



Participants from 7 different organizations including women representatives from al-Walaja village attended on Wednesday the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2016 the roundtable discussion, hosted by Heinrich Böll Stiftung and the Palestinian American Research Center (PARC) to present the study of **“Gender Empowerment and Treated Wastewater Reuse in Ein Qinia Village”** by Dr. Marwan Ghanem.

Dr. Bettina Marx, Director of the hbs Ramallah & Jordan, opened the roundtable discussion by welcoming everyone. *“Water is scarce in Palestine and Palestinians are denied their fair share to water. Treated wastewater could help to overcome the direst shortage and at the same time empower women who work in agriculture”* said Dr. Bettina. Dr. Ghada Almadbouh, Director of PARC – Palestine, who also facilitated the discussion, agreed with Dr. Bettina and pointed out that such researches are important in finding a solution for the water issue in Palestine. Since there is a growing need to find alternative water resources, Dr. Ghanem’s two main objectives of the study are: 1) to improve communities’ empowerment (mainly women) in the Palestinian pre-urban areas towards accepting using treated wastewater; and 2) to investigate the effects on women’s willingness to use treated wastewater after undergoing training.

Women often do not take part in the decision making in regards to water related issues. As women are often the main users of household waters, it is vital for women to be able to participate in the decision making regarding water supply. After Dr. Ghanem presented his study the floor was opened to discussion. The question of what exactly empowerment is arose. It was agreed that knowledge is the first step to empower women. Yet, knowledge alone does not suffice as Dr. Abdel Rahman Tamimi, Director of Palestinian Hydrology group for Water and Environmental Resources Development, pointed out. Women need to be able to become part of the decision making process. How can one transform knowledge-based empowerment into action-based empowerment? As suggested by one of the participants, by including face to face interviews in the study one can achieve a better picture of the situation on the ground and suggest policy recommendations according to the findings.

The discussions then focused on the issue of the actual wastewater, which despite being of good quality for agricultural use, it often poses problems, such as when recontamination occurs. The geographical location of Ein Qinia village, situated to the north west of Ramallah, made it inevitable for the issue of al-Tireh wastewater plant came up not to be brought up. This is notably out of the scope of the study, but can be suggested for future studies. In addition, the attempted comparative study on the city of Rammoun can be used as a good example to highlight that every village deals with its unique problems in the face of occupation. Among the suggested future improvements of the study, both discussant and participants suggested that the study includes integral environmental planning.

Overall, the discussion bore fruitful thoughts and we would like to thank all participants for contributing to the event.