

World Bank's Greater Beirut Water Supply Project, Lebanon
U.S. Position
December 16, 2010

The Greater Beirut Water Supply Project for Lebanon will help address Greater Beirut region's severe water supply problems, which impede economic growth and public welfare. The project positively extends collaboration between the World Bank and the Lebanese Authorities to improve the delivery of essential services to the people, particularly poorer households. The project will construct a wastewater treatment plant and a network of tunnels to transport water that will be piped to storage reservoirs in Hadath and Hazmieh and enhance the capacity of the Beirut Mount Lebanon Water Establishment.

While this project's aims are noble and will address a critical need, the United States is reluctantly abstaining for the following reasons.

1. **Untimely Disclosure of the Resettlement Action Plan:** The disclosure of the RAP did not meet the Bank's disclosure policy. In addition, since the full RAP was not disclosed publicly in hard copy or in Arabic, the RAP's executive summary should have provided more detail on the implementation schedule and the compensation process for local residents.
2. **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA):** The EIA left gaps that, experience shows, merit attention. For example, it left unclear the potential for and impact of future water diversion and the handling of large volumes of spoil from excavation.
3. **Public Consultations:** The United States is concerned that consultations were not widely advertised among affected peoples and were not well attended. Given Lebanon's political and social environment, and this project's history, the Bank should have advocated for more comprehensive consultations.