



## Appeal of the Mediterranean Union of Young Water Ambassadors



## Partnership



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## STRATEAU est exposé comme une solution prometteuse au village des solutions



### Projects 2023-2026:

#### Strateau :

- Animate the users' club\*
- Animate the developers' club
- Ensure the hosting of the tool in a public body

#### UMJAE /

- Carry out a pilot of water awareness by university JAE for school children
- Organize a videoconference between universities - to communicate on this pilot to create the World Union of Young Water Ambassadors
- Strengthen the partnership with university networks (RMEI, World Youth Parliament for Water...)
- Organize the great annual gathering of the JAE

The young people of the [Mediterranean Union of Young Water Ambassadors](#) (UMJAE) participated in the World Water Forum in Marseille in 2012 and presented their latest project called "Strateau", a decision-making tool created to better manage demand around water management. Fourteen student coordinators of the UMJAE from France, Lebanon,

Palestine, Jordan, Israel, Egypt, Algeria and Morocco made the trip to the forum. Their main role was to coordinate youth networks around the world around water-related issues. They work in collaboration with their country's elected officials and their university's research centres to design and implement infrastructure projects to improve access to water and sanitation. They also have the role of informing, raising awareness of water-related problems and proposing solutions to local problems.

The Water Embassy (AdE) and its UMJAE network have been on standby since 2016 due to a lack of funding to assume the hosting and third-party maintenance of the Strateau tool, which served as a common project for all partner countries and therefore a link that no longer existed.

The AdE handed over the intellectual property of the Tool to Cerema (Centre d'études et d'expertise sur les risques, l'environnement, la mobilité et l'aménagement [www.cerema.fr](http://www.cerema.fr)), a public institution of the French State, which hosted and updated it.

An agreement between AdE and CEREMA allows the relaunch of the UMJAE network because its use by the Young Water Ambassadors (JAE) and partner university research centers will again be possible.

With its experience in water awareness, the AdE and UMJAE team have found that, for good governance and good water sharing, it is not enough to have the right diagnosis and the right projection to mobilize citizens and certain decision-makers. The feeling of belonging to the project of their territory can only exist if they are allowed to reason, from their local culture, because water management is a global problem but its solutions are always local.

In Arabic-speaking countries, belonging to the modern management of water projects is almost non-existent among the citizens of the territories. Most of the time they refuse projects that allow them to share water with the neighboring territory, for example, or to pay for what is for them a gift from heaven. The AdE, in collaboration with many of its former partners, intends to launch a project to bring together this Arabic-speaking region – the countries of the Middle East, North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula – around the Arabic language, their local beliefs and ancestral methods of sharing and protecting water.

In addition, AdE and UMJAE realized, during the organization of a workshop entitled Water and Peace at the Marseille Forum, that water has become in these countries a source of conflict rather than a factor of peace.

After seeing the example of the natives who began to protect and share equitably the waters thanks to belonging using ancestral methods that allowed mutual respect between all the actors of the same territory where often a belief related to a source or a river brought them together. (is this the right place in this sentence; if so, it must be linked otherwise)

This pilot cultural project will allow locals to work together on the history of their waterways, the ancestral methods used for their protection and the equitable sharing of their resource as well as the beliefs related to them. A common history that brings together the Arabic-speaking world will allow it to better understand itself in order to mobilize all the inhabitants of a territory and to involve them concretely in local awareness-raising, education and management actions that encompass environmental, social, legal and economic factors.

The AdE intends to develop its network of JAE by also integrating partnerships with universities of law and those of political and social affairs.

## **Respect for nature through local beliefs and knowledge of ancestral methods of sharing its resources**

Example ancestral beliefs and methods of water management

In Arab countries, several rivers are linked to beliefs or legends that inspire their respects to citizens, examples are not lacking.

\*Source: Académie de l'Eau website

Pilgrimages on rivers\*

The cults of certain rivers give rise to pilgrimages, in memory of sacred characters or their healing virtues. We have the equivalent in the Christian world with the famous Jordan River where Christ is baptized.

Water, the Qur'an and its rules

Professor Abdelhadi Boutaleb, former Minister, member of the Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco, evokes in the international seminar of Rabat (August 1992) the uniqueness of God, the only creator whose will dominates time and space and is exercised on the immeasurable and on the infinite, on the lived, the invisible constituting his kingdom. It is a harmoniously constituted domain where everything has been created to serve man and satisfy him. Indeed, in Surah "the bees" (verses 2 to 16), we read the following: "Cattle were created for you from which you will derive warm clothes, other profits and from which you will feed ... It was created for you horses, mules and donkeys to serve as mounts and be exhibited in parade ... It is he who brought down from heaven the water that serves you as a drink and who grows the pastures for your flocks. Thanks to him, she still grows cereals, olive trees, palm trees, vines and all kinds of fruit trees for you. He has put at your service the night, the day, the sun and the moon. The stars are subject to you by his order. What he has created for you is of various colors. There really is a sign for a people who think! It is he who has put the sea at your service so that you can get fresh flesh and the jewels with which you adorn yourself. The ships split it so that you go in search of these benefits. Perhaps you will be grateful! He threw mountains on earth like pillars, rivers, paths, which will serve you to guide you as well as landmarks and stars. »

In these verses, the water that God brings down from heaven is the element that brings life to men with their drink and with the food that comes from the pastures for the flocks and with cereals, olive trees, palm trees and vineyards. God, with the Koran, entrusts its management to the man whom he guides in his actions throughout this sacred book. It is up to him to face the bad elements and bad weather that he will master provided that he follows the signs of God.

The history of a territory and its traditional water and land management techniques used by ancestors will mobilize citizens through shared cultural values.

\*Source: L'Opinion MAROC website

"The goal is to take the best of the Moroccan ancestral genius and implement it..."

Freshwater Project Manager at WWF Morocco, Dr. Oussama Belloulid answers our questions about the use of traditional water and land management techniques.

- Aren't traditional land and water management techniques sometimes in danger of being outdated in the current context?

- The traditional techniques that we call "good practices for sustainable water and land management" are a stratification of methods that have come down to us since time immemorial because they have proven their worth and are presented as solutions adapted to local territorial and environmental specificities. Like us, our ancestors had to deal with the adversity of climate and the episodic scarcity of natural resources. Their solutions have been effective for several generations and are still relevant today.

- The implementation of these practices does not depend on the evolution of knowledge, techniques and technologies?

- On the contrary. By promoting these ancestral techniques, the idea is not to go back. The goal is to take the best of the Moroccan ancestral genius and implement it while using the best of what modern knowledge and technologies can offer us. While respecting the methods, the choice of materials, the bias of a community implementation, nothing prevents us from taking advantage of the modern tools at our disposal to identify the locations adapted to the realization of a work, to manage the project or to calculate or generate the right monitoring indicators.

- In your experience, are these techniques still spontaneously used or are they falling into oblivion?

- It depends on the regions and situations. During our field projects, we have met people who know these methods and continue to use them. In other places, people seem to know that these methods exist, but no longer have the technical knowledge to implement them, hence the interest of the guide we have developed and the awareness we are trying to implement with our partners. What is certain is that populations are very sensitive and open to the idea of using techniques that were developed by their own ancestors and that are also accessible and effective.

Collected by S. A.

The closing remarks of the first World Conference on the Environment, held in Stockholm, under the auspices of the United Nations in 1972, were delivered by Mr. Olof Palm and concluded with this sentence that is still relevant today: "The future of the planet is entirely in our hands and if disasters ever occur, It will be because of our bad political decisions or our lack of political decisions. »

How can we not all work together to promote reforms that will be able to change mentalities and attitudes towards waterways.

In several Arabic-speaking countries and especially in the Middle East region, water is not shared equitably and is therefore a source of conflict.

In 2010, at a ministerial meeting organised by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), in Barcelona. Ministers from all over the Mediterranean basin were around the table to vote on the "basin water strategy", in short, the application of IWRM that would guarantee an equitable sharing of the resource in this region. This meeting was a fiasco: disagreements over the quantities of water used by this or that border country, reproaches about the origins

of its pollution, and The strategy has fallen... to water. Once again a great opportunity to help peace was missed. For 60 years, water sharing and its management have been the main sources of conflict in this region where many rivers span several borders, where quantitative sharing is vital.

And yet, some officials are beginning to pay attention to the worldview expressed by local beliefs. The Paris Agreement resulting from COP21 was an opportunity to recognize the relationship of indigenous peoples with nature and to highlight the importance they attach to its safeguarding, to the harmony of their relationship with it.

The power of the judge is the only effective way to avoid the simulacra of cooperation too often practiced by profiteers with little concern for ecology or social peace and, in some cases, peace in general.

Finding: In most countries, there are no laws to protect waterways and often, when it comes to environmental law, we have a law to fix and not a law to protect. All disputes concerning damage to the river are dealt with by the administrative court which excludes any losses related to ecological damage, etc.

Example of IWRM in California:

Everyone agrees that since the nineteenth century, California has done a tremendous job of protecting the environment. In 1892, it saw the birth of the first association for the protection of the environment, the "Sierra Club of San Francisco. It was the first in the world to take legal and institutional measures to protect biodiversity with the designation of national parks. Pride of the people of San Francisco who are really convinced of the need to protect natural resources, who love their Yosemite park, but here it is... Most do not know the names of their waterways. And yet, this is where the IWRM (Integrated Water Resources Management) concept was born.

To protect water, we must be able to put an end to conflicts related to its sharing and exploitation. Its management should be integrated, which means that its protection must be taken into account in all land use planning projects. Even California, creator of IWRM, has great difficulty applying it on the San Francisco Bay Delta. Its two main rivers, the Sacramento and the Joaquin, provide water to 2/3 of its population. A state agency, "Delta Steewardship Council", was created to implement this IWRM in order to reduce costs, those caused by repeated studies on the same territory and those occasioned by repeated negotiation meetings and control visits.

At the same time, the agency was responsible for the implementation of cooperation projects. Funds had been allocated to them. Immediately we saw the emergence of rivalries between local actors and politicians to offer state money to their electoral perimeter.

State-level budget conflicts have delayed IWRM funding, etc.

As a result, water policy remains fragmented and the drought that California has suffered since 2012, combined with the excessive commodification of water, is increasingly distancing Americans from environmental values and respect for nature. This state of affairs pushes citizens to consider watercourses as objects at their service and exploitable at will.

What California has lacked is public support for the IWRM project. The involvement of the population is essential to protect water and share it equitably.

Examples of citizen involvement through local beliefs

Hindus tell how the six thousand sons of King Sagara were cremated as punishment for their recklessness; the goddess Ganga, from whom the Ganges takes her name, descends

from the heavens to purify their ashes. The rite takes place in the Bengal Delta. Since then, Hindus have paid homage to the Ganges, through a ritual bath that cleanses man of his sins. Those who drown there are reborn among the gods.

**Countries such as New Zealand and India have given their rivers legal personality. On 15 March 2017, a world first, New Zealand recognized Whanganui as a living entity and legal person; it is the third longest river in the country, revered by Maori for spiritual reasons.**

**Hindus, too, fought for legal rights for the benefit of the Ganges and Yamuna River, which were impacted by exponential pollution. Since March 17, 2017, by decision of the High Court of the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand, these two rivers, which are part of the seven sacred rivers of the country, are now protected by law. This notion of the sacred also concerns the banks because they allow to descend in contact with the water for ritual ablutions. Since that day, the two rivers are considered as "Living entities with the status of legal person", therefore benefit from the related rights. The situation requires extraordinary measures to preserve and conserve these rivers, the court said in explaining its decision.**

**In both cases, the recognition of their legal status will allow citizens to go to court on behalf of these sacred rivers.**

## **CHOOSING THE WATER EMBASSY AS A BENEFICIARY**

**The Water Embassy, an international NGO, is a member of the World Water Council.**

The Water Embassy was born in France, but over time it has taken on an international dimension; several subsidiaries now exist in Canada, the Middle East, Africa, the Maghreb, etc. The young people and the experts who animate them within the project of the Mediterranean Union of Young Ambassadors of Water and, soon, of the World Union of Young Ambassadors of the EU, are aware that they belong to the planet more than to a single country. This is why the Water Embassy becomes "international", because it corresponds to its philosophy as much as to its reality.

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