West Bank and Gaza Solid Waste Management Project

Overview

Drawing on World Bank Group Trust Fund financing and expertise since 2001, the Palestinians were able to improve solid waste management and environmental conditions in 80 communities in Jenin Governorate, with a population of 200,000 people. They achieved this by establishing a new sanitary landfill, closing and rehabilitating 85 dumpsites, and improving waste collection services. Towards the end of the project, the new landfill was expanded to serve all five governorates that comprise the northern West Bank (population 600,000), providing for further cost saving and enhancing public-private partnerships.

Challenge

As a cornerstone project of the Bank’s 1997 strategy of institutional, governance and sector-specific restructuring and reform, SWEMP helped place both the environment and Jenin on the policy agenda. However, the SWEMP launch coincided almost exactly with the beginning of the second Palestinian Intifada. By November 2000, Israeli-Palestinian military hostilities had left some 1,500 Palestinians and 400 Israelis dead, and they had a major negative effect on Palestine’s economy, its social fabric, and institutions. They also had an extremely negative impact on the implementation of SWEMP effort in Jenin, a major battlefield. Still, SWEMP was able to overcome the major challenges associated with political uncertainty and security by attracting international consultants to design and supervise the construction, as well as international contractors to build the new sanitary landfill. Moreover, SWEMP was able to achieve serious reforms in municipal management of waste through joint responsibilities under the umbrella of the new Joint Service Council. Finally, SWEMP was able to create opportunities for dialogue on key environment issues between the Palestinians and the Israelis, even under very difficult political conditions.

Approach

SWEMP supported the Palestinian Authority’s (PA) development plan by establishing key infrastructure that in
turn encouraged private investments while delivering a cleaner environment to the Palestinian population. Furthermore, the SWEMP task team helped foster Palestinian-Israeli cooperation and an exchange of experiences towards designing and constructing a first-of-its-kind sanitary landfill in the region. This approach was useful even under the severe restrictions on movement in the West Bank. SWEMP was one of the few projects that faced fewer restrictions, and construction material and laborers were allowed easier access. The restriction actually presented opportunities for creativeness, such as the replacement of one of the landfill liner (60 centimeters of clay) with a two millimeter polyethylene layer. This adjustment in design provided some 60,000 cubic meters of additional landfill space. Moreover, the pilot recycling of plastic enabled the creation of a few jobs for unemployed workers in neighboring communities, generating income to the Jenin-Joint Service Council while reducing the total amount of land-filled waste.

Results

A credit from the International Development Association (IDA), together with a grant from the European Commission (EC) grant was able to achieve the following results:

- About 600,000 people living in the northern West Bank are now enjoying safe disposal of their municipal waste at the new sanitary landfill, compared to 200,000 at appraisal;

- Yields from the landfill operation are not only able to pay back the IDA credit, but are also generating sufficient surpluses to maintain and improve service levels, replace equipment, and expand the landfill once the current capacity is exhausted. Sustainability should also be further enhanced by the expected private sector-led recycling operation.

- Some 85 uncontrolled dumpsites in Jenin and Tubas were closed and rehabilitated, freeing up 1,200 dunums of rehabilitated land that are now open for development. This also led to an increase in value of neighboring properties; and.

- The expanded landfill service coverage also freed up scarce land in the northern West Bank that had been designated for at least two additional landfills; one in Tulkarem and a second in Nablus.

Bank Contribution

The Bank is leading donors in this sector. IDA has contributed nearly 67 percent or US$9.5 million toward the overall US$14 million SWEMP cost. During the same period, the Bank administered a contribution of US$1.6 million toward solid waste management in the northern West Bank. The success of the Bank’s activities led to an IDA grant of US$12 million toward a follow-on project in southern West Bank. The Bank is considering financing a similar project in the Gaza Strip that is currently under preparation. Other indirect support to solid waste management has been through the urban sector and, in particular, municipal services support projects.

Partners

There was a strong partnership among key development partners in West Bank Gaza solid waste management sector. Periodic meetings led by the Ministry of Local Government with the participation of the four most active donors (IDA, European Commission, Germany, and Italy) helped coordinate and complement investments and analytical work.
The IDA credit for SWEMP was complemented by a US$4.3 million grant from the EC and US$1.6 million from Italy in seven Tulkarem communities. Current contributions include US$20 million from Germany’s KfW for middle West Bank solid waste management projects and US$20 million from World Bank Group Trust Funds and the EC for the southern West Bank projects. Coordinated support has helped contribute to a satisfactory response to Palestinian needs and priorities.

Toward the Future

The PA solid waste management strategy adopted in July 2010 recognizes the achievements in this sector in the northern West Bank, and it reflects the lessons learned from this experience. It also adopts policies and measures to ensure the sustainability of the outcome from the investments. This is exemplified through a policy to encourage public-private partnerships, whether in collection and disposal of waste or in turning waste into resources through the development of recycling and composting schemes. Similarly, it calls for a revisit of waste collection fees to ensure that it is representative of the costs borne by the service providers, which are primarily the municipalities.

Beneficiaries

About 600,000 Palestinians in the northern West Bank now enjoy safe disposal of their municipal waste. One resident who was part of a documentary film prepared for the project expressed his satisfaction with the initiative, noting that it closed and rehabilitated a dumpsite near his house, leading to a better use of the land and an increase in neighboring land values.