

As part of a commitment to NGO sector development in Palestine, the NGO Development Center (NDC) has been supporting NGO networks since 2007. These networks provide organizations with a space to share expertise and experiences. Thematic networks ensure that specific issues within Palestinian society are not lost in the duplication of campaigns and services. PENGON, in its role as Friends of the Earth Palestine, coordinates the work of environmental organizations throughout the oPt and sheds light on environmental injustices in Palestinian communities. Whilst individual environmental organizations are hugely effective in delivering projects, PENGON works to maximize the impact of these organizations as a cohesive voice.

NDC is a long-standing partner of PENGON. NDC's direct funding to thematic networks supports institutional development and communications capacity. PENGON's initial funding agreement with NDC (2008 – 2010) saw the total overhaul of PENGON's status. The organization was officially registered as a network, established its website, successfully assumed the mantle of Friends of the Earth Palestine, began a process of capacity building for member NGOs, and drafted the network's first strategic plan. These institutional developments required great commitment from PENGON employees and turned the network into a functioning and progressive movement.

PENGON's second tranche of funding from NDC enabled the organization to target innovative campaigns and develop the lobbying and advocacy capacity of its members through a series of training programs. In addition, PENGON has constructed an environmental database resource for NGOs in Palestine that is driving the distribution of knowledge throughout the environmental sector.

The first campaign has proved hugely successful in influencing the environmental policies of the Palestinian Authority. Following PENGON's partnership with local municipalities, dedicated environmental units have now been established in the Ramallah, Nablus and Al Bireh municipalities, and two local councils (responsible for fourteen villages) in the Jerusalem Governorate. Furthermore, a fully staffed Environmental Police force has been created and is currently receiving training from Jordanian counterparts. This initiative will revolutionize the ability of the public sector to respond to environment threats. Rather than solely relying on the commitment of independent NGOs, the public sector and NGO community are developing a true partnership to combat environmental degradation in Palestine.



The second campaign launched by PENGON highlights environmental violations perpetrated by the forces of occupation. Palestinian residents of Area C are particularly vulnerable to these threats. Their land is constantly under threat of appropriation by the Israeli authorities and abuse by settlement communities. The Bedouin village of Om Al Kher in the Hebron Governorate is no exception having suffered a house demolition as recently as January 2012 (ICAHD). Surrounded by the settlement of Carmel, the population lives with a severe shortage of water; according to PENGON's research, water consumption of the two neighboring communities differs hugely. The settlement of Carmel consumes 300 liters of water per capita compared with 20 liters of water per capita in Om Al Kher. It is no exaggeration to say that this community is forced to eke out an existence in an extremely arid environment due to severe rights violations. In August 2012 PENGON invited a delegation from Friends of the Earth International (FoEI) to visit the West Bank. Bobby Peek (Director FoE South Africa) and Eurig Scandrett (FoE Scotland) came to listen, observe and learn about the environmental crisis afflicting isolated communities in Palestine. The delegation's visit to Om Al Kher centered on a public meeting. Over seventy participants from the

local community, international organizations and Palestinian Authority contributed to the discussion held in the shadow of settlement houses and agricultural installations. This was a truly diverse representation of Palestinian society and the development sector. Community organizations, Palestinian NGOs, the PA, international NGOs, international aid missions and UN representatives descended on Om Al Kher in solidarity. Whilst the political stalemate in Palestine is well documented internationally, the daily reality of environmental violations is given less attention. For inhabitants of villages such as Om Al Kher, the occupation seriously impairs their ability to support families and the broader community. Consequently, such attention from a variety of stakeholders is absolutely necessary. PENGON and its members are leading the way in advocating for justice for Palestine's most vulnerable communities. It remains extremely difficult to establish sustainable projects in severely marginalized regions; however, NDC, PENGON and many other partners (both domestic and international) working throughout the West Bank are proving that it is possible.

