

# Wetlands International in the Mediterranean



**Wetlands International is a global organization with a mission to sustain and restore wetlands, their resources and biodiversity. It is an independent, not-for-profit, global organization, supported by government and NGO membership from around the world, with a network of 20 regional and national offices that facilitate activities in over 100 countries. Its long-term vision is to have a world where wetlands are treasured and nurtured for their beauty, the life they support and the resources they provide.**

Wetlands International's goal is that wetlands are wisely used and restored for the role they play in:

- improving human well-being and local livelihoods
- conserving biodiversity
- sustaining the water cycle
- reducing climate change and its impacts

Wetlands International was one of the founding partners of the MedWet Initiative twenty years ago. Our work in this region has spanned from wetland monitoring and research, to capacity building of partners and stakeholders, and encouraging collaboration between the different regional, national and local players.

In 2009, Wetlands International established a Mediterranean Programme Office, which is hosted by the Tour du Valat in the Camargue in France. With financial support from the Government of Canada provided through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), this office is leading a Mediterranean wetlands and water resources initiative with field level projects in critical wetlands of Jordan, Tunisia and Morocco. Wetlands International, along with its regional and national partners, focuses on engaging civil society in water management in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Region.

## Our approaches

### Water Scarcity in the Mediterranean

The Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region is one of the most water-deprived regions of the world. Annual water consumption outstrips renewable resources. There is growing pressure on water resources because of increased demand. 60% of the population (180 million people) suffers from a water deficit in the Mediterranean, 60 million people suffer from water scarcity and 20 million have no access to potable water. Expected population growth, increased water use per capita, dwindling aquifers and global climate change (drought) will make water scarcity worse.



Monitoring demonstration, Sebou River, Morocco

# We aim to raise awareness on decisions related to water allocation and extraction that may cause valuable wetlands to disappear.

Currently, water management approaches in the south and east Mediterranean are prioritising one ecosystem value - use of water for productive sectors - over others, such as fresh water for local communities and their livestock, and the sustenance of wetlands for biodiversity. Civil society can play a critical role in helping governments to find a more balanced approach to water management by looking at the broader range of ecosystem values - in this case for wetlands.



Education with schools in Jordan

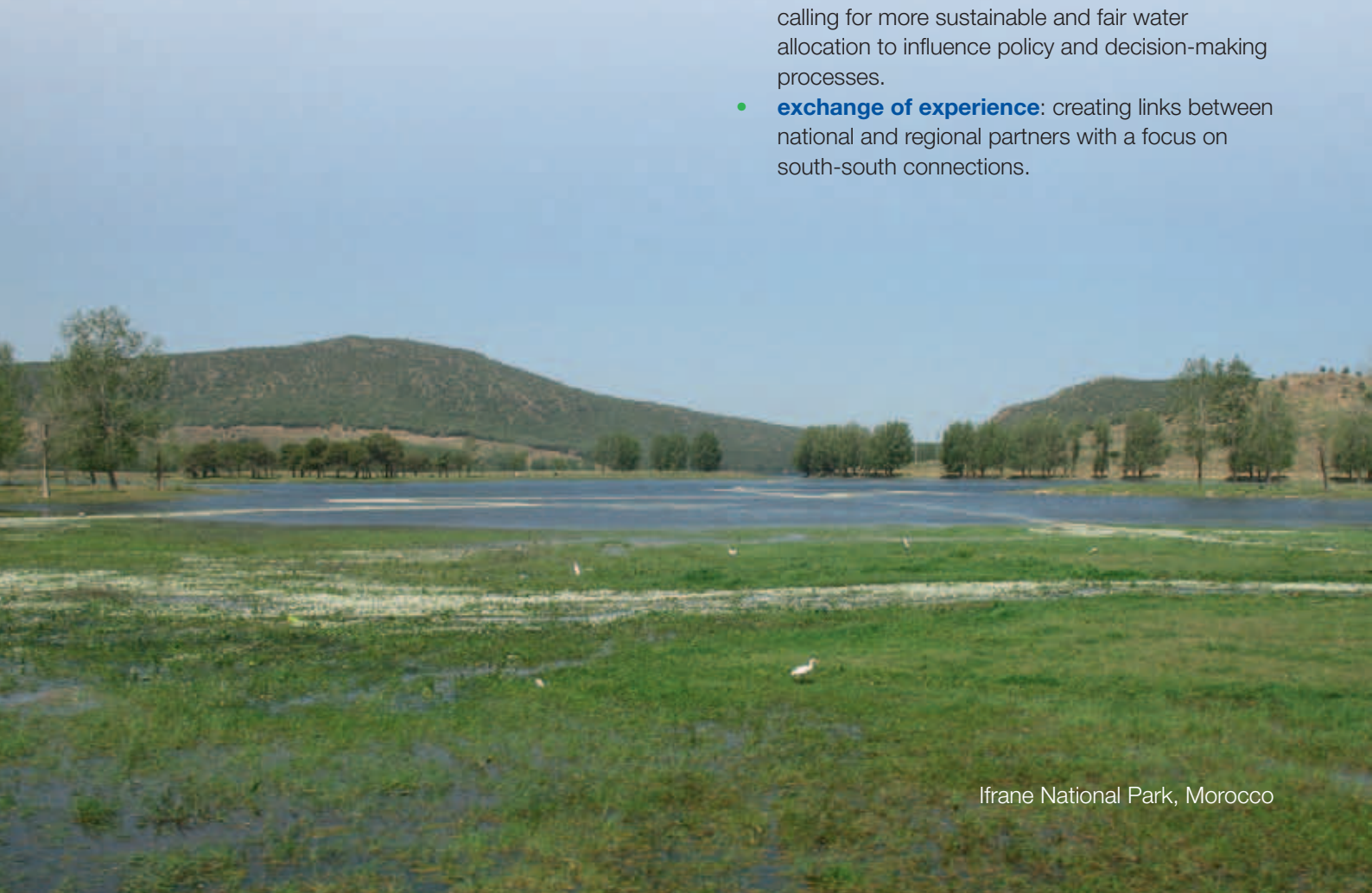
## What Wetlands International is trying to achieve

Wetlands International's main objective in the Mediterranean is to promote more sustainable Water Resource Management planning for the wetlands of the arid and semi-arid regions, in order to alleviate the scarcity of clean freshwater for people and biodiversity.

We advocate for healthy, functional wetlands to be integrated into the solutions for addressing water scarcity. We aim to raise awareness on decisions related to water allocation and extraction that may cause valuable wetlands to disappear.

Our approach focuses on:

- **knowledge:** collecting information on water scarcity, unsustainable situations and the role of wetlands to guide management of water resources.
- **building capacity and awareness of stakeholders:** help community-based and non-profit organisations and research institutions calling for more sustainable and fair water allocation to influence policy and decision-making processes.
- **exchange of experience:** creating links between national and regional partners with a focus on south-south connections.





Gender awareness session, Tunisia

**We work with local partners to address water management issues that are critical to their own local contexts and communities, and link these to the wider regional context. To date, some of our successes include:**

In **Tunisia**, we worked with INAT (National Agronomic Institute of Tunis), to promote sustainable water resources management in the Ichkeul catchment area through:

- developing a water resource allocation decision-making tool by engaging in a consultative dialogue that succeeded in gathering all involved stakeholders into the balanced allocation of water for the ecosystems of Ichkeul.
- raising the awareness of local people around the lake, including women, on the importance of wise water management.

In **Morocco**, we worked with Med PO WWF (WWF Mediterranean Programme, Office of Morocco) and ABHS (Sebou River Basin Agency) on the water quality of the Sebou River. In this project, we succeeded in:

- developing and establishing a monitoring protocol for evaluating the ecological status of the freshwater in the basin of Sebou, becoming the first river basin in Morocco to adapt the Water Framework Directive model in a non European country.

- establishing a civil society platform of NGOs, water users and research institutes to initiate a dialogue with ABHS on water management planning processes.

In **Jordan**, we worked with the RSCN (Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature) on the Mujib River to:

- assess the impacts of the Mujib Dam on the ecosystems of Mujib Biosphere Reserve, in regards to pollution, water extraction and fluctuation.
- produce a management plan for the Mujib Reserve, including its first local water strategy, through a consultative process with relevant stakeholders.
- involve farmers around the river basin in ecological agricultural practices to sustain water resources and preserve water quality.
- conduct awareness programs for school and university students on the importance of good practices in water resource management and the importance of conserving ecosystems.



Regional roundtable, Jordan

## Mission:

To sustain and restore wetlands, their resources and biodiversity

Wetlands International welcomes your support. We invite governments, institutes, knowledge centres, donors and NGOs working on similar issues to join forces with us and our partners to help us achieve sustainable water resource and wetlands management in the Mediterranean.

### For more information, contact us:

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Mujib River, Jordan

## Our next steps

While we are pleased with the progress to date, there is more to do. Together with our partners, we have identified an ambitious plan for engaging in sustainable solutions for water and wetlands management in the region. Our key objectives include:

- influencing changes in water allocation in infrastructure plans at river basin and national levels through a consultative, integrated approach that involves relevant stakeholders, including local communities, while promoting sustainable practices along basins and wetlands.
- mobilising technical exchanges and information from case studies between different partners as examples and tools to connect organisations, people and sites.
- building the capacity of existing civil society organisations and networks to communicate common messages, and use the different capacities of national and regional partner organisations to create impacts at the policy and implementation levels.

 Sources mixtes  
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