

Capacitating Trustees to Prevent Water Conflicts

After attending a SIWI course on Transboundary Water Management (TWM), Jordanian Mai al-Dergham was tasked by her employer, the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) to establish a regional TWM office. Her task is to look into water benefit sharing in the Red Sea Gulf of Aqaba.

“I am looking into ways to establish benefit sharing between countries that have never cooperated before. They should all see eye to eye to the future,” she said, referring to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

This is very timely as plans to extend a canal between the Red sea and the Dead Sea are underway, according to al-Dergham. She had just returned to Amman, Jordan, after taking part in the second phase of the TWM course in Stockholm, organised by both SIWI and Ramboll Natura AB with Sida funding.

Back in Stockholm, SIWI Project Director for Capacity Building, Anton Earle, greeted this as an important step in building trust for proactive cooperation to avoid any conflicts that could spur out of climate change.

“There are two different types of building capacity: one that builds trust between professionals, organisations and nations that have never collaborated before (such as the Middle East). When member states have been closely aligned politically, our focus shifts to improving technical skills, widening the participants’ knowledge base and establishing horizontal networks (as in Lake Victoria),” Earle said. “In the long run, this is particularly important when it comes to climate change, as lack of cooperation could lead to conflicts.”

Since 2005, the SIWI-Ramboll consortium has been arranging several global, regional, national and on-demand capacity building programmes every year, with a special focus on TWM and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).

Their module builds trust through intermarrying the needs and knowledge of course participants, as well as engaging them in peer-to-peer project review discussions where the focus on benefit sharing outweighs national political gains. According to Earle, many participants lack the political



Photo: Anton Earle, SIWI



Photo: Ramboll. Map: Nordpil

SIWI and Rambolls International Training Programmes are held in different regions around the world and in Sweden. The map shows the Gulf of Aqaba where ITP participant Mai al-Dergham is looking into possibilities of benefit sharing between countries that have never cooperated before.

backing on the top level management to encourage cooperation with other riparian nations and their water authorities.

To that end, SIWI is putting out a text book on Transboundary Water Management, summing up the thrust of the global experience of its experts on this topic – which will be used for future courses and in sound policies advocating campaigns on a higher managerial and political level. The book will be officially launched during the World Water Week 2010.

They are also planning additional courses to take place just before the conference, during the first week of September this year. According to SIWI’s Deputy Executive Director Per Bertilsson, these courses will

present state of the art, best learning tools and practices to a multi-sector experts taking part in the World Water Week.

The four courses deal with water negotiations (role play and theory), river basin planning and allocation, international water law, and benefit sharing in international basins.

“These courses provide an added-value for the World Water Week participants. The modules are built to equip participants with modern tools and global experiences to be harnessed in the management of natural resources,” added Bertilsson.

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