



INTERNATIONAL
RiverFoundation

Annual Report 2018 / 2019

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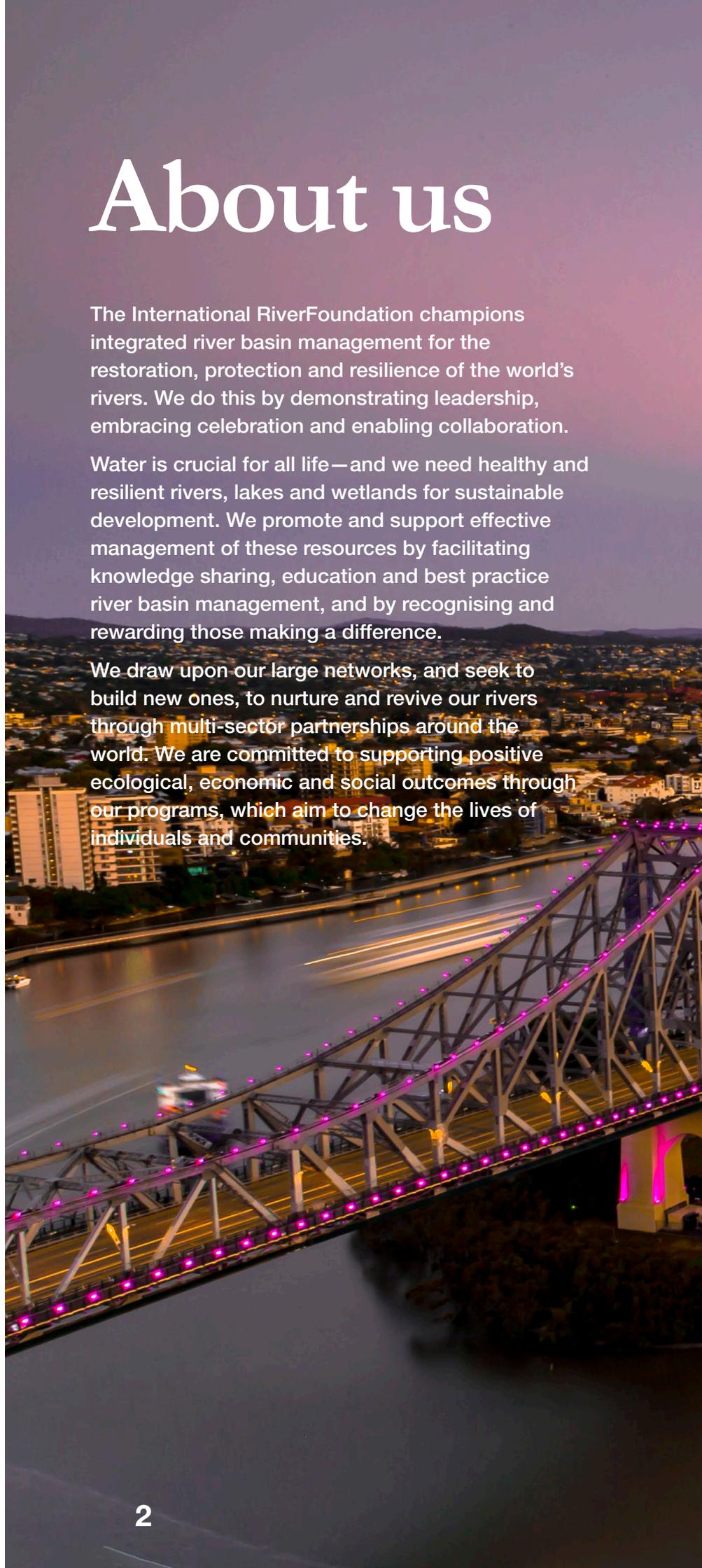
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About us

The International RiverFoundation champions integrated river basin management for the restoration, protection and resilience of the world’s rivers. We do this by demonstrating leadership, embracing celebration and enabling collaboration.

Water is crucial for all life—and we need healthy and resilient rivers, lakes and wetlands for sustainable development. We promote and support effective management of these resources by facilitating knowledge sharing, education and best practice river basin management, and by recognising and rewarding those making a difference.

We draw upon our large networks, and seek to build new ones, to nurture and revive our rivers through multi-sector partnerships around the world. We are committed to supporting positive ecological, economic and social outcomes through our programs, which aim to change the lives of individuals and communities.



Our goals

- To recognise, reward and replicate exceptional efforts in the protection, restoration and resilience of the world's rivers,
- To facilitate global knowledge sharing in sustainable, integrated river basin management,
- To raise awareness of the important environmental, economic, scientific, social and cultural aspects of rivers,
- To facilitate multi-sector partnerships and alliances that further global action to protect and revive rivers, and
- To empower and support individuals to make a positive contribution towards the world's river basins

Our vision

We envision a future where healthy, resilient rivers support thriving communities, ecosystems and economies

A message from our Chairman & CEO

2019 has been an exciting year for IRF. We have established new programs, forged strong alliances with partners and hosted arguably our most successful *Riversymposium* to date.

This year we have fully embraced the notion of 'resilience', weaving this important aspect through all of our programs. With extreme weather events increasing and our waterways feeling their impact like never before, we are encouraging river basin professionals to look beyond restoration and recovery and put steps in place to build resilience in the face of global change. This requires a highly proactive approach, collaboration and long-term planning, and we have recently launched our Resilient Rivers program to help river basins around the world become more resilient.

The overarching theme of the 22nd International *Riversymposium* in Brisbane was Resilient Rivers, and the high number of attendees suggests our global river community is ready and willing to walk this path. Some 600+ guests gathered in the grand plaza ballroom to witness the awarding of the International Riverprize (by the Bert and Vera Thiess Foundation), celebrating the USA's James River and its transformation from one of the most polluted in the country to one of the most improved through four decades of effort.

We held our first *RiverPatrons* event in 2019, welcoming an exclusive group of eight inaugural Patrons to network along the Brisbane River prior to the 22nd *Riversymposium* commencing. We could not have asked for a more passionate and engaged group for our first *RiverPatrons* event. All are river champions who 'walk the walk.' The example of what it means to be a true leader with both business smarts and consideration for the natural environment.

In 2019 we also launched an exciting new offering - our River ThinkTanks. We are uniquely placed to plan, convene and synthesise expert panels on a range of water issues, and our first ThinkTank resulted in a series of tangible recommendations for the University of Queensland to mitigate water quality issues in the main lake located at their Brisbane St Lucia campus.

Supporting emerging water leaders remains a high priority for IRF, and with the support of our sponsors and partners, we have been fortunate enough to continue to run our Emerging Water Professionals Program, and to award two Ken Thiess Scholarships and one Vera Thiess Fellowship for Women in 2019. In looking at our diverse group of EWPP participants, scholarship recipients and fellows, we are particularly proud of the range of countries and disciplines represented. We hope that by building capacity in developing countries and enabling collaboration between geographies and sectors at this early stage, future generations will reap the benefits of having knowledgeable, open-minded and well-rounded river leaders.

As our portfolio of programs continues to grow and diversify, so too do our corporate partnerships. A number of discussions are underway with companies looking for opportunities to better manage their water resources and communicate the significance of these activities to local communities.

As always, a special thank you goes out to all of our sponsors, donors and pro-bono partners. Whether you have sponsored a program directly, offered a donation, contributed to our operating costs or gifted your time, we are truly grateful. The impacts of your contributions are far-reaching, with countless lives and ecosystems benefiting from the programs you directly and indirectly support.

To the Bert and Vera Thiess Foundation, Brisbane City Council, Martin Albrecht AC, Thiess Pty Ltd and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, thank you sincerely for your continued support and belief in our vision.

Throughout the coming year, we look forward to advancing our Resilient Rivers Blueprint, building our corporate partnerships, convening more ThinkTanks, welcoming new *RiverPatrons*, building our alumni network and of course hearing new stories of individuals and organisations doing fantastic work to care for our waterways.

Leadership

Vera Thies Fellowship for Women

The Vera Thies Fellowship gives women the opportunity to gain valuable work experience through the IRF and its partners, with the goal of advancing women's participation in water and river management. This fellowship goes not only towards supporting the selected candidate, but towards continuing the important work of bridging the gap in women's participation in river basin management.

Awarded in the name of the late Vera Thies, a long-time supporter of the IRF, the Fellowship recognises Vera's and the Thies family's ongoing philanthropic support and commitment to forward-looking initiatives of the International RiverFoundation. Through the Fellowship, we honour Vera's legacy by supporting women's involvement in river basin and water management. New fellows are announced at the International Riversymposium's Gala Dinner the year prior.

2019 scholarship recipient:

Qing Ye (China)

(pictured right)

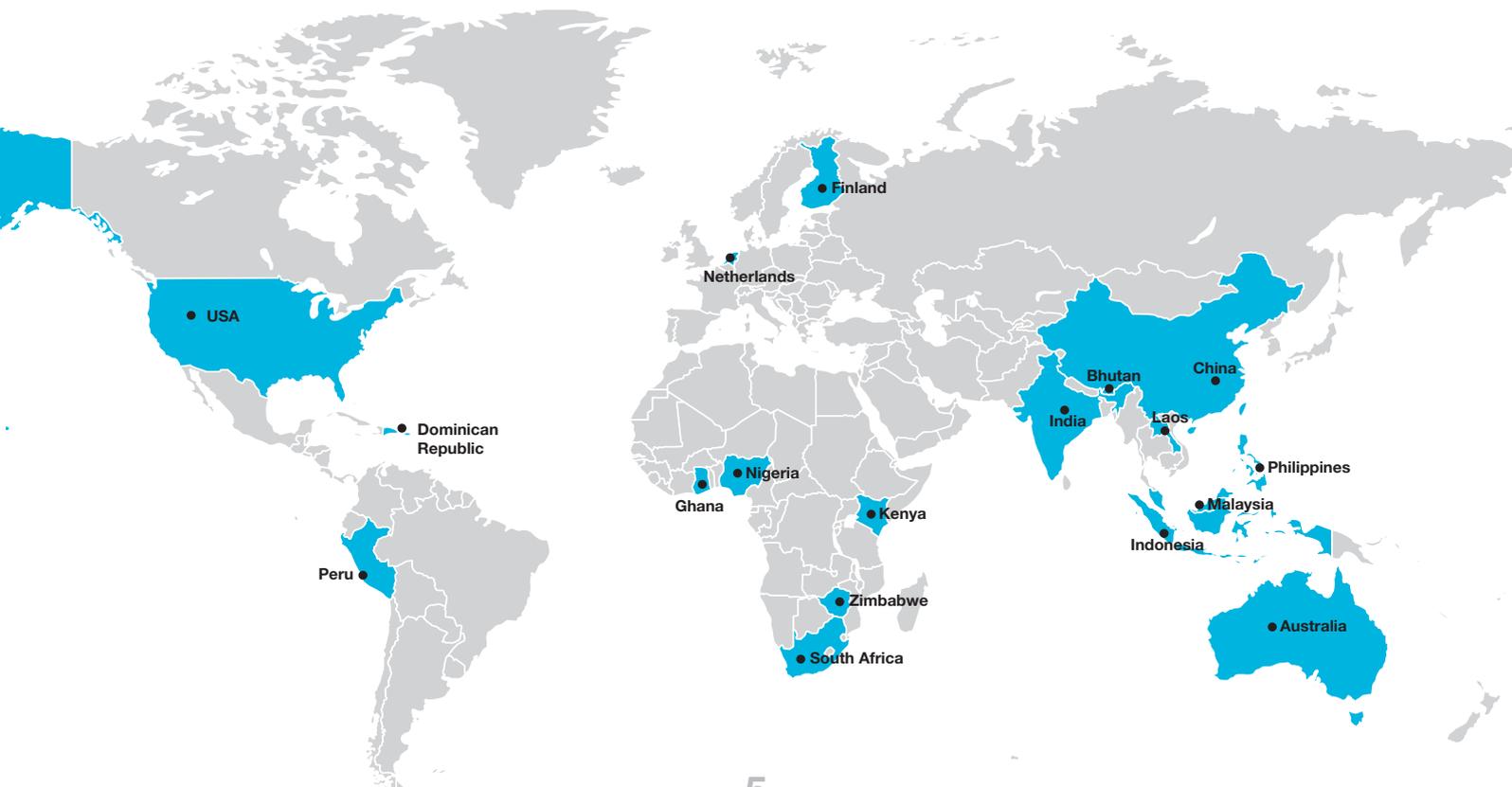
Qing Ye graduated with a Master of International Economics and Finance Management, having also completed a Bachelor of Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management at the University of Queensland.



2018 scholarship recipients:

Charity Mundava (Zimbabwe)

Carmina Rivera (Philippines)



Ken Thiess Memorial Scholarship

2019 scholarship recipients:

José Fernández (Peru)

(pictured right)

Rosie Sanderson (Australia)

(pictured far right)

2018 scholarship recipients:

Camaria Holder (Antigua and Barbuda)

Rej Bungabong (Philippines)



The Ken Thiess Memorial Scholarship builds capacity in Integrated Water Resource Management to improve outcomes in Australia and in developing countries. Awarded to one person from a developing country and one Australian engineer, the scholarship enables students to study the International WaterCentre Master of Integrated Water Management in Brisbane, Australia by funding tuition, living expenses, travel and health cover.

The Emerging Water Professionals Program

The Emerging Water Professionals Program (EWPP) has been running for five years and has involved over 120 participants.

Strong, consistent support from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has enabled dozens of emerging water professionals to participate in the EWPP, which promotes interdisciplinary and cross-generational collaboration, supporting the professional and personal development of young and emerging water leaders.

49 emerging professionals made up the fifth EWPP cohort at the 2019 *Riversymposium*, with 21 of those generously sponsored by DFAT.

Activities held as part of the EWPP include the opportunity to meet established/senior professionals at the 'Water Wisdom Breakfast' and a celebratory networking dinner. Participants also took part in a new 'Innovation Challenge', where they utilised imagination and creativity to propose innovative solutions to river basin issues faced by river leaders from Asia and the Pacific.

The EWPP currently has over 200 members and IRF continues to seek opportunities to implement year-round activities.



“Meeting with and listening to different professionals talk about water and river management was just so powerful. I feel now I have been given a voice and basic foundations to work on towards water and river management.”

Emerging Water Professional, 2019

2019 Emerging Water Professionals at the 22nd International Riversymposium

Leadership

RiverPatrons

The *RiverPatrons* Group comprises a passionate group of respected community leaders, Chief Executives and Chairs from Australian and global organisations, all who support the restoration, protection and resilience of our rivers.

Our *RiverPatrons* champion our cause and understand the importance of the stewardship and nurturing healthy and resilient rivers now and for the future. Through our *RiverPatrons* Group, IRF also offers the opportunity for the employees and stakeholders of Patron organisations to learn, share, inspire and transform rivers through participating in our initiatives and activities.

The *RiverPatrons* group was launched and came together for the first time as part of the 2019 International Riversymposium program. This inaugural event provided the *RiverPatrons* and guests:

- An opportunity to network with each other and other VIPs,
- Exposure to Brisbane as a river city,
- Increased awareness of the role of ports, recreation, development and educational institutions, and
- An understanding of the IRF and its programs.

2019 RiverPatrons	
Cr Adrian Schrunner	Lord Mayor of Brisbane
Martin Albrecht AC	Albrecht Foundation
Daphne Wood (rep)	Wood Family
Nicola Irvine	Director, BMI Group
Jerry Maycock	CEO, Port of Brisbane
Ben Pevreall	Regional Vice-President, Asia Pacific, Valmont Group
Peter Varghese AO	Chancellor, University of Queensland
Douglas Thompson	Managing Director, Thiess Pty Ltd



Alumni Network

Over the past twenty years, the International RiverFoundation has built a strong network of prestigious river prize winners and finalists.

The 20th Anniversary Riverprize Gala Dinner was an opportunity to officially launch the Alumni Network, with 19 members represented on the night.

The Network provides collaborative learning opportunities for all members.



Celebration

Thiess International Riverprize

2019 Winner: James River, James River Association (JRA), Virginia, USA

When the James River Association (JRA) was founded in 1976, the James River was considered one of the most polluted rivers in the country with large sections declared dead or unfit for human use. Through four decades of consistent and continued effort, the James River has transformed from one of the most polluted in the country to one of the most improved.

This remarkable improvement in river health is the result of an inclusive, comprehensive approach to strengthen public awareness and appreciation, as well as many years of public and private investments in conservation projects. Moreover, access to the James River has expanded to over 200 public access points. The state of Virginia has established comprehensive plans to increase resiliency along the James River, addressing climate change and other future threats.



Finalist: Chicago River, Friends of the Chicago River, Illinois, USA

Over the past 30 years, Friends has focussed on solutions such as reducing combined sewer overflows, stormwater runoff, litter and phosphorus; reconnecting reaches via a statewide dam removal program; securing sewage effluent disinfection; improving oxygen levels, improving river-edge and instream habitat and increasing green infrastructure all along the river system.



Finalist: Whangawehi Stream, Whangawehi Catchment Management Group, New Zealand

WCMG's habitat restoration programme has been implemented effectively with the establishment of 160,000 native trees (over 4 winter periods), 60 hectares of riparian margins and the retirement of 10 hectares of native bush block. In 2018, water quality in the Whangawehi stream had improved by 15%. The Whangawehi Stream was the winner of the 2018 Australasia Riverprize.

Riverprize is the world's foremost award in river basin management. It recognises and rewards organisations making waves in the sustainable management of the world's rivers.

The prize rewards inspiring initiatives that demonstrate integrated river basin management to restore and protect rivers, wetlands, lakes and estuaries. Previous winners and finalists have received widespread recognition, built new partnerships, shared their knowledge and won other awards following Riverprize, becoming part of a network of river practitioners and experts from around the world.

Celebration

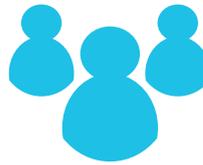
International Riversymposium

In 2019, the 22nd International Riversymposium returned to Brisbane, with more than 530 delegates embracing the 'Resilient Rivers' theme.

This year also marked the 20th anniversary of the Riverprize – around 600 guests attended the gala dinner to celebrate this achievement and congratulate the latest International Riverprize winner; James River, USA.

Keynote presentations were given by: Mara Bún, President, Australian Conservation Foundation; Peter Batey, Chair, Mersey Rivers Trust UK; Marcella D'Souza, Director, WOTR Centre for Resilience Studies India; Au Shion Lee, Senior Water Resources Specialist, Asian Development Bank; and Leith Bouilly and Karlene Maywald, Chair of Sunwater and Chair of ICEWaRM, who offered different river community perspectives on the road to resilient rivers.

Fast Facts



539
Delegates



14
LIT Sessions



39

Countries around the World represented



3 Study Tours



6 Keynotes Speakers

The International Riversymposium was first held in Brisbane in 1998, providing a platform for river managers, policy developers, scientists, consultants, NGOs and community organisations to share knowledge and innovative ideas on all aspects of river and water management.

By facilitating partnerships between key stakeholders, the International Riversymposium celebrates the environmental, economic and social value of rivers across the globe. The symposium provides an international forum for examining best practice in river and watershed management.

Through the Riversymposium, the International RiverFoundation has hosted thousands of delegates from all over the world.



Collaboration

Resilient Rivers Blueprint

The Resilient Rivers Blueprint has the vision “To enable the resilience of our river by addressing the complex social, economic and ecological pressures associated with global change.”

In collaboration with Deloitte, Healthy Land and Water (HLW), University of Maryland Centre for Environmental Science (UMCES) and the International Waters: Learning Exchange and Research Network (IW:LEARN); IRF is developing an International Resilient Rivers Blueprint for river basin managers around the world to commit to, enabling their rivers to leapfrog from recovery to resilience.

The Resilient Rivers Blueprint Framework provides the vision, principles and goals to enable a river basin to become resilient. The Blueprint is not another plan; instead it complements and adds value to existing river basin planning by providing a ‘common understanding’ of what river resilience looks like - and the platform, mechanisms and tools to overcome barriers to successful implementation.

A global initiative applicable to all river basins, regardless of scale, location, socio-economic or environmental characteristics, the Blueprint can be tailored to address locally specific governance frameworks, needs and barriers.

The Resilient Rivers Hub is a web-based platform for knowledge exchange, supporting the Blueprint by providing river managers with tools, innovative solutions, case studies and guidance to assist them along the journey to achieve resilience of their rivers, communities and economies.



River resilience is the capacity of a river system and its communities to adapt to disturbances and withstand shocks without collapsing.



Collaboration

RiverTwinning

This financial year saw the completion of two Twinning Projects: the Sunshine Coast Rivers-Capricornia Catchments program in Queensland, Australia, and the Mara River and Sondu-Miriu River Basin program in Kenya.

Sunshine Coast Rivers and Capricornia Catchments, Australia

The Sunshine Coast Rivers Initiative (SCRI) won the Australian *Riverprize* in 2011 for their long-term collaborative and strategic approach to community-based natural resource management in the region's many catchments. The SCRI and Capricornia Catchments/Livingstone Shire Council Sister Catchment project was formulated to share expertise across aspects of catchment management, with a focus on the relatively small Fig Tree Creek.

The Fig Tree Creek Catchment is part of the traditional lands of the Darumbal, located in the heart of Yeppoon on the Capricorn Coast. It flows into Keppel Bay and ultimately to the Southern Great Barrier Reef Lagoon, and faces multiple environmental pressures from increasing urbanisation including poor water quality, weed infestation, significant erosion and lack of community stewardship.

Activities have included erosion and sediment management, the establishment of a nursery and biocontrol breeding facility for Cats Claw Creeper control, a marine debris clean-up in Keppel Bay, new technologies being trialled for gross pollutant traps, capacity building with Livingstone Shire Council and Traditional Owner youth leadership exchange.

Although there were several setbacks including a Category 5 cyclone, the project has yielded positive results which are on-going. The SCRI and Capricornia Catchments/Livingstone Shire Council continue to maintain their connections from the Twinning Initiative into the future.

Mara River and Sondu-Miriu River Basin, Kenya

The community-based Mara River Water Users Association (Mara River WUA) in western Kenya won the 2013 Thies International *Riverprize* for successfully collaborating with farmers, community groups, NGOs, consultants and many other stakeholders to implement the Mara River Environmental Management Initiative. Following their win, Mara River WUA established a Twinning relationship with the neighbouring Sondu-Miriu River Basin to assess the progress of implementing the recently established Sondu Basin Catchment Management plan, and organise field visits to engage with local community members and stakeholders.

The fourth largest Kenyan river basin flowing into Lake Victoria, the Sondu-Miriu River Basin spans 3,470 square kilometres, originating from the western slopes of the Mau Escarpment, flowing through a narrow gorge before entering the floodplains of Nyakwere. One of the main problems identified while preparing the Sondu Basin Catchment Management Plan was the prevalence of unsustainable farming and land use practices. Additionally, poor institutional frameworks, lack of finances, catchment degradation from deforestation all needed to be addressed.

The Mara Sondu Twinning Initiative resulted in the Identification of riverine conservation hot spots and the rehabilitation of a 25km river reach; the formation of a Community Forest Association and 20-hectare forest rehabilitation project; exchange visits, workshops and training sessions on water resource governance; water quality and quantity training and monitoring; and the identification of farms to be used as a knowledge sharing hubs for other community members in the area.

Our Twinning program pairs *Riverprize* winners with communities who can benefit from their knowledge and expertise in sustainable river management, improving management of, access to and quality of water globally.

It focuses on long-term, peer-to-peer relationships between organisations and communities at the local level. The program has an extraordinary impact on people and communities around the world, with one project alone providing education and access to clean water for more than 10,000 people in three villages in rural Kenya.

Communication and Outreach

The IRF is committed to raising awareness of the important environmental, economic, scientific, social and cultural aspects of rivers.

To do this, we actively collaborate and communicate with diverse audiences from all over the world, and we work hard make our programs and the content we publish both inclusive and accessible.

We send regular newsletters and utilise Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn to interact with our followers.

 International RiverFoundation

 @ReviveOurRivers

 International RiverFoundation



World Rivers Day IRF and Thiess (Founding Member of IRF) celebrated World Rivers Day by holding a special lunch event. Shaun Newberry, Thiess Executive General Manager Technical Services, and Dr Eva Abal, CEO of IRF, spoke on the importance of stewardship and active involvement to ensure long-term river health.

IRF Staff & Board

Staff

Staff member	2018	2019
Eva Abal CEO		
Carla Littlejohn General Program Manager		
Jacqui Atique Project Officer		
Natalie Baker* Riversymposium Manager		
Patricia Dalby, Marketing & Communications Manager		
Tara Davis Alumni Coordinator		
Danielle Andlemac Bremer River Project Officer		
Sylvia Liu Communications Officer		
Abdula Bansuan, Project Coordinator, Philippines		
Chris Skelton Financial Advisor		
John Hayes Accountant		
Kelly McMillan Events Coordinator		
Vanh Mixap, Emerging Water Professionals Coordinator		
Marion Schembri Finance Officer		
Jacob Watt Assistant Accountant		

* Supported by Brisbane City Council

Board

Board member	2018	2019
Martin Albrecht		
Anthony DeDomenico		
Bill Dennison		
Paul Greenfield (Chairman)		
Philip Weller		
John McCarthy		
Craig Morton		
Selina Ward		
Peter Rowley		
Wouter Arriëns		
Brian Kemp		

Financial

Financial year	2017	2018	2019
Income	\$1,714,838	\$1,203,811	\$1,706,388
Expenses	\$1,564,585	\$1,340,934	\$1,550,954
Assets	\$700,586	\$408,314	\$637,035
Liabilities	\$583,861	\$320,455	\$377,190

As a not-for-profit organisation, the International RiverFoundation benefits from sponsorships and donations to fund much of its river basin management activities. During the year the IRF has undertaken a range of actions to secure on-going funding, to allow the continued support of its business plan. It has implemented strategic initiatives to maintain sufficient income combined with reduced costs so that a positive equity position can be attained and maintained in future years.

Major income generating activities during the 2019 financial year:

- \$150,050 - Revenue from Commonwealth government
- \$457,572 - philanthropic patrons, including the Bert and Vera Thiess Foundation
- \$474,592 – *Riversymposium* 2019
- \$591,302 - monetary and non-monetary from International and Australian Business and Australian Universities, including Thiess Ltd, OceanaGold, PKF Hackett.

Major expenditure outlays during the 2019 financial year:

- \$100,000 - Asia and Australasia Riverprizes
- \$50,000 - Ken Thiess Scholarships and Vera Thiess Fellowships
- \$55,000 - International Twinning projects sponsored by Tweed-Kenya
- \$120,000 – OceanaGold project in the Philippines

There was a positive equity for the year of \$259,845 with a gain of \$171,986.

For the full Financial Audited Report please visit the International Riverfoundation website at:

<http://riverfoundation.org.au/publications>

Sponsors

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DIVERSITY IN WATER PARTNER



RESEARCH PARTNER



Queensland, Australia

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