

# Dealing with the Public in International Waters: Why Bother?

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Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement for RBOs

World Bank Webinar

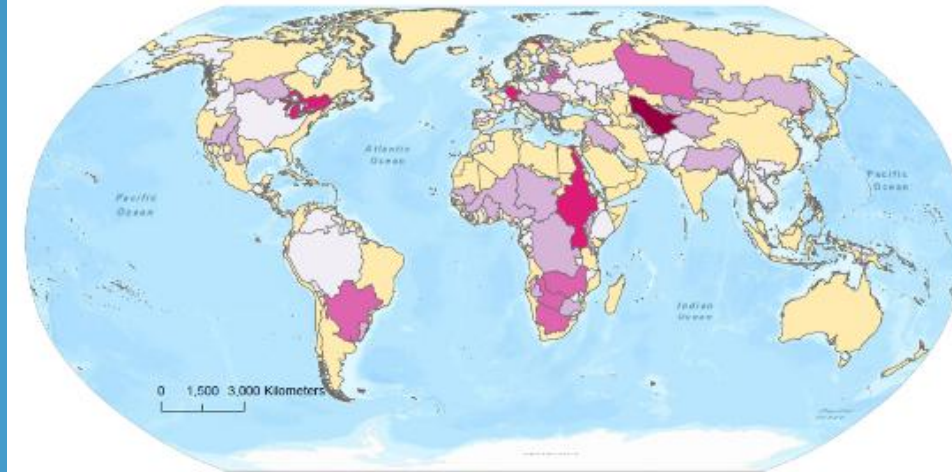
29 January 2026

[WWW.TRANSBOUNDARYWATERS.ORST.EDU](http://WWW.TRANSBOUNDARYWATERS.ORST.EDU)

# A global overview – Stakeholders in treaties & RBOs

- Out of the more than 800 treaties, only a 108 (13.5%) refer to stakeholder engagement
- Out of the 127 basin organizations worldwide, 43 make formal reference to stakeholder engagement
- Most focus on information sharing and awareness raising activities; only 16 cases are more extensive

Agreements with Stakeholder Participation Clauses by Basin

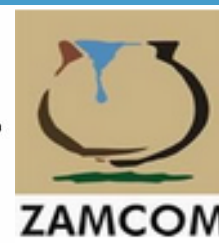


Robinson Projection  
Cartographer: Alexandra Caplan

Number of Agreements with Clause for Stakeholder Participation



Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS



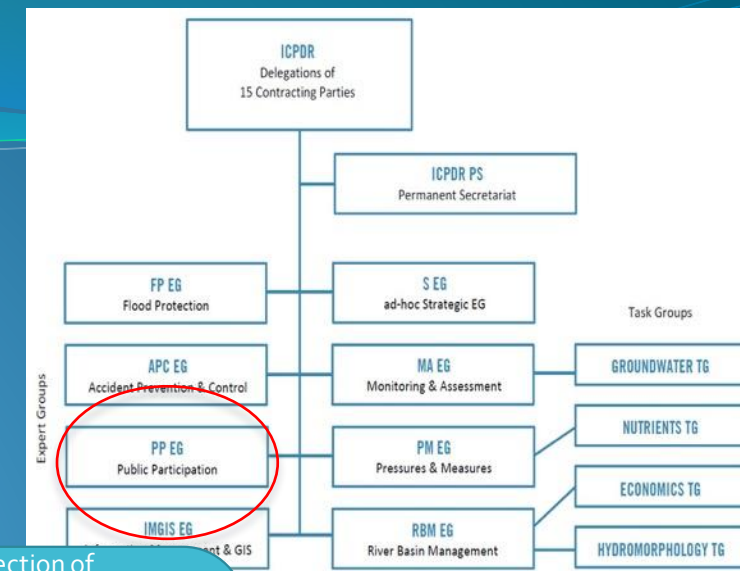
# The stakeholder involvement continuum



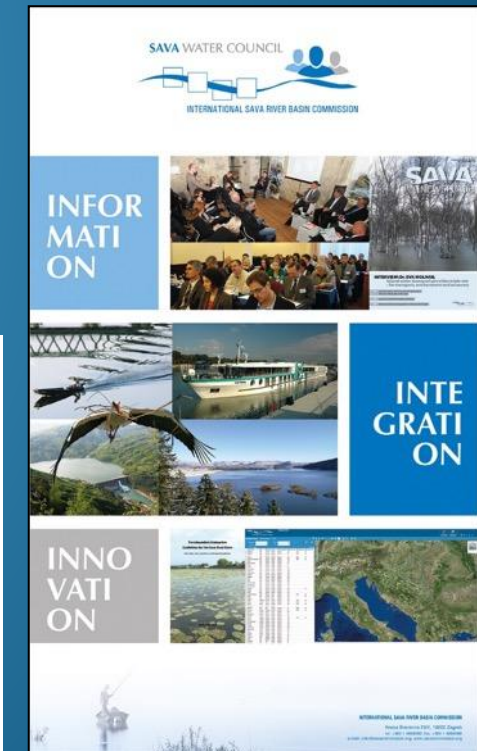
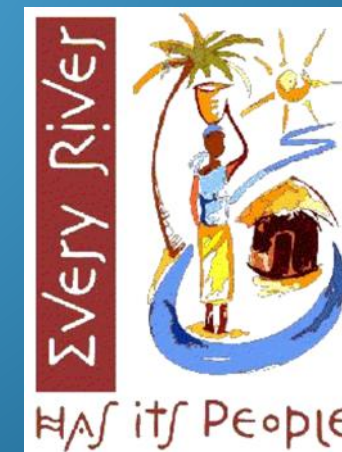
Source: Susanne Schmeier, IHE Delft, 2025

# Stakeholder Engagement from Around the World

- Danube River Basin
- International Sava River Basin Commission
  - Sava Water Council: Advisory Platform of ISRBC
  - Active involvement (non-gov, academic, business sectors)
- Nile Basin Discourse: network of NGOs to support Nile Basin Initiative
- The Okavango, OKACOM and the Basin-Wide Forum
  - National and local representatives, including communities, village headmen, tourism companies, etc.



- (1) direct collection of comments
- (2) stakeholder consultation workshop
- (3) social media campaign
- (4) online questionnaire (in 10 languages)
- (5) dissemination of information via website dedicated page and the journal *Danube Watch*



# Healing the Enlightenment Rift: The Issue is Never the Issue



**Mental**



**Physical**

**Spiritual**



**Emotional**



# 1964 Columbia River Treaty

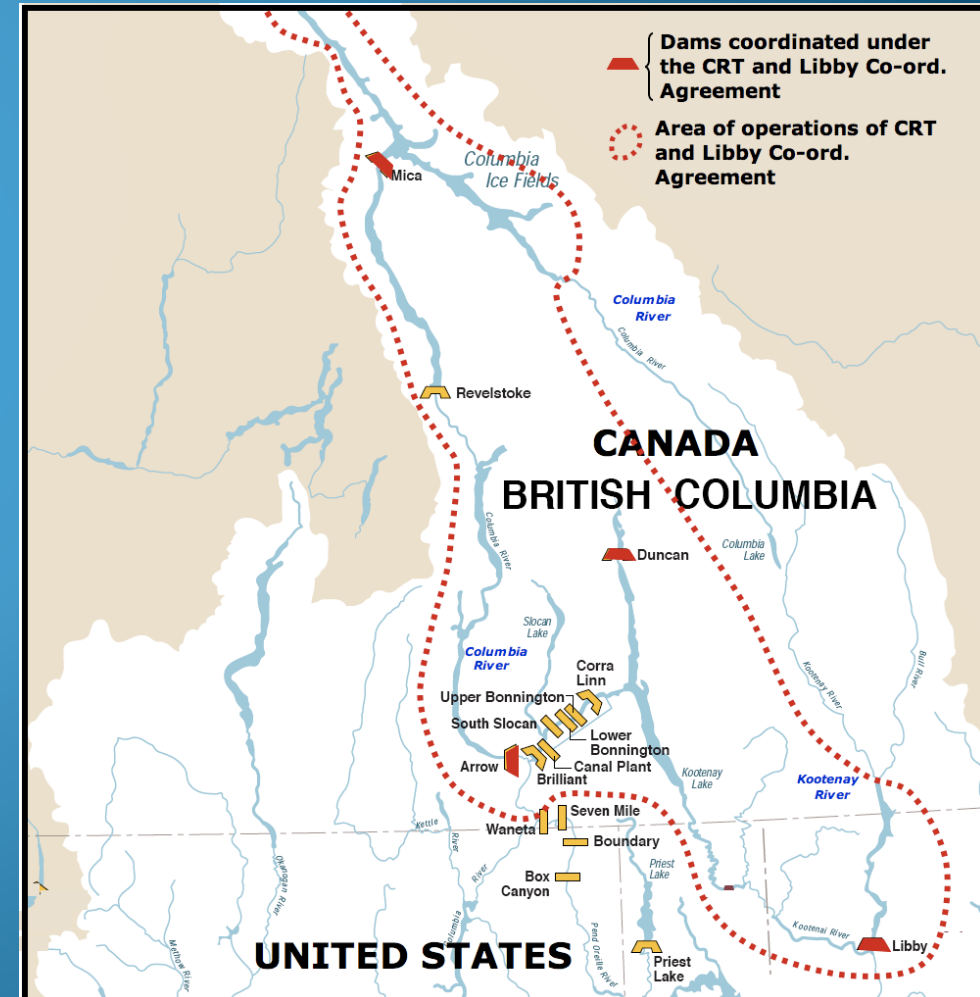
Allocated benefits, not water

Optimized for:

- Hydropower generation
- Flood control

Did not have provisions for:

- Environment as “3<sup>rd</sup> leg of stool”
- Tribal governance role
- Public participation
- Adaptation to changing values/conditions



# July 2024 Agreement in Principle



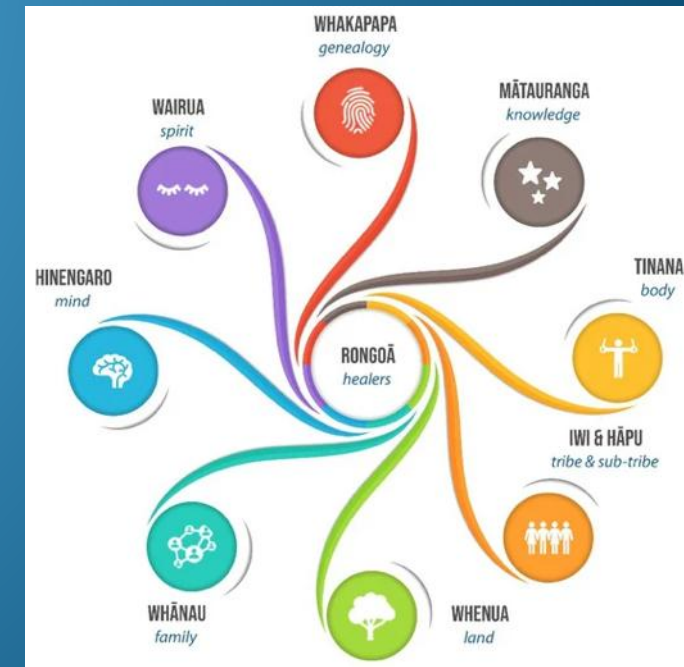
## Kootenay/Kootenai Transboundary Collaborative Workgroup

- to facilitate transboundary efforts around each country's interests to provide a forum for sharing, exchanging, and collaborating on scientific and Indigenous knowledge and other information to inform planning and management processes

## Joint Ecosystem and Indigenous and Tribal Cultural Values Body

- to enhance ecosystem health and integrate Indigenous and Tribal cultural values in decision-making by making formal recommendations in line with its terms of reference and workplan and applying a One River approach in its work. The JEB would be co-chaired by Indigenous Nations and Tribes.

March 2025: Treaty on “pause and review.”



# Elevating the Conversation



Egyptian Coptic Church tapped to play the role of mediator in Nile River dispute - Al Monitor: the Pulse of the Middle East

Egyptian Coptic Church tapped to play the role of mediator in Nile River dispute



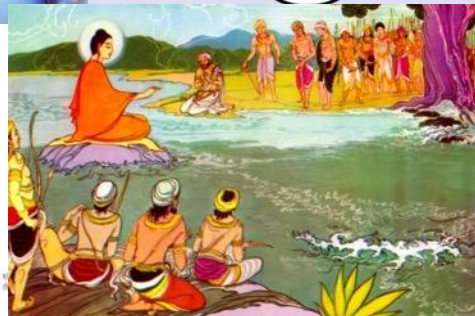
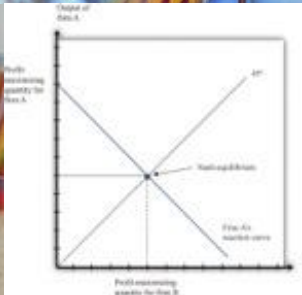
Coptic Pope Tawadros II (R), head of the Coptic Orthodox Church, shakes hands with former army chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi upon Sisi's arrival for a visit the night before Easter, in Cairo, April 19, 2014. Sisi was elected president a month later. (photo by REUTERS)

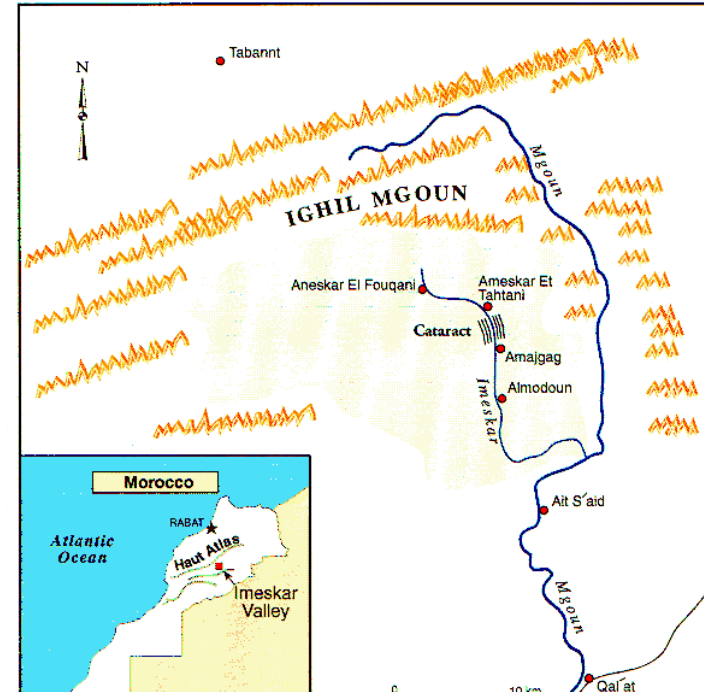
# Sulha: Reconciliation

- From *musalaha*, reconciliation: hostilities ended, honor re-established, and peace restored in the community.
- Two basic elements: rights and honor.
- *Tarrahdhin*: “Resolution of a conflict that involves no humiliation.”

# Kampung Spirit: Singapore Kindness Movement

- Spirit of neighborliness of village life
- Being revived for vertical living
- Community Mediation Centre – 70% of cases resolved
- Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals, since Oct. 2015





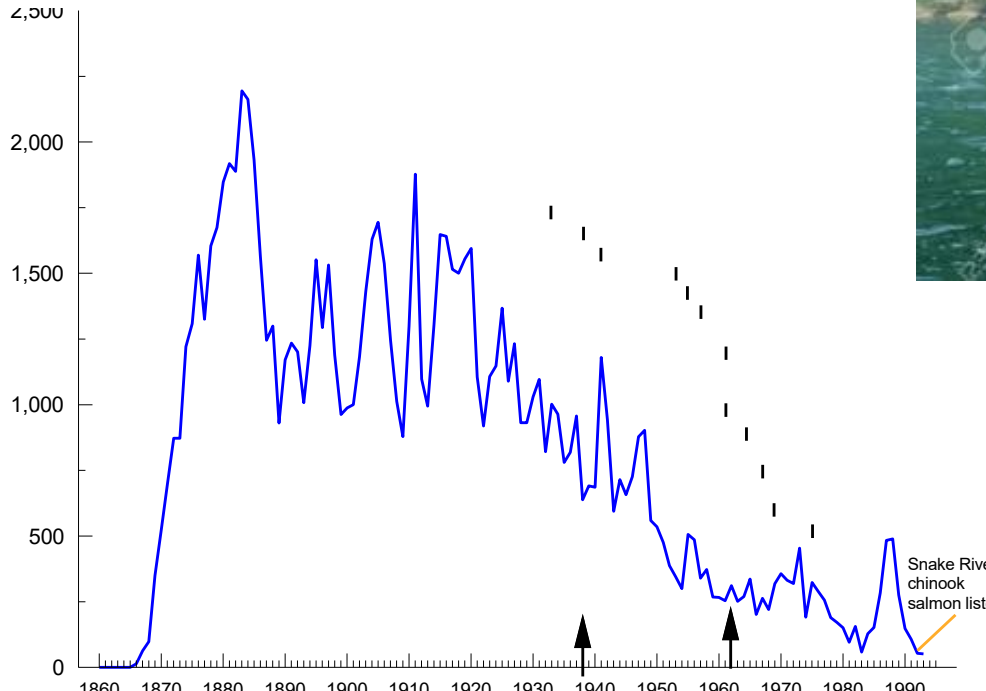
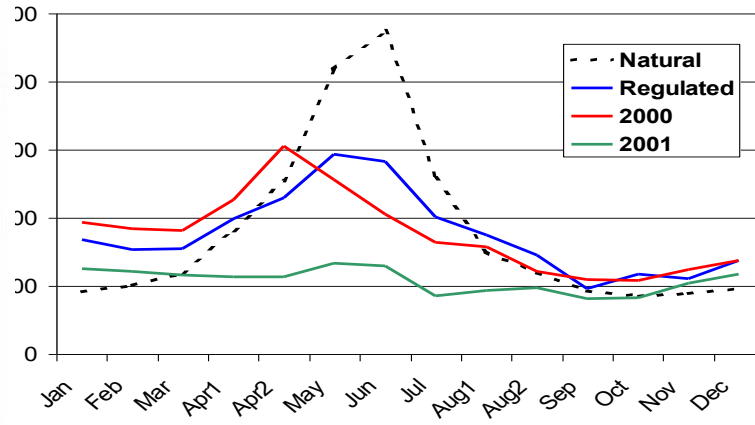


<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kariba-Dam>

# Universities Consortium for Columbia Basin Governance



# 2000 & 2001 Flows at The Dalles -- compared to average



# River Festivals




We drink it. They live in it.  
*We all rely on it.*



# River Festivals



# THE NILE PROJECT



WOMEN IN  
WATER DIPLOMACY  
NETWORK & PARTNERS

**Thank you!**

