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UNOPS conducted an Infrastructure Global Productivity Index to assess infrastructure delivery systems in the West Bank. UNOPS will use the findings to support the Government to plan and implement infrastructure works that go beyond construction and improve human development and livelihoods.

UNOPS Jerusalem Operations Centre Director, Nicholas O'Regan said: "We are actively engaged with the Government to provide support to ensure that responses to critical short-term humanitarian needs have, as much as possible, links to longer term infrastructure planning. This ensures that reconstruction of the infrastructure networks do not just repair what was damaged, but improve them, and that short-term fixes do not evolve into long-term unsustainable solutions."

In addition to providing infrastructure services, UNOPS is also supporting reconstruction efforts by providing procurement and project management services. Projects include providing emergency lighting for internally displaced persons and managing grants for legal assistance, in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

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UNOPS holds training day for engineering students

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The training introduced students to international best practices and industry-level standards for implementation of infrastructure works, and provided valuable work experience.

UNOPS Project Manager, Amer Amrah briefed the engineering students on the structural and civil designs of the courthouse project and introduced them to UNOPS sustainable practices, including applying the ISO standards for occupational health and safety and environmental protection. Students learned about the inner workings of state-of-the-art electrical systems, wiring, and circuit boards and proper handling of tools.

The training is part of UNOPS commitment to support the Palestinian National Development Plan, which encompasses an agreement signed with the Palestinian Engineers Association to develop sustainable infrastructure in the country, including through training programmes.

To advance gender equality, UNOPS is broadening the training initiative to include additional programmes and internships geared at expanding women's skills and career opportunities. The first female engineering intern was recently recruited at the Tulkarem courthouse construction site.

Greening infrastructure and energy at Birzeit University

UNOPS held a workshop on renewable energy solutions with the engineering faculty of Birzeit University in Palestine, as the first stage of a larger initiative to improve the environmental sustainability of the campus.

15/09/2014 -- Launched by UNOPS in partnership with the university, objectives include greening campus infrastructure, implementing alternative energy systems and strengthening national capacity to address environmental issues through knowledge-sharing programmes.

The faculty was trained in value-for-money methods during the workshop to generate sustainable solutions for the university that promote high returns on investment, in terms of increased capital and access to education. Value-for-money methods help improve decision-making, reduce operating costs and waste, and improve productivity.

Under the project, the university's engineering curriculum will be modified to concentrate on renewable energy and sustainability issues. In line with UNOPS and its stakeholders' commitment to promoting sustainability throughout the project cycle, and with long-term results in mind, the new curriculum will enable students to embed sustainability knowledge in their future careers.

In addition, UNOPS will support the implementation of sustainable infrastructure and green energy on the campus to reduce energy consumption and operating costs. The university electricity and fuel bill makes up 3-5 percent of the annual budget, and electricity is often unreliable, disrupting class. By lowering operating costs and implementing new energy systems, the university will be able to offer reduced tuition fees, making formal education more affordable for Palestinian youth, and providing a better learning environment.

Jerusalem first UNOPS office to use Sustainability Marker

Recognizing the importance of promoting sustainable development practices, UNOPS Jerusalem Operations Centre recently piloted the Sustainability Marker methodology.

15/09/2014 -- Jerusalem was the first office to pilot the marker, which promotes sustainability through every stage of the project cycle, addressing the social, environmental and economic dimensions and encouraging national capacity development.

UNOPS is committed to developing a working culture in which personnel can make informed decisions about how to best organize resources to increase sustainability in projects. The marker supports project teams and partners in their efforts to deliver projects that are appropriate to the local context and directly contribute to intended outcomes. While the tool can be applied throughout the project management cycle, the earlier it is used, the more likely it is that the project will maximize benefits for communities in each of the 25 sustainability themes the marker identifies.

The methodology is part of UNOPS larger effort towards embedding and capturing sustainability across its projects and will undergo continual development in collaboration with partners.

For further information about the Sustainability Marker please contact the team at: sustainabilitymarker@unops.org

Assessing and improving infrastructure sector in Palestine

UNOPS has conducted an eight week assessment of the infrastructure sector in Palestine. The study compares local infrastructure activities against 29 examples of international best practice, with the aim of identifying gaps and improving delivery.

15/09/2014 -- Palestine is the second state in the world, after the United Kingdom, to undergo such an assessment, which will expand government capacity in infrastructure works and produce significant savings on current and future projects.

UNOPS Jerusalem Operations Centre Director, Nicholas O'Regan said of the Global Productivity Index: "Coupling our mandate in infrastructure with our commitment towards state building, we have conducted an infrastructure diagnostic to provide the Government of Palestine with a roadmap to improve their delivery systems and support development. The index makes Palestine a forerunner in infrastructure best practices."

Improving livelihoods in East Jerusalem and the West Bank

Minister of Jerusalem Affairs, Adnan Hussein hosted a donors' reception to present Mujtamana, a programme which focuses on strengthening resilience to improve livelihoods, particularly for youth and women, in East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank.

15/09/2014 -- The programme is implemented by UNOPS in partnership with the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs, the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Mujtamana contributes to improving social infrastructure, implementing crime prevention measures and creating access to job opportunities, particularly for

marginalized and vulnerable groups. The programme aims to reduce school dropout rates, alleviate poverty and prevent drug abuse, violence and sexual exploitation in Palestine. Central to Mujtama is encouraging community engagement by working closely with local institutions and groups. UNOPS will support efforts to improve coordination between the government, national institutions and grassroots organizations to work together to address the challenges faced by Palestinian youth. The programme will target schools, youth and sports clubs, and women's associations, and will actively involve the private sector and policy-makers to work collectively towards long-term strategic solutions that increase local resilience. Minister Hussein said of the programme: "The Government of the State of Palestine places great importance on the communities of East Jerusalem and Area C and the continued need to support the Palestinian people in those areas."

<https://www.unops.org/english/where-we-work/middle-east/Pages/Supporting-the-reconstruction-of-Gaza-through-infrastructure.aspx>