



## **Water Diplomacy Sows Seeds of Peace Between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the Kabul River Basin**

Water is the essence of life. As we commemorate World Water Day on March 22, 10 experts (five from Afghanistan and five from Pakistan) gathered online and in person at the Peace Centre at Dawson College in Montreal for a week-long in-depth dialogue to find effective solutions and opportunities for sustainably resolving conflicts generated by the looming water crisis in the Kabul River Basin. The workshop was convened by the Center for the Advancement of Public Action (CAPA) at Bennington College and the Institute of Environmental Diplomacy and Security (IEDS) at the University of Vermont with the hope of developing a framework for sharing the transboundary water resources in Afghanistan and Pakistan in the Kabul River Basin.

The sessions brought science and civil society experts and community activists from both countries together. The participants explored the political, environmental, social, technical, scientific, and regulatory challenges in this region. They discussed and developed frameworks to proceed on environmental and science diplomacy (Track 2) and community action and

engagement (Track 3) between Afghanistan and Pakistan over shared transboundary water resources in the Kabul River Basin in accordance with international conventions and treaties.



This week-long convening led to the establishment of the Transboundary Water In-cooperation Network (TWIN), a network of networks that connects transboundary partners globally. TWIN plans to design a citizen science-based water quality monitoring system for the Kabul River Basin; develop a comprehensive set of measures to promote community and scientific cooperation; develop strategies for community awareness and engagement; and organize science and civil society water diplomacy events. Our network partners have been inspired by successful environmental cooperation projects in Palestine, Israel, and Jordan, as well as in Peru, Ecuador, and Cyprus.

The following organizations represented during this convening included: Community Motivation and Development and Organization (CMDO), Coordination of Afghan Relief (COAR), House of Afghans, Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), German Development Bank (KFW), Arava Institute for Environmental Studies (AIES), i.GREENS, Institute of Environmental Diplomacy and Security (IEDS) at the University of Vermont, and the Center for the Advancement of Public Action (CAPA) at Bennington College. The next TWIN meeting on public and science diplomacy on the Kabul River Basin is planned for next year in Kathmandu, Nepal.

For more information, contact Asim Zia at [asim.zia@uvm.edu](mailto:asim.zia@uvm.edu) or Susan Sgorbati at

## Water Resources and Bennington Students

Students Sona Markosyan, Bibek Basnet, and Raphael Pierson-Sante participated in the Transboundary Water Peace Talks. Pictured are the students asking questions about the project.



"In Montreal, we [CAPA, University of Vermont students, and Bennington students] met to propose new ideas about water resources in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and how to take care of and protect the shared water. They see water sharing resources as a potential problem causing future conflict between the two countries. A lot of people gathered together from Afghanistan and Pakistan supporting the project of bringing these people together and discussing the possible ways to propose new ideas about how to take care of the shared water.

I went because I am taking the class with Susan Sgorbati and Michael Cohen about transforming communities and water resources in this region. We are soon going to see the results of the project and in ten years will see it go from track three, which is the community effort and advocacy, to track two, which are scientists, to track one, which are the big level country governments and diplomats— So something will actually get put on paper and I will be proud to take part in it.

The most meaningful part of this for me, besides just being involved, was meeting people who do so much vital work for their countries even from outside their borders. A lot of the participants work in the US but still want to do something for their countries, and it was a very good opportunity for me to meet these people and think about the work I want to do in my own career. On a personal level, as I got to know the participants, I started asking myself the questions: What work do I want to do in the US? What can I take home to positively impact Armenia?"

—Sona Markosyan

**Visit the CAPA Website**



**Don't hesitate to reach out to the Student Educational Policies Committee (SEPC)!**

Your CAPA representative is [Claire Webb](#)

Check out the SEPC Website:

[www.benningtonsepc.com](http://www.benningtonsepc.com)

## Upcoming Events & Opportunities

For more events, visit the [CAPA Website](#)

April 4 | [Diasporic Translations](#) | CAPA Symposium | 7 PM

Katrina Dodson is the translator from the Portuguese of *The Complete Stories* by Clarice Lispector (New Directions, 2015), and winner of the PEN Translation Prize. She is currently translating the 1928 Brazilian modernist classic, *Macunaíma, the Hero Without a Character*, by Mário de Andrade.

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May 11-12 | [Incarceration in America: Immigration Detention](#) | CAPA Symposium | May 11th at 7 PM, May 12th at 3 PM

The United States operates the world's largest immigration detention system. In 2016 (the most recent available figures), nearly 360,000 people were detained, awaiting resolution of their immigration status or deportation. Those detained in inadequate and frequently inhumane conditions include asylum seekers, children, pregnant women, and the seriously ill. Since 2003, more than 180 people have died in ICE custody.

*Panels: General Trends in Immigration Enforcement Immigration, Detention and Private Prisons, and Local Government and NGO Involvement*

**Faculty Feature: Alisa Del Tufo**

Bennington College, teaching a seven week course on Oral History, Restorative Justice, and Youth Impacted by the Criminal Justice System in Bennington.



An oral historian herself, Alisa is the founder of [Threshold Collaborative](#), a storygathering organisation which has produced oral history projects on food access, violence against women, and the experience of youth. She has also founded [Sanctuary for Families](#) and [CONNECT](#), which serve survivors of domestic violence, sex trafficking and related forms of gender violence. Her Participatory Action Research (PAR) is based on the principal that the subjects of a research initiative are the experts in their experiences. PAR is a collaborative process in which the target population is involved at every step of the research project.

Her current work continues to address gender violence, including a project to reduce sexual harm in Vermont schools, which is in the process of developing a facilitated dialogue handbook. She has also established a series of Truth and Reconciliation Events, which have addressed both gender and race-based violence. This project is currently being embedded in the curriculum of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Texas in order to give students oral history tools for organizing, impact, and information dissemination. In New York City, her intergenerational storytelling project brings together teens and older adults to develop narratives about settlement houses and grassroots movements for social change.

Students in Alisa's Oral History course are meeting with oral historians and local experts in child welfare, restorative justice, and incarceration to develop a plan for a participatory action research project that addresses the juvenile justice system in Bennington. She hopes to connect the college with the surrounding community as mutual resources to make restorative justice mainstream.





Threshold Collaborative: [Conversations With Farm Women. a Celebration of Beauty and Abundance](#) (Pictured: Tammy White; Jennifer Lawrence; Taylor Barcelow; and Char, Tammy, and Sarah Jane White. Photographs by Amy Anselmo & Daydriellane Osorio.)



**The CAPA Newsletter is a student-run project with the mission of developing the CAPA community.**

We want to share the amazing work that our friends and coworkers are producing. Each issue will include features on students and faculty members with inspiring projects, CAPA classes tackling important issues, and upcoming events and opportunities.

We want your feedback! If you have any suggestions to make this newsletter something that's truly beneficial to you [let us know](#).

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EM '20 and KN '20