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The importance of integrating a gender approach in water supplies programs: the case of LYDEC in Casablanca.

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**The importance of integrating a gender approach in water supplies programs:
the case of LYDEC in Casablanca.**

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Abstract:

Since the INDH* was launched in 2005, LYDEC** has the obligation to provide water access to 120 000 households in various shantytowns of Casablanca before 2009. To promote the numbers of households connected, LYDEC started a program based on urban methods but also on a social diagnostic. The first results, after one year and half of investigating, planning and implementing new water supplies have shown the importance to ensure the participation of communities in the process and more specifically, to develop participatory methods based on gender approach. In most developing countries, the role played by female users in water and sanitation is predominant and has been proved. The promotion of participatory methods has improved women's awareness of health and hygiene issues related to the use of clean water but also increased their involvement in the public community. In the case of LYDEC, this process has ensured a greater community acceptance of changes and payment related to new water supplies.

*National Initiative for Human Development.

** Lyonnaise des Eaux de Casablanca.

Keywords:

Gender issues; Participatory methods; Shantytowns; Sustainable development; Water access.

INTRODUCTION

On May 18th 2005 in Agadir, His Majesty the King of Morocco Mohamed VI launched a major national initiative and challenge to Morocco: the INDH, the National Initiative for Human Development. Five years after the beginning of his reign, Mohamed VI took a major decision and political stand for the development of his country. In this speech, the King targets poverty and Human Development should therefore promote access to basic goods but also encourage national involvement for Morocco. It is important to underline the choice of the term Human Development; the international public sphere (Habermas, 1970) tends indeed to prefer eco-development, social development and more specially, sustainable development. By Human Development, the royal discourse meant a new model of living and behaving together as a society. The Human

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Development calls for solidarity, citizenship and conviction. For the King, the two goals are related to Development and Education, one cannot come without the other. However, the first operational step must develop access to basic social goods and equipments for the entire population like health, education, water, electricity, sanitation, etc. The implementation of those basic infrastructures will bring social changes and new ways of life, which usually implied changes of behaviours.

The case of LYDEC in Casablanca

This study will focus on one of the main cities of Morocco: Casablanca, the economic capital. The choice of Casablanca is particularly relevant to consider risks and social changes in the broader context of urban water. This city is facing spontaneous urbanization, growing immigration from rural zones and strong poverty. In 2005, the Wilaya of Greater Casablanca (Figure 1) counted 180 000 households without water and electricity infrastructures (Koulm, 2006). Only 20 000 of these households were legal habitation and 160 000 without any legal existence for the city. At last, 50% of those 180 000 households are in urban area and 50% are in a rural area.



Figure 1: The Wilaya of Casablanca, 180 000 households to connect in 2005.

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To promote Casablanca's development, the city has chosen to eradicate illegal households and districts by ensuring their inhabitants water, electricity and sanitation access. LYDEC, Lyonnaise des Eaux de Casablanca, is in charge of distributing and managing water, electricity and sanitation infrastructures since 1997. The city gave therefore the company this responsibility. The public authority wanted both to capitalize on the company previous experience in providing access to basic infrastructures like water and electricity and to benefit from the SUEZ expertise. Indeed, LYDEC is part of SUEZ, a French multinational company delivering services in the fields of electricity, natural gas, water and waste services. The group is divided into two branches, SUEZ Environnement in charge of water and waste services and SUEZ Energy dealing with electricity, gas and energy services.

This study wants to question what is the user's role in the development of water access. It will focus on the women's role at every step of the project from a gender approach. We want to question how important the concept of gender is, how is it understood and applied, if there is any benefit and particularly, if it can ensure a greater community involvement, acceptance of changes and new behaviours.

The Gender Approach

Gender refers to the sexual distinction between male and female. The term refers to a social construct rather than a biological condition. It assumes that a wide variety of phenomena have gendered characteristics to identify men and women on social norms in contrary to male and female bodies. Gender also included the different values that carry men and women. Gender supposes therefore a distinct conception of water resources management. The gender approach have been widely used and promoted by the "gender and development" theories starting with the work of E. Boserup first published in 1970 (Boserup, 1970; Moser, 1993; Braidotti R., Charkiewicz E., Hausler S. and Wieringa S. 1994; Benería L. & Bisnath, S. 2001). The gender approach insist on the role of women to international development issues.

The 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 was the first international conference to define gender and its impacts in development. It attempted to redefine the ways to reach a better understanding of the gender approach throughout various societies of the world. The purpose of Beijing was to help the gender approach to get operational applications and results. Beijing also accepted the importance of the national situations' diversity: general rules cannot be applied to local contexts, adaptation is key. The important point with Beijing is the definition of an official concept for gender concept and its links with development. Throughout World Conferences from Rio in 1992 to Mexico in 2006, one fact has been accepted, proved and ensured: without women, no development. It has been particularly underlined for the water field.

From this international frame to the local, regional and national development: how gender is really applied and understood? By referring to the gender approach in the case of Casablanca, we want to analyse how deciders and managers integrate the gender concept and more particularly, how male and female users are effectively taken into account at the different stages of urban hydraulics projects ((Allély D., Drevet-Dabbous O., Etienne J., Francis J., Morel à l'Huissier A., Chappé P. and Verdelhan Cayre G., 2002 ; Vézina M., Dabbous O., Désille D., Durany Jacob J. and Etienne J., 2007).

MATERIEL & METHODS

Our study draws conclusion from three different kinds of analysis. First, we took benefit from a qualitative analysis based on interviews, observations in focus groups, meetings and several

discussions with deciders, managers, social animators and users who are related to the implementation of water supplies led by LYDEC. This work has been accomplished during two internships at Lyonnaise des Eaux and LYDEC.

Two different sites were chosen to further analyze the methods and projects: (i) in Rmel located in Douar Bouazza in the West of Casablanca and (ii) in Lamkansa in the South of Casablanca close to the highway which draws the limit between urban and peri-urban areas.

For the company, the main difficulty is to cope with property issues. It led INMAE to define three different steps for the water implementation project:

- “Before water” - the company establishes a “picture” of the targeted households. This picture is actually an important urban diagnostic that consists in mapping, listing households and evaluating needs. Before starting building water supplies, property issues must be resolved.
- “Implementing water” - the works start. During the overall period, crisis can occur and the company has to keep the population informed of the stages of the process.
- “After water” - the company wants to ensure the users became clients. It’s important that the new clients knew their responsibilities but also the services they can benefit from LYDEC. For the company, it’s an important moment to give some basic rules on water uses in order to avoid misuses of the water and sanitation infrastructures.

With this methodology, the company tried to get the community support and the legal authorization to implement and manage water supplies in targeted areas. It also urged LYDEC to further develop ties with the local communities thanks to participatory methods (focus group, animation and daily contact with the community).

The other important method is a bibliographical analysis of the gender literacy based on theoretical books, evaluation reports, articles and methodological guides to gender. This bibliographical analysis has been completed by interviews with specialists of gender and development theories and more specially with gender and water like the AFD, PSEAU, UNIFEM and UNESCO.

The third method is based on discursive-semiotic approach and analysis of several supports produced by SUEZ Environnement and LYDEC. It also included a text analysis of different discourses and international declarations written on the occasion of international conferences dealing with development or water since 1972 (From Stockholm, the first international conference on environment held in 1972 to the 4th World Water Forum held in Mexico in March 2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In 2005, LYDEC took the responsibility to provide water access to 125 000 households without legal existence. The company elaborated a method mostly based on an urban picture and a light social diagnostic. This accompaniment of the implementation of water supplies is led by a program called “water for all” at SUEZ Environnement and INMAE (meaning development in Arabic) at LYDEC. In order to deal with various difficulties, the social unit for implementing water further fosters participatory methods to promote a better community involvement and acceptance of new water infrastructures.

- A stronger social diagnostic

The first methodology adapted by LYDEC was to establish a picture of the selected shantytown. This picture consisted in describing habitation types, transportation, current water access (public fountain, water vendors, wells, etc.), sanitation and public infrastructures. The method focused on operational aspects including a general description of the community in terms of consumption

habits and needs. It excluded a sociological short portrait of the population composition. This fact can be explained by three factors:

- The importance to establish if water supplies can be physically implemented,
- The importance of legal issues tends to drive LYDEC to focus on relations with political authorities,
- The actual evaluation of the community needs and financial related issues to implement water supplies.

The social diagnostic has however taken more importance due to the previous quoted difficulties. The social diagnostic is therefore a crucial step to get the community confidence and to transform the inhabitants of shantytowns - used to illegal situations - into clients. The social diagnostic is based on participatory methods (that implies for I. Pechell the responsible of the social diagnostic program of INMAE, "to coordinate information, to comprehend inhabitant's needs and to establish confidence by daily contacts with the community resource persons").

- Identifying community resource persons

An important step to promote participation and adhesion is to contact key persons within the community. These persons will support LYDEC to better communicate messages to the community. For the social animators, it is particularly important to identify and to get the confidence of the influential men and women of the community. From the two sites experiences, resource persons' profiles have been defined. For the next operations, the social animators will have to contact these persons at first.

In the case of men, resource persons are the "caïd" (the local and political authority), the doctor, the institutor, the "fker" (the religious authority) or the "hajj" (Arabic term for a person who made the pilgrimage to Mecca), elders (traditional authority), responsible(s) of existing association(s).

In the case of women, it is interesting to underline that women's resource persons are the wives of men's resource persons' profiles, a sort of "female version" of men's typology. To these profiles, the method added the midwife and young women like students who are particularly involved in the community life. It is interesting to emphasize that women are seen as "repetitors". Indeed, to select the wife of a resource person is another way to reach a male resource person. Women got thus a double status; they are "repetitors" and influential persons. Some women have therefore a strong influence in the community life like old women and "hajja" (the feminine term for "hajj").

The distinction made between male and female resource persons shows the integration of a gender approach that is concretely declined by distinct communication supports. Abdelatif Abdarazzak, responsible and social animator for Lamkensa, insisted on the importance to differentiate between men, women and children "because they don't have the same center of interests and conception of water managing resources". This inclusion of gender leads us to question its diffusion and impacts within the water implementation supplies projects.

From top to down: gender's diffusion and impacts

Gender as a term is not particularly used in the communication supports or in the discourses of the different persons working for the water implementation unit. Mostly, deciders have a strong knowledge of the gender theories and usually worked with specialized agencies like the AFD or the PSEAU. The more we drew to the local scale of the project, the less the "gender" term itself is used even if it's usually vaguely known. In this part, we'll present the gender concept from the deciding level to the local implementation of water supplies.

- Access to water... For women

First level: SUEZ Environnement. SUEZ Environnement, the water branch of SUEZ pilots the “water for all” program. The “water for all” program is in charge of delivering water and sanitation to unconnected areas where the company has a contract. It deals with shantytowns in urban, peri-urban and rural areas in different regions of the world.

The semio discursive of the Internet website dedicated to “water for all” or the different brochures showed a strong communication on women: pictures, testimonies and impacts conveyed the importance of women in water projects. They are not seen as deciders but direct beneficiaries of the service. For instance, women are considered as a minority like children: “water has important impacts on people’s everyday life: to walk kilometres in order to find it or to spend the day to fill buckets - and therefore not being able to work for women and not being able to go to schools for children” (“Water for all”, SUEZ Environnement, 2006).

The value of the example is also particularly important, women’s testimonies legitimate the taken actions. Free time, new professional activities, education... The impacts are measurable and easy to communicate for the company. This representation led to “biased visions of the project within the company and a reproduction of women traditional roles in the local contexts” explained F. Raoult, the communication manager of SUEZ Environnement. Women are only seen as beneficents of the water new supply like children, they are not seen as actors (Figure 2). This remark questions the understanding of gender at SUEZ, LYDEC and in the two sites of Lamkensa and Rmel.



Visual similar treatment between women and children.

Figure 2: Brochure “Water for all”, SUEZ Environnement, March 2006.

- The gender conscience

Second level: the gender diffusion in LYDEC and SUEZ Environnement. It is interesting to note that the term of “gender” is better known in Morocco than in France where the concept is not widespread. Many people know the term but may not know what it means or will have a vague idea of its principles. O. Dabbous from the AFD highlights that the term itself “will be appropriated in function of the local context but also depending on financial backers involved in the project”. It will also depend on “the emotional beliefs related to water” for A. Mathys of SUEZ Environnement. Gender is therefore adapted to the context. For LYDEC, “gender” is not really used but the conscience of women and men’s distinct roles is strong. For Abdelmajid Hilal, responsible and social animator for Rmel, the difference between male and female users exists, “during the preliminary phase in order to establish the social diagnostic, we could see the differences of perceptions of water supplies expected effects. Women have strong expectations and we have to answer them by providing adequate answers and information”. Women’s interest - despite the men’s reluctance to see women’s on the public area – (“they don’t want their wife to be taken in picture for instance. We can talk with them but we shouldn’t show them...” explained Abdelmajid

Hilal) – shows the concrete need to integrate gender in water project and to ensure a correct knowledge of its principles within the company.

- **A local demand**

Third level: the users. The different implementation phases have shown a strong women's interest towards new water supplies. It is a fact that women are in charge of water collection and storage for the family. The water chore is perceived as a waste of time and they expected radical changes from water supplies. Their participation to water management project is however more conflictual. In the cases of Rmel and Lamkensa, women's implication to the project hasn't been a major obstacle, most of men accepted that LYDEC contacted and worked with them. Resource persons however refused mixed focus group which means that water projects don't have the same meaning and consequences depending on gender.

What has been particularly interesting to observe is the strong women's will to be part of the project. They asked several times that LYDEC organized focus groups for them but also for their children. For most women, water supplies is an important change in their everyday life and they are particularly interested by the water cost and the benefit for their children's health. Pascale Guiffant, part of "water for all" program at SUEZ Environnement declared, "at the local scale, the gender approach is included by itself. The first concerned by water are women, the gender concept is therefore already integrated to the process." The next important step is their education to water and sanitation uses.

Changing behaviours, a gendered gesture

To foster the users' awareness of water issues and uses, INMAE develops information and communication towards future users and new clients. To implement water supplies involves transforming inhabitants' status of the new connected area... The stake for LYDEC is therefore to integrate them as clients in their system. On the operational ground, it means to animate focus groups and campaigns, once again, gendered based. The supports developed by INMAE are based on oral transmission with a written support like short brochures, panels (specially for children) or power point used during focus groups. The communication of INMAE is not yet well structured but already clearly differentiated targets. The method to promote water "good" behaviours is based on three strategic axes.

- **How to use water and sanitation**

The introduction to water uses implies a presentation various issues tackled by the social animator mostly during focus groups. First message, the water and health links. This particular part will further develop the different illness caused by unclean water and how to avoid its transmission with simple habits (Figure 3).



Figure 3: A simple schema to explain water and health links.

The second message will focus on waste. It will introduce simple gestures to avoid abusive use of water even if the targeted population will usually not exceed a monthly consummation of 6m³. The gesture to avoid waste will usually be present as a way to limit excessive bills, a strong argument to

convince the target. The last message is related to sanitation and inadequate utilization of used water pipes. The inhabitants usually have the habits to throw everything in the pipes and will damage the water sanitation network. LYDEC tried to change this behaviour with some difficulties. It implies a long-term work and involvement of the company to reach responsible behaviours.

This part of the message will particularly be highlighted during women's focus groups because they are considered as more interested by these aspects. They usually asked "more accurate questions on water uses than men and seek ways to get rid of water chores. Both men and women are interested by these aspects but women will be the first affected by water changes" observed Morad Belmine, social animator at Lamkensa.

- The water cost and price

The water cost of implementing water supplies is evidently essential to the company. Cost and price are a very delicate matter for these inhabitants who lived in shantytowns with very low incomes. LYDEC has therefore to present investment cost, new infrastructures and changes brought by water access. Women and men are both strongly interested by water price and payment. The administrative steps and ways of paying bills would usually equally interest both sexes. Women however will also have a greater interest to limit waste than men. The acceptance of the water cost is necessary before the launch of the works. Social animators of Rmel and Lamkensa all declared that proceeding by the two steps method would ensure a better success and acceptance of changes from the community. They emphasized that resource persons are key to enter the community and to widespread the idea of water access, its impacts and related cost. To convince resource persons or the community, they usually backed their argumentation with a copy of a bill and the official arguments on water price given to clients and medias. To use habitual supports gives a status to a person, which is a simple way to get his respect and confidence, "if you give importance to an inhabitant, he will become a partner" declared Abdellatif Abdarazzak. Discussing water cost is the first step to get water access; discussing water price is the first step to become clients.

- A shared responsibility

The last step consists in presenting each one's responsibility. Acting in a contractual context, LYDEC underlines each actor's responsibility. A concrete example will be the damages to water meter. Both parties will ensure the vigilance on its correct working but for instance, LYDEC won't be responsible if the user inadequately touches the infrastructure.

The responsibility is an important part of the discussion and argumentation with the community. With women, LYDEC further develops the mother's responsibility to educate her children but also to adopt simple good gestures. With men, LYDEC will insist on administrative aspects. The rights and duties step is an important stage of the project. To develop responsibility supposes changes of behaviours that are not always easily accepted and actually, taken into account in everyday life. There are not observable differences on this particular point. Men and women would be both preoccupied of impacts for their children or their bills. They would understand the stand of LYDEC and will further discuss accurate aspects of their daily life like coping with rain waters, odours or eventual inundations. The impacts on behaviours can't be measured at this state of the project.

CONCLUSIONS

This study showed that gender is not really widespread as a term within the company but it's understood as a reality and an actual fact related to water uses. In the case of LYDEC, the diffuse gender conception is declined at a local scale as resulting from women and resource persons' demands. The first wants to be part and is naturally a part of the water implementation projects, the

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later wants to avoid conflict with inadequate mixed animation campaigns or focus group. This last remark shows that gender is understood but still problematic as a political concept supposing changes of women's status. A gender approach however ensured a greater participation of the community thanks to the "double agent" women status: influential authorities and key "repetitors". Even if gender is not yet a subject of communication, its concrete applications and success could lead the top of LYDEC and SUEZ Environnement to further promote the gender approach when implementing water supplies.

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