



Bethlehem 21 Project

Environmental Sustainability for a Better Life: An Integrated Approach for Localizing Agenda 21 in the Bethlehem District

Bethlehem 21 Project: An Overview

What is Bethlehem 21 Project?

Bethlehem 21 project entitled “Environmental Sustainability for a Better Life: An Integrated Approach for Localizing Agenda 21 in the Bethlehem District” is a Palestinian initiative responding to Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 whereby local authorities are called upon to undertake a consultative process to develop and implement a “Local Agenda 21” for and with their communities.

Bethlehem 21 project will develop the capacities of local and national authorities including Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, Za'tara, Al Khader and Ed Doha municipalities, the rural council of Battir, the Ministry of Planning (MoP), the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) - Department of Joint Councils for Services, Planning and Development (DJCspd), the Palestinian Environmental Quality Authority (PEQA), the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA), Bethlehem Governorate (BG), the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) and the Water and Sanitation Authorities to reinforce them to enter into dialogue with citizens and local organizations in order to develop local sustainability action strategies or “Local Agendas 21”. The participatory approach will be in the form of a visioning process that focuses on bringing together a broad section of the community with the local authority to develop a shared vision for the sustainability of their community and plan how to achieve it.

What are the Project's Objectives?

The main objectives of Bethlehem 21 project are:

- To secure and maintain the involvement of the targeted local and national authorities throughout and after the course of project implementation.

- To establish an effective participatory process that ensures a representative participation of the communities' members with the targeted local and national authorities in the community visioning process.
- To assess the communities' environmental and socioeconomic conditions as well as the institutional arrangements, structures and practices.
- To establish a GIS based information system and reinforce the technical capacities of the selected municipalities and rural councils in GIS, database management and environmental monitoring.
- To formulate shared community vision statements that declare the communities' visions for more sustainable communities and to set sustainability goals, targets and actions
- To develop local sustainability action strategies “Local Agendas 21” based on the baseline community profiles and the outcomes of the community visioning process.
- To transfer the gained knowledge to other local authorities in the West Bank and encourage them to carry out similar sustainability initiatives.

Who is Responsible for the Project's Implementation?

The project is implemented by the Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem (ARIJ) in partnership with the Centro Regionale d'Intervento per la Cooperazione (CRIC).



ARIJ is a Palestinian non-governmental organization founded in 1990 and dedicated to promoting sustainable development in the Palestinian Territory. Further details regarding the projects and activities implemented by ARIJ can be found at the institute's website: www.arij.org



CRIC is an Italian non-governmental organization founded in 1983. It is working in the development field in Africa, Latin America, Middle East, the Mediterranean area, the Balkans and Southern Italy. Further details about CRIC and its activities can be found at the institute's website: www.cric.it

Who is Funding the Project?

The project is funded by:



The European Commission, LIFE-Third Countries Programme. This programme is one of the three thematic components of LIFE (The Financial Instrument for the Environment), which is one of the spearheads of the European Community environment policy. Further details regarding the objectives of the LIFE-Third Countries programme can be found at the European Commission website: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life/home.htm>

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The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The SDC is Switzerland's international cooperation agency within the Swiss Foreign Ministry. Further details about the SDC can be found at the agency's website: www.sdc.admin.ch/

What is the Project's Duration?

The project will run for 32 months. It started on the 1st of February 2006 and will end on the 1st of October 2008.

What are the Milestones of the Project?

The Bethlehem 21 milestones are the steps and actions that form the basis of the adopted participatory approach to move towards the sustainability of the targeted communities. These are:

❖ Securing and Maintaining Top Level Support

The basis of the work is securing broad top level support among the involved local and national authorities in order to maintain their involvement during and after the course of project implementation. The capacities of authorities regarding sustainable development and the process of Local Agenda 21 will be developed to ensure successful implementation of the project. The experiences of Italian, Brazilian and other local authorities in localizing Agenda 21 will be transferred to them. Moreover, a steering committee composed of members from the involved authorities will be formed in order to oversee the implementation process.

❖ Establishing an Effective Participatory Process

Securing broad public participation of community members with local and national authorities in the Local Agenda 21 process is essential to ensure their effective contribution towards the formulation of local Agenda 21 policies and actions. This will be achieved by exploring, through an in-depth dialogue, the environmental identities and desires of the communities; informing the lay public of the importance of implementing sustainable development programs; fostering trust in local and national authorities; and maintaining public involvement through empowering neighborhood and water user associations and forming the sustainability initiative citizens' committees.

❖ Creating Baseline Community Profiles

Assessment of the communities' environmental and socioeconomic conditions as well as the institutional capacity to implement sustainable development actions will be carried out using the pressure, state, current practice framework. The results of this assessment are (1) *Baseline Community Profiles* that characterize the environmental and socio-economic conditions on one hand and the driving forces and actions that

have led to the current unsustainable situation on the other hand; and (2) *Environmental Information Systems* developed in GIS to allow consequent updates and monitoring of key environmental indicators.

❖ Developing Local Sustainability Action Strategies "Local Agendas 21"

Building upon the knowledge generated through the baseline profiling of the communities and the development of project's ownership among authorities and public, the project team in cooperation with the steering and citizens' committees will hold community forums in each targeted community to carry out the community visioning process in order to (1) define the communities' visions for more sustainable communities; (2) formulate key areas' vision statements; (3) set sustainability targets; and (4) identify and prioritize actions that will achieve the sustainability goals and targets. All these components as well as the detailed description for each of the identified actions and the situational analysis part will be integrated into comprehensive reports that represent the local sustainability action strategies or "Local Agendas 21" for each targeted community. A publicity campaign will support the community visioning process to attract the community members to participate.

What are the Actions and Means Involved?

1. Developing decision makers' capacities in sustainable development and the process of localizing Agenda 21 through thematic group meetings with local experts.
2. Issuing a declaration of the sustainability planning effort and seeking the support of the MoP, MoLG, DJCspd, PEQA, MoA, MoH, PWA, BG and the PCBS to endorse the declaration and mandate the involvement of the selected councils in the project.
3. Electing a steering committee from members of the involved authorities to oversee the implementation process.
4. Publicizing the sustainability initiative and its outcomes at the various stages by means of press releases in local media, conducting meetings with local organizations and decision makers,

preparing flyers and establishing a project website.

5. Organizing community awareness campaigns in the form of information and awareness sessions targeting the communities' members.
6. Electing citizens' committees from members of the various communities sectors.
7. Data collection through review of available databases and publications and through conducting semi structured interviews with local authorities and organizations.
8. Establishing a GIS based information system composed of environmental and socioeconomic databases.
9. Transferring the GIS based information system and the computers to the targeted councils and training selected personnel on GIS techniques, database management and on environmental monitoring.
10. Profiling the communities using the pressure, state, current practice framework.
11. Conducting community forums to bring people together to participate in the visioning process in order to develop shared visions for more sustainable communities and formulate sustainability goals, and actions through brainstorming and establishing key area task forces.
12. Developing a detailed description for each of the identified actions.
13. Integrating the outcomes of the visioning process, the actions' description and the findings of the community profiles to develop local sustainability action strategies.
14. Organizing a national workshop with participation of local authorities, ministries, non-governmental organizations, international funding agencies and the established key area task forces to disseminate the findings, transfer

the gained experience to others and identify funding sources.

What are the Expected Results?

- Having strong advocates of the sustainability initiative among the involved authorities.
- A declaration of the sustainability planning effort and the endorsement of the declaration by national authority.
- Broad public participation of community members is secured and their awareness level with respect to localizing agenda 21 is raised.
- Trust in local and national authorities is fostered among the community members.
- A comprehensive GIS based information system is established for each local council.
- Technical capacities of the targeted councils strengthened in GIS, database management and environmental monitoring.
- A project website to disseminate project results is developed.
- Baseline community profiles providing an assessment of the communities' environmental and socioeconomic conditions are produced.
- Understanding peoples' perceptions of their environmental futures and social well being.
- High level of dissemination of the resulting information, extracted knowledge, strategies and actions to the national and local authorities as well as the international funding agencies.
- Adoption of the recommended actions and strategies by the national and local authorities.