

Third Party Evaluator's Opinion on Water Supply and Sewage System Improvement Project in South-Tunisia

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Relevance

Since Southern Tunisia has an annual rainfall of less than 150 mm, the demand for drinking water and sewage treatment in this economically important region has been difficult to meet.

The project, the impact of which we are evaluating, covers the island of Jerba and the nearby town of Zarzis, with the objective of satisfying the needs of a population of approximately 200,000 people, as well as the area's environmental and economic needs, particularly in the tourism sector (per the strategy specified by the national plan for this region). The project also responds to the needs of an additional population of 200,000 citizens if the improvements made in Mednine, Tataouine, and Benguerdane are included. Brought to completion between 2001 and 2002, this plan represents an important step on the path to balancing Tunisia's resources and demand by the year 2030.

Impact

In terms of desalination, the digging of wells, and the construction of reservoirs and aqueducts (170 km between Jerba, Zarzis, and Benguerdane), estimates were, for the most part, surpassed.

Waterways and waste treatment facilities were created as planned. The benefit is marked in terms of population growth: 38 to 41% depending on the zone, thus initiating a new layout. The water system coverage rate increased by 9% in Zarzis and by 17% in Mednine.

Furthermore, the number of people benefiting from the improvements in sewage treatment increased 2.5 times in Jerba and the volume of sewage treated increased 8% after the installation of the new facilities, the three old facilities having been closed.

The new Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) has met Japanese as well as Tunisian standards.

Under their sanitary program, the infant mortality rate has dropped in both Jerba and Zarzis from 26.2 per 1,000 births to only 9.7 in 2004. This decline is naturally due to the improvements in the treatment of water and waste.

Economic, and particularly tourist, activity has likewise been enhanced. After the completion of the project – between 2001 and 2003 – the number of hotels in Jerba and Zarzis grew by close to 10%. A survey of tourists in the region confirmed that the water supply, in terms of volume and quality, has been significantly upgraded.

Sustainability

The continuity and ever-developing management of this project are practically assured by the vast experience of the supervising agencies (SONEDE and ONAS) in this arena. Japanese experts have also guaranteed that there has been neither any technical nor organizational problem. By hiring additional personnel, SONEDE could pursue the project's healthy financial management while reasonably raising prices according to regulations. ONAS, which oversees procurement for rural zones, would benefit, to the degree that such is needed, from State subventions under the framework of the social politics of the country.

Conclusion

This project forms part of an integrated management strategy for the collection and dispersal of Tunisia's water resources. It is fortunate that Japan is in the lead in bilateral cooperation, marrying

financial means and modern technology, in a sector so vital to the Tunisian economy and environment.