



SUCCESS STORY

Awareness Improves Water and Health

An effort to clean up a local canal brings benefits to everyone

Water is necessary for life, but if it is polluted it also can cause disease and even loss of life. The lesson is a simple but critical one. Thanks to a USAID program run in cooperation with Egypt's government, this lesson is being learned and passed on in communities in Egypt's El-Sharkia province.



Photo: USAID/Ramez Fatihalla

El-Haja Mabrouka, a representative of the local water users association, discusses the benefits of the association's public information campaign on clean canals in Egypt's El-Sharkia province.

“Awareness is the way to a nation’s development, so we must give it a big part of our effort,” said El-Haja Mabrouka, a representative of a water users association in Egypt’s El-Sharkia province.

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USAID has been working with Egypt's government to address environmental issues related to agricultural irrigation throughout Egypt. As part of the project, they helped farmers using those canals form canal water users associations. One of these associations, the El-Gedida Om El-Resh branch canal water users association, is actively teaching its members about the effects that polluted water can have on both crops and human health. El-Haja Mabrouka Mohamed Abdel Hamid represents a community in El-Sharkia located beside an irrigation canal where residents used to throw their garbage and sewage in the water. She says that they also used to wash their dishes and dirty clothes in the canal, as well as allow their children to bathe in the water along with the cows and sheep. This polluted the water. Even worse, waste would pile up and clog the canal, reducing the flow of water to farms. Farmers' crops suffered, and in some cases crops irrigated with the polluted water were unsafe to eat.

The water users association launched a public information campaign to inform the community about the danger posed by water pollution and how to avoid it.

Since the campaign began and people became more aware of the effects of polluting the water and using polluted water, children's health is better and the community as a whole is changing its hygiene habits. Life in El-Sharkia has improved, and the water users association has reached one of its top goals.