



Friends of the Earth Middle East

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF TRANSBOUNDARY CONSERVATION

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www.foeme.org

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About FoEME

- **Friends of the Earth Middle East** is a tri-lateral Jordanian, Palestinian, Israeli environmental peacemaking organization.
- FoEME's efforts are focused on the rehabilitation of the Jordan River, Dead Sea, Mountain and Coastal Aquifers.
- Our primary **objective** is to promote cooperative efforts to protect our shared environmental heritage and to advance both sustainable regional development and the creation of necessary conditions for lasting peace in our region.
- **Change orientated** in that we seek a fundamental shift in the status quo.

FoEME's Strategic Pillars

- **Fair Share between People and Nature:**
Balance the needs of people and nature
- **Cross-border Water Justice:**
Fair share in the benefits, access and decision making.
- **National Environmental Activism:**
Encourages the national adoption international best practices.



Environmental Peacemaking Asks?



- What are the **political implications** of transboundary conservation?
- Can transboundary environmental cooperation be an **entry point for peace making**?
- When and under what **conditions**?
- How much of a contribution to peace can it make?

FoEME experience responds:



Transboundary conservation efforts can:

- Identify cooperate **points of leverage** to advance peace: ex. shared benefits to mutual challenges.
- Serve as a **catalyst** for reduced tension, broader cooperation activities and social transformation
- **Build wider identity communities:** ex. Jordan River communities
- Build and establish **mechanisms and habits for cooperation** and partnership: ex. new/ reformed institutions; longer term partnerships.

Necessary conditions?

Adopt a dual approach using BOTH bottom-up and top-down tactics to reach shared objective.



Top down approaches: examples



- **Identifying points of leverage** with the affected communities to transform environmental challenges to opportunities: ex. Good Water Neighbors
- Identifying and selecting points of entry that **maximize mutual benefits**: ex. Jordan River, JRPP
- Promoting the adoption of **institutional reform**: ex. Model Water Accord; alternative security measures
- **Legal** approaches: petitions
- **Research** based: ex. Environmental flows, best practices
- **Advocacy** campaigns: best practices
- **Political partnerships** and champions

Results and Risks of Top Down Approaches:

Results?

- Institutional transformation: Building institutional partnerships based on shared goals and mutual gains. Ex. Model Water Accord
- Builds transparency and trust between governments. Ex. Regional MP
- Project based partnerships have multiplier effects.
- Towards cooperation as a rule not an exception.

Risks?

- Institutional reform must be fair and just – not reinforcing status quo of unequal power distributions.

Bottom up approaches: examples



- **Long term, local community work** is the foundation of support: ex. Good Water Neighbors program
- Grassroots trust building, shared benefits, long term partnerships – lay the groundwork for peaceful relations.
- Diverse **coalition building** to maximize the breadth of support. Coalitions share the same goal but shape tactics to their own decision makers: Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian, International: ex. Faith based advocacy
- **Education and Awareness building:** ex. Youth water trustee program, tours, ecocenters, concerts etc.

Results and Risks for Bottom up Approaches:

Results?

- Creating a vision for shared future
- Building transboundary identities
- Environmental cooperation can spur spill over into many realms.
- Grassroots supports provides political base for decision makers to advance cooperative solutions to transboundary conservation challenges.

Risks?

- Unfulfilled or unequal expectations
- High stakes

Example: The Lower Jordan River

- Rich in Cultural, Historical Heritage
- Holy to Jews, Christians and Muslims
- Unique Eco-System
- Meeting point for flora and fauna of three continents
- Migratory flyway for 500 million birds twice annually



The Historical Lower Jordan River

- Average annual flow of over **1.3 billion cubic meters** including:

Upper Jordan: 540 mcm

Yarmouk: 480 mcm

Side Wadis: 280 mcm

- Supported a wide variety of habitats/ rich biodiversity



The Great Water Grab



What is left for the Jordan?



Demise of the Jordan

- Over 96% of the Jordan River's flow is diverted by Israel, Syria and Jordan.
- Resulting in ecological devastation of the Jordan River system.
- Loss of cultural heritage/ tourism revenue.



Political implications for dual approach for JRV?

- **Respected regional research laid the ground work for regional policy goals**
- **Wide stakeholder groups involved:** youth, adults, majors, faith based communities, experts etc.
- **Wide International support**
- **Sewage being removed by all sides:** WWTPs being advanced in Israel, Jordan and Palestine
- Israel commits to **first ever return of fresh water** to the Lower Jordan River.
- **Regional master planning underway**

Working towards a cooperative future



For more information visit:
www.foeme.org