

## Farmers Make A Difference In Their Own Lives

### Through Their Water Users Association

One year ago, a Branch Canal Water Users Association (BCWUA) was established through the USAID funded LIFE-IWRM project in Shabrawen village, linked with the Integrated Water Management District of Ibrahimeya in the Governorate of Sharkeya. On branch canals it is customary for the district office of the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation to take responsibility for the cleaning and maintenance. Typically, the irrigation department hires a contractor to do the task mechanically using heavy equipment.

This year ---in September 2005 --- the contractor came as usual and excavated the Shabrawen branch canal, but the farmers were not satisfied by the quality of the cleaning and maintenance. Through their newly established BCWUA, they had an appropriate way to express their concerns. The BCWUA chairman went to meet the IWM District Manager and told him the quality of the work was substandard and unsuitable. He told the District Manager the credibility of the BCWUA was at stake and he should take action to correct the situation. Within a week farmers on the Shabrawen canal awoke to the noise of an excavator sent by the contractor on the orders of the IWM District Manager. The contractor had to repeat the cleaning of the canal at his own expense.



BCWUA can make a very real difference in peoples' lives. The establishment of nearly 600 BCWUA covering 1,000 branch canals during the LIFE-IWRM Project is not a *paper exercise*. It will positively affect 6 million water users. BCWUAs are an opportunity. They provide water users with an organized, legitimate way to present their needs, and complaints to the authorities. Associations provide water users with an appropriate process that ensures the needs presented are prioritized by the local leadership to best serve the entire community.

**Quality of maintenance is improved because water users are close by and monitor activity.**

*“Recently a Chairman of a BCWUA reported that a contractor had not properly cleaned their canal. I was able to withhold payment until the job was done to their satisfaction.” District Manager*

To be successful water users need to make their needs known to their board. Board members need to consider, prioritize and negotiate with district staff. Once all parties experience the mutual benefit of cooperating in this way, sustainability of these associations is no longer questioned. BCWUAs are proving to be a *win-win* situation for both water users and the MWRI.