

Bethlehem 21 Project

Environmental Sustainability for a Better Life: An Integrated Approach for Localizing Agenda 21 in the Bethlehem District, No: LIFE05 TCY/GA/121

Conference Report "D5.3"

Prepared by:

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Submitted to:



European Commission

LIFE-Third Countries Programme

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1. Date and Place of Conference

In the framework of Bethlehem 21 project funded by the European Commission (LIFE-Third Countries Programme) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the national conference "Local Sustainable Development in the Bethlehem Governorate" was organized on the 25th of October 2008 in Bethlehem Hotel located in Bethlehem City.

2. Conference Objectives

The conference aimed at:

- disseminating the project's results;
- transferring the gained knowledge to other local authorities;
- ♣ launching the Local Sustainability Action Strategies "Local Agendas 21" for the seven targeted communities; and
- ♣ providing the involved local authorities with the opportunity to identify potential funding sources to increase the possibility of implementing the actions and projects identified in the strategies

3. Conference Participants

The conference was successfully organized under the auspices and participation of H.E. Dr. Salam Fayyad, the Prime Minister. It was also organized with the participation of H.E. Eng. Ziad Bandak, Minister of Local Government, H.E. Mr. Salah Al Ta'mari, Bethlehem Governor, Mr. Mario Carera, the Head of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the Heads of Local Councils targeted by Bethlehem 21 Project. Furthermore, the conference was attended by representatives of local and national authorities as well as representatives of local, national and international non-governmental organizations, the project's steering committee members, the citizens' committees' members, and funding agencies. The total number of participants is 118 persons (see Appendix 1 for the list of participants).

The conference was covered by local and national mass media as well as by Al Arabiya News Satellite Channel. To view the press releases on the conference, please visit the project website: http://bethlehem21.arij.org

4. Conference Agenda

The conference was organized over one day and in accordance with the following Agenda:

9:00 - 9:30	Registration	
9:30 - 10:10	Conference Opening	
	Eng. Daoud Istanbuli, Chairman of Board - ARIJ	
	Mr. Salah Al Ta'mari, Bethlehem Governor	
	Dr. Victor Batarseh, Mayor of Bethlehem City	Cooperation
	Mr. Mario Carera, Swiss Agency for Development and H.E. Dr. Salam Fayyad, Prime Minister	Соорегации
	n.e. br. salam rayyad, Prime Minister	
10:10 - 10:30	Coffee Break	
10:30 - 12:00	Presenting the Strategic Planning Process and the Vital Development Projects at the Bethlehem Governorate Level	Dr. Jad Isaac, ARIJ's Director General
	Presenting the Local Sustainability Action Strate 21" by the Heads of Local Councils	
	Bethlehem Municipality	Dr. Victor Batarseh
	Beit Jala Municipality	Eng. Raji Zidan
	Beit Sahour Municipality	Mr. Hani Al-Hayek
	Al Khader Municipality	Mr. Ramzi Salah
	Ed Doha Municipality	Mr. Sami Mroua
	Za'tara Municipality	Mr. Sami Thweib
	Battir Village Council	Eng. Akram Bader
	Experience of Bethlehem Municipality in GIS	Mr. Anwar 'Alawi
12:00 - 12:30	The Remarks and Comments of H.E. Eng. Ziad Band Local Government	ak, Minister of
12:30 - 13:00	Discussion and Recommendations	
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch	

5. Conference Results & Recommendations

The conference was successfully organized with the participation of all stakeholders who expressed the need of extending projects similar to Bethlehem 21 Project in other localities. This is because of the effectiveness of the adopted strategic planning process in empowering local authorities and providing local community members with the opportunity of participation in the decision making process.

The following highlights the major findings and recommendations of the conference:

- ♣ A wide variety of measures to promote sustainable development currently exists and has been presented. However their implementation has been hindered by the aggressive policies of the Israeli Occupation, which remains the fundamental constraint to sustainable development and the main cause of environmental degradation. This raised the question that: Is sustainability possible under occupation? It has been agreed by the participants that all Palestinian attempts to implement sustainable development should remain a high priority. Sustainable development in the Palestinian case means developing the ability to withstand, fulfill the basic human needs and improve living standards for all as well as developing and sustaining effective government institutions and empowering local communities inspite of the Israeli Occupation and its practices. In this challenging context, Bethlehem 21 Project has contributed to developing a new concept for development ownership in Palestine; a concept which reflects the determination of the Palestinian people to remain on their land and to continue to pursue their livelihoods, not succumbing to the pressures placed upon them by the Occupation; and a concept which refers to the transition from unviable development under Occupation to development for withstanding and survival. This has been also emphasized by H.E. Dr. Salam Fayyad, the Prime Minister, in his speech where he indicated that Bethlehem 21 Project is consistent with the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP) 2008-2010, which is the national plan that sets out the Palestinian National Authority's (PNA) medium term agenda for Palestinian reform and development. The PRDP focuses on sustainable development to meet the current needs without undermining the future potentials and was adopted by the Government at the end of last year.
- ♣ H.E. Dr. Salam Fayyad, mentioned that the PNA considers Bethlehem 21 Project and the "Local Sustainable Development in the Bethlehem Governorate" Conference as well as the other Palestinian sustainability initiatives as essential elements for promoting sustainable development at the local level. Out of this context, the PNA is keen on building empowered and accountable local government institutions that deliver cost effective services at the local level in line with the needs of the communities they serve¹.
- The integrated and participatory approach to local policy making that was applied in Bethlehem 21 Project is in line with the Strategic Planning Programme adopted by the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG). In this respect, the MoLG in cooperation with the Ministry of Planning, the Municipal Development and Lending Fund, the relevant national authorities and some local authorities has been working on developing a unified mechanism for strategic development planning that aim at empowering local communities to contribute in the development process effectively.
- ♣ H.E. Dr. Salam Fayyad, asked the donors and funding agencies to support the Local Agendas' 21 that have been developed in the framework of Bethlehem 21 Project. He also emphasized the need of forming a committee from all

¹ Reference: Palestinian National Authority. (2007). Palestinian Reform and Development Plan 2008 - 2010. Palestine.

stakeholders to follow up the implementation of the conference's decisions and recommendations. In this respect, the Minister of Local Government, Eng. Ziad Al-Bandak, emphasized the support of the Ministry to the formation of the abovementioned committee and indicated that the committee should be formed from the MoLG, MoP, relevant ministries, academic institutions, ARIJ, the involved local authorities, and local community members. The committee should be responsible for studying and analyzing the actions and projects outlined in the Local Sustainability Action Strategies in order to come out with a list of the high priority vital joint projects that should be urgently implemented to meet the needs of people. This will enable the MoLG from pursuing the adoption of such projects by the Government through integrating them in the reform and development programs of the PRDP and consequently secure funding for their implementation.

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Appendix 1: List of Participants



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

"Local Sustainable Development in the Bethlehem Governorate" Conference

List of Participants: 25/10/2008

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"Local Sustainable Development in the Bethlehem Governorate" Conference

List of Participants: 25/10/2008

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