External Evaluation - “Good Water Neighbours Project”
Concluding Report of YEARS 2012-2014

ECOPeACE / FRIENDS OF THE EARTH MIDDLE EAST
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1. Introduction

The Good Water Neighbor (GWN) project is the flagship project of EcoPeace/Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME) since 2001. FoEME's main objective is to promote environmental peace building through influencing policy makers and advancing changes in cross-border environmental policies related to shared water resources in Palestine, Jordan and Israel. To achieve these goals FoEME applies a two-folded strategy – bottom-up and top-down.

The Good Water Neighbors (GWN) project is an integral part of the bottom-up strategy. The 28 cross-border communities are a place where various initiatives and strategies are being conceived and their relevancy and impact are being checked in local settings as a learning process, suggesting applicable models for the top-down strategy, while at the same time creating actual positive change in the participating communities.

Map of the GWN communities
The project comprises the following components:

1. **Eco-Education**

The WaterCare curriculum consists of a Student Resource Book, a Teacher’s Guide and a Web Page focused on water conservation issues that are regional in concept, scope, and content. The materials were prepared jointly by Jordanian, Israeli, and Palestinian educational writers and are written for students between the ages of 12 and 16. The major topics addressed by the materials include water resources, water use, water pollution, and water management for conservation, all from a regional – cross-border – perspective, combined with conflict resolution education and leadership in addition to activist capacity building. Over the past three years, a new cross-border Water Resource Guide was developed by FoEME’s staff to compliment the WaterCare materials with actual hands on materials and activities that the Water Trustees are now obliged to undertake. The guide is being published now for all three countries after being reviewed by teachers for assuring a high quality of the work.

FoEME is using the WaterCare curriculum, textbook and activities, along with the Cross-border Water Resource Guide in the youth "Water Trustees" educational process at the GWN’s communities as well as in the educational process at the cross-border youth camps. The new cross-border Water Resource Guide allows teachers of geography classes and environmental studies classes to take an active part in the water trustees' process by integrating the program's activities and curriculum into their ongoing annual curriculum at school.

Annual joint workshops involving Palestinian, Jordanian and Israeli teachers took place during this two year period to gather comments on the new Water Resource Guide as part of the finalizing process of the guide. The regional teachers’ training workshops were so successful that they have been fully integrated into the next phase of the GWN project. The regional teachers’ training program is/was built on the national teachers’ training program that took place in each country, each year.

The school year of 2013-2014 also saw the formation and initial steps of GWN Alumni program that will be fully launched in the next three-year cycle. The focus of the Alumni program is to allow graduates of the water trustees program to continue their participation with FoEME's activities after the first year and have an opportunity to develop as ambassadors of FoEME's vision. It was a desire expressed by many graduates who were interviewed for this study. Another focus of the Alumni program is to upgrade FoEME’s ability to reach out to more audiences using these devoted and empowered youth and to create sustainable platforms where youth guides can guide each other.
2. **Community GIS**

The Community Geographic Information System (CGIS) project was developed initially as a standalone project of FoEME but has now been fully integrated as part of the youth Water Trustee program. Its purpose is to give high school students the ability to identify environmental and water hazards in their local area, and train them with tools and capacities necessary for environmental activists. Each youth Water Trustee group produces its own environmental hazard map that is placed next to the map produced by its neighboring community so that the interdependence of how pollution knows no borders is visualized on the digital map produced by the Water Trustees themselves.

3. **Neighbors’ Path**

The 17 Neighbors’ Paths are all community-based tours that deal with the issue of water and peace building between Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian neighboring communities, which share a common water source (i.e. a stream, river or an aquifer). The paths take their visitors through the water history and into the water reality of local communities, providing a view and an insight into their neighbors’ lives as well. These paths, trails and tours showcase the mutual dependence on shared water resources and highlight the need for cross-border cooperation in protecting those resources. Guided tours of the path are held for both youth and adult residents of each GWN’s community.

4. **Municipalities**

This project seeks to work with municipal officials, mayors, council members and municipal employees, in order to advance cross border initiatives on the municipal level and to increase the legitimacy of GWN in the broader community. The work with municipalities varies according to the circumstances of each community. In many GWN’s communities the local community coordinators have become an integral part of the local municipality work. They became the "green" and/or "co-existence" markers of the council; thus, they are invited to municipal committees on a regular basis and their opinions are highly valued, allowing the environmental peace building narrative to be integrated into the municipal decisions and policy making.

5. **Cross-Border Priority Initiatives**

FoEME works with municipal staff and adult residents in each GWN’s community to identify and address sources of pollution, advocate for increased water supply, and to find ways to answer the
needs of the cross-border communities through projects that protect the shared environmental heritage. FoEME reached out to stakeholders, decision makers and funding bodies to identify the priority projects that need advancement in each community. Special consideration was given to issues relating to cross-border water and environmental concerns and initiatives that are likely to reduce sources of tension between neighboring communities and which promote efficient management of water resources. Here FoEME tends to work with a local forum of concerned community activists that help educate decision makers to support investments that the Priority Initiatives represent.

2. Objectives of the External Evaluation Study of the GWN Project

The following evaluation report represents the concluding part of a two-year study (September 2012 - August 2014) that sought to assess the relevancy, effectiveness and impact of the GWN project. A mid-term formative report was submitted to FoEME on August 2013. The current report reflects the conclusions and results of the two-year evaluation process. It includes an evaluation of a number of themes from the perspective of the project's stakeholders and beneficiaries, which were as follows:

- The alignment between the expected goals of the project, the goals of the beneficiaries, and the goals that were achieved.
- The activities that the project undertook, and their ability to achieve the project's objectives.
- The project's effectiveness and relevancy, and its ability to bring about the desired impact of environmental peace building.
- The capacity of the project for sustainability.
- Quantitative results: positive trends and opinions of beneficiaries and stakeholders about the vision of environmental peace building

Evaluation Methodology

A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches have been applied for the purpose of this study as a means to examine issues related to trends and attitudes and how they are formed. This two-folded methodology allows a deeper, more complex understanding of the project. By comparing the qualitative and quantitative results, the researchers were able to validate/negate them and better understand the complexity that they reveal. For the sake of transparency, all the stakeholders
and beneficiaries knew that the researchers were conducting an assessment in order to find out how the program can be improved; however, the results and insights from the assessment were not shared with any of these the stakeholders and beneficiaries.

**Study Tools**

Five main research techniques were used:

1. In-depth personal interviews with beneficiaries and stakeholders.
2. Focus groups.
3. Quantitative and qualitative closed and open-ended questionnaires.
4. Observation of uni and multilateral activities.
5. Literature review on environmental peace building’s most current theories and practices in the region and worldwide.

**Study Sample**

The two-year evaluation study took place in nine of the GWN project’s communities - Al-Hemma, South Shouna, South Ghour, and Tabkat Fahal in Jordan; Mateh Yehuda, Jordan Valley and Emek Hefer in Israel; and Al-Auja and West Bethlehem Villages in the Palestinian Authority. The communities were visited by the researchers who conducted interviews, focus groups and observations. The evaluation study sample comprised:

- 39 local community individuals, activists, water and environment experts and beneficiaries of the Good Water Neighbors (GWN) project, including activists in other environmental NGO's;
- 16 School principals, teachers and employees of educational departments in local municipalities;
- 290 Youth water trustees (153 males, 137 females);
- 20 mayors and council members
- 10 Environmental, development and water authorities employees decision and policy makers;
- 32 GWN’s community coordinators, GWN project’s coordinators, and FoEME’s directors.
The evaluation results include an analysis of a questionnaire distributed among educators who come from other GWN project’s communities, as well:

- 20 educators at schools, education departments at the municipalities and education coordinators from other environmental and social justice NGOs.

Finally, the evaluation of the impact, effectiveness and relevancy of GWN’s cross-border conferences, community visits and youth camps included the following additional sample of participants who took part in these activities:

- 20 local community individuals, activists, and beneficiaries of the Good Water Neighbors (GWN) project, including activists from partnering NGOs;

- 18 Municipality mayors and council members

- 22 Local and national environmental, development and water authorities decision and policy makers;

- 150 water trustees (77 boys, 73 girls)

- 9 School teachers;

The above sample includes participants residing in all of GWN’s communities, except Abasan (Gaza) and Yatta. All in all the sample of the two-year study comprised 646 beneficiaries and stakeholders.

3. Executive summary

Introduction: The GWN project operates in active war zones, both in Palestine (the West Bank and Gaza) and in the Negev part of Israel, and in a strong anti-normalization atmosphere in Jordan and Palestine. In some areas of Israel, children and their parents take refuge in bomb shelters. In Palestine, many children do not go to school nor adults to work on a daily basis due to Israeli Military checkpoints, the separation wall, and other military actions. Palestinian communities suffer from water scarcity due to political reasons related to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories as much as from water hazards coming from nearby settlements that damage agricultural lands. Military siege and curfews occur in the West Bank on a regular basis. Travelling across Israel, the West Bank and Israel/ the West Bank and Jordan is very difficult due to the necessity of going through complicated bureaucratic procedures to obtain visas, military and/or entry permits. Many times Jordanians' and Palestinians' entry into Israel will be refused. Israelis are not allowed to enter into Area A.
Even before the recent July 2014 war between Israel and Gaza average Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians have been full of hate; the street discourse has always been concentrated on killing, eliminating and boycotting the 'other'. The political discourse is Skeptic and centered on nationalism and patriotism. For many, cross-border cooperation efforts and projects are seen as a collaboration with the 'enemy' or as normalizing a system of injustice. Those who take part in these activities may sometimes be seen as traitors to their nation. On the social level, the Palestinian and Jordanian people have become more and more isolated from Israel while the Israeli society is on a path of distancing itself from the Palestinian society, as well. The first case is a result of the increasing amount of social pressures against any relations with Israelis dubbed under the term normalization; this is becoming one of the Palestinian society's largest taboos and it is increasing in the Jordanian society as well. Fears from such social accusations pressure to shy away from potentially beneficial developmental relations such as suggested by the GWN project.

With all these factors in mind, some would say that it is almost impossible to hold such a project like the Good Water Neighbors project that brings together thousands of Palestinians, Jordanians and Israelis to meet and work together towards common environmental and development goals in frequent intervals and on such a long-term process.

In this respect, it is not only that GWN has been fully active and has expanded its activities broadly over the past 14 years since its initiation. The researchers have found it to be effective and relevant to the needs of the project's beneficiaries and stakeholders -- youth, adults, activists, educators, local municipalities' mayors, council members, municipal employees, as well as employees of local and national water authorities and activists in partnering NGOs. Coming from 28 communities that cover most of Israel and the West Bank and all of the Jordanian Jordan Valley area, the project's beneficiaries not only meet and converse, they work together to create a change in their regional, local water and environmental realities in a way that answers developmental, economic and educational needs.

**Relevancy, effectiveness and impact:** The researchers observe the project's multi-layered, comprehensive strategy and unique environmental peace building approach as having a central role in achieving its relevancy and bringing on its positive impact and effective results. The project's strategy includes two interrelated components, which cater for its relevancy. A unilateral component of working and adapting the project's objectives to each community's specific character, while including a strong multilateral aspect – mainly concerning shared water resources, and a multilateral component of working on cross-border activities, seminars, campaigns and advocacy efforts, which include a strong unilateral aspect that emphasizes each community's self-interests and needs.
The project’s relevancy motivates the beneficiaries to actively take part in it, assimilate its narrative on environmental peacebuilding into their work, activism and personal lives and advance its objectives beyond any particular activity. This, in turn, sets the basis for the project’s effectiveness: raising awareness and promoting the understanding of the interdependency of environmental and shared water issues, and the necessity of cooperation in protecting shared water resources, while, at the same time, motivating the various stakeholders to actively work towards solving these problems and creating a change in the reality. Impact is reached on another level, as well, by initiating short and long-term local and cross-border projects that create an actual change in the realities of the benefiting communities in terms of addressing the lack of water and sewage infrastructures, employment opportunities, informal and environmental education, and sustainable agricultural technologies. All of the above lead to creating cross-border contacts and ties, in addition to professional, activist and personal relationships.

Furthermore, the combination of bottom-up and top-down strategies creates a cross-border cooperation that leads to a political change on national and regional levels. For example, the legal and environmental campaigns initiated by GWN led to halting the plans to build the separation wall in two of the project’s communities, a wall which would have otherwise separated cross-border communities, and the Palestinian communities from their agricultural lands on top of damaging water and environmental resources. The combination furthermore led to shifting the national and legal Israeli discourse about security to a degree that environmental security has become a strong factor in the national security decision making discourse. Another example is the Protecting Ground Water, the rehabilitation of the Jordan River and Saving the Dead Sea projects - all of them cross-border initiatives with very clear advances and results that were born originally as GWN initiatives before becoming independent projects.

The quantitative results also shed light on the project’s effectiveness in reaching its goals and validate the qualitative results. 92% of the interviewees for the evaluation study reported to have gained or have demonstrated an acquired knowledge of shared water and environmental issues and their interdependent nature due to their participation in or connection with the project. 88% of the beneficiaries understand the necessity of working together in order to protect their shared water resources. In fact, 71% deem it impossible to protect shared water resources without working together. Finally, close to 90% of the interviewees demonstrated a more positive attitude towards their neighbors across the green line, in particular, and across the border, in general.

**The Priority Initiatives:** The researchers found the strategy of the priority initiatives to correspond to the most updated literature and practices of environmental peace building. The initiatives lead to
projects that create a practical change in the reality of the communities in a way that protects shared, cross-border, water and environmental sources while, at the same time, creates relevant, actual and meaningful economic and developmental benefits for each of the communities who takes part and cooperates with the initiatives. For example, water and sewage networks, halting the separation wall, wastewater treatment plants, eco-parks that create job opportunities and more.

The Priority Initiatives motivate communities to go into a cross-border cooperation, against social and political objections, as they see the benefits for their community from the initiatives as benefits they could have not achieved otherwise. Thus the initiatives' sustainability is promised. It then allows FoEME to deepen the GWN's stronghold in the community. These benefits have become clear over the years as FoEME has managed to mobilize funders to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in these initiatives and local and national stakeholders to create and sustain necessary cross-border mechanisms for their realization.

**Municipalities and adults activists:** The GWN works with municipalities and adult activists' groups results in the assimilation of GWN’s narrative about water, development and cooperation into the daily lives and work of the various stakeholders and beneficiaries.

**The Water Trustees and eco-education:** The work with the water trustees is effective and relevant. It raises the youth's awareness to water and environmental issues, drives them to actively promote environmental change in their communities, motivates them to understand the necessity of a cross-border cooperation, and answers most of their needs and concerns. It motivates the youth to break down stereotypes/fear and prejudices of the other and become active agents of environmental change and cross-border cooperation in their communities.

**Environmental peace building and dialog:** The environmental dialog methodology applied by GWN is based on mutuality, intersecting self-interests and goal oriented dialog. It suggests a comprehensive model for creating a cross-border cooperation and trust building that promotes actual change in reality. It thus sets an effective alternative to other forms of cross-border political dialog and allows various beneficiaries, coming from different backgrounds and with different concerns and needs, to find a place to voice and realize their interests.

In conclusion, the evaluators recommend continuing the support for this courageous project. We found the project's environmental peace building approach unique and conclude that it can set a model for similar efforts regionally and worldwide. We thus recommend that the project continues in its current course with a consideration of a few recommendations, detailed in the body of the report, that involve increasing and modifying already existing practices.
4. The GWN's Cross-Border Joint Activities

A brief about the Cross-Border activities under examination:

The Cross-Border activities under observation over the two-year study included:

- **The Cross-Border Mayors’ Conference** – a two-days conference with mayors, members of local councils, representatives of national water authorities, and decision makers on the national level from four Jordanian, two Israeli and most of the Palestinian communities, held in Israel on May 2013.

- **The "Good Water Neighbors Communities Gathering"** – a two-day conference in Herzliya with beneficiaries and stakeholders from the project’s 28 communities along with international stakeholders and funders, held on November 2013.

- **The International "Protecting Groundwater Conference"** – a two-day conference with beneficiaries and stakeholders from GWN project’s communities with international partners from Malaga, Spain, held in Jordan on May 2014.

- **A Cross-Border visit** between beneficiaries from Mateh Yehuda and West Bethlehem Villages with a focus on creating a cross-border touristic cooperation, held in Battir on June 2014.

- **And ten youth water trustees’ camps**, including:
  - **Six Community Visits Camps**: Two Jordanian-Israeli camps (one held in Jordan, one held in Israel), a Jordanian-Israeli-Palestinian camp, two Palestinian-Israeli camps, and a Palestinian-Jordanian camp.
  - **Four Campaign Camps**: A girls’ only Jordanian-Israeli-Palestinian camp, an Israeli-Jordanian mixed gender camp, a Palestinian-Palestinian (with Arab citizens form Israel and Palestinians from the PA) boys only camp, and a mixed gender Jordanian-Israeli-Palestinian camp.

Analysis of the results

In the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires of the study, we put an emphasis on evaluating the GWN Cross-Border activities' impact, including the conferences, youth camps, community visits, and gatherings. The results were clear: 95% of the participants confirmed that the Cross-Border meetings are strengthening the acquaintance, trust and cooperation between cross-border communities.
The conferences and youth camps are well organized. The agenda of the conferences includes a reference to all the layers of GWN, the connection between water and economic development and the positive place that the water issue can have in the peace process. The role of the priority initiatives in the protection of shared water resources as much as in advancing local interests and good neighborly relations. The various projects that sprung out of GWN and became independent projects. The educational work with youth through the water trustees program, and presenting the project’s efforts to advance the environmental peace building.

The agenda and activities of the youth camps are comprehensive. They focus on raising awareness of the need to jointly protect the environment and water sources. They include personal acquaintance and dialog. Learning about the specific environment of the visited community and its water situation. Exchanging knowledge about the visiting communities. Reflecting on the necessity of cross-border cooperation and learning how to campaign all of the above.

The coordinator of the Mateh Yehuda community described the joint meetings strategy clearly: bringing together stakeholders from the communities to meet and create a dialog on a specific common issue that is relevant to their interests and needs, and allowing them to find the things that connect between them as the basis for creating cross-border cooperation.

Theme 1: The range of alignment between the objectives of GWN's Cross-Border activities and the needs of the participants and stakeholders.

Outcome 1: The direction of the cross-border activities towards networking, addressing joint water and environmental issues, and promoting good neighborly relations are the most important reasons for taking part in them.

There were a few reasons that motivated the GWN beneficiaries and stakeholders to take an active part in the GWN's joint activities. The participants stated that they came to the conference wanting to meet professionals from Jordan, Israel and Palestine, to exchange experiences, and to gain more knowledge about pollution hazards in the region and on how to prevent them. They wanted to promote cooperation on environmental issues and hoped it will help in local issues, such as getting a sanitation system for their community. They represent official authorities, private Institutions and NGOs. They came to get to know FoEME's work and objectives and to see if they fit their own work and goals.

The interviews were conducted with activists, community members, businesspersons, educators, mayors, council members, municipality employees, and employees of water authorities. They show
that networking was one of the main reasons for participating in cross-border conferences. The interviewees perceived the conference as a space for creating new professional and personal relationships, and sustaining old ones. Furthermore, some noted their motivation to find new (and old) partners to initiate new projects, based on past successful experiences in previous conferences.

Raising awareness to local water and environment problems was another motivation. The Palestinian participants at the communities gathering stated that a main motivation to participate in GWN's cross-border meetings is the importance they see in voicing the Palestinian narrative related to water and the general difficulties of living under occupation. They believed that the importance of these conferences lies in the legitimacy and space they give for that voice. Israeli and Jordanian participants noted that the awareness of those across the border to the local water and environment problems, is the basis for cooperation.

Finally, wanting to initiate practical joint projects that will address the economic and development needs of their community was stated as another focal motivation. The mayor of Battir stated that he hoped the community visit will lead to cooperation, that it will plant the seeds of good relationships and that it will help the village to gain Israeli support for the protection of the village's main source of livelihood. Two businesspersons working in the water industry, who visited the communities gathering, stated that they came to "do business". Palestinian and Jordanian participants hoped to advance sanitation solutions in their communities through these conferences. Lastly but not least, looking for opportunities for environmental tourism was clearly stated as another focal motivation.

The youth stated that their reasons to take part in joint camps included meeting new friends, having fun, changing their perception of the other through learning about the other's culture, and presenting their own culture in a direct manner (way), not mediated through media or their friends and families. Another focal reason was learning more about the environment and about ways to protect water sources, learning about the water realities in the cross-border communities, and wanting to get involved in joint environmental activism.

Their teachers confirmed that in their minds, the youth camps are an opportunity for their students to interact with the other, exchange knowledge, break down stereotypes and learn about environmental and water issues they could not have learned in class.

**Outcome 2: There is a compatibility and alignment between the objectives of the organization and the aspirations and interests of the beneficiaries of the cross-border activities.**

The participants responded well to the conferences and youth camps' agenda and activities. They confirmed finding their themes, some or all, relevant and noted that there was enough room for the
various and different needs and aspirations that they come with to be realized, addressed and voiced.

They confirmed that the environmental water-based dialog that FoEME applies in these conferences is realistic and compatible with their interests. For example, a Palestinian participant stated, "You can see that at FoEME they don’t only talk, they do". An Israeli council member from Tamar said, "You do not talk about peace and about wanting peace. You come to these conferences because you know you can do actual things. The cross-border relationships that the joint work creates can, in the future, function as a solid basis for peace ". An Israeli activist said, "I came to meet and preserve the relationships with other activists. In the joint meetings, I can meet and converse with other people from other communities who share the same vision. It helps me to feel that I am not alone in my vision, and it gives me hope".

A manager of the tourism department at an Israeli local council and an activist from a Jordanian community both stated that their communities believe in peace and coexistence and that cross-border cooperation on tourism and/or solving water problems is a way for them to manifest this belief. An Israeli businessperson stated, "I see cross-border economic cooperation as a business interest that can at the same time help in protecting the environment and advance peace."

The honest broker approach that FoEME takes in its activities is not forcing its position on environmental peacemaking and allowing a room for a dialog on the ways of realizing water and environmental needs. This approach was valued. The participants noted the legitimacy they felt in voicing their water realities. The conferences are perceived as a safe place where participants can increase the volume of the voice of their community, regarding the needs, the interests and the difficulties, in a constructive and positive manner. One of the Palestinian mayors noted: "Although the chances for formal cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian municipalities are now low because of the political situation, I still find it highly important to come to these events and speak up about the realities, the water and other issues, that my community lives under. They give me room for that, and this is why I keep coming. It is important that the other side knows about it".

The youth noted that the camps' agenda and activities are aligned with their personal goals and desires – they can meet new friends, engage in dialog with them, create personal relationships and learn together about their cultures, and their water realities. They enjoy the camps' activities and feel that they are learning about the environment much more than they could have in class, just by the direct encounter. One of the Israeli participants noted, "At the camp we learn everything ‘through the feet’. We meet with the youth from the communities we learned about in class". Her Palestinian and Jordanian peers confirmed, "At the camps we go out together and learn about the
environment by seeing it, not only by talking about it, and we can talk together on how we can solve things”.

**Outcome 3: Effective reflection upon organization’s objectives for the target groups.**

“I reached the conference as the person in charge of environmental issues in my municipality and without proper background. I went out from the conference with a clear understanding on how to promote the protection of the environment and the quality of life in my municipality.” *A participant at the PGW conference*

Participants confirmed that the conferences, community visits and youth camps were effective in realizing their goals. They suggested a space for meeting peers from neighboring countries and discussing common interests. The good discussions led to building a base where all parties could share knowledge, raise awareness and learn about water problems and new techniques of dealing with it. A Jordanian participant at the Protecting Ground Water conference noted, "The conference created a mechanism for a regional cooperation for preventing environmental problems".

Protecting the environment and finding solutions for water problems, creating good neighborly relationships in order to do so, and the benefits of cross-border cooperation stood at the heart of the conferences' impact. The interviewees at the communities gathering confirmed that the joint meetings created realistic cooperation, allowing for something beyond the raising of awareness to take place – i.e., practical results on the ground that answer local needs and interests and at the same time create good neighborly relations that sustain them.

GWN’s honest broker approach to the dialog, along with its strategy of networking various stakeholders and beneficiaries both give room to introduce a wide range of perceptions, points of view and expertise into the dialog at the joint activities. This openness leads to results. We mentioned earlier the legitimacy that the Palestinian participants feel for voicing their community’s and personal narratives. Israeli participants shared the same desire – to become legitimate partners in the eyes of the Palestinians through voicing their perspectives. A Jordanian participant noted, "I was impressed by the level of expertise of the Palestinian presenter at our panel, I felt we can work together". A Palestinian participant in the PGW project’s conference clearly stated that due to this approach "FoEME is able to advance things on the ground that governments and politicians can't". Thus, being able to share expertise, whether professional, personal or activist, motivated the participants to engage in a cross-border cooperation.

This led to a personal change that the participants went through while following their participation in joint activities. An Israeli participant from Beit She’an who introduced himself as "politically right wing" noted that for him, the GWN project answered a strong need in his community for
environmental education and social justice. He said, "I do not care about peace, it did not interest me, but in the conferences I have learned to know the Jordanians as people. That they are very capable experts. This changed me after the many years that I participated in such gatherings".

Finally, the conferences are valued for their capacity to create and sustain a strong network of cross-border communication that has a long term impact, beyond the concrete conference and/or cross-border initiative. An Israeli council member from the Tamar regional council noted that his community needed a solution for the houseflies problem coming from across the border. They needed a source of communication in order to communicate with the other side but lacked the infrastructure for such communication. Through FoEME's connections in the neighboring community they were able to do so and establish direct communication. After a long two-year process, an official signing of a joint initiative with the Jordanian community across the border took place on June 2014.

The community visit to Battir was effective. The participants stated it allowed them to learn about the village, its heritage, culture, environment and water realities. The dialog was very practical and included a discussion of the opportunities that the cross-border cooperation implies for both sides, each with his own interests and desires, and how they could be exhausted, while reflecting about the challenges and possible means for overcoming them. As one of the participants noted "it was not just meeting and getting to know each other for the sake of meeting, it was meeting in order to think how, and what, we can do together practically."

The youth noted in their interviews that they enjoyed the camps. They confirmed learning about other cultures and ways of life and about gaining knowledge of the environment and sustainability, as much as on how to pass this knowledge on to future generations. They noted that following their participation at the camps they gained knowledge of water and environment on a level they could not have reached at school. They learned about the other side and the problems it faces. They were then able to exchange knowledge on how to deal with water problems.

The camps allowed the youth to create personal friendships. The interviewees reported that it led to breaking down stereotypes. A 16-year-old Palestinian said "I learned not to judge the other side negatively". They were able to meet youth from the other side without the mediation of the media, and felt it allowed them to present their "own positive side", as well. A 13-year old participant from Israel said "Until now I did not even think that Palestinians and Jordanians could be so nice. Now I feel that I am awakened".

The good personal relationships opened the way for "a true and meaningful communication" through which they were able to learn that they can work and become activists together. A 16-year
old Jordanian participant noted: "We learned first that there is someone that we can talk to on the other side. We then understood that these kids care about the environment as we do. It helped us overcome the language barrier and the different cultures. I understand now that we can work together because we have the same goal". Her friend added: "I felt that through the camp I was able to strengthen the relationships with my Israeli neighbors and through that the relationships between our peoples".

A 15-year old Palestinian participant noted: "The camp is good because it helps protect the environment. My goal was to get to know the other side and understand their way of thinking about the environment and its protection. In the end, I could actually see how both sides cooperate on that issue, even though we come from different religions, and although there is war between our peoples".

**Results for theme 1:**

1. The participants confirmed that GWN’s conferences and cross-border activities have a strong capacity to design public opinions and to motivate decision makers to create joint initiatives and funders to designate the necessary funding towards the realization of these initiatives.

2. The relevancy of the joint meetings and activities objectives to the desires and interests of the participants, and the effective environmental dialog model applied in them, brought about the desired impact of creating and sustaining cross-border cooperation on water issues.

3. They then led to a realistic cooperation with practical results on the ground that answer local needs and interests and at the same time creates good neighborly relations that sustain them.

4. The focus on a single issue – water - that is common to all has helped the participants to overcome the language barriers, the different cultures, religious beliefs, the ways of life and even differences of political opinions, and work together.

5. The main challenge in this respect is the need raised by participants from all sides to engage high rank government officials, that without them, some of the initiatives, while being sustained constantly on the informal level, cannot be transferred into the formal level. This was mainly discussed in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian formal cooperation on the municipalities' level.
Theme 2: The feasibility of the activities to realize their objectives

Outcome 1: Benefiting from the activities.

The interviewees, whether adults or youth, decision makers, educators or activists, private consultants or employees of water authorities, all shared that the way the activities were organized and set allowed maximum realization of their objectives. The participants at the conferences noted the good timetable and the good agenda, the professional facilitation, the work in small groups and the conducting of relatively small participants' workshops, and the satisfying and appropriate venues of the meetings. All of the above made it possible for them to create personal and professional relationships, engage in formal and informal dialog, and understand what connects them and what can bring them to work together.

- When asked what needs improvement, the participants at the conferences mentioned the need to train the translators on the issues at hand, the lack of free time and the need for more outdoor and interactive activities as something they would suggest adding to future conferences.

- A Jordanian participant at the communities gathering said that going to Israel is a one-time opportunity for Jordanians to visit the holy places sacred to Islam. He hoped that in future conferences the time for such a visit would be allocated.

The youth and their teachers highly valued the combination of experiential learning methods based on FoEME's educational resources guide, the work in small groups, the use of fun introduction activities and the field trips, which were all adequately balanced with periods of free time, which allowed them to interact informally. In fact, many noted the opportunity for an informal dialog as one of the main benefits of the youth camps.

Outcome 2: The need for continuity and/or sustainability.

There was an internal challenge that the interviewees from all levels observed regarding GWN's cross-border activities: The need for sustainability. The participants saw this challenge as an opportunity and agreed that there are a few actions FoEME can take in order to realize this need, including:

- Having actual applied projects as a result of the conferences.

- Follow up meetings in the project's communities.

- Better training of municipality employees who implement these projects.

- Involving more decision makers and experts.
The youth raised the following needs:

- Those who participated in the two-day camps noted their desire for longer camps that will allow them to deepen the relationships created between them and engage in a more concrete dialog over the water realities on both sides. More than one participant noted: "Two days are not enough, you barely get to know someone and already you have to go home".

Many water trustees expressed a desire to sustain the personal and activist relationships created at the camp after returning home. They suggested the following:

- Having actual applied cross-border projects as a result of the camps.
- Follow up camps or community visits.
- Adjusting the ages of the participants – when there is an acute age difference, the relationships are less meaningful.
- Jordanian and Palestinian participants expressed a desire to work together, side by side, in the encounters with Israelis.
- The schoolteachers noted the need for a more stable unilateral process before and after the camp, and also spoke of the need for prolonging the cross-border activities for more than one year for each group of students.

**Theme 3: Opportunities for creating neighborly relations between the three people through the cross-border cooperation on water and environment issues.**

"We are the future, and if we start our future with a clean slate, without prejudice, then problems can be solved. Water are the most important thing common to all of us, we all live on the same territory and nature connects us". **A 12-year old girl from Israel**

"Through water and environment we can create true coexistence, based on respect and the protection of the rights of each side". **A 16-year old boy from Palestine**

As mentioned above, the environmental dialog applied by GWN at the joint activities was seen as an effective tool that creates cross-border relationships and cooperation of various types on water and environmental issues. These relationships, translated into good neighborly relations, are then seen as setting the basis, or as one of the interviewees termed it "the infrastructure", for future peace making and "peaceful relations between all of us".
It was agreed that the joint activities set opportunities for promoting understanding of one another. Furthermore, the direct professional meetings help "bypass political and bureaucratic obstacles and assists decision makers to make the right decisions", as one of the Israeli participants noted. Creating partnerships that will come up with solutions for vital issues and knowledge sharing promoted and laid the basis for cooperation and more projects between countries.

One of the participants articulated that beautifully by saying: "(We are) making peace, step by step, without saying that we are making peace. You say that you cooperate so your community can find a solution for this or that problem. Then people get to know each other beyond the professional level and spread the message. We do not take the side of the others, we take our own side. It is like we are many water drops that in time will become an ocean".

With that, a few participants did not share this optimism, stating "The relationships cannot get better unless Israel gives Palestinians their fair share of water". They shared their political pessimism, stating that as long as Palestinians cannot take an active part in the partnerships as equals, the results will be confined to their direct local results but might not improve the relations between Israelis and Palestinians in general.

The youth stated that the joint encounters produced good cross-border relations – the personal relationships helped bridging over the language and cultural gaps and opened the way for joint activism. They noted that for them it shows the practical feasibility of such cooperation, of experiencing it in practice. They see their role in spreading this message to their friends, families and communities, and through that advancing their communities’ involvement in the project, thus advancing an opportunity for greater peacebuilding that relies on shared common goals.

A 13-year old participant from Jordan noted: "Learning together how to use water properly creates friendships. The deep acquaintance creates mutual love, and it can help calm things down in the region". A 15-year old participant form Israel stated: "The camp showed me that it is possible to create peace between our peoples; that it is possible to reach an agreement and live on the same land". One of the teachers observed: "A dialog over water issues assists in reducing hostility and hate even when political issue are rising, it makes the political dialog easier because everybody remembers what is at stake –the most essential needs that everyone share".
Theme 4: Quantitative results - positive trends and opinions of beneficiaries and stakeholders about the vision of environmental peace building.

Outcome 1: percentage of participants who gain knowledge of shared water and environmental issues and their interdependent nature.

The results show that 91% of the interviewees reported to have gained or have demonstrated an acquired knowledge of shared water and environmental issues and their interdependent nature following their participation in a cross-border activity. 85% confirmed the cross-border nature of water and environmental issues.

**Outcome 2:** percentage of participants who understand the necessity of working together in order to protect their shared water resources.

95% of the beneficiaries understand the necessity to work together in order to protect their shared water resources following their participation at a cross-border activity. In fact, 78% believe that it is impossible to protect shared water resources without working together.
Outcome 3: percentage of participants who demonstrated a more positive attitude towards their neighbors across the border

The study examined the following parameters:

1. The interviewees' willingness to create/sustain cross-border personal (for the youth and for activists) and professional (for decision makers and experts) relationships.

2. Their disposition towards hosting in their community members from cross-border communities.

3. Their preparedness to be activists in the fields of water and the environment in cooperation with their colleagues from across the border.

94% of the beneficiaries demonstrated a more positive attitude towards their neighbors across the green line, in particular, and across the border in general. The highest preference (95%) was towards perceiving the other as a partner for cross-border activism and joint professional cooperation. 95% demonstrated a positive willingness to create/sustain cross-border personal and professional relationships and 91% showed a disposition towards hosting the members from cross-border communities in their community.
Outcome 4: percentage of participants who confirmed that cross-border meetings are strengthening acquaintance, trust and cooperation between cross-border communities

95% of the interviewees at cross-border activities confirmed that the cross-border meetings are strengthening the acquaintance, trust and cooperation between the cross-border communities.

Results for theme 4:

The positive impact of the cross border activities on the participants is evident, on all levels. There is a high degree of awareness to the narrative that addressing the problems of the environment cannot be separated from addressing regional water issues; that these issues "do not stop at the border". There is a strong disposition created towards understanding that the protection of shared water sources has to be carried out by cross-border cooperation. Finally, following their participation in cross-border activities, the participants demonstrate an unequivocal positive change of the perception of their neighbors across the border – as friends, as professional colleagues, and as partners to environmental activism. When going back to their communities they continue using the language, the frame of thought and the standpoint of the environmental dialog and cross-border cooperation.

Recommendations:

The chapter above includes specific recommendations. We would like to highlight here the need raised by all the participants for continuity - that there will be some sort of continuation and/or follow ups of the cross-border conferences.
We find it worthwhile to note here that FoEME has taken a few meaningful steps over the second year of the evaluation to meet this demand for sustainability, reflected in the interviews with the participants. For example, this year’s educational program witnessed the first steps of an Alumni program, for second and third year graduates of the water trustees program. The Alumni are now part of the organizing teams of the youth camps and are responsible for the facilitation of some of the activities. In their interviews, they clearly stated their desire to continue their involvement in environmental cross-border activism and dialog. Furthermore, action was taken to increase transparency and awareness in the GWN communities to the work done by FoEME over the years.

5. The GWN Palestinian Communities

A brief about the two-year study's research communities from Palestine

Al-Auja lies 12 km north of Jericho City along the Jordan Valley’s main road. The town dates back to the Roman period. It has an area of about 10 square kilometers, and a population of about 5,500 people. The main source of income is agriculture but there is also a commercial activity.

The main water supply for the village comes from seven local springs. Due to earlier efforts of the GWN project the water supply network has been completely rehabilitated through the support of USAID and today AL-Auja has a domestic water supply of 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Al-Auja has a better domestic water supply today than Ramallah. Wastewater remains a problem and is disposed in cesspits. The community lacks a sewage network as well as any place for the disposal of their solid waste. The current priority initiative for Al-Auja is to undertake a feasibility study of a new wastewater network and treatment facility. Due to SIDA support the study is emerging. The village has great potential for local eco-tourism as the springs of al-Auja are well reputed and the nature in the area is quite beautiful.

West Bethlehem Villages include the neighboring communities of Wadi Fukin and Battir, located in the West Bank to the west of Bethlehem. The population of both villages includes farmers, who sell their produce to the Bethlehem area. Currently, the agricultural way of life and natural landscape in both communities is endangered by massive urban development surrounding the villages. Recently, the West Bethlehem Villages have identified 2 "Priority Projects", namely Cross-Border Preservation of Terraced Landscapes, and Advancing Sanitation Solutions in West Bethlehem Villages.
Analysis of the results

Theme 1: The range of alignment between the objectives of the GWN project and the needs of the local communities.

Outcome 1: The direction of the project towards working in the domains of water and environment, assisting with local water problems, and advancing Palestinians' water and land rights through cross-border cooperation are the most important reasons for joining it.

Interviews conducted with representatives of local NGOs, community activists, mayors and council members, schoolteachers and beneficiaries of the GWN project in the communities of AL-Auja and West Bethlehem Villages over the two-year study show that there are three main reasons for their continued participation with FoEME's activities. These reasons include a mixture of 1. A desire to address water needs and environment issues, 2. Local development needs, and 3. The necessity to protect water and land rights.

Living in agricultural communities, the Interviewees noted that the GWN's goal of protecting water sources and the environment, together with the capacity building trainings on sustainable agriculture and water conservation that supported their livelihoods, were one of the main reasons to join the project. The environmental tourism opportunities advanced through GWN were highlighted as well. Finally, GWN’s efforts to leverage water and sewage networks initiatives, and the rehabilitation of local water sources that support local livelihoods, were confirmed to motivate the interviewees to support and take an active part in it.

The school principals and schoolteachers noted the opportunity to give their students the prospect for environmental education as the main reason for participating in the GWN project. They value the project's educational program for its focus on raising the awareness to environmental issues. The youth stated their desire to gain professional knowledge and skills about environmental and water problems and to voluntary support their communities through applying their gained knowledge.

Finally, the interviewees noted the GWN's focus on peacemaking and/ or creating cross-border cooperation around shared water problems, while advancing fair water distribution and insuring water and land rights, as a focal reason for participating in it. The mayor of Battir noted, "We suffer from the water problem and we turn to anyone who can help us with that. If we do not cooperate for clean water, non-violent co-existence will not exist." A council member from AL-Auja stated: "Water are shared between Israel, Palestine and Jordan. The basis for the (GWN) project is the equal distribution of water between the three nations and this is why we support it."
**Outcome 2: Compatibility and alignment between the objectives of the organization and the aspirations and interests of local community members**

It is clear that the most important objectives identified by those interviewed were the desire for knowledge of the issues related to the environment and finding applicable solutions for the problems of water shortage and pollutants in Palestine. The areas of Wadi Fukin, Battir and AL-Auja suffer greatly from environmental problems such as pollution of water sources, specifically of springs, lack of water and sewage networks, water scarcity and, consequently a threat to local agricultural traditions and livelihoods. Thus, the relevancy of the project's goals is evident.

Living in traditional agricultural communities and sharing a deep connection to the land, the interviewees see a benefit from GWN. It supports their livelihoods by protecting the environment and advancing water solutions; moreover, the project opens the door for environmental tourism opportunities that can address local economic needs. In Battir, a unique relationship was established between FoEME and the local environmental museum that now hosts visitors from the project's Israeli communities as much international tourists. In AL-Auja, a unique Palestinian eco-center is the focal point of the project's work in the community. It functions as an educational center as much as a site for environmental tourism and the physical site for the project's activities in the community. Thus the project was found to effectively answer development and educational needs as well.

As Wadi Fukin and Battir are located very closely to Israeli villages such as Tzur Hadassah and others, the two cross-border communities used to have close economic ties in the past (and to some extent still have). Palestinians were employed in Israeli small businesses and Israelis used to shop in the neighboring Palestinian villages. The GWN objective of creating and/or sustaining good neighborly relations through joint activism and cooperation are thus of high relevancy to the Palestinian communities.

In AL-Auja the interviewees stated that the eco-center, formed originally as a project goal, made the village famous. The various projects initiated through the eco-center, like the construction of a water reservoir and others, drew widespread attention and helped the village to gain the support and assistance of the Palestinian Authority, of international bodies, and of relevant Israeli authorities. Their water problems "got to be voiced and be heard by the authorities and then be treated", noted the former mayor of AL-Auja. This sets an attraction for local stakeholders.

The interviews suggest another central motivation for the participants' support of the GWN project; i.e, FoEME's active solidarity in support of their struggle to protect the Palestinian rights in the land and water. This motivates them to face the accusations of supporting a "normalizing" project and bases their commitment to the non-violent Palestinian struggle for independence.
Finally, the school principals and teachers see the Water Trustees program as an opportunity to expose their students to contents that are not part of the formal curricula. They observed the program as highly beneficial for their students' education and professional future development and as catering the need for informal education opportunities. The youth were unanimous that the most important goal for the project in their view is the preservation of the environment, conservation of water, raising awareness among their peers and the younger generations, and contributing to their community through volunteering and sharing knowledge and expertise. They noted the importance of gaining Jordanian support and advocating the Palestinian rights among Israeli youths as well.

The work of the joint activists group from Wadi Fukin and Tzur Hadassah was found to have had a clear positive impact on the two communities. When the former community coordinators who initiated this group left, the level of the joint work of the group reduced significantly.

- The activists from both communities expressed their desire that FoEME would support them in putting joint activism back on track and assist them with creating a work plan for the group.

To conclude, interviewees in the Palestinian communities indicated that their desired goals were adequately aligned and compatible with the goals of the project, and there was not any difference at this level of objectives. They also commended all the efforts undertaken by FoEME in the fields of feasibility studies, workshops, conferences, and small projects such as gray water, groundwater protection, rainwater harvesting systems and others. Respectively, the active role of the eco-center Al-Auja in all aspects of the community's daily life was highlighted.

It is important to note here that while the interviewees are highly involved with the GWN project, they are aware of the objections raised in their respected communities against it and its image as a "normalizing" project. They state that they do not observe it as such since it supports local Palestinian needs and rights. They see their role in communicating this message to the members of their communities and gaining their support by showing how they, their communities and the Palestinian cause in general can benefit from the project.

**Outcome 3: Effective reflection upon organization’s objectives for the target groups.**

The participants stated that there were positive effects reflected on all beneficiaries and stakeholders, at a number of levels. At a personal level, the participants agreed that there was a qualitative addition to their personal lives, both in terms of newly gained practical experience, and at the level of life and professional skills. For example, they undertook various training and capacity building courses.
Activists, policy makers and youth stated that participation in the project allowed them to create new friendships and professional ties with cross border communities as much as other Palestinian communities, based on the deep trust built through joint activities. Furthermore, all the interviewees noted that the project has opened for them the opportunity to effectively contribute to their community and to assist in resolving and taking care of its social, economic and environmental needs and interests in an effective manner.

They confirmed the project's relevancy in dealing with current water and environmental hazards related to the Israeli occupation – untreated sewage coming from nearby settlements, the legal assistance in halting the construction of the separation wall, and putting the villages’ case into UNESCO’s agenda in the West Bethlehem villages. The Al-Auja center's activities helped in achieving recognition for the Palestinian lower Jordan valley area as a historical and touristic site. The participants there thus noted FoEME’s assistance in the work with the Israeli Civil Administration on that and other issues.

All the adult interviewees, whether educators, policy makers or activists, confirmed the clear impact the project has on the youth, by raising their awareness of the importance of protecting water and the environment, and training them with leadership skills. The schoolteachers confirmed that the project capacitated the students with the skill of how to disseminate their knowledge and educate their peers on the subject, thus becoming active agents of change. They noted the effectiveness and relevancy of the educational guide, and specifically the extracurricular experiential methods in transferring information as well.

The youth stated their commitment to the environment and noted being highly aware of the ways to protect the environment and conserve, purify and reuse water. They confirmed learning the importance of jointly working across the border to protect shared water resources from waste and pollution and the capacities necessary to create such cooperation and joint efforts.

Almost all of them stated learning about the importance of contributing to their communities and the values of activism and volunteering. A 16-years old male water trustee from AL-Auja stated: "Through the project I became a better person, a person that takes care of the environment". A 14-years old female participant from Battir noted: "The project made me a more active person that protects the environment. I became a role model for my friends and other people who are close to me". They see themselves as the future leaders and mentioned their responsibility to take care for future generations, creating intra-state relationships between Palestinian communities and fostering cross-border cooperation.
The municipality mayors mentioned that the efforts expended led to raising awareness of the importance of environmental, mainly water, issues which harm the two communities, and that there are clear areas for cooperation between the municipalities and FoEME in order to achieve the common goal of environmental and water protection in a way that improves the quality of life.

The GWN’s goal of advocating water networks and wastewater treatment infrastructures through the priority initiatives project, and specifically FoEME’s success in allocating the necessary funds from the World Bank and other international donors, were identified to correspond to the development interests and economic needs of the communities. The success of allocating the necessary funds, and not just initiating a project for the sake of initiating it, was conceived by the involved interviewees as a sign for GWN’s seriousness and ability to put its vision into practice. It thus raised their commitment to the project’s other components.

Finally, the effectiveness of the GWN Cross-Border component was evident and recognized by the participants. For example, the legal and media support, side by side with UNESCO’s involvement through FoEME’s efforts, in the struggle to stop the construction of the separation wall, and thus to protect the agricultural lands and water resources of Battir and Wadi Fukin. In AL-Auja, the former mayor and one of the main supporters of the project stated in his interview: "Usually, when Israel tries to solve our local (water) problems they do it from an Israeli perspective. The (GWN) project and the Al-Auja eco-center allowed us to raise our own voice and our own perspective as Palestinians. It supported us in raising awareness to the problem of occupation and its relation to water issues, as much as in raising our voice in front of the Palestinian leadership. The local issues of Al-Auja and other villages in the Jordan Valley are now part of the general Palestinian agenda thanks to FoEME’s efforts."

**Results for theme 1:**

1. The clarity of the GWN objectives, and their alignment with the hoped-for objectives of the members of the local community, demonstrates that there is a close relationship between the programs and project activities, and the objectives that were agreed by all parties. Consequently, this high level of relevancy to local needs and objectives are reflected in the effective strategic plans helping to bring about the desired impact.

2. Objectives have been achieved at the level of raising awareness and building knowledge about the most important environmental issues faced by the target areas and the inseparable connection between them and the treatment of water problems. This led to forming a collective consciousness concerning the importance of working jointly with the other regions (Jordan and Israel) in order to solve the problems from which they suffer. This collective consciousness led the beneficiaries to act
as agents of change in their community, support the project and advance GWN’s narrative of environmental peace building/cross-border cooperation.

3. All of the above led to active, on-the-ground, local and cross-border initiatives, actions and projects to realize the project’s goals and the fruits of the awareness raising efforts.

4. The main challenges in the work with the Palestinian communities are the external difficulties posed by the Israeli Occupation and the current general perception of any project that involves cross-border cooperation with Israelis as a normalizing project. This is a challenge even for the most dedicated advocates of the GWN project in the Palestinian communities. One of the strategies applied by the project to address this challenge is by strengthening the Jordanian-Palestinian cross-border ties and relations. This is an opportunity that rises from FoEME’s organizational structure and which it effectively exhausts.

5. In the face of the current despair regarding the feasibility of cross-border cooperation with Israelis, the results from the interviews are unequivocal. There is a common understanding demonstrated that until the political circumstances change, shared water resources must be protected unilaterally as much as possible. This, until the political situation allows the realization of the agreed upon necessity to do so through cross-border cooperation.

Theme 2: The feasibility of the projects and initiatives participated in.

Outcome 1: Benefiting from initiatives and community-based projects that have seen implementation.

Participants from the Palestinian GWN project’s communities stressed that the initiatives implemented by the project are beneficial to the local community. The activities conducted through it have worked to raise the level of consciousness and knowledge of the importance of preserving water sources and the rationalization of their use, in addition to highlighting all the environmental issues related to pollution, etc. Furthermore, they suggested practical solutions that served local water and environmental, as much as development and economic needs and concerns. For example, a former member of the local council in Al-Auja stated, "the eco-center (initiated by the GWN project) opened many job and income opportunities for the residents of AL-Auja, for people and families who encountered unemployment. It also led to the opening of new business and shopping centers".

An activist from AL-Auja and the mayor of Battir stressed the positive impact of the cross-border activities in breaking down stereotypes about Palestinians. The activist revealed, "The Israelis had a
prejudice that the Palestinians in the territories are extremists. The work that was done at the eco-
center and the joint meetings made them change their minds about us. This also helped us to solve
our local problems. The Civil Administration started to approve things we needed”.

The following list of initiatives reflects the impact and contribution of the GWN project to the
Palestinian communities, confirmed by the Interviews with local beneficiaries and stakeholders:

- Raising the necessary funds from the World Bank, USAID, SIDA and other donors for the
  implantation of priority initiatives involving water networks and wastewater treatment
  solutions.

- The promotion of wastewater treatment plants in all the Palestinian communities.

- Legal and media support in protecting the lands of Wadi Fukin and Battir and halting the
  construction of the separation wall and the confiscation of the villages' lands.

- Battir listed as an endangered cultural site on the World Monument Fund's 2014 'Watch
  List'.

- Efforts to promote UNESCO to recognize Battir's terrace landscape as a world heritage site.

- A campaign of raising awareness in the neighboring Israeli communities of the Mateh
  Yehuda region about the negative environmental consequences of the separation wall. Thus,
  gaining Israelis support and solidarity with the Palestinian village's struggle.

- Eventually changing the official position taken by a governmental authority in Israel, the
  Nature and Parks Authority, to also object the building of the barrier in Battir, against the
  wishes of the Israeli military.

The above had a positive impact beyond the obvious protection of water resources and
environmental units as it helped the villages safeguard their lands and thus protect a main source of
livelihood. It further gave the village an international recognition as much as the support of Israeli
neighbors.

- Assisting to address the problem of agricultural lands being contaminated by untreated
  sewage.

- Assessment of water quantity in Wadi Fukin's and Al-Auja's springs and calculation of the
  most effective methods to use for agriculture. Thus, finding sustainable solutions for farmers
  who otherwise might have to abandon agriculture and/or migrate to nearby cities in search
  of other sources of livelihoods.

- A cross-border vegetables project between Wadi Fukin and Tzur Hadassah that generated
  income for the Palestinian farmers. Promoting local products through agricultural festivals.
Initiatives to promote environmental tourism in the communities; developing the Neighbors Paths as a source of income side by side with their educational value.

- The deep and ongoing educational work on raising awareness to environmental and water issues and the cross-border youth camps lead to in learning about the other and breaking stereotypes, along with environmental activism and building future local leadership.
- Small projects at the schools included ecological gardens, rainwater harvesting systems, recycling projects and eco-facilities, water reservoirs, grey water systems, eco gardens, recycling projects and more.
- Exposing the youth to international education through cross border camps.
- Trainings and capacity building workshops on sustainable agriculture, water preservation, water hazards and leadership skills.

**Outcome 2: The need for sustainability in the community-based projects and activities carried out by the GWN project**

It was unanimously agreed that the success in halting the construction of the separation wall and achieving UNESCO's support in proclaiming Battir’s landscape as a world heritage site should be preserved and continually supported by FoEME in their future activities in the area.

The efforts to establish cross-border cooperation was confirmed to be a positive trend that should be kept in future GWN’s activities as well. The cross-border dialog was conceived as a place to voice local perspectives. Al-Auja’s former mayor stated: "A lot of people think it is normalization, but it is not, and it (the project) should not give up on that'. He added that, "participation in the conferences helps. Although concentrated around environmental issues, the dialog allows us to tell about our local problems. It gives a voice and visibility to our community".

There was a general perception of the present and past support of local agricultural products and local livelihoods through the GWN project’s activities as a highly meaningful component of the project that should be further strengthened. It was further agreed that the priority initiatives concerning water networks and wastewater infrastructures should see FoEME continues its support in GWN project’s future work, plan and strategy.

Almost all of the interviewees mentioned the high level of professionalism of the project’s staff – the local community coordinators, the project coordinators and FoEME's experts and managers. There was an agreement among the various stakeholders that their professionalism and commitment contributed greatly to achieving the project’s impact and that those efforts should be put into ensuring they will maintain their positions. The role of the communities’ coordinators was
emphasized, both for their commitment to the community and professionalism, and for their long standing work in the community, building and sustaining local ties and connections.

Finally, all the participants agreed on the need to continue working with the schools as it has a positive effect on the students. Consequently, these activities will leave a long-term impact on generations to come. A policy maker from the West Bethlehem Villages area confirmed: "The work with the youth is highly important, even more than the work with adults. They are the core of our society and our future leaders". Al-Auja’s former mayor noted: "The youth are those who activate the eco-center and they pass its importance to their friends".

**Results for theme 2**

The GWN has a positive impact, apparent on many levels:

1. There has been a positive change amongst the male and female students in the area of water, in terms of how to use it, transferring knowledge to other individuals in the community, and the cultural exchange between them and their peers in other regions both in Jordan and Israel.

2. The project allowed small, distanced communities to have their voice and needs heard and attended on the national and regional level.

3. The opportunity for Jordanian-Palestinian cross-border cooperation is meaningful. It is perceived by the various stakeholders as a tool to advance the cooperation with Israelis as well. A 16-year old female participant from Battir put it clearly: "It is important to keep building the ties between the Jordanian and the Palestinian people, because through that it would be possible to advance the cooperation with Israelis, even if on a more minor scale for now".

4. The current political situation is a challenge. However, most participants do not see it as a risk, but as a changing obstacle. A Palestinian decision-maker noted: "The political situation is a challenge – it makes the cross-border cooperation more difficult to realize. At times when the political situation is calmer, the GWN project clearly creates fruitful and useful cooperation".

5. Interviews with youth and adults from various Palestinian communities confirmed that the eco-center in Al-Auja sets an inspiring model for action.
Theme 3: Suggestions for developing the programs of the project concentrated on development initiatives.

Interviewees offered many suggestions for developing the scope of work, which were as follows:

- Evoking the cross-border activists group and cooperation between Wadi Fukin and Tzur Hadassah and assisting it with developing a new work plan; continuing with food and market festivals.
- At local schools – wastewater treatment facilities, compost stations, and community awareness raising campaigns initiated by the water trustees to allow them to put their newly gained knowledge into practice.
- For the youth – learning visits to other Palestinians communities, more outdoor activities, and more and longer cross-border camps that will allow: a. more students to participate, and b. deepening the relationships created at the camp. A 15-year old female water trustee said: "Two days (for a cross-border camp) is too short. You barely get to meet the people and then you have to leave. Adding another day will help me to establish the relationships, learn more about the other, get to know them, what they think about me and my situation".

Theme 4: Opportunities for creating neighborly relations between the three peoples and cross-border communities.

Most of the participants confirmed that there is a need to build neighborly relations between the three areas targeted in the project, and that is because there are shared interests connected with water sources and protection of groundwater and the environment. They noted that any of the proposed solutions cannot be implemented by individual regions/nations, nor in isolation from the other regions. This in turn motivates seeking a common way that will serve the interests of all sides.

Most of the interviews were conducted with people who have participated in conferences, workshops, and training programs, both inside and outside of Palestine. These interviews had a lot to do with environmental awareness, the protection and rehabilitation of water resources, solving the problems of water pollutants, the rationalization of the consumption, and the comprehension of the necessity in the joint work in order to achieve all of the above. There was a broad consensus that the cross-border activities raise awareness to the cross-border nature of the water issue. Moreover, they suggest themselves as effective examples for the possibility and feasibility to create the joint work. Almost all the interviewees perceive that dialog is important for creating close relationships
and understanding. A council member said: "The conference created a common language that we can speak together, the language of protecting the environment and each side's local interests".

The joint events and projects enabled knowledge exchange and consequently aided in solving local water problem in Palestine. The long-term effect of the joint venture was acknowledged, as well. A council member from Al-Auja noted: "Change is a difficult thing to achieve quickly, it needs to be gradually. Eventually, the conferences made people understand that Israel took our water away and that led to building water reservoirs".

**Theme 5: Quantitative results - positive trends and opinions of members and activists about the vision of environmental peace building.**

**Outcome 1: Percentage of participants who gain knowledge of shared water and environmental issues and their interdependent nature.**

The results show that 92% of the interviewees reported to have gained or have demonstrated an acquired knowledge of shared water and environmental issues and their interdependent nature. Furthermore, 92% noted that the inseparable connection between preservation of the environment and solving water problems is regional/cross-border in its nature.
Outcome 2: percentage of participants who understand the necessity to work together in order to protect their shared water resources.

81% of the beneficiaries understand the necessity to work together in order to protect their shared water resources. In fact, 79% of them find it impossible to protect shared water resources without working together. From the 81% who understand the necessity, 100% are adults and/or youth who participated in cross-border events. The other 19% mostly showed political skepticism. They understand the need, but are skeptical about the possibility of such cooperation to take place under the current circumstances. Most of them agreed there is a need to protect shared water sources unilaterally, until the political situation ripens for cross-border cooperation and stated it as the reason for their continual participation in GWN.

Outcome 3: percentage of participants who demonstrate a more positive attitude towards their neighbors across the border.

The study examined the following parameters:

4. The interviewees' willingness to create/sustain cross-border personal (for the youth and activists) and professional (for decision-makers and experts) relationships.

5. Their disposition towards hosting in their community members from cross-border communities

6. Their preparedness to be activists in the water and environment domain, in cooperation with their colleagues from across the border.
85% of the beneficiaries demonstrated a more positive attitude towards their neighbors across the border. The highest preference (100%) was the willingness to create/sustain cross-border personal and professional relationships. 89% noted perceiving the other as a partner for cross-border activism and a joint professional cooperation and 66% demonstrated a positive disposition towards hosting in their community members from cross-border communities.

Results for theme 5:

It is noted in the charts above that there is a high degree of awareness to the importance of addressing the polluted water matter, an issue which cannot be separated from addressing the problems of the environment. In addition, the protection of water sources needs to be carried out by the cooperation of the three regions (Jordan, Palestine, Israel), escorted with the desire to participate in joint encounters on an ongoing basis, in order to seek ways to reach solutions, which will solve the water and environmental problems exposed to each region. Finally, there is a positive perception and attitude towards neighbors across the border, whether as friends, as partners or as environmental activists.

Recommendations

The sub chapters above include various specific recommendations. We highlight here a few general recommendations:

1. Many interviewees perceive the current political situation, even before the last war in Gaza, as a challenge to Israeli-Palestinian cross-border environmental cooperation. There are two
opportunities to overcome this challenge as showed in the study results and in the organization’s structure.

- The first is the opportunity to establish strong cross-border ties between Palestinian and Jordanian communities, side by side the ties established with Israeli communities.
- The second is the strongly evidential understanding of the necessity of joining forces in order to protect shared water and environmental resources. It creates an ethos which is accompanied by a strong desire to do that unilaterally until the situation allows for bi-lateral efforts to come into effect.

2. Following the broad consensus regarding the Al-Auja’s eco-center impact and its perception as an inspiring work model in other communities, many expressed the desire for such a center to be built in their own community for the benefits it brings with it. We would highlight that as an opportunity for future GWN’s strategic planning; to consider duplicating similar initiatives in the other GWN communities. We see it as an opportunity to strengthen the GWN stronghold in the communities, as a byproduct as well.

3. While the work with youth at the Al-Auja’s eco-center involves mixed-gender groups, the Water Trustees group contains boys only. The coordinator noted it was a conservative community which families prefer a female facilitator to work with an all-girl group of Water Trustees. In Battir, the work with the youth targets only girls, as GWN works in a girls-only school.

- We recommend FoEME to consider raising/allocating the necessary funds to allow the eco-center’s female facilitator in Al-Auja to establish a girls-only water trustees group there, and to open another water trustees group in Battir’s boys' school.
- We see the eco-museum in Battir as an opportunity in this respect. It is worthwhile checking the option to open a boys group there in after-schools hours.

6. The GWN Jordanian Communities

A brief about the two-year study’s research communities from Jordan

Al-Hemma – The municipality of Khalid Bin Al-Walid lies in the northern part of Jordan, 25 km from the city of Irbid. The municipality’s area covers 33,947,000 sq. meters, and has the population of 21,232 people. It overlooks the Sea of Galilee / Lake Tiberius and the hills of Golan. Its natural environment is rich with olive and forest trees and is considered as a distinguished touristic area in Jordan which attracts tourists all year round. The community of Al-Hemma has identified the need for a waste water sanitation solution for the GWN’s communities in Jordan as its "Priority Project".
**South Shouna** – The district of southern Shouna, approximately 30 km from Amman, includes the areas of Rama, Rawda, Joufa, Nahda, Karama, Kafraim, and New Shouna. It is situated in the Ghour area and considered the lowest area on earth! Its proximity to the Dead Sea makes it an attraction for tourists. The area is also known for its agricultural produce of citrus and banana trees. The community of South Shouna has identified the need for a waste water sanitation solution for the GWN’s communities in Jordan as its "Priority Project”.

**Tabkat Fahal** – is a medium sized cluster of towns and villages, in total of approximately 25,000 residents. The northern Jordanian/Israeli border crossing is located in this area. Tabkat Fahal’s main water resources for agriculture are the King Abdullah Canal, the Ziglab dam, and the Wadi al-Arab dam. The main source of drinking water is the Wadi Al-Arab well, and water is pumped directly to a reservoir in North Shuneh. The Tabkat Fahal communities have identified the following areas as those with urgent environmental concern: Lack of parks and open spaces; No municipality wide sewage network and treatment facilities; No industrial zoning; Poor agricultural practices; High traffic density; The pollution of the Jordan (and the Yarmouk) rivers.

**Ghour Al Safi** – The municipality is located in the Jordan valley of Jordan. The population is nearly 40,000 as the majority of the people work in the agricultural sector. This area is known for its agricultural products, especially tomatoes. The main water resources come from the Al-Mujib dam and springs including Al Karak spring, Al-Hesa spring, Wadi Bani Hammad spring, Al-Numaira spring, Faifa spring and Al-Naqe spring. The project involves stakeholders from three communities: Ghour Safi, Ghour Maazra’a and Ghour Haditheh . Among the main water issues are water scarcity, lack of wastewater infrastructures, the need to advance an economic use of water in agriculture, the receding water of the Dead Sea and house fly infestation.

**Analysis of the results**

**Theme 1: The range of alignment between the objectives of GWN and the needs of the local communities.**

**Outcome 1: The direction of the project towards working in the areas of water and the environment are the most important reasons for joining it.**

In their interviews, the representatives of local NGOs, community activists and beneficiaries of the GWN project in Al-Hemma and Tabkat Fahal stated that one of the most important reasons that led them to participate in the project is the link between the name of the organization -- Friends of the Earth -- with the earth and the environment. The Jordanian communities are mostly agricultural and
serve as a home for citizens interested in the cultivation of the land. Furthermore, their area is characterized with a landscape of springs and mineral waters, a feature they could economically benefit from by investing in environmental tourism projects.

Moreover, one of the interviewees expressed the reason for his desire to work with FoEME by saying: “I desire to be in Friends of the Earth because the land is my life”. Most of the interviewees pointed to their personal relationship with the community coordinator as a motivating factor in engaging with GWN’s activities. Others mentioned that by witnessing the activities of the project and its contribution to their community, including the workshops for raising the awareness, the practical help, and the educational and environmental programs offered to the community it provoked the desire within them to become members in the project.

Moreover, in the area of South Shouna and South Ghour, the participants indicated in their interviews that it was their passion for the land and their interest in agriculture that led them to take an active role in GWN’s activities, as well as their good personal relationship with the community coordinator. One of them mentioned that she became an activist of water and environmental issues because it affects the lives of the residents in the area of South Shouna; therefore she was willing to work with the NGO in these areas. Thus the researchers find that the main goals for joining the project were focused on identifying how to optimize water usage, ways to rationalize water usage, how to exploit wastewater, and how to protect the environment from pollution. However, a small number of participants pointed out that there were some reservations about working with FoEME due to political considerations, as it works with three areas jointly, namely Jordan, Israel and Palestine. They stated that this is a challenge the project faces and that the project deals with it by long-term, deep trust-building that is constantly maintained by the community coordinators.

The school principles that were visited agreed that the most important reason for their desire to participate in the activities of GWN was the positive results of the project’s activities in schools. That is what appealed to them, because it works to encourage the students to take an interest in the land and agriculture, to handle water problems rationally and wisely, and to raise awareness of the importance of protecting the environment among other students. Several schools in Jordan were listed as Green Schools accredited by the Jordanian Ministry of the Environment as a result of their involvement in the project.

The municipality mayor of Khalid bin Al-Walid mentioned that at first he was not aware personally of the project’s activities except through his relationship with the project’s coordinator who had introduced him in the beginning to the NGO and its objectives. It was by the reciprocal visits with members of FoEME that he got to know them better and develop his relationship with the project by
participating in a number of GWN’s conferences and workshops, both inside and outside of Jordan. He also believes that the anticipated goals of FoEME must be tied to the name of the NGO, “to be a friend of the earth”, as it seeks to protect the land, both in the water sector, and in the environment in general.

**Outcome 2: Compatibility and alignment between the objectives of the project and the aspirations and interests of local community members.**

It is clear that the most important objectives of those interviewed were the desire for knowledge of the issues related to the environment and finding possible solutions for the problems of water shortage and pollution, since the targeted areas suffer greatly from environmental problems such as pollution of water sources, and especially of groundwater and springs. Also, from the interviews in Al-Hemma and Tabkat Fahal it was made clear that the areas in which FoEME works are border areas and therefore politically characterized, what makes the work with the NGO inevitable for the benefit of the area as a whole. There are water sources shared between Jordan, Israel and Palestine, and suitable solutions cannot be reached except through the cooperation of all parties.

The youth were unanimous that the most important goal of the project, in their view, is the preservation of the environment and conservation of water. They noted that through the activities in which they had participated, through lectures, workshops, or camps, the desired outcomes were achieved by creating awareness of the importance of maintaining the cleanliness of the environment and the rationalization of water consumption, both locally and through cross-border cooperation. This, in addition to the deployment of GWN’s initiatives pertaining to gray water in residents’ farms. The eco-facility in Muaz Bin Jabal and eco-garden in South Shouna were noted by the youth in all 4 communities as examples for the GWN’s contribution to their communities, as they suggest a site for eco-education, just as much as answering the communities’ needs for parks and open green spaces.

Interviews with participants from the Jordanian communities indicated that their desired goals were adequately aligned and compatible with the goals of the project, and there was not any difference at this level of objectives. They also commended all the efforts undertaken by FoEME in the fields of conducting feasibility studies, research, workshops, conferences, and small projects such as gray water, groundwater protection, and other issues.

However, at the level of activities there were a number of observations, in their view, where they agreed that GWN and FoEME must undertake priority initiatives with greater on-the-ground impact. In the words of one: “Tangible on the ground”, i.e. that FoEME is still not meeting expectations. The phrase “we want something tangible” was mentioned, and another said: “We have not seen a real project yet”. This, in the sense that they still think it is necessary to establish a program or a project
that would lead to producing solutions to daily problems pertaining to sanitation, septic tanks, lack of potable water, uncovered drainage channels, and other issues that they consider a priority for them.

An issue of concern here is that though the project did leverage funding for projects on the ground, such as the building of a new wastewater treatment plant in North Shouna, since much of the effort was behind the scenes, FoEME did not receive nor look for the recognition.

**Outcome 3: Effective reflection upon project’s objectives for the target groups.**

The participants stated that there were positive effects reflected on all the beneficiaries, at a number of levels. On a personal level, the participants agreed in their in-depth interviews that there was a qualitative addition to their personal lives, both in terms of practical experience, and on the level of life skills. For example, they undertook training courses in communication skills, expressing opinions, analysis, debating, and how to raise issues in a scientific manner.

The school principals that were visited confirmed that the objectives of GWN had a clear impact on the students which were achieved through raising their awareness of the importance of, and how to implement, water rationalization. This was achieved through the outdoor activities at the eco-parks from which students then transferred their experience to their homes and farms. They confirmed that students had a high degree of enthusiasm and interest in the activities of the project in the school, in addition to highlighting the effectiveness and relevancy of the educational guide, and the extracurricular experiential methods in transferring information. However, the principal of the school in Al-Hemma indicated that the work has halted there (at the school, not at the community) until a letter of permission is obtained from the Ministry of Education for its formal adoption at the school.

The youth noted being highly aware of the ways the environment can be protected and water problems solved. They confirmed learning the importance of jointly working across the border to protect shared water sources and the capacities necessary to create such cooperation and joint cross-border efforts. They also reported gaining practical capacities of recycling, reusing and saving water and environmentally sound agricultural methods. For example, one of the participants said that he learned a method to save water for agricultural use and then taught it to his father.

Following their participation, the water trustees have become agents of change and have stated they now have a role in raising the awareness and sharing the knowledge with other members of their communities on shared water sources and joint efforts for protecting them. Furthermore, they see themselves taking an active voluntary role in advancing practical solutions for water problems,
protecting natural resources and creating a change in the reality of their communities for the sake of future generations.

The municipalities’ mayors mentioned that the efforts expended were great and led to raising awareness of the importance of environmental issues which harm the communities, and that there are clear areas for cooperation between the municipalities and FoEME in order to achieve the common goal of environmental and water protection.

**Results for theme 1:**

1. The clarity of GWN’s objectives, and their alignment with the hoped-for objectives of the members of the local community, demonstrates that there is a close relationship between the programs and the project’s activities, and the objectives that were agreed by all parties. Consequently this high level of relevancy to local needs and objectives are reflected in effective strategic plans helping to bring about the desired impact.

2. Objectives have been achieved at the level of raising awareness and building knowledge about the most important environmental issues faced by the target areas and the inseparable connection between them and the treatment of water problems. This led to forming a collective consciousness concerning the importance of working jointly with the other regions (Israel and Palestine) in order to solve the problems from which they suffer. It then led the beneficiaries to act as agents of change in their community.

3. However, in terms of modifying disposition of community members and the building of positive attitudes, there is a need remained that was stated by most of the interviewees to strengthen this aspect through the implementation of priority projects, which serve the region and work towards presenting radical solutions. Such as solving the problems of open channels, the provision of safe drinking water, and benefiting from waste water that comes from rain and rivers, and advancing sanitation solutions which would work towards raising the quality of life for the greater community.

**Theme 2: The feasibility of the projects and initiatives participated in.**

**Outcome 1: Benefiting from initiatives and community-based projects that have seen implementation.**

Participants in both communities stressed that the projects implemented by FoEME are beneficial to the local community, and that many of the activities conducted have worked to raise the level of consciousness and knowledge of the importance of preserving water sources and the rationalization of its use, in addition to highlighting all the environmental issues related to pollution, etc.
The importance of field tours (Neighbors Path), which were very well received by the participants, where areas have been identified in Jordan that they had not previously heard of, or about which they did not know anything. They further led to suggesting environmental tourism options that addresses local development needs.

One of those interviewed mentioned his experience with the gray water project, and how benefit was gained from water used for cleaning. Instead of wastefully transferring it into septic tanks, it is now used for irrigating residential gardens. One of the activists mentioned her participation in the gray-water project at her home, by the utilization of drinking and air conditioning water at home for watering the crops around the house. According to her, this idea spreads amongst many of the farmers in the area. This is in addition to the confirmation from another activist that many have benefited from this project when she and her husband implemented it in their farm.

One of the participants of the groundwater protection project noted that his participation in training for the project was very important both at the informational level and at the skill that have been gained, especially as he works in the local municipality and it can help him find possible solutions to the environmental problems from which the area suffers. He did indicate that there is an external challenge in transferring knowledge in the community. He said that there are instructions for the design of septic tanks to international standards, but the municipality does not follow them when it grants building permits. This is due to economic circumstances that do not allow people to bear the costs of building septic tanks surrounded by a concrete wall according to the specifications and standards, which would ensure protection from ground leakage. Furthermore, the cost of renting a waste tanker every three months constitutes an additional burden on the residents.

The participants agreed that FoEME is exerting great efforts in the areas of study and research connected to water and environmental issues in general. One of the outcomes of these studies was the promotion of wastewater treatment plants and water and sewage network all across the Jordan Valley communities. In their interviews, participants indicated their involvement in the process of waste recycling, including the utilization of car tires, using them to decorate the entrances, both to the farms and the homes, and using them to make seats to sit on.

A number of initiatives undertaken by schools have emerged about the cleanliness of the school and its surrounding areas, and the participation in clean-up campaigns in many areas. This is in addition to working on recycling where, for one example, the Al-Hemma elementary school uses cardboard potato-chip boxes as waste-baskets, ballot boxes, and boxes to collect the left-over bread form the students’ sandwiches.
The youth reported learning about their power and capacity to initiate actual change in their community. They felt gaining personal empowerment and it motivated them to do community volunteer work. For example, one participant said: "Participating in the project helped me to develop personally, change my attitudes and become a better person".

The deep and ongoing educational work on raising awareness to environmental and water issues and the cross-border youth camps resulted in learning about the other and breaking stereotypes, side by side with environmental activism and building future local leaderships.

**Outcome 2: The need for sustainability in the community-based projects and activities carried out by the GWN project.**

All the participants agreed on the need to continue working with the schools as it has a positive effect on the students, especially because Jordanian is a youthful society in need for informal environmental and leadership extra-curriculum activities. Consequently, these activities will leave a long-term impact on generations to come, with an emphasis on the importance of developing this program through introducing the educational guide book, and a broadening of the trial to a greater number of schools, which will be for the benefit of all.

The participants also pointed on the concern for the school eco-facilities that have proved to be successful on a school level, with concepts relating to the land and caring for it, being planted among other students. This has included how to take responsibility for the parks’ care and preservation, in addition to suggestions for their development through a diversity of plants to be cultivated, such as medicinal herbs and palm trees for sale in order to cover the costs of the parks’ development, and for it to become a productive garden, generating income for the school.

At the municipal level, the eco parks have become a venue for national and international eco-tourism, they supply job opportunities and they have an integral part in promoting adult environmental education. In turn, they assist in drafting local support for GWN and FoEME’s work on other projects.

- The owners of the gray water project in the area of AL-Hemma also noted that the project could be advanced through the installation of filters or by placing pieces of sponge at the bottom of the tanks in order to collect solid waste and dispose it, thereby ensuring the water pump remains free of particles.

With regard to groundwater protection, it has been shown that there are challenges that cannot be solved except through radical solutions in cooperation with the municipalities:
• One respondent suggested coordination with the municipality in order to cover the costs of building proper septic tanks, and the recourse to payment by installments or by the provision of part-financing, so that the citizen can afford the financial costs involved with this.

• Others also noted the need to allocate the necessary funds to realize the proposed solutions for the open waste channels that were identified through research and feasibility studies.

The school principals confirmed the importance of continuing the environmental cross-border camps and awareness workshops, noticing that the students have a high level of knowledge and awareness of their responsibility towards the environment.

Both male and female students confirmed the need to hold the camps and undertake the various activities, which are beneficial and have a positive impact on the students’ characters, as does the information they absorb and the experience they gain during the meetings with students from different regions.

**Results for theme 2**

1. There has been a positive change amongst the male and female students in the terms of water, how to use it, the transfer of knowledge to other individuals in the community, and the cultural exchange between them and their peers in other regions both in Palestine and Israel.

2. There are economic challenges faced by the region (Jordan Valley) that form an obstacle to residents improving their living situation and taking the initiative in effecting change. This is in addition to the political circumstances that the region is experiencing, and the resulting crises at the social, economic and political levels.

3. Another challenge is partial awareness to the importance of the project’s initiatives by the schools’ administration. For example, in the area of Al-Hemma there is an inability on the part of the teacher responsible for the school garden in respect of her duties towards the eco-garden because she works as a support teacher (part time only). Furthermore, the eco-garden at the boys’ school has suffered damage due to the absence of the school guard and the lack of sufficient importance given from the school administration.

**Theme 3: Suggestions for developing the programs of GWN concentrated on development initiatives.**

Interviewees offered many suggestions for developing the scope of work, which were as follows:
✓ Provision of a large water tank linked with already existing water networks in that area, thus providing the area with water for drinking and agriculture, as the residents of the area, which lies at the top of Al-Hemma, are not able to access drinking water.

✓ Finding a way with the municipality in order to ensure the building of septic tanks according to the correct specifications and standards, and in a way that can be realized by the community members by paying in appropriate installments or through the provision of payment facilities. This will then limit the pollution caused by septic tanks.

✓ Using more space in the school's eco-facility.

✓ Addressing the issue of groundwater contamination that is caused by improperly built septic tanks by choosing of five homes, for example, and providing part-financing to build septic tanks and cover their periodic emptying.

✓ Working on the distribution of garbage dumpsters to the municipalities as there is a lack of capacity among them and they are unable to provide dumpsters and compressors necessary to get rid of the waste.

✓ Develop techniques to attract participants to attend events and activities of the project through a token honorarium, an in-kind gift, or by involving them in the events.

✓ Convert the school eco-facilities to productive projects specializing in the sale of aromatic and medicinal herbs in order to ensure the sustainability of the project.

Theme 4: Opportunities for creating neighborly relations between the three peoples and cross-border communities.

Most of the participants confirmed that there is a need to build neighborly relations between the three areas targeted in the project, and this is because there are shared interests connected with water resources and protection of underground water and the environment, in general. They noted that any of the proposed solutions cannot be implemented by individual regions/nations, nor in isolation from the other regions which in turn force the reality of seeking a common way, serving the interests of all sides.

Interviews were conducted with people who have participated in cross-border conferences, workshops, and training programs, both inside and outside of Jordan. They dealt with, variously, environmental awareness, the protection of ground water sources, water pollution, and the rationalization of consumption, etc. There was a broad consensus among interviewees that the cross-border activities raise awareness to the tri-lateral nature of the need to protect regional water
sources as much as suggest themselves as effective examples for the possibility to jointly work together. It was agreed that establishing cooperation over a common subject – water – can create a common ground and advance conflict prevention and resolution. One of the water trustees noted: "Mutual understanding of the unjust water distribution through joint activities and dialog can lead to a more just distribution of water resources according to needs".

**Theme 5: Quantitative results - positive trends and opinions of members and activists about the vision of environmental peace building**

**Outcome 1: Percentage of participants who gain knowledge of shared water and environmental issues and their interdependent nature.**

The results show that 93% of the interviewees reported to have gained or have demonstrated an acquired knowledge of shared water and environmental issues and their interdependent nature. Furthermore, 77% confirmed that the inseparable connection between preservation of the environment and solving water problems is regional/cross-border in its nature.
Outcome 2: Percentage of participants who understand the necessity to work together in order to protect their shared water sources.

90% of the beneficiaries understand the necessity of working together in order to protect their shared water sources. In fact, 56% hold that it is impossible to protect shared water resources without working together, while only 39% believe it is possible to do that; most of the 39% noted the external political challenges as an explanation for their attitude. Adding that until these challenges are dealt with there is still a pressing need to protect shared water resources by any available means.

Outcome 3: Percentage of participants who demonstrate a more positive attitude towards their neighbors across the border

The study examined the following parameters:

1. The interviewees’ willingness to create/sustain cross-border personal (for the youth and activists) and professional (for decision-makers and experts) relationships.
2. Their disposition towards hosting members from cross-border communities in their community.
3. Their preparedness to be an activist in the fields of water and the environment in cooperation with their colleagues from across the border.
87% of the beneficiaries demonstrated a more positive attitude towards their neighbors across the border. The highest preference was towards perceiving the other as a partner for cross-border activism (92%). 89% noted their willingness to create/sustain cross-border personal and professional relationships and 79% demonstrated a positive disposition towards hosting in their community members from cross-border communities.

Results for theme 5:

It is noted in the charts that there is a high degree of awareness that addresses the issue of polluted water that cannot be separated from addressing the problems of the environment. In addition, the protection of water sources has to be carried out by cooperation between the three regions (Jordan, Palestine, Israel), with the desire to participate in shared encounters on an ongoing basis, in order to seek ways to reach solutions to solve the water and environmental problems which the regions are exposed to. Finally, there is a positive perception of the neighbors across the border, whether as friends, as partners or as environmental activists.

The relatively lower percentage of readiness to host in their community members from cross-border communities characterizes mainly the disposition of youth water trustees who did not participate in cross-border youth camps. It manifests a reoccurring hesitation expressed by youth from all the communities in varying degrees.
Recommendations

The sub chapters above include various specific recommendations. The researchers would like to highlight here the eco-parks, eco-facilities and eco-gardens as a significant opportunity for future activities in other communities. We found that the existence and ongoing activities of the eco-parks, eco-facilities and eco-gardens deepens the communities’ commitment to the project and its objectives even in the most difficult times. Interviews with youth and adults from various Jordanian communities confirm that the eco-parks set an inspiring model. Many expressed a desire that such ecological centers/parks will be built in their communities.

7. The GWN Israeli Communities

A brief about the two-year study's research communities from Israel

**Emek Hefer** is a regional municipality with a jurisdiction of 130,000 dunams, of which 80,000 are agricultural, irrigated, and cultivated. The municipality is comprised of 37,000 residents. Agriculture and small factories are the main industries. The Alexander/Schem River flows through the middle of the region, and suffers from pollution due to domestic, agricultural, and industrial sources. The residents of the Emek Hefer Regional Council have identified three primary environmental issues that have a direct and dangerous impact on ground water resources: Untreated wastewater disposal in Nablus and Alexander Rivers, untreated solid waste dumping and mosquito outbreaks.

**Mateh Yehuda** is a regional council in the Jerusalem District of Israel. It spans 520,000 dunams and stretches from Jerusalem, in the east, to the coastal plains in the west. The council contains 57 municipalities. The residents’ occupational profile has undergone through many changes from dealing primarily in agriculture to newer realms such as tourism, organic farming, and sophisticated industries. Recently, Tzur Hadassah and the wider area of the Mateh Yehuda Regional Council, together with their partnering community of Wadi Fukin and the West Bethlehem Villages identified two "Priority Projects", namely Cross-Border Preservation of Terraced Landscapes, including protection of their own springs, and Advancing Sanitation Solutions in West Bethlehem Villages.

**The Jordan Valley Regional Council** consists of numerous rural communities on both sides of the Jordan River. Large projects in which environmental impacts were not fully considered include the Degania Dam at the river mouth of the Sea of Galilee and the Israel National Water Carrier, all leading to the diversion of waters from the Jordan River and the redirection of saline springs into the River. Community members have identified the following obstacles and challenges as urgent...
concerns: 1) Fresh water diversion; 2) Untreated or partially treated sewage discharged into the Jordan River; 3) Lack of access to the Jordan River. The new wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) near the Alumot Dam mitigates the amount of pollution flowing into the Jordan River. A future planned desalination plant will also be established on the site in order to desalinate saline waters from the National Water Carrier that now flow into the river.

Analysis of the results

Theme 1: The range of alignment between the objectives of GWN and the needs of the local communities.

Outcome 1: The direction of the project towards creating cross-border cooperation around jointly addressing water and environmental issues and promoting good neighborly relations with cross-border communities are the most important reasons for joining it.

Interviews conducted with representatives of local NGOs, local community activists, local decision makers and council members and beneficiaries of FoEME in Mateh Yehuda, Emek Hefer and the Jordan Valley communities show that there are two interrelated reasons for participating in the GWN project since its initiation. They are: 1. the focus on raising the awareness to environmental issues and advancing the rehabilitation and protection of water resources, which go hand in hand with the strong environmental agenda of these communities, and 2. the GWN project's objective of creating professional, personal and activist cross-border relationships and advocating tri-lateral co-existence and cooperation. It was confirmed by all that the second is a unique feature that GWN offers in comparison to other environmental projects that operate in these communities.

Emek Hefer is the leading municipality on environmental issues in Israel. The Mayor of Emek Hefer stated that the interdependency of the two reasons mentioned above is the reason why his council cooperates with GWN for more than 8 years now and wishes to continue doing so for many years to come.

Mateh Yehuda is the largest environmental unit/area in central Israel. The managers of the local environmental unit and of the national environmental authorities working in the area agreed that the protection of ground water is a pressing need for the area, which GWN highlights. The manager of the local environmental unit stressed that FoEME’s strategy of combining bottom-up and top-down work is an effective and unique feature of GWN.

All the interviewees agreed that establishing neighborly relations with the Palestinian communities is crucial. The schoolteachers and those in charge of the education departments at the local councils
perceive the GWN project positively for its focus on raising the awareness to environmental issues and leadership and activism skills, and no less, perhaps even more, for its objectives of creating good neighborly relationships and co-existence. It was clear that the integration of both was an asset in their minds.

The youth in all the communities stressed the opportunity to engage in a dialog with the Palestinian and the Jordanian youth on water and environmental issues, to get to know them, learn about their lives and introduce their own lives and culture. They evenly noted the ability to learn about the area that they themselves live at, in general, and the opportunity to learn about water hazards and local environmental issues and how to act about them, in particular, as reasons to take part in the project.

**Outcome 2: Compatibility and alignment between the objectives of the organization and the aspirations and interests of local community members.**

It is clear that the most important objectives identified by those interviewed were the desire for finding applicable solutions for the problems of water pollution and for creating personal, professional and activist cross-border relations.

One of the main challenges that the municipality of Emek Hefer faces are home and industrial pollutants originating from the untreated wastewater of the neighboring Palestinian municipalities. They pollute the streams, groundwater and agricultural lands of Emek Hefer. In order to protect them, the council needs to work together with the neighboring municipalities across the green line. For them, the project’s focus on creating cross-border professional working relations between local municipalities on these issues is highly relevant for this pressing need. The mayor and deputy mayor stated: "There are dozens of 'green' organizations that want to work with us. FoEME proposed something unique – monitoring water hazards through cooperation with the other side. The GWN uses the language of cooperation which is a language that the municipally wants to speak. This is why FoEME is one of our focal partners on the educational and environmental aspects".

In Mateh Yehuda, the managers of the local environmental unit and of the national environmental authorities working in the area all agreed that the rehabilitation of springs and the protection of groundwater are a pressing need of the area that GWN highlights.

The interviewees, whether adult or youth, agreed that establishing neighborly relations with the neighboring communities is an interest, a desire or a pressing need. For the activists from Tzur Hadassah in the Mateh Yehuda area, who have been involved with the project for more than 10 years that was the main motivation - to establish a cross-border dialog and to find ways to support their Palestinian neighbors' rights and livelihoods. They confirmed that the project’s involvement with the neighboring community of Wadi Fukin, and FoEME’s involvement in the legal struggle
against the separation wall and the villages' land rights, were highly relevant to their aspirations. Moreover, they found the water narrative that GWN suggested for cross-border dialog as an effective tool to realize their goals.

The interviews with educators, mayors, municipality members and activists confirmed the relevancy and importance of the educational work done through the project. Environmental awareness and activism and the interaction with youth from across the border correspond to a community interest of developing future environmental leadership leaning towards peace and cooperation.

The stakeholders noted that some of the project's goals, like the GIS project or the Neighbors' Path, are to some extent less relevant to the communities' needs. The municipalities and water authorities in Mateh Yehuda and Emek Hefer see themselves as leaders of the environmental agenda and as those who already have systems in place in that respect. With that, they see these project's goals as potential opportunities. I.e, the birds park priority initiative in Emek Hefer is seen as a potential touristic attraction and the GIS and Neighbors' Paths projects as a potential strong educational tool in all three communities.

To conclude, interviewees in the three communities indicated that their desired goals were aligned and compatible with the goals of the project. They also commended all the efforts undertaken by FoEME in the fields of feasibility studies and research, workshops, conferences, and projects such as the rehabilitation of springs and streams and small projects like eco-facilities and gardens and grey water units at schools. Finally, they stressed the high relevancy and uniqueness of the cross border component to their aspirations.

**Outcome 3: Effective reflection upon organization’s objectives for the target groups**

Analysis of the in-depth interviews clearly indicates that GWN's activity is comprehensive in such a way that allows for a wide range of people and groups with various interests to take part in it without having a negative effect on its realization. There is room for social change, environmental and peace activists, environmental authorities, mayors and council members, schools and education units and to some degree national authorities.

There were positive effects reflected on all the beneficiaries, on a number of levels. At a personal level, the participants agreed that there was a qualitative addition to their personal lives, both in terms of practical experience, and in the ability to realize their personal goals and desires related to either peace building, the environment, or both. They value greatly the personal and professional contacts established through the project, both locally, with stakeholders from other Israeli communities and unilaterally with stakeholders from Palestine and Jordan.
All those involved with the Springs Forum in Mateh Yehuda agreed that its importance lays in its very existence and the way it works. The forum was established under the same work model and strategy that FoEME and GWN apply for cross-border cooperation: bringing in together relevant local and national stakeholders to cooperate in order to achieve a concrete goal; in this case, the rehabilitation of local springs as part of the effort to protect groundwater. In their interviews, all those involved agreed that the forum's activity brought the subject into the public eye, both on the residents and on the local municipalities’ levels. It drew the attention of decision-makers and the forums objectives became a part of their Agenda. Moreover, the interviewees highly valued the professional and personal ties that were created between the forum members.

The interviewees found the environmental dialog to be an effective common ground that allowed for citizens, policy makers and youth to act and make a change in their respective realities even in light of the grave political situation. An activist from Tzur Hadasa, an employee at the local environmental unit from Mated Yehuda, and a schoolteacher from Emek Hefer reflected on their experiences and involvement with various other co-existence initiatives. They highlighted in their interviews that FoEME's approach to the dialog suggested something unique and different. They agreed that it lets "people get to know each other but also have a common ground, a common language to talk about actual problems that everybody faces. It is a practical approach of working together to solve concrete problems and supporting local interests." An activist from Emek Hefer added, "It (water dialog) is one of the very few remaining channels left for cross-border dialog that assist in breaking stereotypes and reducing hate that I know of".

One of the managers of a local water authority shared that he spreads the message when he meets managers from other local authorities from all over Israel. Another interviewee proudly shared his success in involving the mayor of Beit Shemesh, a city that resides in Mateh Yehuda and is characterized as mostly right wing, with GWN’s activities.

The community coordinators are invited to actively participate at the relevant committees in their local municipalities. They have become part of the local decision-making process, now influenced greatly by the GWN’s narrative about water and cross-border cooperation.

Following their participation in the project, the youth reported seeing their role in communicating their gained knowledge about the water problem and its solutions to their peers and other family and community members. Furthermore, they see themselves actively responsible for addressing the problems of water pollutants and water conservation. Together with their teachers, they noted the effectiveness and relevancy of the educational guide and program, and specifically the extracurricular experiential methods in transferring information.
All agreed that the stalemate political realities are a challenge for the realization of the GWN’s goals, mainly on the municipal level. Their interviews show that GWN’s activities managed to create deep, effective and strong informal professional cross-border ties and relationships between mayors, council members, employees of local authorities and activists. GWN created a common language that everybody uses now, and assisted in identifying shared interests, goals and paths for joint actions. The main challenge identified lies in the difficulty to realize these ties and relations by transforming them into the formal level, into a formal working relation between neighboring municipalities, due to the political realities.

The strategy chosen to deal with this challenge, as presented in the interviews, is that each side continues to work as much as possible on solving shared water problems locally, while waiting until the political circumstances change. For example, the parallel wastewater treatment plants projects in Emek Hefer and Nablus, or the parallel groundwater protection efforts in Mateh Yehuda and West Bethlehem area.

While identified as a weakness, this situation was perceived as an opportunity, as well. Emek Hefer's mayor noted, for example: "We are happy that FoEME exists for their optimism, and mainly because they preserve the cross-border relations and ties. We trust that in the future it will create a momentum when the political situation ripens. The infrastructure for joint work, based on the existing good informal relations, will already be in place".

Results for theme 1:

1. The clarity of GWN’s objectives, and their alignment with the hoped-for objectives of the members of the local stakeholders and beneficiaries, demonstrates that there is a close relationship between the programs and project activities, and the objectives, agreed by all parties. Consequently, the effective strategic plans helping to bring about the desired impact reflect the high level of relevancy to local needs and objectives.

2. Objectives have been achieved at the level of raising awareness and building knowledge about the most important environmental issues faced by the target areas and the inseparable connection between them and the treatment of water problems. This led to forming a collective consciousness concerning the importance of working jointly with the other regions (Jordan and Palestine) in order to solve the problems from which they suffer. This collective consciousness led the beneficiaries to act as agents of change in their communities, to support the project and to advance the narrative of environmental peace-making.

3. All of the above led to active, on-the-ground, local and cross-border initiatives, actions and projects to realize the project's goals and the fruits of the awareness raising efforts.
4. The main challenges of the GWN project’s work with the Israeli communities are the external
difficulties posed by the political situation and the lack of relevancy of some of the environmental
goals of the project as it works in some of the more environmentally aware communities in Israel.

5. In the face of the general despair concerning the feasibility of cross-border Israeli-Palestinian
cooperation, the results from the interviews are unequivocal. There is a common understanding
demonstrated about the necessity to protect shared water resources through joint cross-border
cooperation. Until the political situation allows the realization of the agreed upon necessity, the
commitment to do so unilaterally is explicit, as much as the commitment for sustaining the existing
cross-border ties and relationships.

**Theme 2: The feasibility of the projects and initiatives participated in.**

**Outcome 1: Benefiting from initiatives and community-based projects that have
seen implementation.**

Participants from the Israeli GWN communities stressed that the initiatives implemented by the
project were beneficial to the local community and that the cross-border initiatives managed to
establish good neighborly relationships. The activities conducted through the project have worked to
raise the level of consciousness and knowledge of the importance of rehabilitating and protecting
water sources, the rationalization of water use, and the necessity to create inter-community and
cross-border cooperation in order to protect shared water resources.

The following list of initiatives reflects the impact and contribution of GWN to the Israeli
communities, as presented in the Interviews with the local beneficiaries and stakeholders:

- The springs’ rehabilitation project, which included the establishment of the spring’s forum,
conducting study surveys and creating a work plan for the rehabilitation of three springs in
the Mateh Yehuda region. The project included a component of involving the local residents.
All the interviewees noted it as a focal point of the project’s contribution to the community.
- Raising awareness to water and environmental issues among youth and adults, as much as
to gaining knowledge on the situation at the neighboring communities and creating a more
positive perception of the other.
- Development of environmental tourism in the area through the Neighbors’ Paths, the
rehabilitation of springs, the birds park initiative in Emek Hefer, and the cross-border
touristic initiative between Mateh Yehuda and Battir.
• The Tzur Hadassah and Wadi Fukin's joint vegetables project created personal and economic ties "and a positive effect that both communities enjoyed".

• The promotion of wastewater treatment plants in all the Israeli communities.

• The deep and ongoing educational work on raising awareness to environmental and water issues and the cross-border youth camps resulted in learning about the other and breaking stereotypes, side by side with environmental activism and building future local leadership.

• Small projects at the schools included ecological gardens, rainwater harvesting systems, recycling projects and eco-facilities. The school in Emek Hefer received the ministry of education standards association stamp as a "green school" thanks to these eco-facilities that the GWN initiated.

Outcome 2: The need for sustainability in the community-based projects and activities carried out by the GWN project.

The analysis of the in-depth interviews confirmed that GWN’s strategy of bringing together different bodies and stakeholders with a statutory status (water authorities, local municipalities, relevant ministries, community residents) who usually do not work together on a daily basis to cooperate on a specific issue in Mateh Yehuda was effective and unique. The stakeholders noted it as something that should be preserved in future activities. The deputy manager of the environmental unit at Mateh Yehuda explained: "Bringing together bodies and NGOs that usually work separately to sit together, cooperate and coordinate responsibilities leads to achieving environmental goals that each body would have not been able to by working alone."

Furthermore, the beneficiaries stated that GWN’s focus on an uncontroversial single issue – water – effective as it allows specific practical on-the-ground results. It was confirmed as an effective and focal component of the project that should be kept in future activities.

The interviewees noted the need to continue with cross-border conferences and activities. They confirmed the clear impact of these activities: bringing together Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians to meet firsthand with their peers (whether decision-makers, activists, youth or educators) and engage in a dialog based on a common language/discourse and an interest.

The community coordinators were commended for their capacity to connect various bodies and stakeholders, sustain the networking and deepen the ties. The interviewees highlighted the coordinators' capacity to sustain excellent and transparent communication between the communities and FoEME. They confirmed that the coordinators’ continued participating in the municipal committees and that the role they play as the contact persons with the neighboring
communities across the green line is a meaningful role in the realization of project’s impact in their communities.

All the stakeholders noted the importance of continuing with the water trustees program. The youth and their educators confirmed that the experiential learning methods (many of the youth termed it "learning about nature through the feet") is a component that should be preserved and broadened in the future activities of the educational program.

Results for theme 2

1. The project is successful and effective. It has a positive impact on the beneficiaries: raising their awareness and creating a collective consciousness that strongly leans towards the environmental peace-making narrative, and initiating actual projects with tangible results that they and the greater community benefit from.

2. The application of FoEME's strategy for creating cross-border cooperation in the local, uni-lateral context was proven successful and effective.

3. There has been a change amongst the male and female students in the terms of water, the transfer of knowledge to other individuals in the community, and the cultural exchange between them and their peers in Jordan and Palestine.

4. The current political situation is a challenge. However, most participants do not see it as a risk, rather as a changing-through-time obstacle. In this respect, the positive effects of the tri-lateral work were apparent as they created excellent personal and professional cross-border relationships, sustained even in the face of the difficulties that the political situation imposed.

Theme 3: Suggestions for developing the programs of the project concentrated on taking the cross-border relations created through the GWN project to the next level.

Interviewees offered many suggestions for developing the scope of work, which were as follows:

- As the various stakeholders hold that the main challenge to the realization of joint projects is the political situation, they ask FoEME to consider strengthening their role as a mediator between local and national relevant municipal bodies and water authorities, relying on FoEME's honest broker approach and statues.

- The adult activists would like that more focus would be put on people to people activities in the joint meetings and not only on environmental issues. They would also like FoEME to
assist them in the design of a formal work plan for the bi-lateral work with the nearby cross border communities.

✓ One of the schoolteachers suggested considering a twin-schools working model, to sustain long-term joint work and relationships, beyond the first year of the water trustees program.

✓ The mayor of Emek Hefer would like FoEME to consider getting involved in finding solutions to the air and sewage pollution coming from the Nitzana industrial area.

✓ As each side in the Emek Hefer-Nablus area has its own wastewater treatment plant, the manager of the Israeli wastewater unit at the local municipality would like FoEME to consider advancing an upgrading the Palestinian wastewater treatment plant so it could remove nitrogen. Right now it doesn’t and it has a negative effect on the Alexander stream.

✓ The community coordinators suggested that deeper relevancy could be achieved if general project’s goals are better adapted to the specific circumstances of their communities.

✓ The youth in all the communities expressed their desire that the Water Trustees group will meet more often, on a regular basis and that more emphasis is put on team-building and positioning the group and its activities as something unique and different from the regular school activities.

Theme 4: Opportunities for creating neighborly relations between the three peoples and cross-border communities.

All of the participants confirmed that there is a need to build neighborly relations between the three areas targeted in the project, and this is because there are shared interests connected with water sources and protection of ground water and the environment, in general. They noted that any of the proposed solutions cannot be implemented by individual regions/nations, and not in isolation from the other regions which in turn forces the reality of seeking a common way, serving the interests of all sides.

There are close cross-border ties between the Israeli and the neighboring Palestinian communities, on all levels, created through the various GWN’s activities throughout the years. On the activist level, they are translated into a clear motivation to find ways to sustain them in the future. On the municipality level, they are translated into a clear motivation to make them formal and to expose them to high levels of governmental decision-making offices and ministries. On the level of schools, the youth expressed their desire to continue with the program and specifically with the cross-border encounters.
The following quotations from the interviews reflect these opportunities:

"I sensed that the Palestinians blame all their environmental problems on Israel and do not take responsibility. I felt comfortable to tell them that. It was easy to build trust on the personal level, and through that on the professional level. I felt they listened to me."

Another interviewee stated:

"Since the civil administration is perceived negatively by the Palestinians, I would prefer to contact my Palestinian colleagues directly without the mediation of the civil administration. We got together excellently at the conferences and trust each other."

And,

"FoEME's project gives us an opportunity to talk with our Palestinian neighbors, to meet them firsthand and dialog with them in their own language. We do not have any other forum to do that."

There was a broad consensus that the cross-border activities raise awareness to the cross-border nature of the water issue as much as suggest themselves as effective examples for the possibility to work together. The interviewees confirmed that a dialog over a common subject – water – created a common ground for cross-border cooperation, and through it advance conflict prevention and/or resolution. One of the students noted:

"The project can bring on peace. It is something that happens in stages. You meet with the other, you talk about water, you create a personal connection and together you learn about something which is a source of living for everyone. You understand that you have to protect it together."

Reflecting about the impact of the GWN project's cross-border activities and conferences, the mayor of Emek Hefer said:

"The difficulties in creating formal working relations are a factor of the greater political situation. It is not connected to the project's work. The project's importance lays in its constant continuation and its effort to create alternatives and solutions, to keep a level of optimism, and to sustain the cross border relationships that have already been created through these conferences. These relationships are now drops that if not dried up in the future could become an ocean."
Theme 5: Quantitative results - Positive trends and opinions of members and activists about the vision of environmental peace building.

Outcome 1: Percentage of participants who gain knowledge of shared water and environmental issues and their interdependent nature.

The results show that 90% of the interviewees reported to have gained or have demonstrated an acquired knowledge of shared water and environmental issues and their interdependent nature. Furthermore, 86% noted that the inseparable connection between preservation of the environment and solving water problems is regional/cross-border in its nature.

![Pie chart showing percentage of participants who gained knowledge of shared water and environmental issues and their interdependent nature.]

- 55% Gained a lot of knowledge
- 35% Gained knowledge
- 10% Did not gain knowledge

Outcome 2: Percentage of participants who understand the necessity to work together in order to protect their shared water resources.

86% of the beneficiaries understand the necessity to work together in order to protect their shared water resources. In fact, 70% find it impossible to protect shared water resources without working together. From the 81% who understand the necessity, 100% are adults and/or youth who participated in cross-border events. Most of those who did not show this understanding are youth who did not take part in cross-border activities.

![Pie chart showing percentage of participants who understand the necessity to work together.]

- 86% Yes
- 14% No
Outcome 3: Percentage of participants who demonstrated a more positive attitude towards their neighbors across the border.

The study examined the following parameters:

1. The interviewees' willingness to create / sustain cross-border personal (for the youth and activists) and professional (for decision-makers and experts) relationships.
2. Their disposition towards hosting in their community members from cross-border communities
3. Their preparedness to be activists in the domains of water and the environment in cooperation with their colleagues from across the border.

76% of the beneficiaries demonstrated a more positive attitude towards their neighbors across the border. The highest preference (85%) was towards perceiving the other as a partner for cross-border activism and joint professional cooperation. 74% demonstrated a positive disposition towards hosting in their community members from cross-border communities and 68% the willingness to create/ sustain cross-border personal and professional relationships.

Results for theme 5:

It is confirmed in the charts above that there is a high degree of awareness that addressing the issue of polluted water cannot be separated from addressing the problems of the environment. In addition, the protection of water sources has to be carried out by cooperation between the three regions (Jordan, Palestine, Israel), with the desire to participate in shared encounters on an ongoing basis, in order to seek ways to reach solutions to solve the water and environmental problems which the regions are exposed to. Finally, there is a positive attitude towards, and a perception of the
neighbors across the border, whether as friends, as partners and as environmental activists, although to a lesser degrees compared to the Jordanian and Palestinian communities.

It is important to notice that all of those who did not have a positive change in their perceptions of the other are youth who did not take part in cross-border activities. They did not state a negative change of perception. Actually 82% of the interviewees, including those who did not take part in such activities, stated that in their minds the cross-border activities are strengthening the acquaintance, trust and cooperation between the cross-border communities.

The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data suggests that the environmental activism discourse creates a common language that motivates the participants to favor professional cross-border relationships over personal and/or social relationships.

Recommendations

1. The comprehensive list of proposed future activities presented above in theme 3 suggests many opportunities for added activities and/or improvements. We would highlight here the need to re-evaluate and perhaps adapt some of the GWN project’s general goals in order to make them better fit to each specific community’s needs, interests and circumstances.

2. The cross-border activities have a clear impact on the Israeli participants’ perception of the other. We recommend considering to increase the number of youth in these activities, to strengthen the cross-border activities for activists from neighboring communities, and to sustain the activities taking place on the decision-making levels.

8. General Results and Recommendations

1. The study results show that among all GWN’s beneficiaries and stakeholders there is a high degree of awareness to the connection between addressing the protection of the environment and addressing water problems. Furthermore, awareness to the cross-border nature of this connection is clearly evident. Thus, FoEME is not just another environmental NGO; it is perhaps the only regional NGO that advances cross-border environmental activism and cooperation.

2. There is a clear understanding among the beneficiaries and stakeholders on the necessity to work jointly on the protection and rehabilitation of shared water sources and this cannot be negated even in the face of the difficulties of the violent political circumstances. The mayor of Emek Hefer confirmed:
"It is clear that we can't solve the pollution of our streams with untreated wastewater without cooperation with the other side. The stream crosses the border and we are affected by everything that happens to it there. At the moment, it is politically difficult to sustain formal cooperation between the two municipalities. But we keep the channels of communication open on every level we can until the circumstances ripen. We have no other option".

3. Basing its work on a long-term goal-oriented dialog approach and on-the-ground project based strategy, the GWN project's focuses on water, a common essential source of living for everyone in the region, stands as a clear strength of FoEME's work in the regional peace-building field. Many peacebuilding efforts declare their desire to work with all sorts and types of communities and backgrounds. The GWN project manages to put that successfully into practice.

It creates a narrative for the participants, a common ethos, that allows them to overcome political, cultural and religious differences as well as the difficulties of the external violent political reality and engage in joint work and in activism. This way, participants who declare they are right wing, as much as participants who suffer the risk of being perceived as "normalizers", participants from varied cultural and religious, from various social and economic backgrounds, with various and different interests, find their place under the umbrella of the GWN project's activities.

4. The GWN project's strategy is comprehensive enough to be able to include and be relevant for the various narratives and interests, on the one hand, and focused enough to maintain a high level of coherence that enables an effective realization of its goals, on the other hand.

5. The educational program is effective and relevant for the beneficiaries. The recent launch of the comprehensive Resource Guide for Environmental Educators was highly commended by the educators involved with the water trustees program. Over the past year, FoEME has approached the education ministries of Israel, Jordan and Palestine. In Israel, it received the ministry's approval, and environmental educators now integrate it into their curriculum. Thus, much more youth and their teachers are targeted and exposed to the project’s materials and environmental peace building narratives.

In Jordan and Palestine these efforts continue. In Jordan it appears that in the coming school year the ministry of education is anticipated to declare its approval but this is not sure yet. In the P.A there is a positive tendency, and the main challenge is posed by the political realities. As there is a high level of support and endorsement of the educational program, the resource guide and the water trustees program among the involved teachers and school principals in Jordan and Palestine, we would recommend considering:
To harness the Jordanian and Palestinian educators’ enthusiasm and support to a further lobby for the educational program’s approval by testifying for the benefits it comprises for their students and their respected communities.

6. The GWN project's impact is clear and evident from the interviews with the participants. It includes:

- Successfully targeting international donors to allocate the necessary funds (more than 600 million $ over the years since it started) for the realization of priority initiatives and various cross border water projects that were initially conceived in the GWN project. Including, the rehabilitation of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea projects, the Protecting Ground Water project, the construction of wastewater treatment plants in many of the project’s communities, and more. These funds were also allocated to the realization of local initiatives in the project’s communities, including rainwater harvesting systems, grey water units, ecogardens, capacity building trainings, the construction of eco-parks and eco-centers, and many more.

- Halting the plans for the construction of the separation wall in the West Bethlehem Villages area by persuading the Supreme Court to order the Israeli Military to take into consideration environmental parameters into their national security agenda, gaining the support of Israeli environmental authorities. Thus, not only have the lands and livelihoods of the Palestinian villages been protected as much as the neighborly relations with Mateh Yehuda in such explosive times; an alternative understanding of security was introduced into the discourse of Israeli decision-makers.

- Being part of the successful efforts to persuade UNESCO to declare Battir’s terrace landscape as a world heritage site and eventually ensuring the protection of the village's lands and livelihoods, also opens the door for new economic opportunities through environmental tourism.

- Promoting successful cross border inter-faith dialog on shared water issues.

- Succeeding in the first steps of the rehabilitation of the Jordan River, a shared water source sacred to all religions.

- Introduction of the water issue as a potentially groundbreaking issue into the Israeli-Palestinian peace process through other partnering organizations like the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies and MAAN news in Palestine or influencing international media personalities like Thomas Friedman. Creating fact sheets of how water and environment issues are being held hostage by the conflict, with concrete examples from actual GWN
communities and experiences on the ground has been instrumental here and essential to show the authenticity of the problems.

✓ Bringing together various stakeholder and authorities to cooperate on shared water issues, like the Springs Forum in Israel, as much as governmental bodies, like in the case of the Jordanian National Committee for the rehabilitation of the Jordan River.

✓ Setting a model for effective environmental peace building to NGOs operating in other conflict regions in the world.

7. FoEME is a learning organization. As mentioned in last year's report, it has integrated into its ongoing work constant inner reflections, trying to make sure that its creativity, impact and relevancy for the beneficiaries are all kept. This learning and reflection processes included the application of the interim-evaluation report’s recommendations (submitted on August 2013).

✓ Thus, this year's work included the following aspects:

✓ The creation of an Alumni program for the youth.  
✓ The integration of the participants' personal water narratives into the joint meetings' formal program. 
✓ Working to increase awareness and expose the GWN's beneficiaries and local stakeholders to the work that has been done in their communities, and working to make the progress of the priority initiatives more transparent and accessible to the respected communities, thus increasing their involvement and participation in them.

Specific resources were allocated towards these goals. All of the above was reflected in the interviews with the participants as effective measures with a positive impact that increased the participants' commitment to the project.

8. The GWN's strategy of long-term deep work in the communities, sustaining a cross-border communication network, and insisting on addressing practical tangible results and interests, rather than just peace or cooperation in general, bears fruits. It changes the discourse of those involved with the project and many have adopted the narrative of environmental peacebuilding/ cross-border cooperation that the GWN project advances into their professional and personal lives.