



BRIDGES



In This Issue

- New International Waters Website and Toolkit
- Third GEF IW Conference Report
- Lake Chad Basin: Reworking a Project
- Managing Transboundary Groundwater
- Kura Aras Basin: Public Participation
- Promoting Transboundary Participation
- Managing Lakes as Basins
- News from the IW Community
- Upcoming IW Events
- IW:LEARN 2005 Highlights, 2006 Plans

IW:LEARN Unveils New Website and Web Toolkit

The International Waters (IW) community can now provide and discover a wealth of information resources through the newly redesigned GEF IW:LEARN website (<http://iwlearn.net>). IW:LEARN's associated Web Toolkit 1.0 also helps IW projects install websites whose contents can be easily managed by public outreach officers, without technical assistance or specialized editing software.

Through the IW:LEARN website, users can access IW-related news, project documents, contact information, and events worldwide. Materials include guidance and models for Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) and Strategic Action Program (SAP) documents, as well as announcements of upcoming training events.

Visitors can also use IW:LEARN's helpdesk to request technical assistance, such as: "How can social marketing promote sustainable practices?", "How can we finance a new marine reserve?", or "What indicators can I use to assess a project's local impacts or global benefits?"

Continued on page 2

L E A R N

Third GEF International Waters Conference

In Brazil last June, the third Global Environment Facility (GEF) International Water Conference (IWC3) brought together almost 300 representatives from 84 International Waters (IW) projects and 85 countries. They met to strengthen IW management expertise through the exchange of practical lessons.

As part of GEF IW:LEARN, IWC3 was the first conference to cluster experts from subsets of the GEF portfolio to address specific issues related to groundwater, rivers, lakes, and large marine ecosystems (LMEs). One such session noted that lakes have extremely varied uses and slow response times, emphasizing a need for early and sustained stakeholder involvement and "focused but flexible" management.

Regarding monitoring and evaluation (M&E), participants emphasized that effective but flexible indicators also should be established at the outset. Best indicators are few in number, linked to socioeconomic development priorities, and meaningful to the public across spatial scales and over project cycles and the longer term. Finally, groups recognized the importance of nesting governance mechanisms from local to regional scales, incorporating national ownership and inter-sectoral integration.

In addition to the facilitated learning at IWC3, eight plenary sessions and three workshops brought all participants together for joint learning regarding management issues such as legal frameworks, innovative project financing, TDA/SAP preparation, M&E indicators, public participation, and integrating efforts across GEF focal areas. Latin American projects also conveyed their region's IW experiences.

Continued on page 6

IW:LEARN aims to strengthen International Waters Management (IWM) by facilitating structured learning and information sharing among stakeholders.

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New IW:LEARN Website and Web Toolkit

Continued from page 1

IW:LEARN staff will then consult with colleagues around the world to respond with timely and relevant responses.

The IW:LEARN website was built using a Content Management System – included in the free Toolkit – that can be readily customized for use elsewhere. Thus, GEF IW projects can also apply this software to meet Web communications needs such as:

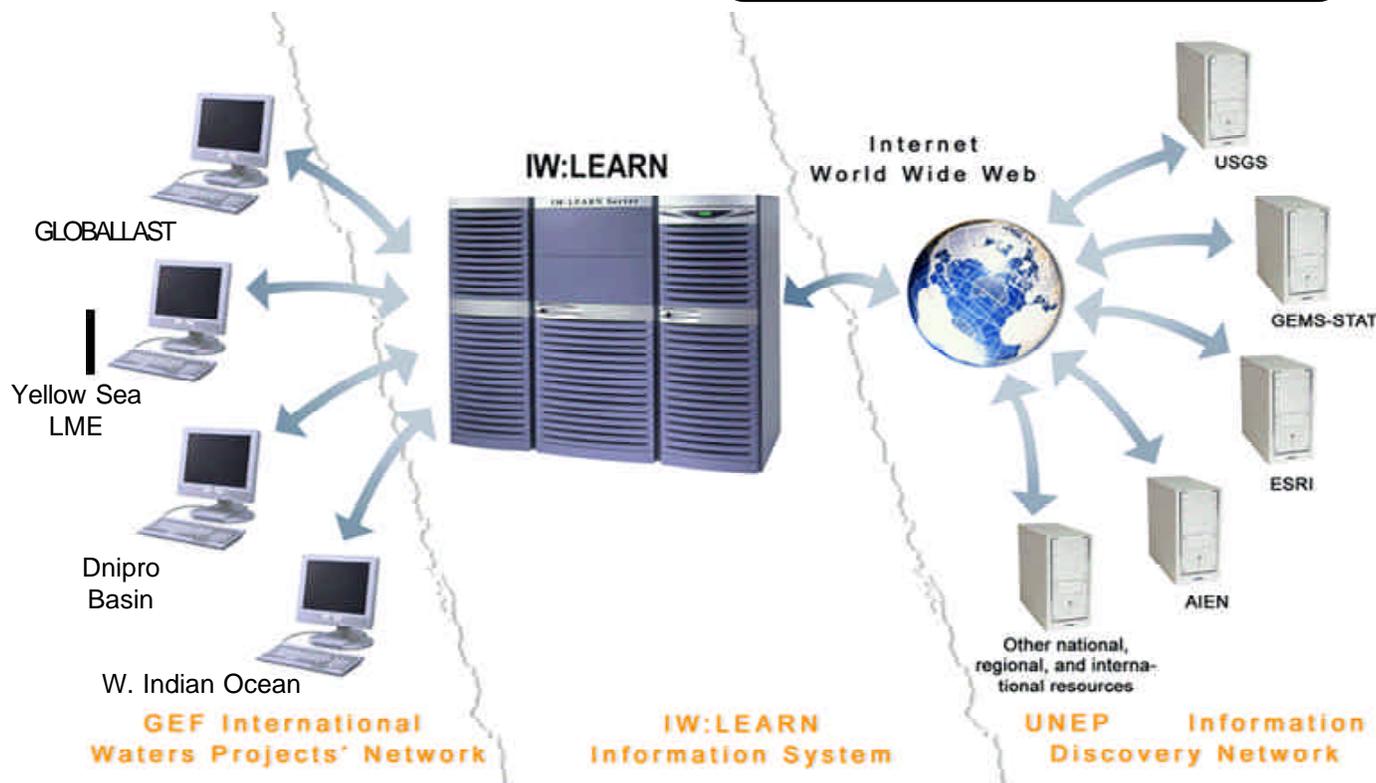
- ◆ Ability for stakeholders to quickly post and share information in multiple languages and character sets
- ◆ Improved interaction between project managers, national coordinators and partners
- ◆ Ability to share project news via e-newsletters, news syndication, and web publishing
- ◆ Easy management of user access to resources and settings

IW:LEARN'S WEBSITE PROVIDES THE KEY TO ACCESS A WEALTH OF INTERNATIONAL WATERS INFORMATION - KNOWLEDGE GENERATED FROM GEF PROJECTS, WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES, LEARNING EXCHANGES, NEWSLETTERS, ELECTRONIC FORUMS, AND INDEPENDENT EVALUATIONS.

IW:LEARN's Web Toolkit "provides features, flexibility and functionality to help you build better websites," notes UNEP's Sean Khan, who is spearheading its development and application. Communications officers, national coordinators, and others can use the Content Management System to create and publish web pages, event calendars, news articles and newsletters on the web.

Such information-sharing contributes to an emerging "IW Network" of websites to assist IW management worldwide. With the Web Toolkit, IW projects can strategically apply limited information technology funds and expertise to easily create and maintain a highly functional web presence and benefit from the global knowledge of the IW Network.

To discover GEF International Waters resources or to apply the IW:LEARN Web Toolkit and join the IW Network, please visit <http://www.iwlearn.net>.

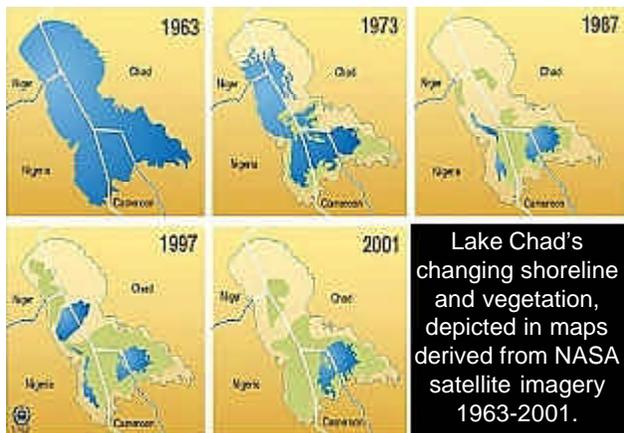


The International Waters Network using inter-linked Content Management Systems to share information resources between GEF IW projects, IW:LEARN and other water-related reference sites around the world.

Schematic courtesy UNEP-Deepa Jani

Lake Chad: Early Reworking of an IW Project

One of the most challenging GEF International Waters lake projects may be “Reversal of Land and Water Degradation Trends in the Lake Chad Basin Ecosystem.” Lake Chad is a vital freshwater resource for more than 20 million people, who rely on it for drinking water, commerce, and habitat for wildlife and plants. Lake Chad’s surface area has varied over time by as much as 90%, depending on rainfall. Its water balance is still not fully understood. Moreover, the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) – Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria – faces tremendous financial constraints in addressing the basin’s water management issues, which include anthropogenic threats as well as changing ecological conditions.



Interim GEF evaluation of the Lake Chad project revealed the following obstacles to implementation:

- ◆ Initial lag in project implementation due to inadequate project management and insufficient technical capacities in the Project Management Unit (PMU);
- ◆ Need for more inclusive involvement (ownership) of LCBC, the regional basin institution, in project implementation;
- ◆ Need for rebuilding LCBC’s institutional capacity.

To address these issues, the project has taken serious steps to rework its operations *en route*, rather than conducting a formal restructuring:

To address the initial lag in implementation and kick-start activities, an experienced GEF Project Manager was hired on retainer to assist the resident PMU in reviewing all preparation documents with a focus on short-term “implementability.” Early resolution of logistical problems is essential for smooth project implementation in a difficult operational environment.

To address project management needs, the difficult decision was made to hire a new Project Manager with demonstrated skills in contract management, human resources and strategic planning. The more difficult a project’s implementation and operational environment is, the more important – and difficult – it is to find highly qualified staff. Retaining consultants may be considered.

To strengthen LCBC’s ownership, four of its staff are assigned to work part-time with the PMU, while a Management Support Group – consisting of LCBC and PMU senior staff – has been established to guide the PMU and ensure LCBC’s full involvement in all activities, without infringing on PMU responsibilities.

To address LCBC’s capacity building needs, a planned institutional audit and review was restructured as a Capacity Strengthening Needs Assessment, driven by an internal Review Team. The project agreed to invest in training LCBC staff with its own budget, while LCBC agreed to embark on a process of reform.

None of these steps has been easy. To assist other IW projects, Lake Chad shares the following lessons:

- ◆ Projects should act to improve implementation at an early stage, without formal “project restructuring.”
- ◆ Strong managerial skills in a Project Manager are critical to working with basin institutions with varying degrees of capacity and ownership over GEF project objectives.
- ◆ Clearly defined roles for regional basin institutions are a prerequisite to project ‘ownership’ and successful implementation.
- ◆ The ‘roadmap’ for institutional change must be adapted to the character of the institution in order to be accepted and embarked upon.

Applying these lessons is contingent on available funding (for consultants as needed), open communication between agencies and partners, and most importantly, the willingness of the PMU and IAs/EAs to be proactive in addressing problems and making radical changes when needed.

The Lake Chad project and Lake Chad Basin Commission are committed to working together to improve collaboration to address the region’s complex human and ecological needs. Their efforts have already attracted additional donor interest to ensure that project resources are leveraged to achieve maximum ben-

Continued on page 6

GEF IW Projects Tap Groundwater Expertise

The GEF International Waters (IW) portfolio has historically emphasized surface waters. Groundwater issues are generally beyond the scope of most river, lake and marine ecosystem projects. Nonetheless, groundwater is intimately linked to these aquatic systems. Groundwater represents 99% of liquid freshwater resources and comprises more than 100 times the volume of liquid freshwater on Earth's surface. Thus, as new transboundary aquifers projects enhance the GEF portfolio, IW partners seek to tap their wellspring of groundwater experience.

At the 3rd GEF International Waters Conference (IWC3) in Brazil, IW:LEARN and its UNESCO partners provided GEF IW projects with their first opportunity ever to gather to learn about, discuss, and address transboundary groundwater and aquifer issues. The interest was keen. Participants from across the portfolio flooded into sessions initially aimed at only GEF transboundary aquifers projects.

This growing interest from the GEF Secretariat, the Implementing Agencies and other GEF projects is important at a time when groundwater is high on the international agenda, and where the GEF has become the global leader in funding aquifer projects. Improved management of groundwater resources, taking into consideration the specific environmental functions of aquifers, is now recognized as a tool for stress reduction in surface ecosystems. This is reflected in the prioritization of groundwater and its integration in the GEF portfolio in future funding cycles. A common awareness has been established across the GEF portfolio in the IW:LEARN learning community, with participation from the parallel lake, marine ecosystem and river learning communities.

This wide interest in groundwater issues at IWC3 from colleagues outside the groundwater community reflects the new interest among surface basin and water body project managers to integrate groundwater components into their projects and create opportunity to share perspectives.

At the first groundwater session at IWC3, presentations by Djamel Latrech of the Northwest Saharan Aquifer Project and Luiz Amore of the Guaraní Aquifer Management fostered a wider discussion of the commonalities and divergences between GEF groundwater projects. River and lake managers joined the sessions to examine how to integrate groundwater indicators into surface water projects to assess environ-

mental stresses and long term impacts. The interest in groundwater was further shared by program and monitoring managers, IA specialists, and senior country representatives.

The second session focused on the need for flexible approaches, including application of GEF IW methodology and risk management. Here, the Eastern Desert pilot project in Egypt demonstrated the importance of good science and strong technical capacity as a necessary starting point for groundwater management activities. Meanwhile, the sub-regional lullemeden project exemplified a risk approach under high uncertainty in transboundary aquifer management as well as the potential for inter-linkages with other GEF focal areas. Lullemeden, Northwest Sahara, and the Guaraní represent large sub-regional groundwater basins that are basically unconnected to overlying surface river basins. But in most cases, transboundary aquifers support and secure critical inflows to transboundary rivers, lakes, and marine water bodies, ensuring preservation of humid zone ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as drinking water.

As a result of the diverse inputs of presenters and audience, the groundwater sessions concluded with recommendations for a GEF groundwater program that is better integrated with IW surface water projects and other focal areas. The panels recommended the continued expansion of the IW:LEARN learning community (aquifer@iwlearn.net), and for the inclusion of participants from other GEF IW areas as a means to explore inter-linkages and add a groundwater dimension to other projects. They also discussed holding a GEF IW Groundwater meeting to explore best practices in groundwater/aquifer methodology and project implementation.

As GEF attention to groundwater management continues to grow, IW:LEARN will continue to serve the IW community by building capacity in information management and project management, and developing inter-linkages between groundwater and surface water projects through IW Conferences and electronic learning communities.

To participate in the IW:LEARN transboundary aquifer and groundwater learning community, please contact Bo Appelgren of UNESCO at bo.appelinvpl@flashnet.it.

Kura Aras NGO Forum: Building Collaboration

The South Caucasus is a region troubled by transboundary resource management challenges compounded by a historical lack of regional cooperation.

The UNDP/GEF environmental governance project, “Reducing Transboundary Degradation of the Kura-Aras River Basin through Public Involvement and Stakeholder Inclusion in Governance,” is pleased to announce that a coalition of 31 NGOs from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Iran has agreed to form an NGO Forum for Transboundary Water Management.

During a meeting co-sponsored by the Eurasia Foundation in June 2005, NGOs identified the lack of transboundary cooperation in the basin as their highest priority challenge to improved water management. In November, during the UNDP-sponsored NGO meeting, public involvement expert Mary Matthews asked these NGOs to recall their concern and address this problem themselves. Working together in integrated groups they brainstormed ideas about governance structure, mission and charter for a region-wide NGO Water Forum.



Kura headwaters in Armenia. *Photo by Mary Matthews*

The NGOs are currently drafting an official forum charter based on these ideas, and the Forum will have an advisory role in the UNDP/GEF umbrella project, “Reducing Transboundary Degradation of the Kura-Aras River Basin TDA/SAP process.” This water NGO forum is the only transboundary initiative in the region that includes all four countries in a cooperative development project.

A full report on the Kura-Aras NGO Forum is at http://europeandcis.undp.org/WaterWiki/images/5/57/Kura_Aras_NGO_Forum_Report.pdf

Promoting Transboundary Participation

How can public participation (P2) help protect international water resources? Over 60 representatives from Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia addressed this issue at an IW:LEARN co-sponsored workshop in St. Petersburg in June.



St. Petersburg water resources. *Photo by Dann Sklarew*

Participants considered the Aarhus Convention as a legal basis for basin-level P2; replicating Caspian Sea stakeholder analysis; and creating River Basin Councils. The group also addressed strengthening NGO networks and aligning NGO and donor priorities. Working groups examined the Kura-Aras, Dniester, Daugava and Nemunas rivers as transboundary case studies. They discussed progress, challenges and lessons, then made recommendations at local through regional and basin-wide scales.

Participants emphasized that raising public awareness and consulting with local NGOs and enterprises contributes to better IW decisions. This diverse public can be part of the solution. P2 is gradual, messy and challenging. Success many seem far off, but progress is real.

Participants expected to promptly apply these P2 lessons for positive IW impacts. Many aim to incorporate P2 strategies into their TDA/SAP activities as well.

The workshop was prepared with the UNECE Water Convention and the Center for Transboundary Cooperation-St. Petersburg, with additional funding from the World Bank Institute and Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. Its lessons for information management will be covered in the next *IW:Bridges*.

To access guidance documents, presentations and reports from the St. Petersburg workshop, or for more information, visit the UNECE Water Convention's website (<http://unece.org/env/water/cwc.htm>) or email Water.Convention@unece.org.

IWC3

continued from page 1

Participants overwhelmingly felt that the conference helped them network and develop useful resources and contacts for further collaboration. Many participants also planned to seek future opportunities for both formal and informal peer-to-peer exchange of experiences, to learn firsthand about issues and challenges at the project level.

Among priority learning issues were:

- ◆ Balancing sovereignty with joint management
- ◆ Achieving lasting IW allocation agreements
- ◆ Integrating groundwater, lake, and river management within basins
- ◆ Economic valuation of and financing for ecosystem goods and services
- ◆ Creating multilateral water data and information sharing regimes

Based on the strong mandate from Brazil, GEF and its IW:LEARN partners will host a series of targeted learning activities to address these priorities in GEF regions in the lead-up to the 4th GEF IW conference in South Africa in 2007.



IWC3 participants prepare to sail.
Photo by Dann Sklarew

The IW Conference agenda, presentations, and details on trainings, side-events, and workshops can be found at www.iwlearn.org/iwc2005.

Lake Chad Basin

continued from page 3

efits for the region and its citizens. Lake Chad demonstrates that responding to management challenges early in implementation is crucial, and the project's adaptability gives cause for optimism about its future success.

For more information on Lake Chad, please visit www.lakechadbasin.org or contact the Project Management Unit, Andrew Frowd (andrew@lakechadbasin.org) or Anada Tiega (anadatiega@lakechadbasin.org).

IW:LEARN is available to help GEF IW projects with design, implementation, and assessment issues. Contact info@iwlearn.org for assistance.

Managing Lakes as Basins

The GEF IW Lake Basin Management Initiative project has released its report on "Managing Lakes and their Basins for Sustainable Use," encouraging the movement away from managing lakes as single units of water, but as Lake Basins - ecological units connected to forest, farm, urban, groundwater, atmospheric, and other influences. The report was issued at the 11th World Lake Conference in Nairobi, hosted by the International Lake Environment Committee and the Kenyan Ministry of Water and Irrigation. The LBMI report can be downloaded in full at <http://www.ilec.or.jp/lbmi/>.

The Lake Conference focused on science and management issues facing African lakes, including GEF IW lake projects in Lake Victoria, the Nile Basin, and Lake Chad. The Lake Victoria and Nile Basin sessions described those systems' ecological and human dimensions in detail, and went into depth on the demands for institutional collaboration between national, NGO, and international stakeholders. These sessions were among the best-attended events at the conference. IW:LEARN participation in Nairobi enabled the project to re-establish relationships with national partners, NGOs, and GEF lake IW project managers from Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

Upcoming Events

23 Jan. 2006 - 27 Jan. 2006
GLOBAL FORUM ON OCEANS, COASTS AND ISLANDS

Paris, France

www.globaloceans.org/paris3/

18 Feb. 2006 - 20 Feb. 2006
GREAT LAKES OF THE WORLD III

Arusha, Tanzania

www.aehms.org/glow_event.html

16 March 2006 - 22 March 2006
4th WORLD WATER FORUM

Mexico City, Mexico

www.worldwaterforum.org

30 May 2006 - 2 June 2006
III INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON TRANSBOUNDARY WATER MANAGEMENT

Castilla, Spain

www.uclm.es/congresos/twm/

06 June 2006 - 04 Sept. 2006
ADVANCED TRAINING IN INTEGRATED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

Kanpur, India / Beijing, China

inwama.uni-jena.de

05 June 2006 - 07 June 2006
COASTAL ENVIRONMENT 2006

Rhodes, Greece

www.wessex.ac.uk/conferences/2006/coast06

08 July 2006 - 14 July 2006
COASTAL ZONE CANADA CONFERENCE

Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories, Canada

www.czc06.ca

16 Oct. 2006 - 18 Oct. 2006
III APHW CONFERENCE ON WISE WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Bangkok, Thailand

www.thirdaphw.org

12 Dec. 2006 - 16 Dec. 2006
EAST ASIAN SEAS CONGRESS

Haikou City, Hainan Province, China

www.eascongress.way.to

News from the IW Community

Guinea Current LME TDA/SAP Workshop

The Guinea Current LME project held a Regional Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis workshop in October, for participants to update and complete TDA documents and finalized developed indicators (process, stress reduction and environmental status). (Email k.ihemeje@gclme.org to receive newsletter)

Caspian Sea Science Studies and NGO Outreach

The Caspian Environment Program conducted three cruises to examine sediment cores and water samples, stopping at stations throughout the Sea and basin. CEP also hosted a successful five-day workshop in the economic valuation of Caspian resources. (www.caspianenvironment.org/cepbulletin.htm)

New Mekong Info Resources

The Mekong River Commission launched two information resources -- the Mekong Research Periodical to summarize Mekong research findings in an easily understandable format; and a Basin Development Plan Library to compile documents on sector-specific issues like fisheries, irrigated agriculture, or watershed management. (www.mekonginfo.org)

PERSGA Coastal Communities Workshop

PERSGA held a workshop on "Actions for balancing standards of life for coastal communities" in Amman, Jordan in June, to identify priority projects for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) between 2005-2010 within the SAP framework. (www.persga.org)

National Academies Water Info Center

U.S. National Academies launched the Water Information Center portal of peer-reviewed reports to assist managers, scientists and policy-makers worldwide. The reports represent independent consensus among experts from academia, industry, and other entities. (water.nationalacademies.org)

New Book from UN University

The United Nations University Press has released *Enhancing Participation and Governance in Water Resources Management*, edited by GEF affiliates Jansky and Uitto. (www.unu.edu/unupress/2005/enhancingparticipation.html).



2005 IW:LEARN HIGHLIGHTS

- √ Hosted 3rd GEF International Waters Conference in Brazil, with 291 participants from 84 countries (*with GEF Secretariat, IAs, OAS, Brazil*)
- √ Launched 4 thematic e-fora with 250 participants for river, lake, aquifer/groundwater & large marine projects (*with IUCN, LakeNet, UNESCO*)
- √ Delivered workshop in Russia to 65 people to advance public participation and information management for IW issues in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (*with UNECE, CTC*)
- √ Overhauled IW:LEARN's website (www.iwlearn.net) for support information sharing among GEF IW projects (*with UNEP*)
- √ Sponsored Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization participation at 5th Inter-American Dialogue on Water in Jamaica (*with OAS*)
- √ Conducted first of three roundtable dialogues on Protection and Sustainable Use of Transboundary Water Resources in South-Eastern Europe and launched www.watersee.net (*with GWP-Mediterranean, Germany, Greece, World Bank*)
- √ Conducted study of TDA/SAP processes in Southeast Asia, while launching Southeast Asia Regional Learning Centre website at www.iwsea.org (*with SEA START RLC*)
- √ Displayed "Water Ways" traveling exhibit on gender and water resource issues at water-related events throughout the Americas (*with Gender and Water Alliance*)

PERSGA's Dirar Nassir views IW:LEARN's Water Ways exhibit.



2006 IW:LEARN ACTIVITIES PLANNED

- Hold IW management workshops:
 - ◆ *Large Marine Ecosystems (global)*
 - ◆ *Public participation (Latin America & Africa)*
 - ◆ *Integrated water resources management (Africa)*
 - ◆ *Payment for ecosystem services (Africa)*
 - ◆ *Lakes and groundwater (Southeastern Europe)*
 - ◆ *Information management (Latin America & Southeast Asia)*
- Conduct 2-4 Inter-Project Exchanges, beginning with multi-project communications fair with Black Sea/Danube, South Pacific, Caspian, Red Sea & Nile Basin
- Continue to build and refine iwlearn.net
- Premiere LME documentary, present Pacific SIDS Gender-Water-Climate expo and host GEF session on LME management, economic valuation and public participation at Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts and Islands (France)
- Co-host at World Water Forum (Mexico) sessions on:
 - ◆ *Enhancing Public Participation in International Waters Management*
 - ◆ *Local Groundwater, a Key for Global Environmental Sustainability*

All GEF IW projects and partners are invited to participate in these activities.

Call for Articles

IW:Bridges depends on article submissions from the GEF IW community. Sent article proposals and announcements to news@iwlearn.org. We are particularly interested in stories of lessons learned, challenges overcome, and milestones in IW project implementation.

IW:LEARN aims to strengthen International Waters Management (IWM) by facilitating structured learning and information sharing among stakeholders. For more information contact:
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