director of Tarim District stated: “The police force does not have female officers to investigate and prosecute these cases, which is why most women do not file a complaint. Some incidents are revealed in a hospital if the woman has been severely beaten. Moreover, when these cases are investigated, the women are usually given an option on whether to proceed or deny the incident occurred, which closes the case. Either way, they have to return to the place where their rights were violated.”²² People have the right to litigate before the courts, but in rural areas, farmers usually resort to the customary law, because they fear that their case will be protracted if taken to a court of law.

²² Interviews with community leaders and with Khaled Howaidi, director of Tarim District

If the victim is a child, the families fear they will be stigmatised by the community if the details are divulged. Thus, parents seek to keep their children indoors, particularly boys. However, a girl's rights are likely to be violated at home, not to mention that she would be denied access to education, especially due to the negative social views on girls' education.²³

Women are often unable to get to a police station to file a complaint. When they do get there, the police may not be responsive to her, not because it is a woman-related case, but because she is a woman and a man must accompany her to facilitate the process. There are no female detectives in the police force, except for two or three who work on civil cases. They do attend raids on houses with women inside.²⁴

Access to resources, such as water to meet daily needs, was difficult in the past, especially in the Bedouin areas where households depend on women to fetch water, as the Water and Sanitation Corporation has not established a public water network. Such areas include Al-Dhahab (upper and lower areas), Al-Marabidh, Al-Haburah and Al-Dhiba'a. In these areas, women and girls carry out hard work, in addition to their daily household chores, farming, and ranching, which can harm their health.

The entire community of Tarim is classist, as particular work sectors, especially for women, are associated with particular social classes. Most women working in agriculture are subject to discrimination at work in Tarim District, as most of them belong to the lower or poor classes. Women from rich, tribal or upperclass families do not work on farms, except for women of tribes in the desert, who work on their own farm alongside their family members. Women from low socioeconomic classes are also responsible for the household chores, including cleaning and cooking, for upper-class families, especially during social events.

"I have been working on farms since I knew myself; rich women do not work like us," stated Hana'a.²⁵

"Most of the women working in the agricultural sector are from poor families," stated Abdullah Jameel. "Girls from rich families and daughters of upper-class families do not work."²⁶

Knowledge and means of self-development

Compared to the past, the education of females in Tarim District has undergone a drastic change. In the district, many girls have enrolled in schools. The government has worked to establish schools for girls for all grades, which has significantly increased the enrolment rate over the last 20 years. Currently, 13,640 girls are enrolled in primary education and 1366 are enrolled in secondary education in Tarim District. The entire governorate of Hadramout has a similar high enrolment rate. Moreover, openness to technology has helped girls, particularly those who are educated, to undertake work-from-home projects that generate an income via e-marketing on social media.

However, most women working in agriculture do not enjoy the benefits of information and communication technology (ICT), or other subjects. Their access to education is limited to attending schools that teach only

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Interviews with women working in the agricultural sector

²⁶ Community leaders and Abdullah Jameel

the Qur'an or to schools that train only women. None of these schools teach agriculture, focussing instead on sewing, embroidery, cosmetics, etc.

Nadia, a divorced farmer and mother, stated: "Everyone has an ambition, and my ambition is to be better than what I am now. I need to stay away from such hard and stressful work under the sun, so I can raise my son. ... You are an educated woman; you had the chance to receive a good education and now you can conduct interviews like this. Imagine if I had been given such a chance!"²⁷

Lack of access to education and training remains a great source of concern to them. Access is limited due to the social restrictions imposed on mixed-gender educational and training programmes. Such programmes are limited to young boys, while young girls and women can only attend courses on beauty, sewing, embroidery, cooking and other vocations stereotypically related to women.

The arrival of a small number of internally displaced persons in the district city of Tarim, estimated at 465 families,²⁸ has contributed to changing the attitudes in the district. For the first time in Tarim, and despite the community's objection, girls have begun working for mixed-gender civil society organisations. For example, Al-Ma'roof Association for Development hired three girls who were internally displaced persons, since it had no female applicants from the local community. This good example set by these girls seemed to have changed the general perspective of the women working in the civil society sector, at least, among the educated people in the community, despite the objections of many from the elite and others.²⁹

Because of the lack of administrative and clerical training for both women and men, women have never worked in the district as administrators or for a bank in the district. The community leaders believe that since 1990, no training courses have been held even for men on institutional management in the civil service, as most such training courses are held in Sana'a and Aden.

The director of Tarim District explained, "I looked for a young woman to work for me in the secretarial department, but I could not find one. This is not because there are no young women who have a university degree in administration, but because they lack secretarial skills. Second, if we could find the right young woman, it would be difficult for her to work in an environment consisting predominantly of men because of the local customs. She would be prevented by her family. I even wanted to hire two young women so that one would not feel embarrassed in working alongside men, but unfortunately I could not find any."³⁰

In general, both men and women across Tarim District are not qualified, especially in agriculture and finance.

²⁷ Interviews with women working in the agricultural sector

²⁸ Field study for counting the displaced and identifying their needs in Tarim District 2019, page 9

²⁹ Interviews with civil society leaders and Abdullah Jameel, general secretary of Al-Ma'roof Association for Development

³⁰ Interviews with community leaders and the director of Tarim District, Abdullah Howaidi

Water and Conflict Resolution

Lack of water in the district, due to the scarcity of rain and the indiscriminate digging of wells on farmland, has become a major source of concern to the local authorities, especially since they have a limited budget for interventions. Thus, the damage caused by flooding to the farmland has not been ameliorated. Therefore, conflicts occur relating to farmland that depend on spate irrigation on the outskirts of Tarim, such as farmland in Wadi Thebi.

These water-related conflicts have caused a rupture in the relationship among people farming in the same area and their families.

However, such conflicts have never developed into armed fighting and the resulting crimes. Tribal customary law is applied to resolve such conflicts, without involving the judicial authorities, or women or youth. The elders adjudicate on such conflicts. Moreover, given the conservative nature of the Tarim community, women do not participate in mediation or engage in direct intervention for these conflicts, unless they indirectly act as instigators for their husbands or relatives. Therefore, a woman can be involved in initiating or mitigating a conflict, but indirectly.

Young people's participation in conflict resolution is marginalised due to their lack of experience, according to the elders. Moreover, their parents have the authority to prevent them from participating.

Water for the city of Tarim and its outskirts comes from wells. Each farm has its own private well. Women have first priority in using water, as they need it for daily chores at home, such as washing, cooking and cleaning, as well as for agriculture. However, women have no say in water management, except when a woman acts on behalf of a man for a few family farms. Women do clean watercourses when they are blocked. Men consider that water management is to be done only by men and older boys, as the tasks are physically challenging for women.

Case study: Women's participation in water management and conflict resolution in Wadi Al-Dhahab, Thebi Area

Many years ago, the people living in Wadi Al-Dhahab established an integrated system for spate irrigation. The water from a torrent flows gently into an agricultural plot without damaging nearby agricultural plots. A civil committee, comprising people from all classes of society, organises any public work needed in the area, such as to the irrigation system. It also collects fines incurred for any violation of the grazing laws in the region.

Women participate in this committee as successors to their late husband or father, but they cannot attend the meetings of this committee due to customs and traditions. They are, however, active rather than passive members regarding water management and running their own farms (which they inherited from their husbands or fathers). The women ensure that spate water is distributed to different agricultural plots, and they remove any obstacles that may block the watercourse supplying her farm or that may cause harm to other farms. If her actions damage another farm, she would be fined.

Some women have inherited customary provisions from their parents to be consulted in disputes relating to water management and damage. This occurs after all members of the civil committee (a community-based committee) have considered the issue. Taking an active part, even in matters related to decision-making and consultations, is a traditional role for these women. The council overall respects their opinions and judgments.

Moreover, women in the Thebi area have contributed to the financing of water management projects, such as Kholasat Alawiyyah, an aqueduct. This spate irrigation system was built by Mrs. Alawiyyah to distribute spate water of torrents to agricultural plots.

The gender roles in farming are as follows:

1. Women and girls (***) clear weeds from fields and prepare them for sowing, plant onions and harvest alfalfa plants and , participate in other harvests.
2. Men and young boys work on arduous tasks on the farmland, such as cutting down large trees, watering crops in the agricultural plots, and selling agricultural produce.

In summary, women do not have a significant role in agriculture, water management or conflict resolution. Generally speaking, all women working in the agricultural sector in Tarim District can assume such roles. Bedouin women in some valleys and mountains in the district are an exception. These Bedouin women supervise the work of their husbands' farms and assist with water management.³¹

³¹ Interviews with workers in the agricultural sector and with Mohammed Al-Ameri, Head of the National Committee in Wadi Al-Dhahab

Recommendations

The differences between the roles of men and women, and those of boys and girls, are rooted in the traditional values of the Tarim community. Success stories constitute starting points for improving the effective participation of both genders, particularly women and youth, due to their respective gender roles in Tarim District and its outskirts. To enhance the participation of women and youth in the community in general and in the agricultural sector, water management and conflict resolution in particular, the following is recommended:

- **Encouraging and involving women and youth in agricultural work:**
 1. Local authorities and other organisations with responsibility for agriculture, such as the Office of Agriculture and Irrigation and the agricultural associations, should secure better wages for farmers by negotiating with the major farm owners.
 2. [The rights of women and youth in relation to working hours, injury compensation and occupational health and safety should be protected by the local authority, local security structures and judicial authorities as well as the Office of Agriculture, agricultural associations and civil society organisations.](#)
 3. Women and youth should be allotted farmland and livestock through projects implemented in collaboration with the local authority in Wadi Hadramout and its executive office of public properties and agriculture to enhance access to agricultural work, expand the amount of green space and to create job opportunities for young people specialising in agriculture.
 4. The local authorities must protect agricultural land and green spaces within Tarim District, such as Eidaid area and other areas on the outskirts of the district, from the ever-increasing urban sprawl. Awareness must be raised of the economic consequences of such urban sprawl on the lives of families working on farms.
 5. Organisations working in this sector in the region must be encouraged or obliged to involve women and youth in their projects. They must provide workers with the relevant personal protective equipment.
- **Enhancing the role of the local authority executive offices concerned with the agriculture and irrigation sector as well as relevant associations and institutions, which engage women and youth:**
 1. The agricultural and water management associations should open their membership up to everyone working in agriculture and involve everyone in decision-making processes.
 2. All relevant institutions responsible for agriculture must work to establish trust with everyone working in the agricultural sector.
 3. Working partnerships should be established with civil society so that women and youth working in the agricultural sector are trained on the best modern and traditional agricultural techniques.
- **Establishing a syndicate for women working in the agricultural sector:**
 1. The local authorities, civil society, and social and religious leaders should support the establishment of a syndicate to protect the rights of women farmers, as they constitute the largest percentage of the agricultural workforce, inside and outside the district.
 2. This syndicate should aim to recruit and represent all women working on farms, including those working on private family farms. It should establish relationships with all relevant organisations in the community.

3. The syndicate should utilize the leadership skills of women to raise awareness of its role, to increase engagement with its work and to offer training courses.
 4. The syndicate should participate in community development in Tarim.
- **Involving women and youth in decision-making in all civil society and government organisations in the district:**
 1. The local authorities should support the participation of women and youth in decision-making and raise awareness of their abilities by engaging with socially influential religious scholars and tribesmen.
 2. The local authorities should work with civil society and the governorate leadership to include women and youth in Tarim in rehabilitation projects as administrators or professionals.
 3. Health and education organisations should appoint women to leadership roles, such as running schools for girls and departments for women.
 4. The decision-making experience of women should be leveraged by the National Committee in Wadi Al-Dhahab when resolving local conflicts.
 5. Job opportunities should be created for young people in organisations managing agriculture and water, particularly those with degrees in agriculture or environmental engineering.
 - **Enabling women and youth to access resources:**
 1. The local authorities and the Water and Sanitation Corporation should implement a network that supplies clean water to the houses in the villages and sub-districts of Tarim, such as Thebi.
 2. Projects should be established to manage water on farmland to limit soil erosion and take advantage of rainfall. Local stakeholders should be involved in the implementation of the projects.
 3. Executive offices of government organisations, local organisations and agricultural associations should contribute actively in communicating the voice of women and youth, in addition to providing them with health and educational services, especially primary and basic education for girls, boys and adults. They should also provide fuel to farmers during crises.
 - **Raising awareness of civil and professional gender rights:**
 1. Civil society should raise awareness of the civil and professional rights of men and women working in the public and private sectors.
 2. The local authorities should work with religious scholars and other leaders to create a positive view of the involvement of women and girls in development in Tarim District, like their counterparts across the governorate.
 3. The community should be encouraged to protect the rights of girls and boys and to refrain from denying them their right to litigation when they are the victim of an honour crime.
 4. The security and police forces should recruit more women.
 - **Training and certification:**
 1. Women should be taught agricultural techniques so that they can increase their income from farmland, for example, by selling palm leaf craftwork, herbal plants used in popular medicine and agricultural produce.
 2. Women and youth should be trained on accounting, distribution and marketing for the agricultural sector.
 3. Women and youth working in agriculture and those who own farmland, especially families, should be taught how to use modern irrigation methods.

4. Women and girls should be taught about alternative sources of income, such as establishing micro-businesses selling advanced products made at home, including handcrafts, antiques, gifts, cosmetics and textiles.
 5. Youth, particularly university graduates and women, should be offered courses on business administration, ICT, report writing, statistics, self-development and time management.
- **Involving women and youth in conflict resolution:**
 1. Women and youth should be trained on conflict resolution and community mediation. Such training could be offered by agriculture and water associations, while respecting the segregation of the sexes in training sessions, due to social customs. When trained, these women and youth will be able to raise awareness of their role among farmers. Group discussions held on farmland at specified times would help farmers to learn about conflict resolution. Civil society, especially women's and youth associations, should also offer such courses so that they are actively engaged.
 2. Women and youth working in agriculture should be trained on and involved in resolving water-related conflicts. This should include the customary laws in the community. The importance of their involvement in conflict resolution can be disseminated through group discussions with the local authorities, landowners and prominent farmers.
 3. Local authorities should work with local leaders to enhance the participation of women and youth in resolving conflicts resulting from water shortages in areas that depend on spate irrigation.
 4. Women should be made aware of the significant role they can play in conflict resolution and empowered to leverage this role.