

Annual Report 2022 – Save the Tigris

Overall objective

Strengthen capacities of local network of activists to preserve water resources in Iraq and Mesopotamia.

Specific objectives

O1- Host a strategic meeting of Save the Tigris, bringing together regional and international activists of the campaign, and produce a new long-term strategy.

O2- Produce a new terms of reference for Save the Tigris

O3- Conduct an assembly in the framework of the Mesopotamian Water Forum.

O4- Advocate on the Iraqi and international level for the protection of the Iraqi Marshes, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

O5- Provide at least 2 publications on water security and protection of the Tigris River in Iraq.

Results Achieved

R1- A Strategic Meeting Organised and New Long-term Strategy for the Save the Tigris Foundation Discussed

Save the Tigris activists from Iraq, Kurdistan Region, Europe and the US spent two days from the 17th to 18th March 2022 in the House of Environment of the Tobacco Factory in Sulaymaniyah. Present among different activists were key partners in Humat Dijlah and Waterkeepers Iraq. A thorough discussion took place on the current status of environmental activism in the Mesopotamian region, which included the Steering Committee and Volunteers and Supporters who participate in the Mesopotamian Water Forum and other Save the Tigris activities. A big exchange was conducted on how environmental activists in the region can be best supported by our transboundary network, and how we can increase the visibility of local actors in the region. The general strategy and objectives of the Save the Tigris Foundation were thoroughly based on the feedback of Iraqi and Kurdish activists, as well as input from Syria, Turkey and Iran. During the Strategic Meeting, international, Iraqi and Kurdish activists participated in Iraqi Water Week and released a joint statement together with the NGO Coordination Committee of Iraq which was disseminated widely.

R2- A New Terms of Reference for the Save the Tigris Foundation

Following on from the strategic regional meeting mentioned above, the new strategic plan was produced and outlined in the form of updating the Foundation's thorough Terms of Reference, finalized and published in May 2022. Since the previous Terms of Reference was dated 2017, this revision was necessary, incorporating new strategies for climate change adaptation, water management, and pollution all within the current reality for environmental activism in Mesopotamia. The Terms of Reference are available on our website.

R3- Creation of an outline for a North East Syria Water Harvesting project, alongside key NES partners



On 27th – 28th September 2021, the International Water Forum in North and East Syria (NES) was organized by the Local Administration and Environment Authority in the Al-Jazira region, with the participation of Rojava University and the Al Firat Center for Water Studies in Hasakah, NES. Save the Tigris was present in the water forum and one of our activists participated publicly in a panel discussion.

Based on the contacts established in this forum, Save the Tigris has deepened its relations with Syrian partners in 2022, including the Al Firat Center, Syrian environmental engineers based in Europe and the NEXTEP Organization based in NES. We implemented a community-to-community meeting with rainwater harvesting practitioners in India and Syria in April 2022, followed by the establishment of a working group to develop a 2023 Water Harvesting project to begin in NES. The goal is to set up a water harvesting tool in the region, based on local knowledge and skills.

This activity is part of the Mesopotamian Water Forum process and will function to strengthen the collaboration between Syrians and Iraqis who both share the Euphrates river.

R4- Iraqi activists have directly advocated with policy makers and civil society in Europe to support environmental change in Iraq

As a result of the presence of Iraqi activists in Europe we managed to continue to build ties with changemakers in Europe, ranging from policymakers to other civil society activists. We met with the Norwegian Social Forum in Oslo, where Iraqi activists were given a platform to discuss the dire climate and Human Rights situation in Iraq. Such ties are set to be of great direct benefit to the activists of Humat Dijlah and others in the region.

R5- Save the Tigris released a new publication on threats posed by Makhoul Dam and released an Arabic translation of 2021's Evaporation Report

In July 2022, Save the Tigris Foundation released a campaign alongside main partners Humat Dijlah to disseminate the new and very important report titled: *The Makhoul Dam and its Environmental, Cultural and Social Impact*. The report, written by a Save the Tigris volunteer and member of the Steering Committee based on field work in Iraq, examined whether the benefits of the Makhoul Dam would outweigh the costs of the dam by outlining its immensely damaging environmental, cultural and social impacts, taking into account the technical aspects. It was made available both in English and Arabic.

In late 2022, the report produced in 2021: *Into Thin Air: Evaporation Losses from Dam Reservoirs in Iraq*, was translated into Arabic and rereleased, again, alongside our official partners in Iraq, Humat Dijlah. The report remained as relevant as ever and an Arabic translation was desperately needed.

Means

This project used the services of a Campaign coordinator, intern and web designer. Save the Tigris is supported in the Netherlands by an office in Amsterdam, and a functioning board with a charter. We produced prints of the abovementioned reports, continued to update and improve the website, and invested in new research.

Conclusion



2022 turned out to be a hard year for the Mesopotamian region with increasingly destabilizing and relentless issues in Mesopotamia ranging from the environmental (droughts, sandstorms, earthquakes, and the continued mismanagement of water resources) to the political instability.

The strategic meeting in Iraq and its outcome, the new strategic plan, provided a fresh stimulus for the work of Save the Tigris and a renewed pledge of support from international civil society for the activism of Iraqis. We published the hugely needed Makhoul Dam report and released an Arabic version of the Evaporation Report which was shared with policymakers in Iraq. The foundations have been put in for research on further dams in the region, new advancements on water harvesting activities plus events in the framework of Iraqi Water Week. These are what we aim to develop in 2023 and beyond.