

Looking beyond conflicts to protect water resources



Context



Underground water sources shared by Israel and the Palestinian Territories in the Middle East suffer enormously due to economic development, strong demographic growth and dwindling water resources. Most of these underground resources are polluted by domestic and industrial sources or by agricultural practices that do not respect the environment. In both Israel and Palestine national authorities are in charge of water resource control and defining water policies, while local authorities, closer to the ground, are in charge of policies to combat pollution. Municipal authorities could consequently play a bigger role in preserving cross-border underground water resources.

Agence Française de Développement (AFD), aware of the issues relating to the sustainable use of this essential resource, wished to support local authorities in the implementation of a coherent policy to protect cross-border underground aquifers. The project financed by AFD provides these local authorities with an original intervention framework that contributes to national and international efforts to protect water resources. It also constitutes a real model that can be reproduced in other world regions experiencing similar pollution risks to their underground water resources.

Objectives

AFD's financing aims to promote the sustainable development of water resources in the particularly difficult Middle East context of conflict and shortages. It is also designed to create favorable conditions for cooperation between the Israeli and Palestinian municipalities. The objective of this financing is to reduce cross-border underground water pollution by supporting Israeli and Palestinian cities.

AFD has the following specific objectives:

- To identify the causes of the underground water pollution in the various municipalities;
- To design procedures to enhance the management and control of underground water pollution in cities;
- To strengthen technical expertise in the various municipalities and train Palestinian and Israeli water specialists;
- To obtain a commitment from Israeli and Palestinian municipalities to improve their environmental performances.

Project description

The project has two main components:

It initially involves conducting a review of the sources of underground water pollution caused by Israel and the Palestinian Territories via a case study on two municipalities. Solutions to this pollution will then be defined and proposed to all the municipalities. The work will be conducted by teams of experts from Israel and Palestine under the supervision of an Israeli-Palestinian executive committee. The teams will work together to define all the measures and procedures to be followed in order to reduce pollution in the underground water sources.

The second project component aims to provide almost 80 water and sanitation practitioners, engineers and different officials with quality information so that they can effectively implement an active policy to prevent pollution and effectively apply procedures to combat pollution. An extensive information campaign has been launched in order to raise the awareness of all the municipalities in terms of this issue.

The project will be implemented by Green Cross France, Friends of the Earth Middle East and the Palestinian NGO House of Water and Environment.

Dates and amounts

Start-up: 2006

The total budget for the project stands at 448 660 euros. It is cofinanced by the European Commission (299 000 euros) and the beneficiaries and partners (71 000 euros). AFD's financing is in the form of a 100 000 euro grant formalized by a service contract between the Palestinian Water Authority and Green Cross France.