



Red Sea – Dead Sea Water Conveyance Study Program

World Bank Inspection Panel Report and Recommendation on Request for Inspection Approved by Board of Executive Directors

WASHINGTON DC, March 5, 2012 – On February 29, 2012, the World Bank Board of Executive Directors approved the Inspection Panel's recommendation not to investigate whether the Bank has complied with its Operational Policies and Procedures with respect to the allegations contained in the Request for Inspection relating to the Red Sea – Dead Sea (RSDS) Water Conveyance Study Program. This Study Program is related to a proposal that includes conveying water from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea and is supported by Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority (the Beneficiary Parties).

The Request for Inspection was submitted by two Palestinian civil society organizations; Stop the Wall Campaign and the Palestinian Farmers Union, and an international human rights non-governmental organization; the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The two Palestinian organizations, which have been the main point of contact for the Panel, represent many Palestinian residents and farmers of the West Bank. Their Request for Inspection states a number of claims relating to policy non-compliance and potential harm resulting from the design of the Study Program and resulting from the potential implementation of a RSDS Project designed under this Study Program.

The Study Program is financed by a multi-donor trust fund established with funding from the governments of France, Greece, Italy, Japan, South Korea, The Netherlands, Sweden and the United States of America. The World Bank is managing the trust fund and the Study Program, which includes the preparation of five studies related to the proposed RSDS Project: (i) a Feasibility Study; (ii) an Environmental and Social Assessment; (iii) a Study of Alternatives (which examines other options available to the Beneficiary Parties to address the degradation of the Dead Sea and the production of additional potable water by means other than the identified water conveyance option); (iv) a Red Sea Modeling Study; and (v) a Dead Sea Modeling Study.

The Panel considered, in its Report, that "*one important objective of the Study Program has been to develop preparatory or preliminary design studies (...) to assist the preparation of a potential project, namely the RSDS Project.*" The Panel determined that, since the starting point of the Study Program is the proposed RSDS Project, the processes leading up to the decision point with regards to future financing and implementation would, by definition, be part of a project preparation process. The Panel also noted that the Beneficiaries' letters requesting the Bank to manage the trust fund stated that World Bank Policies and Guidelines regarding the Safeguards, financial, and procurement aspects of conducting the Feasibility Study and Environmental and Social Assessment would apply. Hence, the Panel considered that the Study Program fell under its purview.

The Panel carefully reviewed the Request for Inspection and the Management Response, and conducted a field visit to Israel, Jordan and the West Bank, where it met with Government Officials, the Requesters, civil society and Palestinian villagers. The Panel was "*satisfied that the Request meets all six technical eligibility criteria provided for in paragraph 9 of the 1999 Clarifications.*"

The Panel considered that the Requesters are raising legitimate concerns, such as potential adverse environmental effects on the Dead Sea, potential adverse effects on sources of water for the population in the West Bank, and the issue of legitimizing current off-take of water in the Jordan River Basin and from the Dead Sea. The Panel, however, did not recommend an investigation of whether the Bank has complied with its operational policies and procedures related to the Study Program because of certain unique and special circumstances and uncertainties at this stage.

The Panel noted that some of the Requesters' concerns are reflected in the Study Program documents – e.g. “*the transfer and mixing of water may result in significant adverse environmental impacts on the Dead Sea (...) and that there is a high degree of uncertainty about what these might be.*” The Panel considered that key issues pertaining to the proposed RSDS Project are still under scrutiny. The Panel also noted that the remaining phases of the Study Program involve negotiations and reaching agreement among the Beneficiary Parties on the draft final Feasibility Studies and the Study of Alternatives. This will be followed by disclosure of these drafts and a period for public hearings. The Panel acknowledged that the Study Program is a politically complex process that is still ongoing. The Panel further noted that the Beneficiary Parties have neither decided on whether to proceed with the RSDS Project nor on the final configuration/design of the proposed Project, and that this is a complex process that may take many years for important questions to be resolved.

The Panel noted that its recommendation does not preclude the possibility of a future claim, relating to compliance and harm, in the event that the Bank decides to support the proposed RSDS Project or a related alternative.

The documents relating to this Request for Investigation, including the Request itself, the Bank Management Response, and the Panel's Report, can be found at the following [link](#).