



Programming, Participation, and Partnerships under Duress: The West Bank Village Water and Sanitation Program

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Background

Per capita use of freshwater in large rural areas of the West Bank is inadequate to maintain basic standards of health and hygiene. Limited access to water is compounded by inadequate sanitation facilities that pollute the environment. These problems are further complicated by conflict with Israel.

The Village Water and Sanitation Program (VWS) is a two-year initiative funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development and undertaken by the Environmental Health Project (EHP) in close partnership with the Palestinian Water Authority and other concerned national agencies. The purpose of the program is to provide safe and sustainable water and sanitation services for up to 140,000 people living in 46 communities in the West Bank—in areas west of Hebron and south of Nablus. Access to safe drinking water should improve health and living standards substantially.

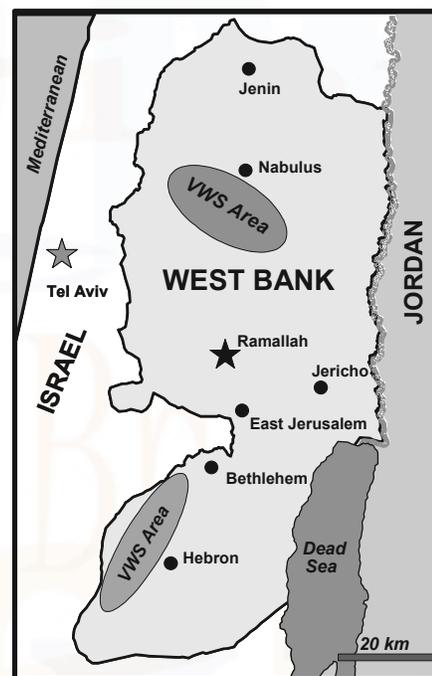
Program Strategy

VWS has three components:

1. Building infrastructure that brings safe drinking water to communities and households
2. Creating an enabling environment through community management and capacity building
3. Improving household hygiene practices through community-based promotion and education

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This integration of hardware, software, and institutional context is guided by the Hygiene Improvement Framework, developed by EHP. Systematic assessments and feasibility studies precede all design and implementation steps, and existing information and newly collected household-level data from assessments and studies are used in developing water systems that are affordable to households, taking into account rapidly increasing poverty and a shift in people's priorities and attitudes.



Target Areas of the Village Water and Sanitation Program



Program Activities

Despite enormous hardships and disruptions, EHP and its Palestinian partners have implemented all initial assessments and most of the design work, and they have planned the following implementation steps:

- Institutional capacity development:
 - Assess institutional capacity.
 - Design a framework for local management of system operations and maintenance.
 - Assist partners in establishing locally appropriate, transparent, and responsive institutions, and coordinate with current and planned programs.
- Infrastructure development:
 - Conduct engineering feasibility studies for water and wastewater systems.
 - Design and construct wells, reservoirs, and distribution networks.
 - Implement pilot programs for wastewater treatment and reuse appropriate for rural communities.
- Environmental health and hygiene promotion:
 - Assess environmental health and behavioral risks through surveys and formative research.
 - Design a hygiene promotion and education program.
 - Implement interventions that reduce environmental health risks and improve hygiene behaviors by linking them to the institutional and infrastructure components of the program.

Participation

The designs of infrastructure and management systems reflect baseline assessments of people's demand and ability to pay. EHP is implementing the assessments with maximum participation from partners at the institutional, community, and household levels.

Palestinian communities and municipalities are working with regional water authorities on infrastructure design and management systems to ensure that improved water and sanitation services meet people's needs and that they can be sustained during times of serious conflict, under social and economic constraints, and thereafter.

Partnerships

To implement and sustain the VWS strategy, EHP will rely on its partners:

- Palestinian Water Authority
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Ministry of Environmental Affairs
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Local Government
- Ministry of Planning

These agencies have shown an enormous ability and determination to cope with extremely adverse circumstances. VWS will also make maximum use of resources available through nongovernmental organizations, Palestinian universities, and the Palestinian business community.

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