



Bethlehem 21 Project

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

The Concluding Remarks of Bethlehem 21 Workshop & the Results of the Working Groups

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Bethlehem 21 Workshop

In the framework of Bethlehem 21 Project, the Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem (ARIJ) and Centro Regionale d'Intervento per la Cooperazione (CRIC) organized a two days international workshop on 28 and 29 June 2006. The workshop was attended by representatives of local and national authorities as well as representatives of local non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, funding agencies and local media, among others. The workshop aimed at informing the participants about the benefits realized by other international municipalities and institutions in developing Local Agendas 21 (LAs21); the encountered problems; and how the implementation of the LAs21 contributed to advancing towards sustainability. This was achieved by the participation of 4 international delegates who shared the experiences of their municipalities or institutions in localizing Agenda 21 with the participants through the papers that were presented in the workshop as follows:

- 1) Mr. Emilio Teglio, the communication responsible person from the Coordination Body of Italian Local Agendas 21, presented a paper entitled "The Experience of the Coordination Body of Italian Local Agendas 21".
- 2) Mr. Gianluca Peciola, councillor to youth policies, intercultural affairs, housing and work in the Municipality of Rome XI, made a presentation entitled "Participative Balance: The Experience of Municipality of Rome XI and "Bristol" Association".
- 3) Mr. Juan Pablo Munoz Navarrete, coordinator of the Democracy and Local Development Network (GDDL) of Ecuador, presented a paper entitled "Participative Management in Local Governments of Ecuador and Agenda 21: Scenarios, Trends, Achievements & Limitations".
- 4) Mr. Vince Caruana, assistant lecturer at the University of Malta - Centre for Environmental Education and Research, presented a paper entitled "Local Agenda 21 Processes - Lessons Learnt from Community Centres Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles".
- 5) On behalf of Mrs. Giuseppina Balzamo, councillor to Environment, Implementation of Agenda 21 and International Relationships in the Municipality of Pavia, Ms. Carla Pagano from CRIC presented the paper entitled "The Implementation Status of Local Agenda 21 in the Municipality of Pavia".

1) The Concluding Remarks of Bethlehem 21 Workshop

The following represents the concluding remarks of Bethlehem 21 workshop:

- **Participative Balance** is a participative democracy process that aims at promoting active citizenship through public participation in the decision making process related to environmental and socioeconomic aspects inside the municipality or village council that may negatively or positively influence citizens lives. In reference to the experience of Rome XI Municipality in this field, it can be noted that public participation is promoted by allowing the citizens to share decisions related to municipality budget and allocation of available financial resources. This process is known as "participative budget". In this regard the participants emphasized the importance of public participation with



the targeted local authorities in Bethlehem 21 project in the process of developing local sustainability action strategies “Local Agendas 21” for their communities.

- **Education** about sustainable development and its environmental, social and economic aspects is a prerequisite step that must precede the implementation of any sustainability initiative. Therefore, the capacities of decision makers and community members should be developed through education about sustainable development. This kind of education should be incorporated into educational curriculum at schools because students can play a vital role in fulfilling the objectives of sustainable development at a local level. In reference to the experience of the Coordination Body of Italian Local Agendas 21, it can be noted that through community forums and thematic working groups, they succeeded in improving the level of understanding on sustainable development and its three main aspects among stakeholders. This was reflected in changing unsustainable lifestyle habits among those stakeholders.
- **Social economy** which is a grass-root entrepreneurial, non-profit sector, based on democratic values that seeks to enhance the social, economic, and environmental conditions of communities, often with a focus on their disadvantaged members must be promoted. It is very important because it: (1) favors citizens’ participation and voluntary work; (2) enhances solidarity and cohesion; (3) offers the potential for job creation; (4) offers goods and services at affordable rate; and others.

2) The Results of the Working Groups

On the second day of the workshop, the participants were divided into three main working groups:

- Working Group no.1: *“Participative Balance as a Local Governance Tool”*
- Working Group no.2: *“ Social Economy as a Sustainable Development Tool”*
- Working Group no.3: *“ Education to Environmental Sustainability and Coordination”*

The working groups used a brainstorming process to determine the advantages, means and implementation strategies related to the discussed themes. Each group selected a spokesperson to present the results, which are outlined in the following table:



| Advantages | Means | Implementation Strategies |
|---|--|--|
| 1st working group: Participative Balance as a Local Governance Tool | | |
| Promoting the concept of democracy | Establishing key area task forces or thematic group meetings | Organizing Community forums and workshops |
| | Forming a Juridical committee and a special committee against the Segregation Wall | Local and National Mass Media |
| Promoting the concept of decentralization | Activating the citizens' participation in the decision making process based on specialties and responsibilities | Organizing meetings and distributing relevant leaflets |
| Promoting active citizenship | Getting advantage of local expertise | Organizing periodical assemblies, community forums and training programs |
| Developing administrative capacities | Publicizing municipal budgets, plans and development requirements | Leaflets, assemblies, among others |
| Ensuring the development of effective and sustainable future plans | Reviewing and reformulating the existing laws | Adopting and enforcing the new laws |
| 2nd working group: Social Economy as a Sustainable Development Tool | | |
| Reducing production cost and improving the quality of products | Conducting assessment studies for each region | |
| Enhancing food security and protecting the environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing market needs • Coordination between the Ministry of Agriculture and farmers in order to assess the region's needs • Establishing cooperatives • Promoting the role of women • Organizing agricultural exhibitions • Organizing awareness campaigns • Promoting organic agriculture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determining the types and quantities of local products • The protection of indigenous varieties of seeds, plants and animal species • Promoting the relationship between the farmer and consumer |
| Alleviating the instability of prices | | |
| Offering the potential for job creation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing laws for small projects • Raising the awareness of workers on this field • Publicity and marketing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging the tourism industries such as handcrafts |
| Promoting the use of renewable energy sources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructing plants to utilize solar energy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizing solar energy |



| 3 rd working group: Education to Environmental Sustainability and Coordination | | |
|---|--|---|
| Having Active community members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchanging experiences and organizing site visits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of best practices |
| Creating job opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing voluntary committees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing indicators to assess existing conditions |
| Reducing water and energy consumption and adopting environmentally sound alternatives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using leaflets and posters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • |
| Contribute to having a sustainable community (environmentally sound, economically productive and socially just) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting community forums | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing the status of environment, taking into consideration public perceptions |
| Changing lifestyle habits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing incentives for community members • Establishing environmental clubs at schools and universities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating environmental education into the local council agenda |