

On Occasion of World Water Day

Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics “PCBS” Issues a Press Release

- **More than half of the Palestinian households are not connected to Sewage System.**
- **More than half of the Gazans reported that drinking water is of poor quality.**

On the eve of World Water Day, which occurs on March 22, 2008 PCBS issued a statement on the bases of the most recent statistics on water and sanitation. According to these statistics, there are 2.6 billion people in the world - including 980 million children - who lack access to the most basic water and sanitation facilities. This situation affects all aspects of life, ranging from education to national development, and the lack of sanitation leads to the death of 1.5 million children annually worldwide. The celebrations for World Water Day in 2008 aim at drawing world attention to the benefits from achieving the seventh of the Millennium Development Goals: Reducing the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015.

47.6% of Households in the Palestinian Territory Dispose of Their Wastewater Through Porous Cesspits

The Data of Households Environment Survey in 2006 shows that 45.3% of households in the Palestinian Territory were connected to sewage networks. The distribution of these networks varies from one region to another, with up to 34.7% in the West Bank, compared with 66.0% in the Gaza Strip. Data also indicate that 58.4% of households in urban communities in the Palestinian Territory are connected to sewerage networks, compared to 3.5% of households in rural communities and 74.2% of households in camps.

In addition, data indicate that 47.6% of households in the Palestinian Territory dispose of their wastewater through porous cesspits. This percentage increases to 85.3% in rural communities, compared to 24.1% in camps; 6.4% of households in the Palestinian Territory use tight cesspits, and 0.7% of households use another means for the disposal of wastewater.

The survey data also indicated that 16.6% of households in the Palestinian Territory had a collection water well at a level that was lower than the cesspit, while 8.5% of households had a well and cesspit at the same level. In addition, the data show that 31.9% of households had a distance of less than 15 meters between the cesspit and the collection well.

Data of Housing Conditions Survey for the year 2006 indicated that 2.8% of households had a kitchen and bathroom not connected to the water network, and 1.4% of households had a toilet not connected to the water network.

Environmental and Health Risk to Humans and Animals and Contamination of Groundwater and the Environment in General

Since 1967, there has been no construction of adequate and effective treatment stations in the West Bank except for the al-Bireh sewage purification plant which was built with German assistance during the period of the Oslo agreements. During the same period there was rehabilitation of the purification stations in Ramallah, Tulkarm and Jenin Governorates. However, the Jenin station was turned into a refuse dump in recent years and presents an environmental and health risk to humans and animals and contamination of groundwater and

the environment in general. This confirms the real need for the establishment of networks and sewage purification stations.

55.6% of Households in Gaza Strip Described the Water as of Poor Quality

The Households Environment Survey in 2006 reported that the percentage of households in the Palestinian Territory that have good quality drinking water has reached 50.6% compared to 23.1% of households that described their drinking water as bad quality. In Gaza Strip, 55.6% of households described the water as of poor quality versus 4.5% of households that described the water quality as good. These results reflect the reality of water quality in the Gaza Strip, which was demonstrated by the recent environmental disaster in Um Al-Nasser village. The village, which was inhabited by about 5,000 people residing in 250 houses, witnessed the collapse of the water dam in the southern part of Beit Lahia, in the north of the Gaza Strip, which caused an explosion of the sanitary drainage basin and a flood of wastewater to households in the village. Five persons were killed and 35 were injured and all 250 households were destroyed.

Share of Water Supplied to the Domestic Sector Reached 120.6 liters/capita/day

The data of the Palestinian Water Authority in 2006 indicated that the quantity of water available annually in the Palestinian Territory amounted to 319.1 million m³, while the amount of water purchased from the Israeli water company (Mekorot) for domestic use was 43.9 million m³/year and the amount of water supplied to the domestic sector was 160.2 million m³/year. While the per capita share of water supplied to the domestic sector reached 120.6 liters/capita/day, it amounted to about 50.1 liters/capita/day in the Tubas governorate, which was the least of all governorates. The Households Environment Survey data indicate that 88.6% of households in the Palestinian Territory were connected to a public water network in the year 2006.

Israeli Settlements is One of the Most Significant Causes of Pollution to the Environment and to the Various Water Sources

Untreated sewage from Israeli settlements that is disposed in the Palestinian valleys is one of the most significant causes of pollution to the environment and to the various water sources (both surface and groundwater). The sewage from Israeli settlements streams into the valleys and farmland and seeps through the soil into the groundwater which results in contamination of the water, causing great harm to farmers and to the environment. An example of Israeli settlements causing this problem are Jalboa', Burkan, Emmanuel, Sha'arei Tikva, Ariel and Kiryat Arba settlements.