



Does the Cooperation of Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians in EXACT contribute to preventing Conflicts in the Region?

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In the early 1990s the Middle East peace process made serious progress starting with the Madrid Conference in October 1991. In support of the bilateral talks, multilateral working groups were established which were intended to cover a range of technical oriented issues extending across national boundaries. One of the groups is the Multilateral Working Group on Water Resources which started its activities in January 1995. The first project known as the *Regional Water Data Banks Project* focused on the enhancement of water data availability in the region. The project encourages organisations of the Core Parties (Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians) to cooperate on water related issues while being technically and financially supported by donors such as the USA, EU, Canada, France, Norway and The Netherlands. The steering committee, known as the Executive Action Team (EXACT) consists of representatives from the active donor countries and the three Core Parties. The steering group meets twice a year, preferably in the Middle East region. The 2-3 day event consists of separate meetings of the Core Parties and the Donors followed by a plenary session. The EXACT meetings have always been held in a positive atmosphere, even during periods when the tension in the region was high.

The activities carried out under EXACT include practical aspects such as the collection, storage and retrieval of hydro-meteorological data, development of standards and manuals for water quality analysis, supply of hard- and software, but also common research and training projects.

The project has been successful in establishing communication channels among col-

leagues from the Core Parties and to keep these channels open at all times. In 1999 the Core Parties created a 'Parliament' which meets regularly in the region without the Donors to resolve issues among themselves and to coordinate project activities. The organisation of joint technical activities and workshops have brought Core Party scientists and technicians together, often for the first time, and facilitated the exchange of technical water information about the region.