



# WATER WATCH

The Palestinian Hydrology Group's Newsletter

Fall 2013

## Inside this issue:

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Activities       | 2 |
| New Agreements   | 3 |
| 20 Years of Oslo | 4 |
| Success Story    | 7 |
| Events           | 8 |
| PHG News         | 8 |

## Welcome



*Rehabilitating roads in northern West Bank as part of improving access to water.*

As part of our ongoing strategy to increase communications on water and environmental issues to stakeholders, it is our pleasure to introduce the first issue of the Palestinian Hydrology Group's tri-yearly newsletter.

This newsletter will allow us to not only document our work across all our offices in the North, Centre, and South of the West Bank and in the Gaza strip but also to provide greater insight into our beneficiaries and the dedicated and talented staff that carry out our work.

We also want this newsletter to act as a platform for PHG to define its position on strategic issues in the water and environment sectors and for stakeholders to exchange information and create a dialogue on these issues.

Finally, this newsletter is also an opportunity to stay in touch with our partners, donors, and beneficiaries and reach out to others who share our vision of just and equal access to water.

We look forward to sharing the PHG's accomplishments with you and welcome your feedback in helping us develop this newsletter.

Regards,  
Dr. AbdelRahman Tamimi  
Director-General

# WATER WATCH

## Activities

---

PHG is currently implementing several projects in the West Bank and Gaza that aim at improving water and sanitation conditions and food security as well as providing relief and emergency assistance to vulnerable Palestinian Communities. The projects can be summarized as follows:

- **Rehabilitation of old cisterns to assist in the overall development of marginalized areas in Beit Mirsim** (a village located near the separation wall south of Hebron). The project is carried out in partnership with the Polish Humanitarian Assistance organisation and is funded by the Polish Foreign Ministry.
- **Rehabilitation and upgrade of wastewater collection and treatment plants** in Kharas and Nuba in the Western part of Hebron, including an infrastructure upgrade for the treatment plant in Nuba.
- Completion of a project funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO) for an **“Emergency response to the most marginalized communities in the West Bank affected by access restrictions to basic needs”**. This project was carried out in partnership with GVC and ACPP. The main project contribution was drinking pipes, 36 latrines, 51 plastic water tanks, 160 water filters, 160 hygiene kits and the rehabilitation of 13 cisterns and 4 km of roads/
- PHG is involved in implementing the **Deprived Families Economic Empowerment Program (DEEP)** funded by Islamic Development Bank through the UNDP, This programme will assist in improving the livelihood of 140 deprived and poor families around Nablus and Gaza
- In partnership with GVC and the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) and with funding from the European Union, PHG is **developing the wastewater network and rehabilitating the wetlands** in Sarra and Hajja to permit farmers to reuse wastewater for agricultural purposes.
- The UAWC is managing another project funded by the European Union to **increase the income of small scale olive oil producers and the competitiveness of their products on the local and global markets**. PHG will be responsible for improving access to water by rehabilitating roads, installing pipes and constructing cisterns and pools for irrigation.
- In partnership with Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) within the framework of their programme on **“Emergency protection of Palestinian-owned assets and contribution to building resilient livelihoods”**, PHG will conduct 60 hours of training on water irrigation management for farmers in the Nablus Governorate.
- Through funding from the Mennonite Central Committee PHG is involved in an ongoing project to **improve access to water for farmers in Zawata**, in Nablus governorate.



## Activities cont'd...

---

- In the Gaza Strip PHG is involved in **rehabilitating and rebuilding greenhouses** on over 200 dunums of land throughout the region that were affected by the flooding that took place earlier in the year. This project is funded by Spanish regional governments and implemented in partnership with the Spanish NGO Assembly of Cooperation for Peace (ACPP).
- PHG's Gaza office also recently completed a highly successful pilot project in cooperation with the Polish Humanitarian Assistance organisation. The project developed **small water treatment and sanitation units for 15 houses and irrigation of 15 dunums of land with treated wastewater**

## New Agreements

---

PHG is pleased to have signed the following agreements for project funding:

- **The Government of Netherlands is providing \$10 million US in funds for a “land development and water management programme”** to improve food security and reduce poverty through developing agricultural resources in vulnerable rural areas. This project will run for 3.5 years and is implemented by a consortium of four local organizations: UAWC, PHG, Land Research Centre (LRC), and the Economic and Social Development Centre of Palestine (ESDC). This programme is under the patronage of the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture.
- As part of the **Area C Development Program** PHG signed an agreement with the UNDP to rehabilitate 50 roman cisterns in the Tubas and Nablus Governorates. Within the **UNDP's Every Drop Matters** initiative PHG also signed an agreement to improve water resource management in Dura Al-Qarra'a (Ramallah Governorate).
- PHG will undertake a project to **expand the water network in Al-Ramadeen** village with funds from the Arab Fund for SocioEconomic Development.
- PHG signed a 3 year agreement with the International Union for Conservation of Nature to develop a **'Regional Knowledge Network on Water Resources Management'**
- In Gaza PHG signed an agreement for funding from the Andalusian (Spain) government to **develop the sewage network around Rafah**.
- PHG will also be involved in a **pioneer public-private partnership** with the Dutch engineering firm DHV, the Palestinian company PADICO, and Jenin Municipality. This project will upgrade a wastewater treatment plant in Jenin for distribution of treated wastewater to farmers.

# WATER WATCH

## 20 Years of Oslo



When Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin met on the White House lawn on September 13 1993 they signed into effect an interim agreement on Palestinian and Israeli shared responsibilities that were only meant to last 5 years. 20 years later and the Oslo Accords are still acting as a frame of reference for Palestinian and Israeli relations, including the allocation of water. In 2013 what difference have the Oslo Accords made for Palestinians' right to water?

Unfortunately, very little. Today in the West Bank Palestinians have less access to water per capita than they did in 1993. In Gaza less than 5% of water extracted from the Coastal Aquifer - the only source of water due to unfair water allocations and the Israeli blockade - is safe to drink. Population growth and crumbling infrastructure have shown that the interim accords are not sufficient to guarantee access to this basic human right for Palestinians, and are often ignored in any case.

### OSLO II: Allocation of Water

| Ground Water Resource | Israel's Annual Allocation | Palestine's Annual Allocation |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Western Aquifer       | 340 MCM (94%)              | 22 MCM (6%)                   |
| North-Eastern Aquifer | 103 MCM (71%)              | 42 MCM (29%)                  |
| Eastern Aquifer       | 40 MCM (42%)               | 54 MCM (58%)                  |

The Oslo Accords and the subsequent Oslo II agreement in 1995 outlined water allocations for Palestinians and Israelis, with the latter gaining control over the majority of the shared water resources. Israel exploits approximately **90%** of all shared water resources for their exclusive use, while the remaining **10%** is allocated for Palestinian use. This leaves Palestinians without adequate water supplies and negatively impacts their economy.

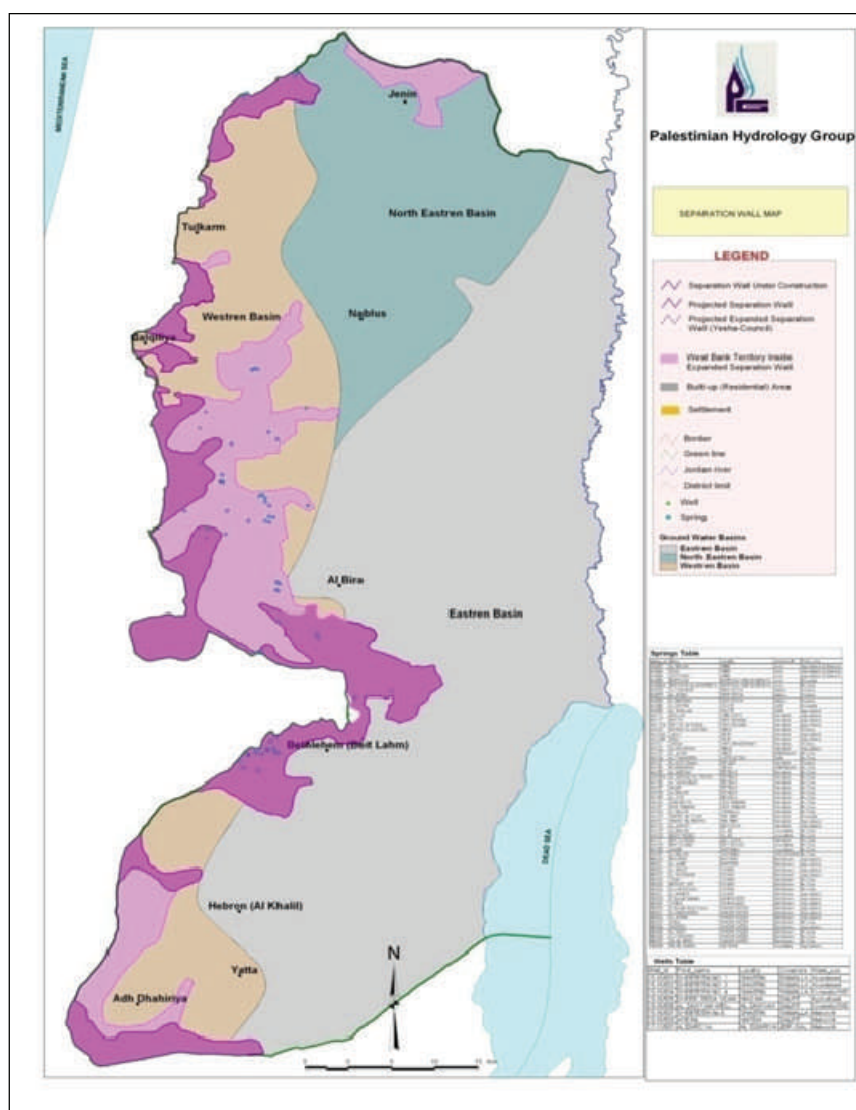


## 20 Years of Oslo cont'd...

Moreover, since Oslo the Palestinian population has doubled, and yet allocation of water remains the same, on top of Israel overdrawing on its allotted share.<sup>1</sup> Permit restrictions by the Israelis do not allow for the much needed development and rehabilitation of the water infrastructure, which means that less can be abstracted from the already low allocation of water Palestinians receive. On average the domestic consumption rate of water in the West Bank is 70 litres per capita per day (l/c/d). Well below the 100 l/c/d recommended as an “absolute minimum” by the WHO, and even further below the 300 l/c/d consumed by Israeli’s, many of them living in illegal settlements within the West Bank.

Permit restrictions preventing the rehabilitation and development of water infrastructure are the greatest obstacle to achieving water rights for Palestinians in the West Bank. The construction, maintenance and upgrading of water and sanitation infrastructure requires a permit from the Joint Water Committee and an additional permit from the Israeli Civil Administration for projects in Area C (60% of the West Bank). These permits are notoriously difficult to obtain; of the 30 waste water treatment plant projects submitted to the JWC since 1995 only 4 have obtained approval. [Those projects built without permits routinely get demolished by the Israeli Defence Forces.](#)

The separation wall and illegal settlements within the West Bank already cut off Palestinians from the best water extraction points. When it will be completed the wall will cut off Palestinians from areas that would yield an additional **90 million cubic metres (MCM) of water annually.**



Map marking the wall and wells and springs located within West Bank

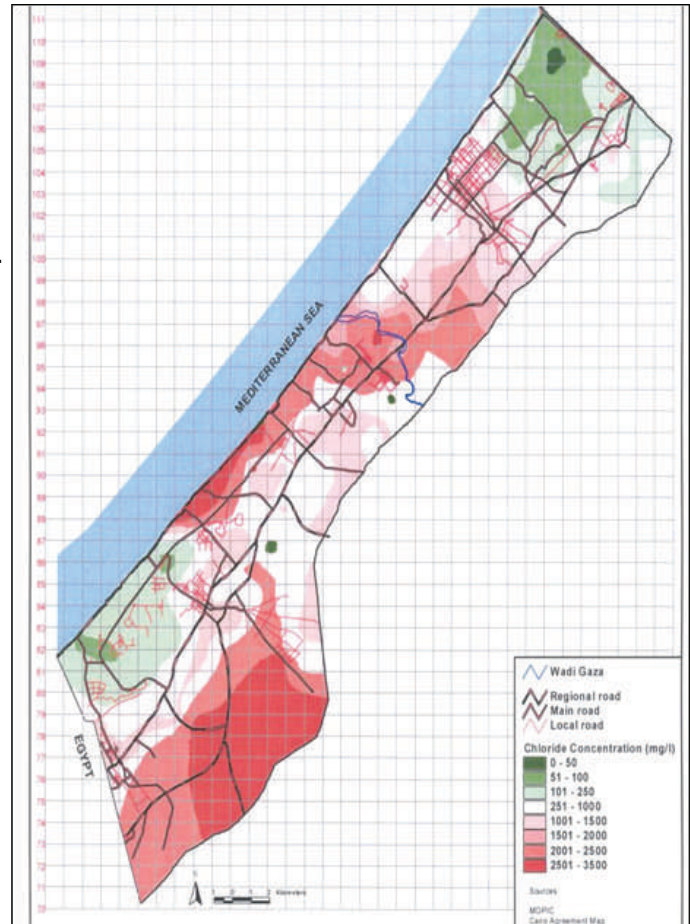
<sup>1</sup>Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development', World Bank (2009)

# WATER WATCH

## 20 Years of Oslo cont'd...

As a result of decaying infrastructure and being cut off from extraction points more and more West Bank Palestinians are obliged to buy water from the Israelis. In 2004 the Palestinian Authority was purchasing 38 MCM of water, in 2011 this increased to 52 MCM. Further exemplifying how Oslo era water allocations do not address population growth, the inability to rehabilitate the water infrastructure in the West Bank and the current political reality.

In the Gaza Strip the situation is even more dire. Under Oslo Israel is obliged to sell approximately 5 MCM/year to Gaza, which was based on the 1993 population of 748 000 people. Today the population is over 1.5 million but the quota for water remains the same. To meet this growing demand Gaza is over pumping its share of the Coastal Aquifer by twice its sustainable yield. This over abstraction has led to increased saline intrusion. Due to the blockade rehabilitation of the infrastructure in Gaza is extremely difficult and raw sewage often infiltrates the water, further accelerating the deterioration of the Coastal Aquifer. A recent UNESCO study revealed that if the situation remains the same the Coastal Aquifer could be completely unusable by 2016 and suffer from irreversible damage by 2020. With demand for fresh water in Gaza expected to increase by 60% in 2016, the outlook is extremely grim.



Map showing concentrations of Chloride in Gaza

Dr. Ayman Rabi - Executive Director of PHG - at an event marking the anniversary of Oslo's signing explained that 'a key lesson from the past 20 years is that access to a safe, reliable, and adequate water supply should not be held hostage to negotiations or a final agreement, which Palestinians are no closer to achieving...by preventing Palestinians from accessing their rightful share of water Israel limits opportunities for Palestinian growth and prosperity.' Access to this basic human right and the protection of the environment should not wait for another round of negotiations. 20 years after Oslo it is time to address the water issue directly, before it's too late.

The facts and figures in this article were taken from EWASH's fact sheet [“Hung Out to Dry: 20 years of denying Palestinian water rights”](#)



## Success Story: Suha

Part of PHG's mandate is to help marginalized groups in Palestinian society. Sometimes this help come in forms other than water, for instance through the UNDP's Deprived Families Economic Empowerment Program (DEEP) PHG is helping poor households gain economic empowerment.

The Sifin family is located in Yamoun, near Jenin and consists of Suha and her 4 children under 18. Suha is a widow and was dependent on social welfare. Because they were considered a poor family in the region they were targeted by DEEP and their case was evaluated by the PHG. Due to her skills, PHG determined that the best way to help Suha's family was to provide her with sewing equipment. Through DEEP funds, PHG gave Suha 4 sewing machines and accessories, and ironing equipment.

Thanks to her good relations with the community and contacts with traders in Jenin, Suha was able to set up various contracts for work. She has a contract with a cloth supplier in Jenin, where she designs and produces shirts and trousers for a set price per piece. For her village she does garment repairs as well as producing traditional Palestinian outfits, school uniforms and mattress covers. As she says, "this work is the best option for me"

Thanks to this project after 1 month Suha was able to make a profit of 3520 NIS. With the money she saved she was able to buy gas for cooking, where before she had to burn wood to cook for her children. She is also able to afford a water tank on her property, where prior she would have to go in debt to the municipality to access water.

Suha has also been able to invest in her children's education by paying for extra private lessons and buying a computer for the house. Her children have shown a marked improvement in school and Suha proudly says "today I can offer them extra private courses to improve their academics and now they even have an allowance and I can offer them whatever they need...my kids are very happy now."



*Suha in her sewing workshop*

# WATER WATCH

## Events

---

### 25 August—9 September:

Training courses for farmers in soil and water management and pest control as part of FAO funded programme.

Where: Rural communities in Nablus Governorate

### October 2013:

Training courses on agricultural and marketing techniques for farmers and water conservation awareness in schools as part of UNDP's Every Drop Matters programme.

Where: Dura Al Qarra'a (Ramallah Governorate)

## PHG News

---

- PHG is happy to invite 2 new engineers to the main office in Ramallah:

**Shereen Ali Zeidan** was working out of the office of the Palestinian Water Training Institute and is now splitting her time there and at the PHG main office as a Project Coordinator. She is currently working on the UNDP "Every Drop Matters" project in Dura Al-Qarr'a.

**Abeer Albutmeh** is a water and environmental engineer at the Palestinian Environmental NGO's Network. She will work on a joint project between the PENGO and PHG.

- Dr. AbdelRahman Tamimi (Director-General of PHG) recently completed a successful trip to the Netherlands, where he involved PHG in a pioneering public-private partnership project (see under New Agreements) and met with representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Members of Parliament from the Labour and Socialist parties. He also delivered a lecture for graduate students on "Water as Peace or Conflict Factor in the Middle East" at the universities of Leiden, Twente, and Amsterdam.



## PALESTINIAN HYDROLOGY GROUP

Ramallah – AL- Masyoun, Emil Habibi St. - Annahda Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

P. O. Box 565, Ramallah

Tel: +97222966315 Fax: +97222966319.

[www.phg.org](http://www.phg.org)

[info@phg.org](mailto:info@phg.org)