

Water & Peace Conference – Remaining Q&A

Keynote Address – Clive Lipchin

In 1994 the UN hosted Multilateral talks on water in the Middle East in Geneva. They included Egypt, Israel, Jordan, the Palestinians and others. Participants were water experts not politicians. I wonder if UNESCO could organize something similar in this day and age.

- I think this is a great idea. Bringing together water experts under a neutral umbrella like UNESCO can promote regional water planning.

Where are the main opportunities for careers in water given the need to shift to regional cooperation, beyond just expertise in the science of water itself?

- Given the unavoidable political dimensions around transboundary water management expertise in negotiation and conflict mitigation and cooperation promotion are very useful in helping to bring disparate parties together over a common cause such as water.

Would you consider hydrological borders more appropriate as nation borders as opposed to what we have today?

- I certainly would consider hydrological borders more appropriate as political borders are many times simply random lines that cut across watersheds thus exacerbating water conflicts and making water allocations more complicated. That being said, we need to deal with the reality of political borders and work with them as far as is possible within a watershed basis or framework.

What role can Water Resource Engineers play in helping develop peace building initiatives?

- Water resource engineers must develop their skills to situate technology within local contexts and strive to deliver technical/engineering solutions that are compatible with local needs, priorities, cultures, etc. In this way they can promote improved livelihoods and bottom up people to people peace initiatives.

Panel I

For Charles Iceland: *It is known that different countries have different political and legal framework, so how these bring mutualistic water use/reduce water conflict? would you please share experience on some country regarding these tools?*

- In *Water, Security, and Conflict*, we wrote that “At a global scale, efforts to develop fundamental principles for transboundary watershed management have led to the drafting, adoption, and ratification of the 1997 UN Convention on the Law of Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses. This convention establishes standards and principles for best practices around joint basin management, data sharing, and conflict resolution, and while not universally accepted, the fundamental concepts in the convention are widely respected.

The promotion of privatization of water management and distribution in the 1990s was not very successful. Are you of the opinion that well-managed public supply is preferable?

- From what I've read, and admittedly I am not an expert in this area, it appears there have some instances of benefits from privatization (e.g., Argentina) and some instances of privatization failure (e.g., Bolivia). So, I think the devil is in the details. I am therefore agnostic on this issue.

For Carol Collier: *Were there regulations rolled back (partially because of COVID-19) that allow for development in the Delaware River watershed?*

- No rules were rolled back by the Delaware River Basin Commission. In fact there is still a moratorium on gas development (fracking) in the headwaters of the basin (only area where there is potential for gas) due to the value of the high water quality to many. There can be an impact from the US EPA's roll back of the Waters of the US (WOTUS) which makes small headwater streams and wetlands more vulnerable. Luckily out basin states also have state laws that will help counter the weakening of WOTUS.

What are the differences between the 4 states in the Delaware River Basin? Which are more conservation-minded?

- This is a difficult one to answer since the priorities of the states vary greatly depending on the administration that is in place. I can say that often the lower basin states can be more concerned since they have the most to lose if there are quality or quantity problems upstream. It is also most difficult to engage the headwater state (or country) since it has the least to lose. In fact they can lose more if they engage with the states lower in the basin. This is the situation in many water issues across the globe.

I was wondering whether Carol can tell us if the DRWI has documented their successful actions to creating and implementing the DRWI? A sort of guide that others could follow? And then could adapt for their own specific needs.

- There is a book in the works, but I would recommend looking at the websites –
1) 4states1source.org; and 2) <https://williamspennfoundation.org/delaware-river-watershed-initiative>

Dr. Shanna N. McClain: *What are some of the challenges of financing water infrastructure in conflict-afflicted countries such as in Mali?*

- Financing water infrastructure in Mali, and in other countries across Africa often requires multiple donors, who are largely external (foreign governments, World Bank, etc.) and have competing interests for the planned development. In order to receive the funding for the infrastructure, agreements are made on how they will address particular areas of interest – the challenges with this, are that they do not often reflect the needs or demands of the communities living where the infrastructure is likely to be developed. Forced displacement can occur, along with significant impacts to lives and livelihoods.
- In conflict-affected countries, the financing can sometimes fall through if the government is not seen as stable, or if the equitable sharing of resources post-infrastructure development are unable to be secured. In the case of the Taoussa dam, funding has been particularly hard to obtain and sustain for many of these reasons.

Are you using any specific tools or methodologies (like system dynamics modeling) in your effort towards a holistic, systems thinking approach?

- We have not yet begun the scenario modeling phase of the NASA – Mercy Corps partnership work. However, we do intend to eventually integrate systems dynamics modeling – the stipulation is that this approach still looks at specific environmental systems (e.g., hydrologic, terrestrial, atmospheric, etc.) and this project requires us to look at the complexities occurring from the interactions of these systems – to look at the coupled human/environment system. Therefore, we will most likely have to run simulations based on proxy estimations for certain variables.

For Bob J. Muscat: Given the basic responsibility of governments to resolve water resource decisions, what is the most useful role of NGOs as partners in the process of advocating peaceful resolutions of stated problems?

- On the important question of NGOs, they are often the only actors with enough standing to represent the interests of unorganized and/or powerless stakeholders. NGOs may be the only actors able to make the interests and views of powerless stakeholders widely known, thereby garnering additional weight to, and support for, the needs of these stakeholders.

Bob spoke about the joining of physical engineering, social engineering, and community engagement through responsible facilitation. Whose role is it to facilitate such an interdisciplinary approach? In the successful (peaceful) examples that he shared, which groups took responsibility for this central position?

- Regarding interdisciplinary responsibility, the engineers are always major actors from the start. They should take the initiative, if it is needed, to bring in knowledgeable representatives of other relevant disciplines. The engineers have a big stake in the success of projects they design, and success may depend on paying adequate attention to the social and economic outcomes besides the mere provision of water or generation of electricity. So, even if the political authorities are remiss regarding inclusion of the unorganized/powerless, the engineers should press the issue.

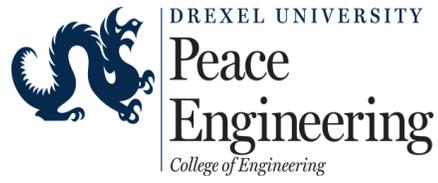
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- I don't see privatization as feasible for large-scale inter-country projects. Too much money is involved, and these projects have major implications for each country's international relations and domestic politics.

Panel II

For Dr. Marisa O. Ensor: What initiatives do you know of that are taking place to help alleviate stress on women collecting water miles across their home?

- Providing a comprehensive answer to that question would be beyond the scope of this venue. At the global level, you might want to consult the [SDG Global Acceleration Framework](#) established by the UN in July 2020, the 2018 UN Water report on [Gender Responsive Water & Sanitation Systems](#), and the Water & Sanitation section of USAID's [2020 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy](#).



For Scott Moore: Have you looked into the interdisciplinary work of Design of Policy?

- No, I'm not familiar with Design of Policy.