

Blue Peace Middle East Programme



Country / Region

Middle East

Main Partners

Turkish Water Institute (SUEN), Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (KRG/Iraq), Ministry of Water Resources (Iraq), Ce-was, University of East Anglia (UEA), Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST), Media in Conflict and Transformation (MiCT), Media Academy Iraq.

Background information

The Middle East is the most water-scarce region in the world. This scarcity increasingly affects all aspects of life in the region, fuelling conflicts and impacting the sustainable development agenda.

Project objective

To enhance regional water cooperation, strengthening the basis for peace in the region.

Beneficiaries

Regional and local water institutions in member states, and ultimately water users across the region who will benefit from strengthened water cooperation, greater access to clean water and regional stability.

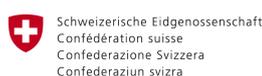
Costs&Duration

CHF 4,400,000

01.2019 – 12.2021

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Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

Regional cooperation over water resources is today more important than ever in the water-scarce Middle East. The Blue Peace Middle East Initiative is the first regional platform to facilitate dialogue and exchange to improve water governance, and ultimately foster sustainable development and peace in the region.

The Middle East is the most water-scarce region in the world. By 2025 the region's renewable freshwater supply will have dropped to below a third of 1970 levels. Moreover, practically all rivers and aquifers straddle two or more countries – all of which claim their part. Other important challenges include the need for more sustainable water use, access to more reliable water services, and improved water governance for national and transboundary surface and groundwater resources.

However, in large parts of the Middle East, conflict or post-conflict conditions stand in the way of sustainable development. Water, and water scarcity, also play a role in many of these conflicts. In order to reduce the risk of water conflict in the region, there is a need for closer cooperation over water with a focus on benefit sharing, productive knowledge exchange and progressive policies and solutions.

The Blue Peace Middle East Initiative – a partnership between the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Mumbai-based Strategic Foresight Group (SFG) – was set up in 2011 to work towards regional recognition of water resources as a potential source of socioeconomic development and peace. Through a combination of political and technical dialogues, which were supported by concrete data collection, knowledge exchange and capacity building projects, the Blue Peace programme was the first – and to date only – effort in the region to foster regional exchange, understanding and conflict prevention.

Despite the increasing complexity of conflicts in the region, the Blue Peace Community, which is made up of around 200 scholars, practitioners and media, has developed a shared political vision, and created a space for political and technical dialogues on water cooperation.

In 2018, they decided to take this vision to the next level by transferring the management of the Blue Peace from SFG to a regional network of water institutes and stakeholders. As a result, the Blue Peace Initiative is today governed by collective leadership with representatives from Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Turkey and, to a limited degree, Syria. The Turkish Water Institute (SUEN) in Istanbul functions as the initiative's Coordination Office.

The project's overall goal is for water users, and particularly the most vulnerable populations, to have fair and sustainable access to water resources thanks to closer regional water cooperation, which in turn strengthens the basis for peace in the region.

Planned outcomes:

- The newly established and regional structure of the Blue Peace Middle East Initiative supports peace building, dialogue and collaboration activities among the countries, water institutions, decision makers and experts in the region.
- Transboundary water resources management in the Tigris Basin is improved through multilevel dialogue (Blue Peace Iraq-Turkey track), joint monitoring and data sharing.
- In the transboundary Yarmouk Basin, conditions for more equitable and sustainable use of the Yarmouk River are put in place.
- A thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem enables the initiation, development and implementation of innovative entrepreneurial solutions to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for the region.
- Objective, in-depth reporting on water issues in Middle Eastern media contributes to water cooperation and sustainable management in the region.