Arab Media Forum: A Step Towards Change

Arab Media Forum
For Environment and Development
(AMFED)

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Who We Are & What We Do?

- AMFED is a non-profit regional organization representing a link of media NGOs and media practitioners from the Arab world focusing on environment and development issues in the Arab region.
Our Goals

- Encourage the media as an active partner in the development issues and activities.

- Facilitate and transfer the exchange of local and international media experience and expertise through a participatory approach.
AMFED Environmental Projects and Activities

- Since its establishment, AMFED has conducted a series of media consultations and training initiatives contributing to national & regional dialogues, and launching awareness campaigns.

- AMFED has also participated in a number of conferences, workshops, summits and forums to promote media involvement in development issues.
Main Activities

- **Rio+20** The Arab Media Forum for Environment and Development (AMFED) will organize in cooperation with ESCWA, UNEP and the League of Arab States a regional media consultation on the Arab Media, Green Economy and Sustainable Development.

- **Broadcasting & Raising Awareness through Environmental Monitoring Program (BRAEM)** implemented by the Egyptian Ministry of state for Environmental Affairs in cooperation with AMFED, IRIS center at the University of Maryland, and the World Bank.
- Water Governance Programme for Arab States (WGP-AS), UNDP and AMFED developed **Regional Strategy and Action Plan for Raising Public Awareness on Water as Human Right** (Mass Media Perspective).

- **Arab States Launch of the Fourth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4) Report** in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the League of Arab States, and the Centre for Environment and Development in the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE) Egypt, 2007.
- The Media and Climate Change National Media Consultation in cooperation with Al-Ahram Regional Press Institute, the British Embassy in Cairo and CEDARE – Egypt, 2007.

- Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, media seminar in cooperation with the world Resources Institute (WRI), the United Nations Environment Program– Regional office for Western Asia (UNEP-ROWA), and the League of Arab States – Egypt, 2005.
Egyptian Revolution: An Environmental Perspective
The main triggers for the Egyptian Revolution:

- The opposition of the national power to hereditary rule in Egypt.
- The forgery in some results of the Egyptian Parliamentary elections 2010.
- The bombing of the Kedeseen Church in Alexandria on January 1, 2011.
- The inspiration provided by the Tunisian Revolution on December 17, 2010.
The Egyptian Revolution and the Environment

- Indeed, environmental and resource-related issues were at the very core of the Egyptian Revolution, as many of the policy decisions and their consequences of the ruling regime had come to fuel popular discontent.

- **During & After Protesting**

  During the public protests, protesters included environmental and resources related issues among their catalogue of grievances, loudly proclaiming, “No” to polluted air & water resources, and “No” to the destruction of farmland.
After the uprising ended, it is revealing that youth who had been demonstrating for 18 days immediately started to clean Tahrir Square of trash and debris. Similar clean-up operations occurred in cities throughout Egypt.
These and other acts of collective “environmental citizenship” were very important. They sent a clear signal to the authorities, challenging the self-interested rational actor model that had pervaded official thinking and policies for decades and articulating the people’s wider social interests and concerns.
Agrium Factory in Damietta
Egypt: Main Environmental Issues

- Air Pollution
- Solid Waste
- Water Pollution
- Air pollution is one of the main challenges and obstacles facing many countries in the world including Egypt.

- Air pollution is considered one of the greatest challenges because of its multiple sources resulting from the remarkable industrial development.

**Reasons:**

- Air pollution has various reasons such as different kinds of waste, burning agriculture residues, vehicle emissions and pollutants resulting from open burning of municipal solid waste.
- Total quantity of generated municipal solid waste (household only) is estimated at about 20 million tons annually, nevertheless, the recycling process do not exceed 20%, and are not done in safe and effective manner, which might expose workers and citizens to many health risks.
**Reasons:**

- Deficiency in implementing integrated and sustainable systems of solid waste management.

- Lack or deficiency in capabilities of equipments, and there in efficient operation and maintenance.

- Storage and inadequate financial resources to achieve needed services.

- Lack of experts and human skills.

- Lack of institutional and administrative systems and lack of coordination between different stakeholders.

- Unclear roles and responsibilities, as well as in effective monitoring and control processes.

- Lack of environment awareness and proper behaviors in dealing with municipal solid waste.
Egypt has limited water resources Nile River, High Dam, Lake Nasser, Rain and Groundwater; it depends mainly on the River Nile which is considered the Egyptian life blood for the domestic, industrial and irrigation uses.

Main Nile River Pollution Reasons:

- Exchange of industrial and agricultural waste and sewage in the Nile River.

- The most dangerous types of waste flowing into the River Nile, industrial waste, which is usually out of the factory loaded with lead and heavy metals that kill human health and endure many of the diseases.
Environmental Media in the Arab Countries

- Media is the only sector that can bridge the gap between the policy makers and general public.

- Media has a social responsibility towards the public, a responsibility that includes promoting a culture of dialogue and reform to achieve sustainable development in the Arab world.

- ‘Development communication’ is an approach through the media’s collaborative role in awareness raising and educating the public on topics related to international and/or domestic sustainable development, thus creating an interactive public.
The role of Environmental Media in spreading awareness is threefold:

- Affecting the behavior of individuals;
- Creating social impact to influence policy and decision makers; and
- Monitoring and evaluating development plans as a whole.
- The environmental media in the Arab world does not have its own identity relevant to Arab political and economic media.

- It lacks its own media institutions, professionalism, specialization, knowledge of the subject, and a network of journalists trained and dedicated to the same issue.

- The problem of Arab environmental information may be related to a larger problem concerning Arab science journalism, which is still marginal in Arab media.
- Traditional Media

- Social Media
- Some Arab newspapers have dedicated sections for the environment and sustainable development.

- Moreover, the environment has found its way to Arab radio and television stations, whether in news bulletins, reports, and debates, usually exhibiting reactions to international events.

- Traditional media, community radio, religious leaders, mayors and other opinion leaders should not be ignored, as these are still the main avenues of information and news delivery to many millions of people.
Main Arab Environmental Traditional Media Features

1. Less than 10 percent of the Arab press has a full-time editor specialized in issues concerning environment and sustainable development.

2. Most Arab news organizations are owned by the state or receive financial support from government organizations, so that favorable coverage of government-sponsored activities is common, as is so-called protocol news, which reports on the state visits and social functions of the elite.
3. Reliable sources of information on the environment are still weak or non-existent on the local level.

4. The percentage of environmental issues in reports, interviews, and debates on Arab television channels is under 1 percent, while they reach 10 percent on channels in many European countries.

5. Environmental titles that have gained primal concern in Arab media are related to general topics like nature, wildlife, solid wastes, environmental health, marine pollution, and disasters.
As mentioned in recent Arab studies and reports:

- A boom has been witnessed during the last five years in the number of Arab environmental websites.

- The content of these sites is mostly not updated and non-documented.

- The major deficiency of all the Arab environmental sites is their lack of interaction with the public.
Main Challenges
Facing Arab Environmental Media

- General Challenges
- Specific Challenges
1. Environmental concerns are not among the priorities of media coverage.

2. Weak professionals and specialists for environmental media personnel in general.

3. Weak command of the English language, and English is the dominant technical language.
4. **Governmental control** over most public media institutes and the resulting trends towards producing propaganda material rather than critical coverage.

5. **Lack of modern media legislation that permits** media practitioners access to updated and detailed data and the need to use public relations, which will result in a biased presentation of information.

6. **Weak investigative media in general**, compared to easy and fast descriptive coverage that lacks analysis and critique.
1. Difficulty in defining the identity of an environmental media practitioners among professional practitioners who lack proper knowledge in environmental issues, and environmentalists who lack basic media skills.

2. Lack of interest, among media decision makers, in environmental issues and in labeling it as a low-priority topic in terms of media coverage.
3. Lack of an educated assessment of the readers' needs and preferences.

4. **Difficulties** facing media practitioners in **simplifying environmental technical issues** and presenting them in an appealing and easy-to-grasp manner for general readers without losing the credibility of information presented.

5. **Weakness in utilizing modern information technology tools** which provide a rich source of environmental information for media practitioners.
Sustainable Development is an integrated approach:
Recent studies identified three pillars which any sustainable development communication strategy targeting at media professionals should be built:

- **Information**
- **Training**
- **Networking**
Recommendations for Socially Responsible Media

- Promoting Media as a key partner in development.

- Developing Arab media mentality to a better understanding & appreciation of the importance of different sustainable development issues.

- Initiating pioneering projects among several stakeholders to streamline the development media work.
- “Arab Freedom of Association Network” in cooperation with the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) and the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND). As this program will create a more robust multi-stakeholder Network on freedom of association and NGO legal issues.
- “Media Monitoring to Promote Democracy through the Transition Phase in Egypt” in cooperation with Foundation for the Future (FFF).
- SPEAK UP EGYPT! Women’s Voices
AMFED & the Delegation of the European Union, European Commission
Thank You

CNN: For the first time, we see people make a revolution and then clean the streets afterwards.