



Environmental Awareness

A Way to Empower Gaza's Youth



By Pierre Cochard

A recent study has shown that the Mediterranean Sea is the most polluted in the world. Every single day, it is contaminated by 600,000 tons of plastic waste.

In accordance with France's strong commitment to identify and mobilize sustainable environmental solutions for Mediterranean coastal ecosystems and, in collaboration with its European partners, to put an end to the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, France and the European Union – alongside the World Bank and the Palestinian Authority – were proud to inaugurate the new Al-Fukhari sanitary landfill site on June 12 in the Gaza Strip. The landfill benefits more than 700,000 persons living in the south and center of the



New collection trucks and heavy machinery for the new landfill's operations were provided.



Gaza Solid Waste Management Project



New refuse containers were provided, replacing the old and severely damaged ones.

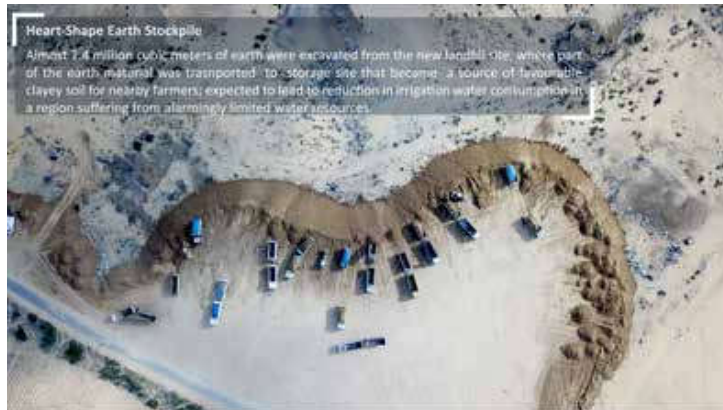


Gaza Solid Waste Management Project

territory (Deir al-Balah, Khan Yunis, and Rafah), representing 45 percent of Gaza's total population.

Waste management is a serious challenge in the Gaza Strip. The commissioning of this major landfill responds to a huge issue, as the existing landfills in the Gaza Strip are over-saturated, and the increase in waste generation is leading to serious environmental and human-health impacts on the Gazan population. Al-Fukhari landfill will put an end to

uncontrolled dumpsites and help protect the aquifer. The works at Al-Fukhari sanitary landfill were part of the strategic "Gaza Solid Waste Management Project," which also comprises equipment, a transfer station, and capacity development for the Rafah-Khan Yunis and Middle Area Solid Waste Joint Service Council (JSC KRM). This project is funded by the European Union, the French Development Agency (AFD), and the World Bank.



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Lives of former waste pickers at the existing dump site were transformed by the provision of alternative livelihoods that took into consideration their capacities and vulnerabilities.



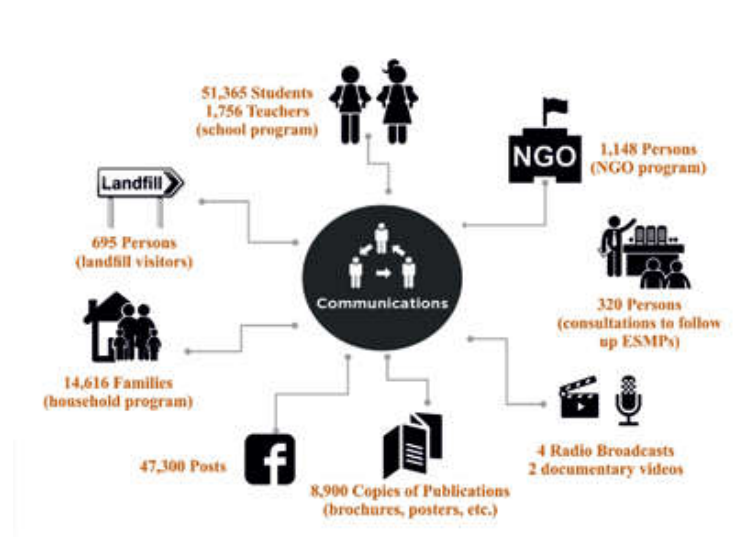
Gaza Solid Waste Management Project

In Gaza, environmental and social safeguards also become opportunities! The project ensured active involvement and change of behavior of local communities through a different set of activities. The 17 waste pickers who were working at the old dumpsite have been supported in new income-generating activities. More importantly, the JSC KRM has deployed broad public awareness and consultation activities, especially oriented toward the new generation.

A school outreach program started in 2016 to contribute to increasing student awareness about the environmental problems and solutions in solid-waste collection and disposal. The program included

various interactive activities with students, such as educational sessions, environmental interactive plays, field visits to the landfills and temporary transfer stations, scientific experiments on pollution caused by solid-waste problems, and drawings and art exhibitions using recyclable materials. This program targeted 40 schools every year (18 UNRWA schools and 22 governmental schools), comprising 51,365 students from 10 to 16 years old, and 1,756 teachers. At the end of the program, 25 schools conducted recycling exhibitions inside their facilities, and 30 schools participated in an e-competition on solid-waste management. Rewards were

School Environmental Awareness Program, March 2018. UNRWA Middle School for Girls – Al-Nussairat Refugee Camp, Middle Area Governorate.



distributed to the 65 schools who participated in the program. One of the key messages was oriented towards waste reduction which, in the end, remains the best way to handle waste.

The outreach program targeted 16,084 people within local communities through 32 local NGOs and 17 municipality neighborhood communities. Thanks to these various social-outreach activities, not only has the project been widely accepted, but the communities, especially the youth, are now more aware of solid-waste challenges.

For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/JSCKRM/>; https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4bE2_DUd0rOXwCobVM7oEw; or <http://jsc-krm.ps/>.

This ambitious project can be seen as an efficient cooperation effort between the French Development Agency and the European Union, in conjunction with the World Bank and the Palestinian Authority, for the

benefit of the people in Gaza. France's role has been key in creating this project, in spite of the constraints of the Israeli blockade and the inter-Palestinian division.

Photos courtesy of the author.



Pierre Cochard was Consul General of France in Jerusalem from September 2016 to September 2019. An experienced French diplomat, he successively served in Iran, Japan, and at the French Embassy to the Holy See. In addition, he has occupied various positions in Paris, at the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.