



PHOTO & CAPTION

Collaboration Delivers Clean Canals



Photo: USAID/Mina Luka

Farmers and residents living along the canals in El-Gededa om El-Resh and El-Seds in Egypt's eastern El-Sharkia province, used to throw their garbage and sewage into the open canals. This would pollute the water and clog up the water flow, depriving downstream farmers of water when they needed it for their crops. Farmers frequently tried to compensate for the lack of water by using ground water supplies. The problem was that the ground water in the region is highly saline. Using that water deteriorated the soil and brought low crop yields.

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 user associations. The government then formed integrated water management districts, which work with the associations to identify and resolve problems.

“We are very happy for the integrated water management district’s cooperation with us in covering the canal,” says farmer association head El-Hag Ahmed Bahgat Ahmed. He is standing on the covered part of a canal that is now protected from garbage and sewage.

Two local farmers, El-Hag Ahmed Bahgat Ahmed and Saaid Elsaid Abd El-Salam, were especially interested in this initiative. They now head up the El-Gededa om El-Resh and El-Seds water user associations, respectively. The associations have taken the initiative to clean up the canals. Better yet, by working together and collaborating with the water management district and community development associations, they were able to find funding to cover 400 meters of irrigation canals in order to protect the water from pollution — a costly measure that individual farmers could not have afforded on their own. Now, in places where the water passes through residential areas, the canals are covered and protected from garbage and sewage. With clear water available year-round, some farmers have seen a 30 percent increase in crop yield. They also know their farming land is better off in the long run. As a result, the farmers have good water for irrigation, the environment is cleaner, the crops are flourishing, and public health is improving.