NBD MESSAGE ON WOMEN’ S DAY 2022

Theme: Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow

We commemorate the year 2022 International Women’s day, showing solidarity with the incredible women and girls who have broken barriers and shattered conformity with sheer determination and hard work in the field of water and environment. This year’s theme “Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow” reawakens in us the commitment of ensuring that women and girls equally participate with men and boys in water and environmental activism, leadership and decision making for a sustainable environment.

As NBD, our commitment to create all avenues to increase participation of women in climate action and water policies decision making as the fastest way to create sustainable climate resilient communities is steadfast. We recognise that there is no force more powerful than a woman determined to rise; women are already the primary water decision-makers in households but rarely involved in the higher policy-making echelon as water decisions are concerned. When women influence water management, their communities get measurably better outcomes such as better-functioning water systems, enhanced access, and economic and environmental benefits.

From the early years of establishment, the NBD Regional Board was largely dominated by men. This prompted the co-opting of 3 women as gender representatives to the Board in a bid to bring balance and streamline the board’s attention to gender issues as directly scoped from the communities.

NBD further trained and encouraged women within its membership networks to take up leadership positions with-in their organisations. Today, women form 70% of the NBD Regional Board which is also chaired by a woman. Four of the ten NBD member National Discourse Forums including DRC, Rwanda, Sudan and Uganda are currently led by women.

Through the just finalised CIWA/WB supported project "Engaging Civil Society For Social and Climate Resilience in the Nile Basin Project" NBD has built capacity of over 1050 grassroots adult and young women from the 10 Nile riparian states; training them on gender equity, empowering them to become climate resilience champions, challenging them to develop interest and take leadership in climate resilience and integrated water resource management decision making, and championing environmental sustainability/climate security and green jobs for sustainable income. As a result, for example, women in the Mara River Basin of Tanzania have taken lead of environmental conservation in their community.
Ms Siproza Charles testifies: "I’m the chairperson of North Mara Water Users Association. We do sensitization towards conservation of the environment. We also inspire women to form income generation groups. We go to villages to create awareness, relying on the knowledge given to us by the Nile Basin Discourse Project. This has helped raise the women’s voices. In the past, women in the Mara region were not valued. They were not allowed to conduct any income generating activities, own land or wealth. We had no say. But through this organization, women’s voices have been heard. They have formed groups and are conserving the environment. They also implement income generating activities. These women you see here are working hard. They have organized themselves and acquired a plot of land. They are processing ‘gold sand’ which means they have an income; their children are going to school and have food and clothes. In the past, they had no such chance because their husbands would not allow them. The project has done a lot but that is not enough because many areas have not been covered. We appeal to the organization to continue educating people and empower women around River Mara. The women’s voices should be heard. They should not be harassed; they need to be supported so they may help each other."

While relative milestones have been achieved especially in conversational and attitudinal shifts about gender equality, hurdles still lie ahead towards achieving gender parity. Nonetheless, there are windows of opportunities for all stakeholders to step-up on the mandate of gender equality.

As we commemorate this important day, we call upon all stakeholders to think, act, and be gender inclusive. More than ever, we specifically urge governments, development partners, civil society, academic institutions/individuals, media, women’s networks, private sector, corporations, and the international community to:

- Support women-led community initiatives on empowerment and protection of women and girls since many of such initiatives seldom go noticed and or supported
- Strengthen the capacities of women leaders working to help women and girls achieve gender justice
- Give spaces, support and encourage women to take up leadership and decision-making positions and let girls emulate from them
- Support younger generations working towards achieving gender justice
- Embrace working with men as allies for addressing gender disparity, and promoting women’s empowerment at all levels
- Strengthen multi-sectoral approaches to empowering women and girls for holistic and comprehensive protection of women and girls.
- And lastly but not least, encourage women to get involved in water, environment and nature conservation initiatives – that’s a noble cause.

Wishing you a Happy women’s Day Celebration

One Nile One Family!