Enhancing gender mainstreaming in sustainable rural development and food security – Ge.Mai.Sa

Comparative evaluation report

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GeMaiSa at a glance: what has been done

The GeMaiSa project aimed at carrying out pilot actions to promote the role of women in rural development programs in Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia to foster gender mainstreaming capacity-building of partner institutions.

The tables below present resumes of (1) the project’s objectives and expected results. Tables 2, 3 and 4 includes the general objectives, specific, objectives, expected results agreed in Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia as well as a short description of the main activities realized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: GeMaiSa</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General objective</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Specific objectives** | **Component 1**  
- Promoting the creation of a inter institutional public/private platform to protect and valorize women role in natural resource and food security management in Mediterranean and Near East through Institutional reinforcement /capacity building.  
- Provide national and international visibility and dissemination of successful /positive entrepreneurship experiences (best practices) carried out by women in Mediterranean and Near East. **Component 2 (Tunisia)**  
- Analyzing potential strategic partnerships for women empowerment and related capacity building in the framework of the Italian-Tunisian cooperation programme. |
| **Expected results** | R1. Inter institutional platforms in targeted Countries created  
R2. Partnerships opportunities for rural women empowerment in Tunisia increased  
R3. Project Actions disseminated at national and international level. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: GeMaiSa Egypt - From knowledge to practice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General objective</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific objectives</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Expected results** | ER1: Data information and research results from the bottom up and vice versa have been collected and the recommendation have been identified.  
ER2: Recommendations are validated on the ground, bottlenecks between knowledge production and implementation of research results identified CB, TOT activities for the local actors (extensions officers, local associations and women leaders) implemented and women’s skills and awareness accordingly upgraded.  
ER3: Inter- disciplinary institutional coordination and sharing of information and experiences between the PCU and other stakeholders have been promoted at regional, national and local level and a system of sustainable monitoring of |

knowledge and data use is adopted

Main activities realized

- Mapping of the key stakeholders in the promotion of rural women’s empowerment;
- Realization of a training for the PCUWA on quantitative and qualitative research techniques;
- Collection and analysis of the available researches and reports on rural women in the El Fayoum Governorate;
- Realization of a Participatory Needs Assessment with 81 rural women from 9 villages of Yousef El Sediq District and with 9 women extension workers;
- Realization of a national workshop in Cairo to present the results of the Needs Assessment and of a local workshop in El Fayoum on “Enhancing gender mainstreaming in sustainable rural development”;
- Development of an action-training tool on economic activities, markets and value chains;
- Realization of a training for extension workers on “Enhancing the extension workers’ skills to support rural women. Examples in technical training for dairy value chain” as well as on the action-training tool;
- Realization of a training based on the action-training tool for 45 women from three villages (El Nazla, Kahk Bahari and Kasr El Gebali). The training resulted in the identification of the pilot activity to be implemented with rural women, goats and buffalo farming and in the formation of collaborative groups of women for farming animals;
- Realization of a series of awareness and technical trainings for the women beneficiaries on value chains, animal farming and health care, dairy production, marketing, self-help groups;
- Delivery of goats (3 pregnant female goats for each woman except for two from each village who received 2 pregnant female goats and a male goat) and buffaloes (one for every group of 4 farmers).

Table 3: GeMaiSa Lebanon - Improve and mainstream gender rights through awareness in rural areas in Lebanon (IMRAA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General objective</th>
<th>To carry out a gender mainstreaming action for gender equality and rural women empowerment in initiatives addressed to promote natural resources management and food security in the framework of partnerships that the DGCS- MAECI and CIHEAM-Bari carry out with South-Mediterranean Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Specific objectives | SO1: Promoting the creation of a inter institutional public/private platform to protect and valorize women role in natural resource and food security management in Mediterranean and Near East through Institutional reinforcement /capacity building.  
SO2: Provide national and international visibility and dissemination of successful /positive entrepreneurship experiences (best practices) carried out by women in Mediterranean and Near East. |
| Expected results | ER1: Women living in the project targeted area and participating in Ge.Mai.Sa processes feel that their voices are heard and count, or so should, in shaping local development decision-making processes.  
ER2: Women living in the project targeted area and participating in Ge.Mai.Sa processes express confidence in the economic and social value of their work, and have identified constraints and means to balance such roles and time use within their household. |
ER3: MoA and MoSA staff at the central and local level is aware of the importance of promoting women's empowerment and gender equality to ensure food security and environmental sustainability.

ER4: Women living in the project targeted area and participating in Ge.Mai.Sa processes have strengthened their income earning capacity through sustainable economic activities.

**Main activities realized**

- Launch of the GeMaiSa project and approach at national and local level;
- Organization of participatory planning meetings with women of the selected villages to identify the pilot activity to be implemented;¹
- Realization of a training on “Gender Rights and Women Citizenship Rights” and on leadership and communication skills for the women of the selected villages
- Realization of training on women and work and time-use for the project team;
- Realization of the Time Use Diary (TUD) with 18 women and men from the villages and 12 members of the PT and some of their family members;
- Realization of a training on gender issues and gender mainstreaming for the Ministry of Agriculture staff at national and local level;
- Completion of the administrative process to set up a women’s cooperative for food preparation and equipment of a professional kitchen in a space that was offered by a local club; formal establishment of the women’s cooperative and election of the board;
- Training on agro-food processing, food safety, quality control, packaging, marketing and budgeting;
- Identification of three women entrepreneurs to be supported technically and financially by the initiative;
- Realization of a cycle of men-only sensitizing sessions;
- Organization of a closing event at local level with a bazaar for selling the cooperative products;
- Organization of a final workshop at national level.

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**Table 4: GeMaiSa Tunisia - Reinforcement of women’s role in the Mednine rural context**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General objective</th>
<th>Contribute to promoting gender equality and women empowerment to reinforce participation in rural development and in sustainable food security.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific objectives</td>
<td>S01: Improve the participation of rural women in sustainable development and food safety in intervention areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S02: Reinforce rural women’s technical, economic and social skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S03: Bring various services close to rural women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected results</td>
<td>ER1: A multipurpose space for women implemented in Zarzis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ER2: A service network throughout the country is created and activated to promote rural women’s better integration in local development, involving institutions, the private sector in CSOs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Three groups of women – for a total of 30 – attended these meetings: women entrepreneurs, the members of the cooperative to be established under the GeMaiSa initiative, and women interested in trainings and awareness raising events
ER3: A better understanding of the needs, constraints and aspirations is acquired about rural women in target territories.

ER4: Women’s technical and professional skills are reinforced.

ER5: Women’s awareness raising in target areas is performed through activities.

ER6: The economic capacities of at least 20 rural women are reinforced.

ER7: Women in two farming and fishing associations (GDAP) are effectively supported.

ER8: 150 women and 50 men in the rural areas of Zarzis, Ajim, and Sidi Makhrouf are sensitized about socioeconomic rights and about women’s and families’ health.

ER9: Beneficiary women’s social and political skills are developed.

**Main activities realized**

- A diagnostic study Diagnostic to collect information on the conditions of rural women in the target areas, attitudes and opinions, and to create spaces for a participatory need assessment;
- Community workshops
- Workshop on financing for entrepreneurial activities
- Training on fishing nets repairation
- Coaching on artisanal activities
- Establishment of a reception centre for women with a wide range of needs (health, work, family, education,...)
- Workshop on labour rights
- Workshop on professional associations
- Training on women’s rights
- Workshop on social security tools
- Technical trainings
- Activities aimed at the amelioration of working conditions of clam collectors
- Mobile reception centre
- Workshop on the establishment of an institutional network on the condition of rural people, and especially women in the Médenine area

**GeMaiSa: the main actors**

**Project teams**

The **project teams** in each country had a very diversified composition, due to the established institutional relationships between CHIEAM and the Ministries of Agriculture in the three countries, to the networks created in previous cooperation initiatives implemented by CHIEAM or the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, and to the project requirements and characteristics, as resumed below.
**Egypt**

In Egypt, the project has been directly implemented by the Policy and Coordination Unit for Women in Agriculture (PCUWA) of the Foreign Agricultural Relations, in strict collaboration with a group of selected women extensionists of the El Fayoum Agriculture Directorate. In the villages, a key role in coordinating the women beneficiaries was played by the local leaders on women’s issue – influential women of the village which are selected by the extensionists of the Department of Agriculture to support women and to act as a bridge between the village and the local institutions.

**Lebanon**

In Lebanon the project was implemented in a partnership between the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), who both appointed a task force at central and local level. The Project Management Unit was comprised of the project manager as well as one coordinator for each Ministry. The Project Team included all the members of the task force at national and local level, the project manager and a project assistant.

**Tunisia**

In Tunisia, the project has been implemented by the association LeNove together with the Ministry of Agriculture (Ministère de l’Agriculture, des Ressources Hydrauliques et de la Pêche). A local team has been built in Zarzis, recruiting local resources, followed by a project coordinator.
from LeNove. The Ministry of Agriculture was represented by the CRDA (Commissariat Régional au Développement Agricole), the regional branch of the Ministry of Agriculture, and several institutions linked to it, and –at the national level- by the BAFR (Bureau d'Appui à la Femme Rurale), the unit within the ministry directly working on the condition of rural women. The pilot initiative involved a huge number of local stakeholders, that will be described (at least the most relevant) in the next section.

The stakeholders
The GeMaiSa pilot initiatives promoted the involvement of a series of institutional and civil society actors, both at national and local level, with a very diverse background and positioning on gender issues. The tables below present the main stakeholders involved in the three pilot initiatives according to the stakeholder mapping exercise that was developed for the qualitative evaluation tool. The exercise aimed to identify the people and organizations that participated in the implementation of the project, to understand the role they have played and to visualize the connections among the different stakeholders. It has been realized using the information collected by an external consultant at the beginning of the project - that included an analysis of the national and international stakeholders involved in gender activities with a focus on those targeting women living in rural contexts\(^2\) - and the focus group discussion with the project teams.

\(^2\) For Egypt and Lebanon, see the Technical Reports prepared by Irene Viola.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key stakeholders</th>
<th>Stakeholder short description</th>
<th>Stakeholder’s position</th>
<th>Involvement in the GeMaiSa project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PCUWA</strong></td>
<td>Established in 1992 under the Minister supervision, it acts as an agency but it is not formally recognized as such.</td>
<td><strong>Legitimacy</strong></td>
<td>The PCUWA legitimacy has dramatically increased throughout the project implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td>The PCUWA suffers from the limited coordination efforts within the MALR but its members have a strong capacity to coordinate and network with key actors outside the Ministry at national and local level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women extensionists of El Fayoum Agriculture Directorate</strong></td>
<td>The women extensionists who implemented a series of activity at local level (and received trainings) are employed at the The Directorate is the key institutional actor at local level on agriculture-related</td>
<td><strong>Connections</strong></td>
<td>Nor the MALR or the FAR have a gender equity strategy: the PCUWA follows the country's 2030 agenda. Gender equity issues are a hidden agenda for the PCUWA team to avoid facing resistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Gender issues</strong></td>
<td>Project management unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Role</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trainers of the Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Research Institute and Animal Production Research Institute of the MALR</strong></td>
<td><strong>The trainings offered to the beneficiaries of the pilot initiative were realized by researchers and trainers employed at the AERDRI and APRI - both institutes belong to the Agricultural Research Centre (ARC)</strong></td>
<td><strong>High: the ARC is a governmental agency within the purview of the MALR. The ARC serves as the research and development arm of the ministry and focuses on conducting applied research for increasing agricultural and animal productivity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Not discussed during the evaluation mission</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Local leaders** | **Influential women of** | **They** | **are** | **Not discussed** | **They have good** | **The local** | **They** | **They** | **Involved in** |
on women’s issues

the villages which are selected by the extensionists of the Department of Agriculture to support women

recognized as important actors in the village, as they act as a bridge with local institutions and provide information

during the evaluation mission

connections with the extension workers as well as with the women living in the villages.

leaders support women on agriculture-related issues. Gender equity issues are not openly addressed

supported the PCUWA team and extension workers in coordinating and organizing the beneficiaries

contributed in selecting the women beneficiaries and ensuring the coordination between the beneficiaries, the extension workers and the PCUWA staff

specific activities and as contact persons.

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**Lebanon**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key stakeholders</th>
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<th>Involvement in the GeMaiSa project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Social Affairs</td>
<td>Main function of the MoSA is to provide social protection and assistance</td>
<td>Strong. At local level, the Social Development Centres of the MoSA are crucial for poor households to have support.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Very high degree of connections with civil society actors, NCLW, national and international institutions and donors</td>
<td>First Ministry to realize a Gender Audit, to develop a National Gender Strategy and to establish a Women’s Affairs Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional partner of the GeMaiSa project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthened its position as a key Ministry on gender issues; provided key support and networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A project coordinator for the MoSA as well as staff at local level were in charge of the project implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>The MoA’s mission is to improve the performance of the agricultural sector to ensure food security, reduce poverty and rural-urban migration, create job opportunities.</td>
<td>Strong. However, there is an information and resources gap between the national and local level.</td>
<td>The budget allocation to the MoA is 0.5% of the total public expenditures. The MoA strategy emphasizes the need of additional financial resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Commission for Lebanese Women</td>
<td>The NCLW is an official body established at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers responsible for promoting women's rights.</td>
<td>Medium: the NCLW is a consultative body. The new Lebanese government has appointed for the first time a State Ministry of Women Affairs and it’s the unclear the impact of this on the NCLW.</td>
<td>Very strong connections with the civil society sector and international organizations. The NCLW trains the Gender Focal Points for all the country’s Ministries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collective for Research &amp; Training on Development - Action</strong></td>
<td>A Lebanese NGO whose programmes focus on citizenship, social justice and gender equality</td>
<td>Strong, also at regional and international level</td>
<td>Not discussed during the evaluation but the NGO has several international donors funding their projects</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Atayeeb Al Rif</strong></td>
<td>A non-profit organization and the hub of a network of 42 women-owned agricultural and artisanal cooperatives.</td>
<td>Strong. AAR supports women’s cooperatives since 2002.</td>
<td>Supported by YMCA Lebanon. AER has a shop in Beirut and exports abroad.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tunisia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Key actors</strong></th>
<th>Stakeholder short description</th>
<th><strong>Actor’s position</strong></th>
<th><strong>Involvement in the GeMaïSa project</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legitimacy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td><strong>Connections</strong></td>
<td><strong>Gender issues</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LeNove</strong></td>
<td>Italian association that operates in sociological and historical research since 1980. It has a strong legitimacy for the background on gender issues and the work in multi-purpose</td>
<td>LeNove brought a strong expertise in the promotion of coordination</td>
<td>It seems that there has been a good degree of perspective in its activities of implementing actor of the IP (pilot initiative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIHEAM</td>
<td>CIHEAM is a Mediterranean intergovernmental organization working for improving sustainable agriculture and fisheries, for ensuring food security and for developing rural and coastal territories. The organization gathers 13 States.</td>
<td>Strong knowledge of the local context and its economy. Strong relationship with local institutions and fishermen groups.</td>
<td>CIHEAM manages the project’s funds. It brings also knowledge in the field of fishery management and value chain organization. This can be a strong plus for the strengthening of the women’s position in the clam value chain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CRDA</strong></td>
<td>Commissariat Régional au Développement Agricole de Médenine: it is the regional branch of the Ministry of Agriculture.</td>
<td>Being the branch of the Ministry of Agriculture, it has a strong recognition. Its proximity to the farmers has developed throughout the project, especially for women farmers: they perceived the public institutions as far from them in several respects. Ge.Mai.Sa helped in the direction of bridging the gap between the rural women and the public sphere.</td>
<td>The budget aspect has not been specifically dealt during the evaluation, since the work has been mostly concentrated on resources specifically addressed to rural women (see BAFR). Concerning Ge.Mai.Sa, it has mobilized several institutional resources (the training centres, several trainers and the vulgarization unit,...) and human resources (e.g. part of the project team itself).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BAFR</strong></td>
<td>Bureau d’Appui à la Femme Rurale. It is the unit within the ministry of Agriculture directly working on the condition of rural women.</td>
<td>Since the fieldwork focused mainly on the local level of the IP, this actor’s position has been less analysed. Still, we can say that it is the main actor working on the condition of rural women, whose main limitation up to now. For the next year (2017), the BAFR obtained the allocation of a budget on a regional basis (20,000 dinars per region).</td>
<td>Lack of resources up to now. For the next year (2017), the BAFR obtained the allocation of a budget on a regional basis (20,000 dinars per region).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to now has been the lack of resources.

important. E.g. the main formal agreements have seen the participation of BAFR.

The Ge.Mai.Sa project team

Ge.Mai.Sa developed its own characteristics locally and can be considered as an “actor” in itself. Therefore, it is appropriate to mention the project personnel (the two locally recruited resources and the project coordinator) as key actors.

The local team had to build legitimacy from scratch since it was created ad hoc for the project. It seems that in the end the recognition earned from local institutions and from the women beneficiaries is substantial.

Up to know, the material resources mobilized are the project’s resources. The main role has been nevertheless the mobilization of human resources, both within and outside the project team itself (the recruitment of trainers and coaches motivated and committed).

Worked as hub for a wide network of involved actors. It has been the “glue” of a local network that is in the process of being formalized, in order to be in place also after the project.

The commitment to a gender perspective grew during the project, together with the awareness of gender inequalities.

The group of people who carried on concretely the IP activities.

The everyday practices of the IP have been carried on by this team. It seems that its “activist perspective” managed to give a bigger push to the activities.

Throughout the whole project.
The tables above show a very diversified landscape of stakeholders in the three countries. It is worth highlighting that in **Egypt**, the institutions involved in the project - a series of Departments and Centres of the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation - had a very weak background and positioning on women's empowerment and gender equity issues. Within this framework, the PCUWA was able to implement the GeMaiSa pilot initiative deliberately avoiding an explicit reference to gender equity and women's empowerment to prevent institutional resistance while highlighting the initiative's impact on enhancing rural animal farming and improving the households' wellbeing through a shift from “consumers to producers”. Meanwhile, the PCUWA collaboration with a highly-motivated group of women extension workers and the involvement of the local leaders on women’s issues of the three target villages has created a safe environment in which the women beneficiaries could learn, share experiences, express their feelings about working in a group, socialize with other women.

On the contrary, in **Lebanon**, the different stakeholders involved had a strong background on gender equity and women's empowerment issues, and the project team was able to build on these premises to strengthen existing connections among key actors, include a men’s training activity in the project, realize a time-use diary activity to reflect on gender differences regarding the organization of daytime and create the space in which a proposal could be put forward for the establishment of a committee for the coordination of gender issues in the Ministry of Agriculture. Gender equity and women’s empowerment issues were openly discussed both with the women beneficiaries and with the men who attended the training sessions, and one of the project team members at local level was available to give clarifications to the beneficiaries’ husbands thus gaining their support.

In **Tunisia** the main actors involved have been selected being those that compose the Pilot Initiative working group. With respect to the other countries, two differences are evident: the presence of CIHEAM and the presence of the “project team”. The reason of the inclusion of CIHEAM is that, besides being the funds’ managers, it provided important knowledge of the local context, since it is present in Zarzis with a project (NEMO) on the costal economy, which is closely linked with the main Ge.Mai.Sa target group, that are women clam collectors in the area. The project team is indicated as an actor since Ge.Mai.Sa developed its own characteristics in the local context and was recognized as such. The project personnel and several women identify the “Ge.Mai.Sa approach” as something specific that became to some extent autonomous from the actors that built it. This is probably linked to the fact of having a physical space that identifies the project (the Centre Nejmet Tounes). The public institutions involved played a crucial role: as we observed in the country report, bridging the gap between rural women and public institutions has been a relevant field of action of the pilot initiative in Tunisia, e.g. by providing tools for the rural women to address claims and needs to the relevant institutions.

The women targeted by the pilot initiatives

In **Egypt**, the final beneficiaries of the project are 45 rural women from three villages (El
Nazla, Kahk Bahari and Kasr El Gebali) of Youssef El Sediq district, in the Fayoum governorate. The women have been selected after a need assessment carried out with 81 women from nine villages of the district with the support of the extension workers group and the local leaders for women's issues. During the implementation of the project, they organized in groups of 4, according to the type of animal selected - either goats or buffaloes – and for each group a leader and a vice-leader were nominated.

A general profile of the women from the area where the pilot initiative has been implemented can be drawn from the needs assessment,\(^3\) that aimed at collecting information which helps to know their training needs, their plans, their ways of life, understanding how their households are organized, identifying existing income generating activities and the obstacles they face to become sustainable and really profitable, and discovering their perception of the community, its problems and suggestions to solve them. A common and relevant element that emerged from the needs assessment is that women acknowledged that their free time (around three hours per day) could be used to develop a productive activity. During the focus group the women confirmed the need to engage in productive activities due to the negative impact of the economic crisis on their household wellbeing.

In Lebanon, the women beneficiaries of the project are the 13 members of the cooperative that was created under the GeMaiSa pilot initiative as well as two women entrepreneurs that were already engaged in food production and that the project has supported with training and tools. Furthermore, 80 women (including the 15 mentioned above) participated in a training cycle on gender rights, women’s citizenship rights, leadership and communication skills. The cooperative’ members were selected among the women living in the targeted villages and attending the preliminary project meetings and training cycle that showed an interest in joining a cooperative. Some of them already had an experience in preparing and selling food from home.

As in the Egyptian case, the main motivation for joining the cooperative was the need for women to engage in productive activities that could provide an extra-income for the household at a time of economic crisis and of shrinking job opportunities for men. However, when the participatory evaluation was conducted, women weren’t aware of the potential income they could gain from the cooperative work, whereas in Egypt women were more informed regarding the likely revenues of the dairy production. This difference could be linked to the fact that, in Egypt, the women beneficiaries received a specific training based on the action-training tool that was prepared under GeMaiSa to identify an inclusive and sustainable productive activity that would enhance women’s autonomy as well as a training on value chains – whereas in Lebanon the tool was only presented to the project team. Further space for applying the action-training tool in Lebanon can be found in phase 2 of the GeMaiSa project.

\(^3\) It is worth noting that not all the women - from the three villages mentioned above - who participated in the needs assessment had been selected for the pilot initiative.
A further relevant element is related to the way in which the husbands and men living in the target areas were involved (or not) in the pilot initiatives. In Lebanon, the project included the realization of a series of men-only sensitizing sessions that, even though were not as participated and successful as the trainings aimed at women, provided a series of lessons on how to engage men that could be useful for the follow up. Furthermore, thanks to the fact that the SDC director – a respected and trusted person in the target area - was a member of the project team, the husbands of the women who joined the cooperative felt comfortable in asking her information about the project and its reliability. In Lebanon, husbands ended up supporting women’s participation in the cooperative and attending all the public events that were organized by the GeMaiSa team.

In Egypt, husbands were not directly involved in any of the pilot initiative’s activity, even though all the women beneficiaries had to inform their husbands and ask for permission to participate. Here, women generally agree that husbands might collaborate in the group productive activity (for example, going to the market to buy fodder), whereas in Lebanon women argued that they would rather employ someone in case help from a man is needed than to involve their husband in the cooperative work. These differences can be related to the different approaches to gender mainstreaming and GEWE that the project teams adopted – as argued above, whereas in Lebanon the pilot initiative was implemented by actors that had a strong background on gender issues, in Egypt the PCUWA deliberately avoided addressing gender issues and focused on enhancing production for increasing the family income. In this framework, women’s groups were presented more as a sustainable way to access the market than as a strategy to enhance women’s autonomy and relations.

In Tunisia the beneficiaries are a diversified group, since the contact methodology adopted has been the multi-purpose reception centre “Centre Nejmet Tounes” that was created in a building close to the Zarzis fishing training centre. The reception in the Centre is the first level of involvement of women. This could happen for different reasons: a frequent reason was the need to have the recognition of a degree; health-related problems were also addressed to the Centre. A common element that emerged was nevertheless the need of the women to have a space to speak about themselves and to share their difficulties. Among the women that addressed themselves to the Centre, different subgroups participated to different activities. During the fieldwork, we mostly worked with the women who both attended the trainings on social rights and gender relations, and the technical trainings, in view of the participation into income generating activities. Gender issues were explicitly addressed, in a multi-dimensional approach, where the income-generation and entrepreneurial side of the project was embedded in a wider view of women empowerment, which involves together the economic, the social, and the psychological aspects. Men have been involved in specific workshops directed to them: according to their women relatives, this had a positive impact and these activities shall be further developed.

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4 For a discussion, see the second monitoring report from Elena Zambelli.
What has changed? Main results and lessons learnt

At institutional level

In Egypt, the project implementing partner (PCUWA) went through a major restructuring between 2014 and 2015, when the former Director as well as most of the Unit’s members retired: indeed, the team that has implemented GeMaiSa – except for one member - was nominated right before the beginning of the project. According to the project team, the activities realized under the project – that involved several researchers and experts from different Departments and Centres of the MALR – resulted in an increased visibility and legitimacy for the Unit, as demonstrated by the fact that a number of colleagues asked to join the PCUWA. It is worth highlighting that the PCUWA has tended to avoid discussions on the possible outcomes of the project in terms of gender equity and women’s empowerment, in order to limit negative backlashes and resistance from colleagues.

The coordination between the PCUWA and other Units or Departments aiming at the promotion of women’s rights (such as the Rural Women Department), at guaranteeing gender equality within the MALR (Equal Opportunity Unit) or implementing other GEWE programs (such as the Executive Agency for Comprehensive Development Projects, that implements the CHIEAM’ WEE programme) has been limited. Future initiatives might address this issue and support the MALR in the definition of a gender equality strategy. However, it is worth highlighting that the PCUWA has been able to create a meaningful network (with the SFD for example) and to identify allies (some colleagues, the extension workers’ group) that could be critical for the consolidation of an enabling environment in which discussion on these issues and further initiatives can be profitably promoted.

In Lebanon, as argued in the previous chapter, the institutional implementing partners have a very different background on gender issues and women’s empowerment, being the MoSA the strongest government actor in this respect, while the MoA is still lagging behind: the Ministry of Agriculture hasn’t developed a gender mainstreaming strategy and gender equity and women’s empowerment issues remain marginalized in the Ministry’ Agricultural Strategy.

GeMaiSa has initiated two inter-related processes of change within the MoA, that are worth supporting in the second phase. First, the training cycle on gender issues and gender mainstreaming has triggered the interest of the MoA staff, and has brought to the identification of three Departments that could easily adopt a gender approach: the project department, the dairy processing department and the vegetables processing department. Adopting a gender-based approach in the statistics Department would be crucial, but this would require political commitment as well as a dedicated budget. Second, the GeMaiSa project coordinator for Moa, in conjunction with her appointment as Gender Focal Point, proposed to establish a Women’s Committee in the MoA in order to build on the positive outcomes of the project and engage the Ministry decision-makers on gender equality and gender mainstreaming. This Committee cannot be formally included within the Ministry organigram, as this would require a Ministerial reform, but is considered a relevant first step.
to identify the gaps as well as the political and strategic priorities for the promotion of GEWE issues within the MoA.

In Tunisia, the relationship between rural women and institutions is a relevant aspect on which Ge.Mai.Sa worked. Looking from the side of institutions, it seems that a gender perspective up to now has been brought by single donor-sponsored projects. Several actors within the public sphere itself are now asking for a greater institutionalization of such approach: the Unit for International Cooperation at the Ministry of Agriculture maintains that it is needed to institutionalise the practices and the achievements, and more systematically train the personnel involved. In this direction, at the local level, Ge.Mai.Sa promoted the creation of a local network of institutions in order to make the increased attention of institutions towards rural women sustainable. It seems that changes at the institutional level are in progress, through both Ge.Mai.Sa and wider changes: several women in the focus groups indicate a greater attention of the public institutions towards rural women (“before it was as if we were not part of Tunisia”). Moreover, a significant change at the institutional level is indicated by the fact that the BAFR in 2017 has obtained for the first time a budget that will be allocated on a regional basis.

For the women beneficiaries of the pilot initiatives

Both in Egypt and Lebanon, a discussion on “what has changed” for the final beneficiaries of the pilot initiatives seems untimely: the two participatory evaluation missions were carried out before buffaloes' and goats' delivery in Egypt and before the start-up of the cooperative. The participatory tool prepared as well as the roadmap for quantitative evaluation that was developed for GeMaiSa will both be useful during the second phase to monitor the progresses, changes and challenges in the lives of the women involved in the project. However, during the focus group discussions, several elements emerged that need to be taken into account in the follow up phase.

In these two countries, the project dovetailed with two common elements – one at macro and one at micro level. The first are the implications of the economic crisis, that is forcing the women out of the house to start gaining an income. The second is the acknowledgement that the free time that women have (and that in both countries, though with different degrees of depth, was calculated with ad hoc exercises) can be used to engage in a productive activity that is as aligned to women's aspirations and the context' characteristics as possible. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that while in Lebanon most of the women who joined the cooperative have grown-up children, in Egypt there are many women who still have small children at home, which ultimately was the reason to participate in the project. In fact, these women might have different expectations regarding their work life, but are obliged to stay at home due to the young age of their children and animal farming is a good option to work from home. A final comment related to this element is that during the second phase of GeMaiSa detailed data regarding age, level of education, number of children, number of household members, available resources, etc. need to be collected to have a more focused picture of the women beneficiaries.
In Egypt, a change that occurred during the project implementation is the fact that women moved from being sceptical or even against group work to being supporters. This is linked, on one side, to the effectiveness of the trainings received and, on the other, to a process of self-awareness that made women acknowledge that, in the context where they live, working individually would mean staying out of the market and that, if they have a possibility of being integrated in the goats/buffalo value chain this has to be through the group.

In Lebanon, as in the case of Tunisia below, the women beneficiaries highlighted how the main change occurred is about how they feel after the trainings and the collective process of establishing a cooperative: they have improved communication skills and assertiveness, they have increased confidence in themselves and are more aware of their rights. They became aware of the value of their time and of how it can be used profitably.

In Tunisia, indeed, according to the project personnel and to several women in the focus groups, the major change has been “internal”, personal: it mainly has to do with an increased feeling of optimism, autonomy and ambition. Important factors of this change are the trainings on gender relations and women’s rights, and the opening of the “reception desk” at the multi-purpose centre “Nejmet Tounes”. Having a space to speak about themselves played an important role in women’s self-perception. According to the project team, this is a novelty in a context where women (especially married women) are not used to speak about their lives and their frustrations, and are “not allowed to have ambitions”. This reflects also in the relationship with the project: a change that has been underlined by several women in the focus groups is the shift from a focus on the expectation of receiving material help (“a sheep”) to a focus on the immaterial gain obtained in the trainings: self-esteem, awareness of rights, tools to better manage the relations within the household. As we will discuss below, knowledge plays an important role in this change. “Knowing more” is perceived as a factor of empowerment, both in terms of rights and in terms of techniques: knowing the law and what the law states on women’s rights and workers’ rights, knowing better techniques for sheep herding, knowing how to set the price of a product, etc.

Relevant changes appear also in the field of mobility and in the relationship with the institutions. In the first field, women describe the workshops as occasions to move beyond the usual borders of their everyday life. Some of them participated to the field visit to the farms in Jendouba, and this is described as a major novelty. In the second one, it appears that women started to organize in order to claim support from institutions, e.g. to obtain a kindergarten in the village, or to obtain support to build up a producers’ organization. In other cases, women got familiar with social security instruments and started the procedure to enter in the system (e.g. obtaining the school book for children for unemployed parents). Both these aspects seem having changed the relationship with the men in the families: some women say that they are becoming “the one who knows the law and the institutions” in the household.

Changes occurred in both the collective and the individual sphere, but it seems that the collective “comes first”. Collective tools seem more relevant, together with collective time and sharing of experiences. A possible explanation is that the collective “protects” the individual:
an individual exposure would be too risky in a context where the gendered expectations on rural women are very strong.

In the approaches

In **Egypt**, GeMaiSa has introduced three new approaches in the implementation of cooperation projects aimed at increasing market-oriented animal and dairy production. The first innovation in the target area is the establishment of women’s group for goats and buffalo farming and dairy production. While the outcomes in terms of production, market access, group management and sustainability, income generation, household wellbeing shall be possibly analysed during the second phase of GeMaiSa, at this stage it can be commented that organizing in group has created friendships and strengthened women’s networks at local level – through giving women the opportunity to learn, share knowledge and information and meet in safe spaces. From the project management point of view, the creation and consolidation of women’s groups has been facilitated by a fruitful collaboration between the extension workers and the local leaders for women’s issues.

The second innovation, whose outcomes shall be measured in the second phase of GeMaiSa, is the promotion of goat farming and goats’ dairy production among the women of the target area. The market for dairy products from goats ‘milk is still limited in Fayoum – particularly if compared to Cairo – and it is expected that women, in the first phase, privilege breeding and selling animals. However, the positive relationships established by the PCUWA with the Fayoum Agriculture Directorate allowed for the exploration of a sound marketing opportunity for the project’s dairy products – that is, the shop of the Directorate, that sells locally produced foods. The second phase of GeMaiSa shall plan for the definition of a formal agreement (including, among others, the quality and hygiene standards required, transport arrangements, quantity, price, etc.) between the women's groups and the Directorate of Agriculture; and the women producers shall be supported in the achievement of the contract’s requirements. At the same time, further marketing opportunities have to be considered – including partnerships or possibly formal collaboration with the private sector.

The third innovation is linked to the former: the PCUWA, together with the MALR trained, has encouraged women to mix the goat and buffalo milk for dairy production in order to obtain a product that has more marketing possibilities since it meets the local taste more than pure goat cheese.

In **Lebanon**, the GeMaiSa implementation approach defined in the Plan of Action established a strict collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Social Affairs as implementing partners. According to the project team, GeMaiSa was the first case of Ministries collaborating in the direct implementation of a project whose core activities and expected results were relevant for the two institutions. This strategy was a successful one and has created a space for further collaboration among the two Ministries.

A second innovation introduced by GeMaiSa within the institutional framework in which it has been implemented is the selection of the target area. The Lower Chouf is not usually
targeted by development projects – it is not classified among the rural areas by the Ministry of Agriculture and is not considered a very poor area. This choice – taken at the top Ministerial level – was initially questioned by many institutional and civil society stakeholders, but throughout the implementation of the project Lower Chouf has become a “legitimate” area in which to implement cooperation projects.

Finally, while cooperatives are common in the country – including women’s cooperatives that produce and sell traditional Lebanese food – the women’s cooperative established under the GeMaiSa pilot initiative is the first in the targeted villages. For this reason, and due to still unclear marketing opportunities, the project’ second phase shall support the definition of a marketing strategy, identify possible partnerships (such as with Atayeb Al Rif), and continue support to the cooperative.

In Tunisia, a multi-dimensional approach to empowerment has been experimented. Income generating activities have been accompanied by trainings on women’s rights and by the “sharing” space offered by the Centre. On one hand, this produced a greater link between the economic and the social sphere; on the other hand, economic empowerment has not been reduced to a push to develop small businesses, and it has included also an increased familiarity with social protection systems, unions, savings, labour rights etc. The income generating activities become a tool to raise women’s awareness on the fact that they bear rights, competences and needs, and that public institutions shall be responsive on that. Related to this, it is important to notice that an ex ante definition of empowerment has been avoided: the idea has been to promote a set of diversified activities aimed at increasing the freedom of choice and autonomy of women. A relevant element of the approach used is the strategy to “go towards” the rural women: tools such as the diagnostic appraisal and the “mobile reception desk” (the same principle of the multi-purpose reception centre has been proposed in a “mobile” version, in order to reach more remote areas) have been thought in this direction.

In the knowledge

In Egypt, the project aimed at filling the gaps between knowledge production (research) and the implementation of policies on the ground, identifying the bottlenecks which hinder the implementation of policies and suggesting ways to overcome strangleholds while creating sustainable support teams on the ground, listening to women’s voices and promoting their active participation in planning their way out of poverty. At the beginning of the project, the PCUWA realized a review of the researches done in the MALR in the past five years focusing on gender issues and the situation of women in Youssef El Sediq District.

On the basis of the knowledge gaps identified, a need assessment was developed to collect relevant information both from rural women and from women extension workers regarding their perceptions of the villages in which they live, ongoing activities their household organization, their aspirations, etc. The knowledge shared by the women in the needs assessment as well as their explicit aspirations only partially informed the final decision on
the productive activity: in fact, some women explicitly said that they wouldn’t want to receive buffaloes from the project, because they are too big and too difficult to manage at home. According to the extension workers, women’s proposals (for income-generating activities to be realized under GeMaiSa) were evaluated on the basis of women’s capacity and of the context conditions: it was their responsibility to make women beneficiaries reflect on what would work better for them while promoting agricultural development as a key component of their mandate as extension workers. In this situation, we see that women’s aspirations and desires freely expressed during the needs assessment were not considered appropriate for the circumstances in which the pilot activity was going to be implemented. It should be asked whether this specific piece of information – women’s aspirations regarding productive activities – could be better collected using the action-training tool, that includes a series of exercises that help reflecting on the consistency between one’s dreams, skills and context characteristics.

Another relevant element that emerged from the discussion with the women beneficiaries is the distinction between “old” knowledge (their own knowledge about cheese-making) and “new” knowledge (what they learned from the trainers). However, women argued that old knowledge was not to be put aside since, after all, they still preferred the cheese done in the “old” way; “new” knowledge was thus going to be used only when producing cheese for the market. While the transfer of knowledge during the trainings has not been unidirectional – that is, from the trainers to the trainees – the kind of knowledge that the trainers learnt from the women seems to have more to do with women’s attitude towards life (patience, how to do a lot with very little, tolerance, self-sacrifice, take challenges, believing that nothing is impossible) than with “practical” knowledge.

A third element emerging from Egypt is related to the selection of women group leaders. The leaders are perceived as women who can think in a strategic way, oriented towards adding value to the production and to the profitability of the business. The women recognize this strategic knowledge, that seems to have three levels:

- **Formal knowledge**: most of the “leaders” are more educated than the others;
- **Informal knowledge**: they have practical experience in animal farming;
- **Social knowledge**: these women are able to build trust, promote cohesion and practice accountability. They perceive themselves as women who behave well and whom other people like.

In Lebanon, the focus on knowledge was less apparent than in the other two countries, and during the participatory evaluation mission it was difficult to test the knowledge value chain tool that was prepared ad hoc for GeMaiSa.

A key example that can be made to show the knowledge bottlenecks has to do with the training offered by the National Commission for Lebanese Women to key MoA officers. The trainees received an introductory training on gender issues and mainstreaming (no one of them had never attended one) and, during the focus group realized for the participatory
evaluation, they commented that the training was too generalist, and didn’t address their training needs, that is gender-disaggregated data, gender analysis and gender indexes. While these issues can be addressed in further trainings to be realized in the second phase of GeMaiSa, it shall be discussed how this knowledge could be translated in policies and practices in a Ministry that doesn’t have a gender strategy and gender-specific priorities within its Strategy. In this case, the usability of knowledge is strictly linked to institutional dynamics and a broader action is requested in order for the training to produce impact.

In Tunisia, the role of knowledge channels and the recognition of a diversified set of knowledge has been central in the Ge.Mai.Sa pilot initiative. The multidimensional approach to women’s empowerment reflects into the multidimensionality of the knowledge created and shared within the project: the technical trainings for the income generating activities (flow of technical knowledge to the women) have been established together with the reception>Welcome centre, where the women could go and express different kinds of needs, letting the project personnel become aware of the difficulties lived by the rural women in the area. Three main elements shall be underlined:

a) The transfer of knowledge has not been unidirectional: besides the training activities, that produced a flow a knowledge from the institutions/the project to the women, part of the activities produced a flow of knowledge in the other direction, namely the two activities of the diagnostic survey and the reception centre open to all women to provide help in addressing several needs. The latter is particularly emblematic of the multi-directionality of the exchange: on one hand, it is the place where the women received training and information, and on the other it is the place where the project personnel becomes aware of several aspects of the women condition, of their needs, and systematizes this awareness in the services provided.

b) This mechanism allows the “needs” to become “knowledge”, since they are expressed, received and recognized. The capacity to express needs, points of view and opinions, to expose one’s argument is perceived as a source of empowerment. Being able to put words on perceptions is described as a powerful agent of change. The space and time dedicated to speak about oneself is described as an important factor of this change.

c) The transfer of knowledge is not exclusively technical and doesn’t have only an entrepreneurial aim. Trainings were both on technical skills, but also and foremost on social rights and on the alternative views on gender relations. This multi-level flow of knowledge helps in linking several dimensions of empowerment.

Knowledge is perceived as an important element of empowerment. First, the knowledge of the law: the law that establishes the parity between women and men, the law that establishes the right to social security, the law that establishes the right to a contract when employed. Knowledge is a necessary, though not sufficient condition: “you have to struggle” to transform knowledge into rights, argues one of the trainers. For example, knowing how to reach the local institutions allows a group of women to obtain the creation of a kindergarten in the village. Knowledge is empowering also with respect to men in the family: “it’s me who knew that we had the right to have the school books of the kids, and who brought the books home”.

Another element is the need that women’s knowledge is recognized: they have technical skills and competences that is nevertheless not formalized and therefore not valued. This awareness is often expressed by the women in the focus groups and by the trainers. The recognition of skills is closely linked to the need of being recognized as a professional, as a “artisan”, a “farmer” etc. The recognition of a productive role is important to gain visibility in the family and in the broader society, and to break the widespread assumption that “women don’t work, they help”.

In this respect, the trainings played a major role since they provided a formal recognition of competencies, upgraded them, and gave access to possibilities of mobility and contact with new places and people. Knowledge is again at the crossroad of several dimensions of empowerment: mobility, competencies, and self-esteem.

In Tunisia, we identified 4 main channels of knowledge:
Knowledge 1 : women’s needs addressed to the reception centre “Centre Nejmet Tounes”
Knowledge 2 : women’s rights
Knowledge 3 : women’s technical competences
Knowledge 4 : trainers’ technical competences

The Tunisia case provides the best opportunity to test the knowledge value chain that was prepared for the participatory evaluation tool. Even if we realized that each channel requires a specific sequence of actions, we can summarize the main steps for knowledge transfer in the following table. For a greater detail on each process, see the country report (E.g. the women’s needs are “recognized” through a process of “sharing”: in this case, sharing comes before recognition).
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Recognition</th>
<th>Acquisition</th>
<th>Sharing</th>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Women’s needs addressed to the reception centre “Centre Nejmet Tounes”</strong></td>
<td>The needs become knowledge thanks to the sharing process (that happens at the reception desk of the Centre). The main element of this recognition is the awareness of the need to speak about oneself, about one’s project and frustrations. The knowledge holders are the women and the process is made through the reception desk work.</td>
<td>The acquisition of this knowledge is done at two levels: a) The women who address themselves at the Centre acquire the knowledge/awareness of the need to speak about themselves (and in some cases to put words on the experiences of violence). At the same time, they obtain orientation with respect to the initial problem they addressed the Centre for. b) The project personnel systematise the women’s needs through the “welcome forms”, but at the same time becomes aware that the emerging needs are profoundly linked to gender inequalities.</td>
<td>The needs addressed to the Centre are diversified and, at the beginning are more related to income generating activities and degree recognition. At the same time, the need of speaking and sharing their personal life becomes predominant in most cases, including their frustration and their experiences of violence. In this case, sharing the need is the tool that allows for the need becoming knowledge.</td>
<td>Several actions are taken as a consequence of this process of recognition of needs. a) the project team followed up with the women to respond to the request, usually addressing them to the relevant institutions; b) trainings for income generating activities have been put in place; c) trainings on gender relations and social rights have been contexts where to tackle relational issues and the women’s need to speak about themselves. d) several women declare having introduced in their everyday life the practice of keeping a moment for themselves alone during a day; this practice has been shared during the training on women’s rights.</td>
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<td><strong>Women’s rights</strong></td>
<td>Equality between men and women is stated by the law, therefore formally recognized. At the same time, the institutions often do not</td>
<td>The acquisition of the knowledge of being right holders is described as a strong empowering aspect for the women</td>
<td>The training on social rights and on women rights have been important moments of sharing of aspects of</td>
<td>In several cases this knowledge has led women to organize and claim support from institutions, e.g. to obtain a kindergarten in the</td>
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manage to substantiate this with appropriate implementation tools. Labour rights suffer of the same problem e.g. the right to have a contract when employed. personal and professional life, together with the acquisition of knowledge on "the laws". Sharing has stimulated the ambition for change.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Women’s technical competences</th>
<th>The recognition of women competences if crucial in the IP : the reception desk helps women in their search for a diploma of technical competences ; the coaching in artisanal activities has led to the certification of artisanal skills; more broadly, trainings are perceived as contexts where the women’s opinions are taken into consideration.</th>
<th>One of the main issues concerning the women’s skills, is the lack of a formal recognition of competences that the women have. &quot;I have the competence, but I lack a certificate&quot;. The certificate is important both to be recognized by others and to have greater access to formal labour market and businesses.</th>
<th>The women’s skills have been shared with the trainers in the technical trainings: the trainer in herding techniques declares having built on pre-existing competences. During the training, the transfer of knowledge went in both directions. This was strong in the case of trainings on social rights.</th>
<th>The formal recognition of competences has been used e.g. by women engaged in artisanal activities, to participate to formal markets and fairs. More broadly, the awareness of the importance of the formal recognition of skills has been a source of empowerment.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Trainers’ technical competences</td>
<td>The first step, is the recognition of the gaps in women’s skills. Several women indicate what they learnt from the trainers, that was missing before (e.g. in sheep breeding).</td>
<td>The technical training have been on sheep herding, fishing net reparation, artisanal activities and business management. The training in herding and net reparation have been done by trainers working in partner institutions (especially CRDA) while the trainer in artisanal activities has been recruited for the project.</td>
<td>The only income generating activities that had started at the moment of the evaluation were the artisanal ones. Concerning sheep herding, the trainers declares that after 3 days training, the trainees can manage a small group of animals. This training included a visit to farms in Jendouba : this has been perceived as an important training and mobility moment.</td>
<td>The first positive role played by the trainings is to « have proposed something new »; moreover, the women in the focus groups describe as a positive element the fact of « knowing more », also with respect to their husbands/brothers etc. Women selling their artisanal products declare having learnt to establish a fair price,</td>
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that takes into consideration their work.
Conclusions: ideas for the following up of GeMaiSa

Each country report includes a final section that reflects on the challenges faced and proposed solutions that emerged from the focus group discussion with the different stakeholders. This document contains inputs on further actions that could be taken up during the second phase of GeMaiSa to improve the results reached so far by the project.

In this final section, we would like to list a brief series of elements /lessons learned that can inform future initiatives aimed at the empowerment of rural women and that can be useful for broader discussions to be promoted within CHIEAM, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation as well as the project’ partners.

1. The relationship between the national and local level is a complex one. In GeMaiSa (particularly in Egypt and Lebanon), the involvement of the local level institutions has been crucial to involve the women beneficiaries and to build a positive environment for the implementation of the project. However, the main institutional changes (i.e. strengthening /establishment of gender equity entities) that the project has brought about, and that are discussed above, happened at national level. How can the role of the local institutions be enhanced, and how can they benefit from international cooperation programmes like GeMaiSa? On the other side, how can the gap between the national level and what happens in the field be reduced – that is, how can women’s visibility and capacity to make claims be increased?

2. Both the collective and individual dimensions of empowerment are important. In the three countries, the collective "protects”, enhances the individual processes of empowerment. Women’s group creation, the establishment of a cooperative, collective training are crucial for strengthening women’s networks at local level, for creating meaningful relationships and for providing women with safe spaces in which they can meet, discuss, spend time together, engage in productive activities, share information and knowledge;

3. Multi-dimensionality is a good approach to overcome the limitations of micro-businesses / micro-incomes for women. In this respect, the action-training tool is a proper methodology that can be widely used to match women’s desires and aspirations, their skills, and the market characteristics;

4. The analysis of knowledge and learning processes are a good key to look at a project’ outcomes (for example, immaterial gains in terms of awareness and self-esteem are perceived and appreciated), but they have to be framed as explicit results in a project’ action plan.

5. The role of extension workers, local women leaders, trainers – as well as of the project staff – has been crucial for the realization of the expected results in such a short timeframe: the empowerment of the “empowerers” is important!