

Center for Applied Environmental Diplomacy



2025 Impact Report

Executive Summary

The **Arava Institute for Environmental Studies**, as one of the Middle East's leading centers for environmental learning and cross-border cooperation, operates its Center for Applied Diplomacy (CAED) as a dedicated applied research and diplomacy hub. The Arava Institute brings together Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian, and international students and researchers to study shared ecological challenges and build professional networks that can function even in times of political strain. As part of this ecosystem, CAED extends the Institute's mission beyond academia by translating environmental knowledge into dialogue platforms, policy engagement, and field-based initiatives across the region.

In 2025, the Institute's **Center for Applied Environmental Diplomacy (CAED)** advanced its mission to translate environmental cooperation into practical peacebuilding outcomes across one of the world's most complex regions. Through high-level cross-border convenings, applied research, pilot initiatives, and environmental interventions in Gaza, CAED demonstrated how environmental diplomacy can move from dialogue to delivery.

Over the year, CAED has engaged hundreds of practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and community leaders through in-person and online activities, which focused on the Water–Energy–Food–Ecosystems (WEFE) nexus. These efforts generated new cross-border initiatives, strengthened regional professional networks, and produced policy-relevant research addressing recovery, resilience, and long-term sustainability.

In parallel, CAED's operational engagement in Gaza under the Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza initiative, in partnership with Damour for



Community Development, delivered urgent environmental-humanitarian support while laying foundations for dignity, public health, and recovery. Together, these strands reflect the Institute's core applied diplomacy value proposition: combining diplomacy, knowledge, and action to create a measurable impact.

In 2025, CAED's programs, diplomatic engagements, and humanitarian operations reached an estimated 12,315 direct beneficiaries. This includes 315 regional and international practitioners, policymakers, and diplomats who participated in CAED's conferences, living labs, and cross-border dialogue platforms, and approximately 12,000 displaced individuals residing in JHG displacement camps who benefited from shelter, sanitation, potable water, winterization support, and more than 72,000 hot meals delivered. Together, these interventions reflect CAED's dual commitment to advancing environmental diplomacy and impact on the vulnerable communities in the fragile and conflict-affected settings.

- **Core Focus Areas:** Environmental diplomacy, WEFE nexus cooperation, applied research, peacebuilding, environmental action in vulnerable communities.
- **Geographic Reach:** Israel, Palestine (West Bank and Gaza), Jordan, Cyprus, Greece, United States
- **Engagement Modalities:** Conferences, living labs, policy reports, training programs, diplomatic briefings, environmental interventions.



Introduction

CAED's 2025 work combined quantitative outputs with qualitative outcomes:

- Sustained cross-border professional networks despite political fragmentation
- Translation of dialogue into implemented initiatives
- Production of policy-relevant knowledge cited by practitioners and decision-makers
- Life-saving support for vulnerable off-grid communities delivered under extreme constraints



Programmatic Achievements

Advancing Cross-Border Environmental Diplomacy

Cross-Border WEF Experts Conference

Athens, Greece | January–February 2025

Participants: 60 regional and international experts

The Institute, through CAED, convened senior practitioners and emerging leaders working across water, energy, food security, and environmental governance. The conference provided a neutral platform for cross-border dialogue at a time of heightened political tension, enabling technical cooperation grounded in shared environmental challenges.



Key Outcomes:

- Identification of seven collaborative initiatives across the WEFE nexus
- Strengthened professional networks among Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian, and international experts
- A shared analytical framework linking environmental cooperation to peacebuilding outcomes

**Launch of Athens Conference Initiatives**

Spring 2025

Initiatives launched: 4 out of 7 original initiatives

Participants engaged: 30

Several initiatives transitioned from concept to design and implementation, demonstrating an emphasis on follow-through as vital for applied environmental diplomacy work rather than one-off convenings. These initiatives addressed applied challenges such as water reuse, decentralized energy solutions, and food system resilience.



Applied Innovation and Regional Learning

Cross-Border WEFE Experts Online Conference

August 2025

Participants: 50

The online conference expanded CAED's reach, enabling participation from experts unable to travel. It reinforced continuity among the WEFE expert community and sustained momentum from earlier in-person engagements.

EcoFuture Israel Living Lab

Eilat | May 2025

Participants: 27

The EcoFuture Living Lab provides hands-on exposure to applied environmental technologies and governance models. Participants explored how innovative ecosystems can support sustainability while fostering cross-border collaboration.

Impact:

- Enhanced practitioner understanding of scalable environmental technologies
- Peer learning across sectors and national boundaries
- Integration of lessons into subsequent CAED programming



EcoFuture Local Solutions, Regional Impact

Negev, West Bank & Valley of Springs | May 2025

Participants: 22

This field-based program introduced participants to WEFE technologies operating in diverse political and ecological contexts. The initiative emphasized adaptability, local ownership, and the importance of context-sensitive solutions.



EcoFuture – Israeli Demonstration Pilots in the Valley of the Springs

This year, the two EcoFuture WEFE Israeli Demonstration pilots in the Valley of the Springs were launched:

- The Recycled Aquaculture System (RAS) at the Eden Farm R & D Station, demonstrating the feasibility of closed system salmon farming in the Jordan Valley. CAED's contribution was to provide monitoring and heat/cooling exchange.
- The Satellite Pond system at Kibbutz Nir David demonstrates performance improvements in open fishpond farming. CAED's contribution was to provide monitoring.

Both pilots demonstrate the water, energy, food security, and environmental (WEFE) nexus.



Knowledge Leadership and Thought Partnership

Publications

- **Adapting for Impact: Intergenerational Strategy in the Peacebuilding Sector** – Shira Kronich, Ambreen Ben Shmuel, Mohammad Azraq, and Liel Maghen – Based on surveys of Arava Institute alumni and others from the Institute’s ecosystem, this report focuses on ways to integrate the next generation into applied environmental diplomacy and peacebuilding.
- **Shared Environments, Shared Futures: A Perspective on Nature-Based and Decentralized Solutions for Gaza’s Recovery** – Author, Elaine Donderer, contributor Dr. David Lehrer – This report articulated a vision for Gaza’s recovery grounded in nature-based and decentralized infrastructure solutions.



Environmental Recovery and Post-Conflict Futures

From Destruction to Recovery Conference

Washington, DC | September 2025

Partners: Duke University, Damour, Arava Institute

Registered participants: 70

This conference addressed pathways for environmental recovery in conflict-affected contexts, with a particular focus on Gaza. Discussions bridged academic research, policy planning, and on-the-ground realities.





Diplomatic Engagement and Institutional Partnerships

Luncheon at the German Embassy

Tel Aviv | October 2025

Participants: 40

CAED briefed diplomats and partners on its regional work, highlighting the role of environmental diplomacy in conflict mitigation and recovery.

Israel–Jordan Food Security Conference

Larnaca, Cyprus | November 2025

Partners: Mitvim & Arava Institute

Participants: 16

This targeted conference addressed shared food security challenges, fostering pragmatic dialogue between Israeli and Jordanian stakeholders.



Diplomatic Field Visit

Al-Furaa Bedouin School & Arava Institute
Technology Hub (near Arad)

The Institute hosted the Dutch Ambassador alongside European and US embassy representatives, showcasing applied environmental education and technology in practice and strengthening diplomatic understanding of grassroots impact.



Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza 2025

In response to the crisis in Gaza, the Institute operationalized its environmental diplomacy ethos through direct action, prioritizing dignity, WASH and energy services, health, and resilience.

Jumpstarting Hope in Gaza (JHG) is CAED's integrated environmental response initiative designed to address urgent needs while preserving dignity and laying foundations for sustainable recovery in one of the most fragile contexts in the world.

In 2025, JHG combined life-saving assistance with practical, context-appropriate infrastructure, delivering hot meals, safe water, sanitation facilities, and winterization support to displaced families across Gaza. Beyond immediate relief, the initiative emphasized sustainability and resilience through interventions such as the establishment of organized displacement camps, the operation of water trucking systems, and the introduction of innovative technologies like atmospheric water generators in health facilities.

Grounded in the Institute's broader environmental diplomacy and recovery vision, JHG reflects a commitment to action that meets environmental imperatives today while supporting sustainable, more resilient communities tomorrow.



Interventions to Vulnerable Off-grid Displaced Persons Communities in Gaza



100 toilets constructed with basic sewage systems



72,000 hot meals distributed to displaced families



Water trucking: 10 m³/day for approximately 60 days (July- September), supplying thousands with potable water

4 Watergen Gen-M Pro atmospheric water generators successfully brought into Gaza currently being installed at the International Medical Corps field hospital in Gaza City

7,200 waterproof tarps distributed across beneficiary sites

Displaced Persons Shelters Support

New shelter established in 2025 Samar Camp
(North Mawasi) ~150 families

Weatherproof tents, toilets, showers,
wastewater system, and cesspits

Floodwater drainage tunnels

Potable water supply

Basic energy supply

Education programs

Daily hot meals (in partnership with
World Central Kitchen)

Mesk and Leyan established in 2024 ~700 families

Weatherproof tents, toilets, showers, wastewater
system, and cesspits

Connection to a local well for water supply

Winterization and Infrastructure

Food supply

These interventions reduced public health risks, improved living conditions, and introduced sustainable water technologies into emergency healthcare settings.



Key Performance Indicators

Estimated tons of greenhouse gas emissions reduced	46
Climate resiliency and security initiatives implemented on the organizational, communal, or governmental level	7
Number of bilateral, multilateral, interfaith or multi-faith climate initiatives developed and implemented	4
Number of practitioners, policymakers, and diplomats engaged across CAED's regional programming	315
Number of displaced individuals receiving direct support through JHG operations	12000

Looking Ahead to 2026

Building on the previous year, plans for 2026 include:

- Scaling successful WEFE initiatives into longer-term programs
- Expanding training and fellowship offerings in sustainable finance and impact investing
- Deepening engagement on environmental recovery in Gaza and other fragile contexts
- Implementing decentralized solutions for vulnerable communities in Gaza.
- Strengthening partnerships with governments, donors, and academic institutions



Conclusion

In 2025, the Arava Institute's Center for Applied Environmental Diplomacy demonstrated that environmental diplomacy is not only about dialogue, but about action. By bridging research, policy, innovation, and humanitarian response, CAED advanced a model of engagement capable of delivering tangible impact while keeping open the space for cooperation, even in times of crisis.



To donate towards our applied environmental diplomacy work or find out more, please reach out to Dr. David Lehrer at david.lehrer@arava.org

