

***The Rising Role of Rural Women in Wetland Conservation:  
A Case Study in Northwest of Iran***

**NASTARAN MOOSSAVI**

**Papers-6C**

**Women, Gender and Youth**

**SB265**



Azerbaijan

Armenia

Turkmenistan

Turkey

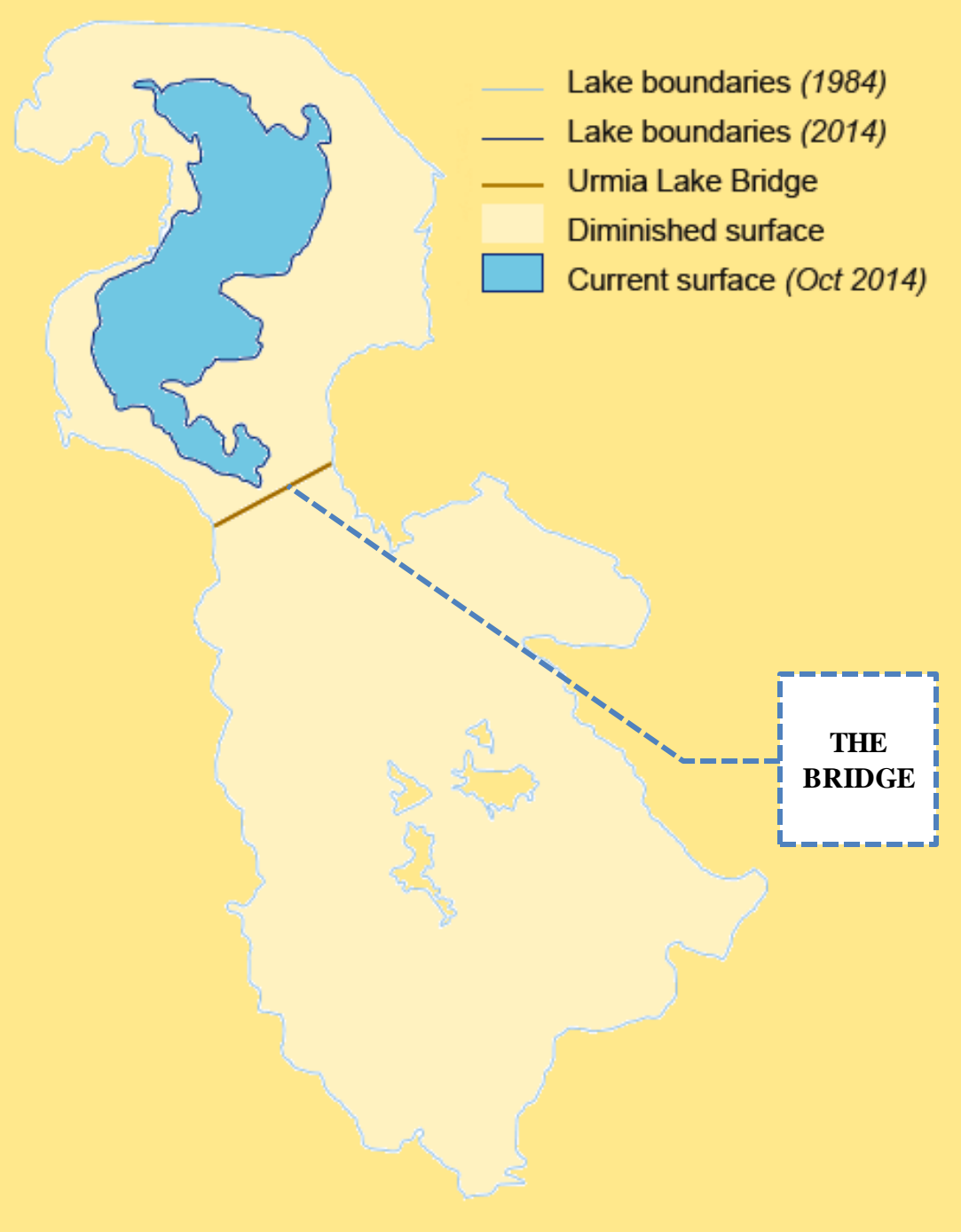
Caspian Sea

Iraq

Afghanistan

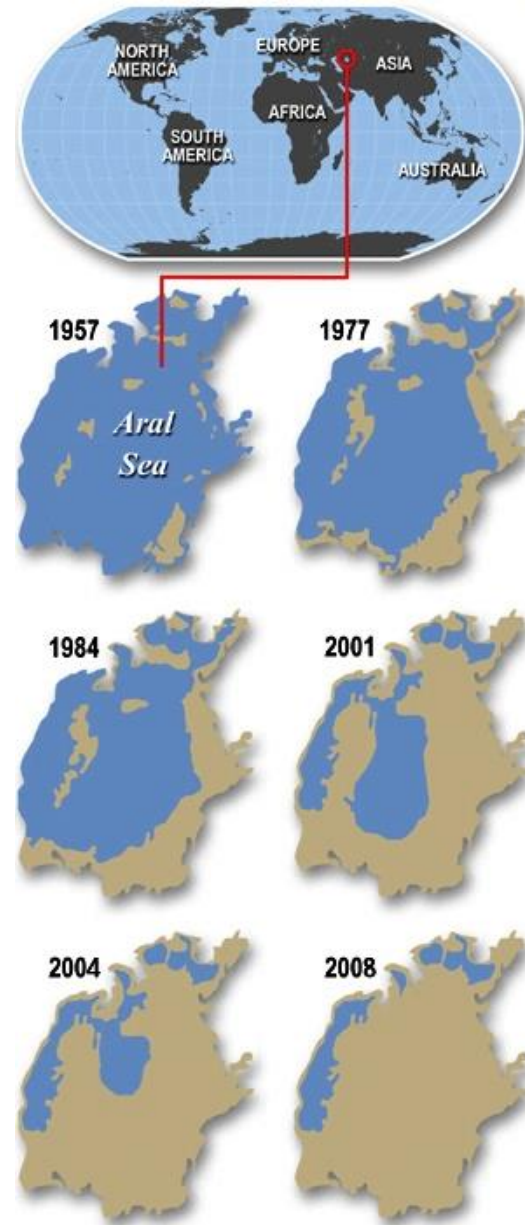
Pakistan

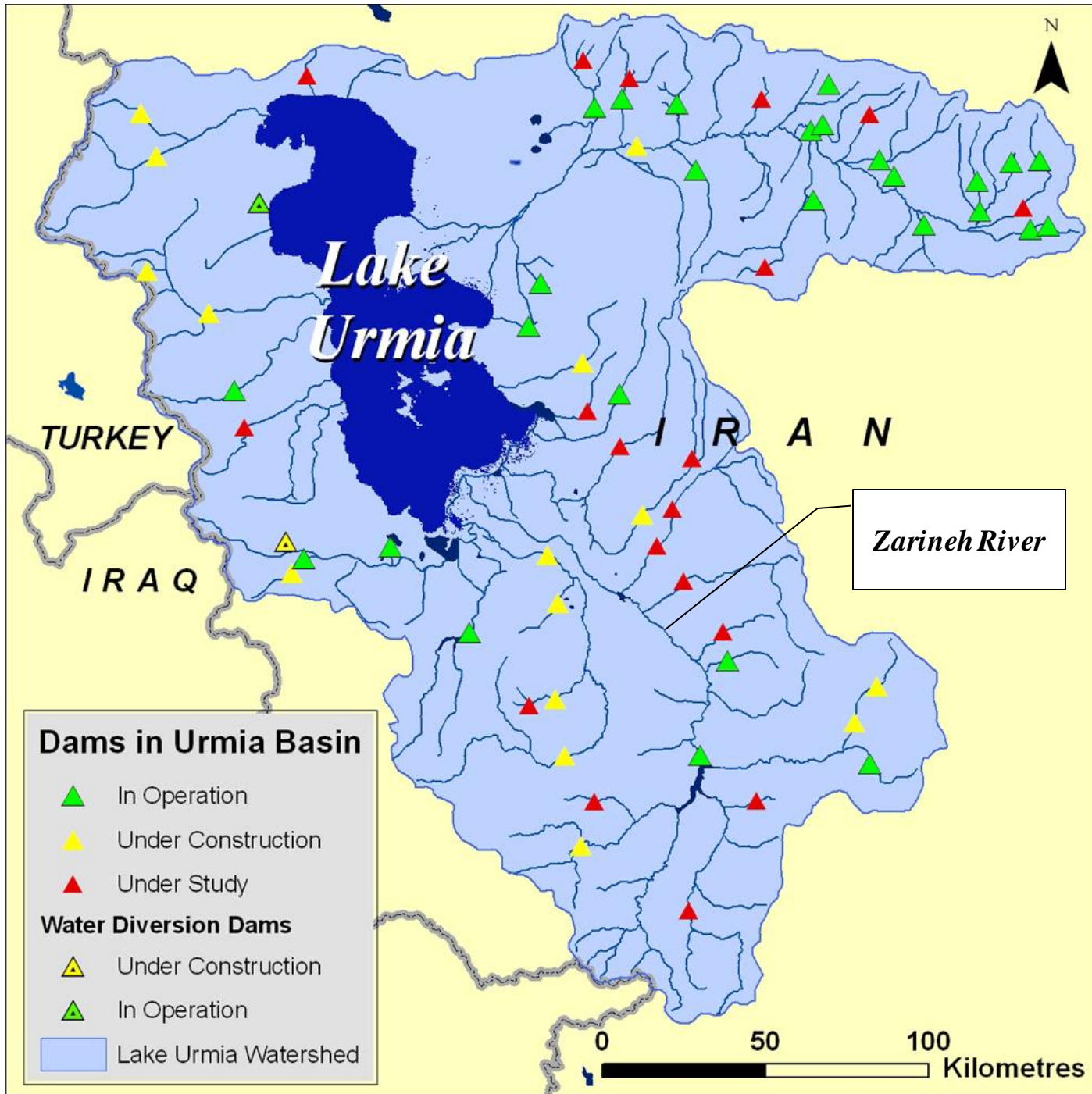
Persian Gulf



## Comparable to Shrinkage of Aral Sea

- Diversion of rivers that feed the lake/sea;
- Irrigation of farms that grow cash crops in unprecedented scale;
- Occurrence of sand and dust storms;
- ...







# Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project (CIWP)

Project was scaled up in 2013.

Project Launch Date:

- 2005;

Area of Focus:

- Application of ecosystem approach in wetlands management;


Contribution to LU Restoration:

- Introducing and piloting sustainable agriculture techniques;
- Modeling alternative livelihoods, women's micro-credit funds and PES





# Socio-economic Context



*Ideal model  
of the male  
bread-winner*

Rural women comprise

- 32.9% of total employment rate for women;
- 18.1% of total rural employment rate.

Rural women undertake

- 60% of farming;
- 63% of husbandry activities;
- and, a great deal of orchard farming.



# CIWP Targets Rural Women

	Prior to 2014	Phase I 2014-2015	Phase II 2015-2016	Phase III 2016-2017	Phase IV 2017-2018	Phase V 2018-2019
<i>All Alternative Livelihood Initiatives have turned into Women's Microcredit Funds, except for 3!</i>		16%	30%	36%	44%	52%
		41	75	90	110	130
Alternative Livelihoods	3	-	1	-	4	4
Women's Microcredit Funds	1	-	1	2	3	



*If yes, are they  
using this power  
for conserving  
water  
resources?  
How?*

# Motivating Factors

- earning an income (for the first time);
- having a chance to socialize with other;
- finding an identity;
- achieving self confidence;
- getting an opportunity to work together;
- being recognized by local government, government-led media, credit institutions, etc.;
- enjoying their time in a public place;
- learning new things.

*Does these women's  
bargaining power  
inside the household  
increase when they  
start creating  
economic value for  
their family?*



*Some of  
these factors  
discourage  
us, too!*

# Discouraging Factors

- Lack of appropriate workplace;
- Insufficient credit;
- Lack of packaging skills;
- No Social Security/Pension benefits for them to enjoy through WMFs;
- Lack of formal registration certification to get orders for work;
- Internal group disputes;
- Opposition of spouses;
- Men's skepticism about women's abilities.



# Concluding Reflections (1)

- Systematic socio-economic inhibiting factors for WMFs:
  - » Participatory and collective approaches are discouraged by external actors;
  - » Access to external funds and support requires WMFs registering as formal entities with rigid structure;
  - » Paternalism and/or conflicting benefits are an issue!

*These inhibiting factors are beyond the abilities of CIWP to overcome!*

# Concluding Reflections (2)

- Impact of gender relations on developing water-friendly livelihoods:
  - » Having/not having a voice on farm management issues; (household level)
  - » Lack of representation of rural women in irrigation water management system; (local/national government level)

*Once WMFs survive the first years, they began challenging the status quo!*

# Concluding Reflections (3)

- Appropriate approach for developing women's water-friendly livelihoods
  - » Women-only Approach to NRM;
  - » Family-run Water-friendly Enterprises

*Too soon for the CIWP to decide which one works out better!*





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محصولات دست ساز روستاییان و عشایر

THANK YOU!



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