

RGD – Making a Difference

Tackling Environmental Problems in Zaporizhzhia

The Problem

Zaporizhzhia is one of Ukraine's most heavily industrialised regions. It is also one of its most ecologically damaged. In 1999, the Cabinet of Ministers identified Zaporizhzhia city as one of four cities in Ukraine with the most acute environmental problems. An estimated 350 tons of harmful particles, such as chemicals nitrogen and nitrogen sulphur, are released into the region's atmosphere *every day* from around 400 hazardous locations; these include metallurgical plants, power stations and landfill sites. An equally severe ecological threat to the well-being of the population stems from water pollution, with the city of Zaporizhzhia and the Azov sea coastline being among the most at risk areas. The Dnipro River is the main source of water to the region for industrial, agricultural and domestic use. Laboratory testing done of water quality levels has revealed that acceptable limits are exceeded by 20 percent. Water supply and sewage treatment facilities in many towns of the region are outdated and in near-crisis condition, considering that ruptures and leakages of water and sewage pipes are a frequent occurrence. The added pressure from new and often ill-planned

residential developments could easily create near catastrophic conditions (Figures from RGD expert report 'Assessment of the Ecological Status of Zaporizhzhia Oblast' 2006). This undoubtedly dire situation is playing out amidst Zaporizhzhia's beautiful countryside - gently rolling steppe landscape and some of the richest 'black earth' soil in Ukraine. It is rich in animal and bird wildlife, with two-thirds of the country's rarest and most endangered bird species nesting or migrating through. The region has over 300 designated parkland and nature reserve areas, including the unique Khortytsa Island in the Dnipro River in Zaporizhzhia city.



Small plant for waste-water recycling



Replacing aged and leaking water pipes

RGD's Contribution to Alleviating the Environmental Threat

Although environmental protection is a priority concern for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), at first glance there might appear to be relatively little a technical assistance project like RGD can do about large scale environmental problems of Zaporizhzhia. However, RGD has provided significant contribution in this regard and its efforts have already started to bear fruit in two specific areas: 1) *the prioritization of ecological considerations in Regional and Local Development Strategies*; and 2) *the training of specialists to design and implement important and viable projects.*

Environment as a Top Priority in Regional and Local Development Strategies

- For much of 2007, the Zaporizhzhia RGD team worked to provide expert advice and organisational support to the process of preparing practical action programmes for the social and economic development of the region as a whole and for 3 smaller local government areas.
- Building on the experience they had seen on RGD's study tours to Canada, regional and local government leaders needed no persuading to make the planning process as broadly participatory as possible. Among the many interest groups taking an active part were environmental NGOs and experts. Not only did this mean that environmental concerns took their rightful place as a top priority in all development strategies, regional and local, it also meant that the concrete actions to be taken were well informed and realistic rather than 'pie-in-the sky'!

RGD Experts Train Specialists from the Region to Design Important and Viable Projects

- 4 major solid waste management projects in Energodar town and Melitopol, Pology and Vilnyansk districts, replacing landfill sites damaging to the health of the local population and creating innovative opportunities for waste recycling.
- An NGO-led project on Khortytza Island to introduce an effective system of waste management, and to educate the

island's 1 million visitors a year of the need to take better care of Ukraine's 'Miracle No.1' (result of a recent internet survey).

- 2 energy efficiency schemes, the first involving the renewal of the communal heating system in a district of Zaporizhzhia city, the second a project to reduce the energy costs of the power station in Energodar municipality and provide guaranteed heating and hot water to a residential area poorly served in the past.
- A programme to upgrade the quality of drinking water in Energodar, where the natural wells from which water was previously drawn have become unusable through pollution by heavy metals.
- A project to clean and restore the ecological balance of the river Molochna in Tokmak municipality and its surrounding district. The scheme will provide an attractive riverside parkland environment in the centre of the town and the benefit of a full-flowing river as a resource to local agriculture.
- A network of community information and education centres in 5 municipalities in Zaporizhzhia region, raising public awareness of ecological issues and encouraging people to take an active interest in environmental action.
- Within the regional Environmental Protection Service, the development of a regional environmental improvement programme and a publicly accessible, internet-based and interactive monitoring system.

Great Ideas – and Good Enough to Attract the Necessary Finance!

The projects were developed by teams of Zaporizhzhia specialists who had little to no experience in designing investment proposals that meet the standards expected by international financial institutions and donors. In this respect, RGD has provided expert guidance and mentoring resulting in a critical mass of young specialists able to conceptualise, design and implement environmental projects which can bring significant improvements to the health and well-being of the local population. In addition, there are also immediate and tangible results. The two energy efficiency projects, in Zaporizhzhia city and Energodar municipality, have succeeded in attracting loan finance from the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). In Energodar's case this is an amazing achievement, since the town falls well below the usual population threshold for EBRD credit. There is reason to believe that at least some of the landfill site projects will be equally as successful. Also, all remaining RGD - assisted projects have been identified as priorities for financing from the Zaporizhzhia region's budget for 2010. Final decisions are expected in the next two to three months.

Project Information

The Regional Governance and Development (RGD) Project is a five-year (2005-2010) cooperation project of the Canadian Urban Institute, supported by the Canadian International Development Agency. The Project promotes civic engagement in regional governance, providing opportunities for Ukrainian citizens and communities to shape their common future and to put their region on the path towards sustainable development.

CANADA

555 Richmond Street West, Suite 402
P.O. Box 612, Toronto, Ontario, M4V 3B1
email: cui@canurb.com
phone: 416.365.0817
fax: 416.365.0650
www.canurb.org

UKRAINE

Triohsvyatyetska 3, office 60_01001 Kyiv
email: info@rdg.org.ua
phone: + 38 044 390 70 87
fax: +38 044 278 07 14
www.rgd.org.ua



Canadian International
Development Agency

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