

Governance structures for transboundary water management in the Jordan Basin



SIWI recommendations offer a step wise approach to basin riparians and stakeholders concerned with designing and establishing a future basin governance structure for the Lower Jordan River including: structure, instrument, mandate, dispute resolution, financing and more - drawing upon lessons learned globally. Full report includes detailed case studies and the proposed Generic Articles of a Jordan River Basin Organisation.

This policy brief draws upon a full report that was commissioned from the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) by EcoPeace Middle East for the benefit of a wide range of stakeholders concerned with designing and establishing a future basin governance structure for the Lower Jordan River. The work should be considered complementary to the Regional Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Master Plan for Sustainable Development in the Jordan Valley released in 2015 by EcoPeace Middle East and its partners SIWI and Global Nature Fund (GNF) with the support of the European Union's Sustainable Water Integrated Management (SWIM) programme.

Throughout the full report readers are guided through the main questions policy makers and other stakeholders must address when considering the development of a basin governance structure such as:

- What type of basin governance structure is most relevant?
- What type of basin instrument is most relevant?
- How the mandate of the basin governance structure could be defined?
- What type of dispute mechanisms can be embedded in order to manage conflicts that could arise between parties?
- What kind of financing mechanism could support the operation of the governance structure and the projects to be implemented in the basin?

Each of these questions are explored at length alongside a series of short case studies that demonstrate how other basin policy makers and stakeholders have addressed these foundational questions.

While each basin is unique – good practice and lessons can be transferable to a variety of different contexts. Case studies elaborated in the full report describe the development of transboundary governance structures where cooperation was fostered around water issues against a background of conflicts, where water represented (and continues to represent) a possible avenue for overcoming differences between countries or in which the conflict setting of the basin contributed to the trajectory of how the governance structure developed. Many lessons of relevance can be drawn from these experiences such as:

- Some form of governance is necessary to enable and incentivize regional financing opportunities.
- Regional management of water resources can serve as a unifying starting point for building trust and regional cooperation towards conflict resolution.
- Basin governance structures can be established even in areas with ongoing border disputes.
- Governance structures can develop over time in function and scope to meet the evolving needs of their members and stakeholder communities.
- Benefits of regional cooperation should be assessed regularly and repeatedly to account for emerging challenges, new realities and shifting priorities in a basin.
- Intentionally inclusive processes involving a range of stakeholders, ensuring gender equality, and participation of community representatives creates more representative and sustainable outcomes.

The step-wise approach adopted by the authors enables the full report to be used as a consulting tool to facilitate discussion among stakeholders – rather than provide definitive closed recommendations. Nonetheless, following the examination of numerous basin governance agreements, the authors present a proposed Generic Articles of a Jordan River Basin Organisation. While typical in many aspects, the Generic Articles are rooted in the context of the Jordan and invite discussion and consultation among all stakeholders. The articles represent the first detailed formulation of a basin governance structure for the Jordan and can serve as a starting point for discussions regarding what a future Jordan River basin governance structure might look like in practice.

Going forward, SIWI recommends:

- Undertaking a concerted multi-level stakeholder consultation process inclusive of both government and civil society voices in all riparian states.
- Workshop discussions of the proposed Generic Articles of a Jordan River Basin Commission articles with riparian stakeholders.

- Implementation of tailor made training modules to support capacity building on governance, multi-level stakeholder consultation processes and water diplomacy among riparian stakeholders.
- Joint learning tours to the basin case studies discussed in this report to explore governance options in depth.
- Regular and repeated assessment of the benefits of cooperation based on international best practices to account for evolving political, social, economic and environmental challenges in the Jordan basin.

Much work remains to harness the political, economic and social benefits of regional cooperation and basin governance in the Jordan, but the options and experiences included in the full report can contribute to promoting ‘peace, prosperity and security in the Jordan Valley’ as envisioned by the Regional NGO Master Plan for Sustainable Development in the Jordan Valley.

The authors

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Institute for Water Education. It draws on *Yaari, E., Neal (Patrick), M.J., Shubber, Z. (2015). Governance structures for transboundary nwater management in the Jordan Basin.* Stockholm International Water Institute, Stockholm.

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