State of Palestine
Water Authority

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Water crisis threatens 35,000 Palestinians, half of them children

RAMALLAH, State of Palestine, 14 April 2016 – Today the Palestinian Water Authority, UNICEF and GVC appealed to the donor community to mobilize resources as 35,000 Palestinians, nearly half of them children, are at risk of being deprived of safe drinking water this summer.

A project providing extremely vulnerable communities in the West Bank with water at affordable prices is at risk of being discontinued as funding has been exhausted.

The project, implemented by the Italian NGO Gruppo Volontariato Civile (GVC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), has supplied families living in 90 vulnerable communities of the West Bank with safe drinking water, especially during the dry months of summer, since 2014.

"The suspension of this project will have a devastating impact on marginalized families, most of them living in rural and herder villages of the Jordan Valley or in the southern West Bank where water is scarce and drought an ever-present threat," said **H.E. Eng. Mazen Ghunaim, Minister, Palestinian Water Authority (PWA).**

"The lack of access to water will not only put 14,000 children at risk of dehydration, diarrhea and other water-borne diseases, but will also place a serious strain on the resilience and coping mechanisms of their communities," **June Kunugi, UNICEF Special Representative in the State of Palestine**, added.

Prior to the project, the 90 communities it benefits used to have access to less than 60 litres per capita per day, with some accessing only 20 litres per capita per day -- one fifth of the World Health Organization's recommendations.

"The suspension of the water assistance will be disastrous for these extremely poor families who suffer from acute water shortages every summer and spend up to 30% of their meagre income to buy drinking water," said **Luca De Filicaia, GVC's Country Director**. "It may lead to displacement, especially as this year's rainfall has been below average."

The project, based on the development of a multilevel governance system managed by the Palestinian themselves, has helped decrease the cost of water while increasing efficiency, equity and predictability. Water has been distributed by trucks directly to all communities, no matter how isolated, at the same price, optimizing resources in order to run this service which is becoming sustainable over time.

The distribution is implemented in strict coordination and with direct participation of national and local authorities such as joint services councils, the West Bank Water Department (WBWD) and the Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG).

Palestinian communities living in Area C, which constitutes about 61% of the West Bank and is under Israeli administrative and security control, experience severe restrictions on their access to basic services and have very few alternatives for service provision.

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