

Building partnerships for shared waters

Experiences and Recommendations of young people working towards water cooperation



Workshop participants displaying strength in finding diverse people with a common goal. Source: NBCBN

Background

The attention for the many roles young people can play in water cooperation is growing. Certain examples include resolutions 2250 & 2419 of the United Nations Security Council on Youth, Peace and Security, which recognise the role of young people in preventing conflicts and sustaining peace.

Over 20 young people from 14 different countries and four continents have come together in Cairo to share their experiences on being active as young people in the space of transboundary water cooperation and diplomacy.

It is important to acknowledge the richness of the diversity of approaches that youth can bring, and to allow space for this to emerge. From such diversity general lessons can be distilled from the different experiences and strategies applied. These lessons are gathered and shared to serve a dual purpose: to inspire young people's involvement from all over the world, and to pave the way for countries and organisations with the willingness, to move the topic of well-managed and equitably shared water forward with young people.

This document is an open invitation to all who wish to reflect and add to the lessons shared.

Lessons

Create space for human to human connections

It is through genuine connections that meaningful understanding and opportunities for cooperation are fostered. It is also through these deep connections that safe spaces are made to try, to fail, and to learn. This includes creating an inclusive environment and dedicated time for healing historic traumas.

Find the right scale and space

There are multiple ways to contribute to water cooperation, in the connection from local to global, as well as in the short and very long term. Identify the right scale and when or wherever necessary, offer innovative spaces in which to work that enable young people to contribute to water cooperation and diplomacy.

Think systems

Water issues are systemic; acknowledging the interconnectedness of basins and water across borders, as well as interrelations with food, environment, health, energy, cultures. Take time to sit-with complex problems to reveal benefit-sharing possibilities.

Connect smartly to get your voice heard

Engaging in the change process to foster water cooperation can be challenging. In order to get your voice heard, identify sympathetic individuals with whom to share your messages, across enabling networks and platforms already in place.

Peer to peer learning

Peer to peer training and coaching is a powerful tool to learn, inspire, and be inspired. Act on privilege to share knowledge and networks, and inspire those who have less or no access.

Physically connecting to the water and land

Immersive experiences that reconnect to our surroundings are crucial for fostering knowledge that is not technical or commercial but relational in nature. Therefore, physically connecting with the memory of the water – the life on the land - is important.

Build mass – Finding diverse people with a common goal

Our overall lesson is that high impact activities can be developed by envisioning alternative futures and vice versa. Meaningful and resilient connections are made with people whom are willing to truly connect as humans, across boundaries, and across generations. By connecting across our diversity, we can identify inclusive and emerging opportunities.