Zarqa River Eco-Development

An Overview
Zarqa River Eco-Development
Open Minds Academy Campus | University Village | Villas | Golf Course | Hotel

Open Minds Academy Mission for Sustainable Social Development

Based on
Human values like: Respect for others | Responsibility | Tolerance and Trust
to develop
Holistic Understanding | Entrepreneurial Mindset | Modern Pedagogy

Founder
Carpe Vitam
Partner with Unesco

Under the Patronage of
HRH Prince Raad

in the hopes for a more peaceful world
In a world where our weapons can kill millions, and where our current technology can destroy the ecosystems on which we and other species depend, an appreciation of our role as stewards of the earth is essential. In a world where science daily sheds new light, enables us to better understand nature, and expands the realm of the possible, ethics must guide what we do with this new knowledge and what technologies we choose to deploy.

In a world where extreme poverty, hunger, disease and ignorance are still plentiful, a respect of all human rights and a commitment to the dignity of all people are vital.

In a world where the boundaries are disappearing, openness to the other, mutual respect and understanding are crucial.

In a world where diversity is abundant, where cultures are important and where co-existence is unavoidable, we must learn to appreciate and celebrate pluralism rather than fear it.

The Open Minds Academy (OMA) is designed not only to provide some selected young people with excellent educational opportunities but also to instil in this new generation of young people these crucial values.

Science and rationality must be accompanied by humanistic ethics and a sense of responsibility. Through shared experience and a journey of discovery with some of the best mentors and instructors in the world, young people from all over the world will acquire the understanding, the skills and the tools to play an important role in our rapidly changing world.

They will acquire more than information and knowledge. They will take their first steps towards responsible global citizenship. They will find a sense of purpose for their lives that goes beyond material well-being, even as it does not exclude it. They will acquire Open Minds, and that is a beautiful thing for them and for the world.

Ismail Serageldin
Librarian of Alexandria
Director of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina
Alexandria, 31 October 2008
I am an architect and town planner by profession and a father of eight children. I am as consequence very interested in education and see the importance of sustainable Social Development.

A good education is to me a balanced mix of knowledge, values and character in order to develop our children to become socially responsible citizens. The values I am thinking of are the human values of respect for one another, responsibility, tolerance and compassion to build trust, values that Islam, Christianity and most other religions share.

And yet, when looking around among the world’s societies you see a totally different picture. Too many decision makers, whether politicians or business people are focused on ego, lust for power and greed. And both in the West and in Islamic countries you find extremists, whose only remaining values are revenge and exclusion – not a good basis for any effort to build a more peaceful world.

I do not think that our generation is willing to sacrifice personal interests to engage in a joint action for sustainable social development. We have to build our hope on the next generation, but we have the responsibility to encourage them by offering them good education and leadership opportunities.

To that end I created the Foundation of Carpe Vitam, being a partner of Unesco to start and support programs focusing on education, culture and social development.

Lemshaga Academy

Lemshaga Academy is a school for 400 children from the age of 36- which is built on the family grounds.

The pedagogic concept has been developed by the educational leaders of Cambridge and Harvard Universities as well as that of Reggio Emilia. You can call it transformational learning or visible thinking for small children:

- It supports their natural curiosity
- It develops their individual talents to build a good self-esteem.
- It trains them, whenever possible, in projects instead of subjects, where they have to develop their analytical thinking
  - to work in teams
  - to present their case and defend it with logical arguments and not with fists.
- You can successfully do this from the age of six.

Junibacken

With the same concept of learning and values we have created Junibacken, a meeting place for even smaller children 36- years, where they can listen to and experience the stories of Astrid Lindgren and other authors of popular children books, and actively take part in the stories through practical work, singing and theatre. It has become one of Sweden’s most popular meeting places with over 200 000 visitors per year.
Open Minds Global - OMG

Carpe Vitam is supporting the Foundation of Open Minds Global, initiated by our Swedish King, created by the International Scout and Girl Guide movements together with Carpe Vitam and other NGOs to develop Community Centers for cultural minorities in Sweden, in African countries like Burundi and Kenya, in Palestine and in the Middle East.

The mission is to mitigate conflict and to support living conditions by bridging cultural differences. It has two centers in Egypt, is working with and supporting existing centers in Jordan and plans to build centers in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq.

The centers may differ but will all have a pre-school, a support center to help parents to find ways to improve their life conditions, by advise, training and micro-financing, as well as a youth center for older children, focusing on activities based on values, teamwork and entrepreneurship.

The Open Minds Global international network of community centers will be the cornerstones of sustainable social development working together for a more peaceful world.

Open Minds Academy - OMA

Carpe Vitam will support, whenever it can, governmental and university incentives in the Mid-Eastern region for teacher training based on modern pedagogy, international quality standards and accreditation. The mission is to create a cooperation for the advancement of educational methods, research and exchange programs for students and teachers.

Carpe Vitam will do this through Open Minds Academy in Jordan, which is a partnership of well-known international universities and the Jordan University in Amman through graduate programs, professional services and advisory committees.

The university partners have created programs, which they consider important for sustainable social development and where they have an internationally accepted experience.

- The programs of the graduate school will be interdisciplinary with 50% theory and 50% practice. The goal is to create a holistic understanding, an entrepreneurial mindset to create academics and skilled workers to become educational leaders and capacity builders.

- The professional services will be shorter programs in the same subjects for professionals, who would like to enhance their knowledge and get an overview of the latest research development and practical experiences.

- The advisory committees will be able to support the educational initiatives outlined in the conclusions and recommendations of the International Conferences on Higher Education in Iraq and the Qatar-sponsored Unesco Conference in Paris.
University Partners support

The Open Minds University partners support the concept of showing their communities and their students, the commitment to values, and social development in order to bridge cultural differences.

- They support the concept of forming an interdisciplinary learning environment, where professors, their assistants and students from different countries would work together in programmes to develop and Open Minds Set with an entrepreneurial focus, where the goal was not to train call - centre staff but self going entrepreneurs.

- They support the concept because it gives their students from their own university an opportunity to do joint projects with the students from our proposed learning centre, like building an eco - village or developing an agricultural scheme but also to stimulate students to complete their own academic career at a mother university.

Partner universities

• Pedagogy and Leadership for Learning | Harvard University USA, Cambridge University, UK
• Governance and Gender Policies
• Diplomacy and Middle East studies
• Sustainable Water Management | Royal Institute of Technology KTH, Sweden
• Sustainable Energy Systems | Royal Institute of Technology KTH, Sweden
• Sustainable Food Production and Rural Development | Wageningen University, Netherlands
• Preventive Approaches to Public Health | Lund University, Sweden
• Eco-tourism | Sorbonne Paris, France
• Urban Planning and its Social Impact | Massachusetts Institute of Technology MIT, USA
• Human Values | Al-Azhar University, Egypt

Peder Wallenberg
Founder, Carpe Vitam Foundation
Amman, 15 October 2008
Zarqa River Eco Development

Zarqa

The Zarqa River runs in the heart of Jordan starting in downtown Amman and then meeting the River Jordan halfway before entering the Dead Sea. The history of the Zarqa River is as old as the topography of the Jordanian highlands as we see them today. About 30 million years ago, the Great Rift Valley started as an active formation of Jordan basically by creating an ever-growing gorge that caused a ripple effect of smaller side valleys. As the Jordan Valley started widening and deepening, the shallower young basin of the Zarqa River began to carve into the western edge of a rising plateau, and the dramatic landscape of Amman started to form. The Zarqa River was sculpting and chiseling the features of all the different valleys between the hills of Amman, the downtown area, and all the valleys and basins to the north of the capital well up to Jerash. Billions of tons of rock mass were transported by the river. Although small in size, the material was active in grinding the rocks of the different strata and transporting the debris into a hungry, ever deepening Jordan Valley.

Ecologically the Zarqa Valley became an important passage, a side corridor that linked the Jordan Rift Valley with the eastern desert. The Jordan Valley was the main feature of the «Levantine Bridge» that became the passage of African-origin plants and animals. As part of the system, the Zarqa Basin must have played some role in the story of Out of Africa particularly for migration of early humans some 2 million years ago.

On the hillsides of this small river one of the earliest human settlements was established with possibly the oldest urban fabric with streets and domestic architecture at the site of Ain Ghazal some 10 thousand years ago.
Like Jericho, the Zarqa River and its basin are considered to be one of the world’s earliest agricultural settlements with domesticated animals. This was most probably an adaptation to the dramatic climate changes that marked the end of the last glacial period that affected Europe and this region. Consequently humans started to adopt a new lifestyle of settlement in addition to hunting and gathering. At this point in time a new cutting edge construction technology was achieved. This was the point where “Architecture” was born. Scholars are now readjusting their story of early agricultural activities away from Mesopotamia or the Nile Valley to the highlands around the basin of the Zarqa River.

With its dramatic basin, this river has been used as a demarcation line as early as humans walked this land. It marked the northern border of the Ammonite Kingdom that ruled from the 13th century to the 6th century BC separating it from the Hittite and Aramaic influence coming from the northern regions of Damascus. The Zarqa Basin was also part of the clash zone that witnessed numerous confrontations between the two world superpowers some 4000 years ago, namely the Pharos and the Persians, and being in the middle, it would have witnessed some of the skirmishes of the armies in conflict.

This river has also been the site of some biblical miracles. One of the most peculiar was the story of the Prophet Balaam, which according to the Old Testament took place at the banks of the River Jabbok, depicted in Rembrant’s painting, The Prophet Balaam and the Ass, 1626.

From early Antiquity and through Roman times this river was used to demarcate sub-regions, and during the different Islamic periods and until the Ottoman period, the river was always the line that separated the region of Baqa in the south from Ajloun in the north, a demarcation that is still in use till this day.

For Jordanians of the early 20th century the Zarqa River used to be the river of the city and along its sides were the lush fields of the early Circassian settlers, where numerous restaurants and cafés provided ideal picnic sites until the 1970s.

Unfortunately, the last 30 years has marked a deterioration of the water quality of the river, becoming by the turn of the millennium the sewer line of Amman. The very city that was created by the river some 10 thousand years ago has grown to kill the river, turning its originally trout-populated blue waters into dark brown with detergent foam floating along.

For the last year or so, the Ministry of Environment has taken the responsibility of restoring the Zarqa River. And as nature can naturally clean itself when we stop our harmful behaviour, the river is now quickly improving. It is being rediscovered by the new generation, and is hopefully returning as an essential feature of the Jordanian landscape, re-positioned in the national collective identity of our precious landscape.

A clear living river is the right of future generations. It should also become part of their environmental-friendly economic awareness, as a way to lead a balanced symbiotic coexistence with the land.

The idea of the academy is centred around a large rock, a boulder that represents the natural works of an active river, to rest on the ever changing hillsides. The manmade architecture touches the rock in a sensitive fragile line of contact, allowing it to exist and adding to it. The building is about co-existence between nature and culture. It is about a symbiotic relationship rather than a parasitic one of cancellation or replacement. And the careful handshake of nature and human creativeness becomes the main point, not nature alone nor the human-made, but the delicate line of their contact, the third element.
Eco Village

The concept of the proposed Eco-village is to prove that you can live as you have learned in the Open Minds Academy. You can easily combine the Jordan and Mediterranean tradition of living in a village with the concept of Social Sustainable Development. You get a more economical solution of supplying needed infrastructure, like roads, water and power and you can control sewer to be used as gray water for irrigation purposes. You can provide an economic solution for solar energy and in the case of the Zarqa river development build ponds in the river to control the water flow and create an environment, where plants, fish and birdlife will thrive. A clean, controlled Zarqa River will support the groundwater level and be visually pleasing for people living in the area.

Our vision of developing the Eco-village as an historic village is partly based on the architectural qualities, but also because of the historic fact that the expansion of Amman started with the development along the Zarqa River system.

As graduate students to a large extent are married and have small children, the structure of the village will include flats instead of dormitories, schools, religious centers, services, social meeting places like cafés and open “piazzas” – and also hopefully thanks to its special atmosphere become a centre for artists and artisans. In other words, a vibrant center, surrounded by water and traditional living developments.

We see the proposed hotel as a combined week-end retreat for Jordanians and a convention centre for sustainable development using the theatres and other facilities of the Academy. It will thanks to the close family structure in Jordan give relatives of the graduate students an opportunity to visit. The hotel is also developed as a village to create an atmosphere similar to that of the Eco-village.
Zarqa River Eco-Development
Overall project site and future developments
Zoning and Landuse
Master plan of the Open Minds campus, village and hotel
Luxury Terraced Apartments
Village streets
Open Minds Academy Main Entrance
Open Minds Academy western view of the entrance boulder and the theatre
Open Minds Academy western view of the entrance boulder and the theatre
Open Minds Academy main entrance space and corridor
Open Minds Academy interior view of the boulder, entrance and main corridor