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CED is developing the Jericho Environmental District (JED), a Special Services District to address the most critical environmental problems in the region. In a nutshell, JED will address the problems of the devastated environment in the Jericho District that negatively impact health and economic activity. Sewage from most of the area's population is not properly treated and the situation in Jericho is extreme and "could be considered the worst in the West Bank" where cesspits are the only form of sewage collection.¹

Environmental problems in the region are tied to cross-border cooperation. Jericho's future depends on a healthy environment and growth in tourism – to showcase its unique natural, religious, and historical resources. CED is addressing these issues with the JED.

During our latest visits in Dec '04 and Feb '05, we worked closely with the PNA Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Local Government regarding the concept of Special Service Districts, commonly used in democratic societies, for environmental management.

The Ministry of Local Government has requested our help in combining city and village Joint Service Councils into effective bodies for managing the environment, and providing needed sanitation services, among others. CED expects to soon have official endorsement from the Ministry of Local Government to help them create these Environmental Districts for Palestinian communities.

Our immediate goal is to establish a Jericho Valley Environmental District (JVED) to address the most critical environmental problems in that area. CED is opening an office in Jericho in the coming weeks, as an incubator for the JVED.

We are collaborating with other NGOs to implement clean up, public awareness programs, community employment, especially youth employment, capacity building and training programs. CED is seeking funding from USAID, UNDP, Japan and private foundations.

Further, CED is demonstrating that environmental cooperation can be a tool in the peace process. Environmental problems in the region are tied to cross-border cooperation. Jericho's future depends on a healthy environment and growth in tourism – to showcase its unique natural, religious, and historical resources. These issues along with employment and training, especially of youth in community clean up projects, is what CED is addressing with the JVED.

CED has been in consultation with Palestinian, Israeli, and international stakeholders located in Jericho, Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv to build support for the JVED and to discuss how JVED can contribute to a cleaner environment and healthier economy. Government officials and religious and business leaders responded very positively.

CED gained support for JVED from the new democratically elected Mayor of Jericho, Mr. Hassan Saleh, and the city Health and Environmental managers, among others. Dr. Saeb Erekat, Palestinian Legislature Representative from Jericho fully supported the JVED and offered to present it to the Palestinian Legislative Council.

In addition to the meetings on the Palestinian side, CED has received endorsements for its JVED concept from the Israeli government. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Environment have given official endorsement letters for JVED to CED.

Currently, we are in the process of creating the Jericho Valley Environmental District, designing work plans and proposals to collaborate with other NGOs, businesses and the city of Jericho and villages in the Jericho district and Israel as well.

Jeffrey Behr
Chief Executive Officer

¹ United Nations Environment Programme, "Desk Study on the Environment in the Occupied Palestinian Territories," 2003, p. 56.