

Jordan...Facing the Environmental Challenges

Challenges:

In Jordan, the lack of energy sources and the acute water scarcity are significant inhibitors for sustained economic growth. Traditional means and technologies for employing energy and water in the country are becoming increasingly inadequate and Jordan must rethink how such resources are employed and conserved. Such a challenge can often be transformed into an opportunity, especially when Jordan has key ingredients such as the highest number of engineers per capita in the world and a long-standing reputation for scientific research and development.

Initiatives:

A number of Jordan's private firms recognized the challenge and approached USAID's Jordan Economic Development Program (SABEQ) to partner with it and the Government to address the energy and water challenges through a focused effort to bring the partners together in an initiative similar to the REACH initiative that built the information technology sector a decade ago. The goal is to create a clean tech and water entrepreneurship cluster in Jordan, through the identification of business opportunities, and capacity building to meet local, regional, and global needs.

Results:

To date, the partners have begun to build the foundations to support economic growth through renewable energy and water activities. First was the USAID Program's support to the Ministry of Environment's efforts to create the Environment Fund that will provide technical and financial support to accelerate the capacity of entities to comply with national environmental laws. A Carbon Trading National Plan was also put in place resulting in less time required to certify projects and sign agreements with potential buyers to increase the prices for traded carbon, and the trading opportunities. Simultaneously, the Program supported the Ministry's efforts to develop streamlined environmental inspections and licensing systems. The Ministry's efforts were memorialized in sponsoring, with Program support and with the Greater Amman Municipality, the 2008 Eco-Cities of the Mediterranean Forum, raising awareness throughout the region of the importance of addressing the new environmental realities.

The USAID program also funded Energy and Water Efficiency audits for eight private hospitals to identify areas where consumption can be reduced. Supporting R&D efforts in the sector, the Program provided a grant to explore the economic feasibility of using biogas that is generated from a landfill.

These efforts culminated in what became known as the EDAMA (which means "renewable" in Arabic) initiative – a joint private sector and public sector effort with 8 working groups that drafted comprehensive action plans in key areas to work towards innovative and environmentally sustainable solutions for energy and water independence. Now the partnerships are implementing these plans.

The initial initiatives developed are geared to yielding long term results, including creating jobs attracting foreign direct investments, establishing new clean tech firms, increasing Jordan's energy, water, and environment productivity.