



Palestinian National Authority  
Palestinian Water Authority



السلطة الوطنية الفلسطينية  
سلطة المياه الفلسطينية



Sustainable Management of the West Bank and Gaza Aquifers

UNIVERSITY OF  
NEWCASTLE



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## Report on Stakeholder Workshops in the West Bank and Gaza



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<p><b>The SUSMAQ Project</b></p> <p>The aim of the project is to increase understanding of the sustainable yield of the West Bank and Gaza aquifers under a range of future economic, demographic and land use scenarios, and to evaluate alternative groundwater management options. The project is interdisciplinary, bringing together hydrogeologists and groundwater modellers with economists and policy experts. In this way, hydrogeological understanding can inform, and be informed by, insights from the social sciences. The results of the study will provide support to decision-making at all levels in relation to the sustainable yield of the West Bank and Gaza aquifers.</p> <p>The project runs from November 1999 to October 2004, and is a partnership between the Palestinian Water Authority, University of Newcastle upon Tyne. The project is funded by the United Kingdom Government’s Department for International Development (DfID).</p>	<p><b>Project Results Dissemination</b></p> <p>The project disseminates its results through the project website <a href="http://www.ncl.ac.uk/susmaq">www.ncl.ac.uk/susmaq</a>, newsletters, workshops, technical meetings, publications in conference and scientific journals.</p>
<p><b>Bibliographical Reference</b></p> <p>This report should be referenced as: SUSMAQ (2004). Report on stakeholder workshops in the West Bank and Gaza. Report No. SUSMAQ - SUS #54 V1.1, Sustainable Management of the West Bank and Gaza Aquifers, Palestinian Water Authority (Palestine) and University of Newcastle upon Tyne (UK).</p> <p><b>Authors:</b> Yasser Shalabi, Alan Nicol, Amjad Aliewi</p>	

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# 1 Executive Summary

The following report represents a summary of the main findings of four stakeholder workshops held in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as part of the SUSMAQ project. The purpose of holding the workshops was to identify key local-level water management issues for the development of effective management options across Palestine in coming years.

In spite of organisational problems caused by the Israeli occupation, the workshops were successfully conducted and the wealth of discussions highlighted both a set of key challenges facing the sector and a number of suggested recommendations—at all levels—to help overcome these challenges.

The picture emerging was one of a complex local policy environment, made particularly problematic by the combined legacy of poor infrastructure and institutional development, on the one hand, and continued Israeli control over and disruption to Palestinian society and economy on the other. The main issues arising are summarised below:

- The overarching issue remained Israeli occupation and control over water resource; this should be dealt with at many levels, including sovereign control over resources, through greater achievement of Palestinian rights and through practical steps to avoid reliance on Israeli technical expertise as well as more equitable relationships to Israel's Mekorot water supply company;
- Nevertheless the existing Palestinian institutional environment was itself poorly coordinated and led from the centre, suffered from a confusing overlap in institutional responsibilities and, at its apex, had a largely non-functioning institution—the National Water Council; this had caused lower public confidence in water management institutions;
- Capacity constraints—both financial and technical—were widespread at all levels, but particularly locally, and severely constrained the managerial and technical abilities of local authorities, this, ultimately, led to higher costs to consumers as institutions were forced to buy-in more expensive external (invariably Israeli) expertise.
- At the user level there are a number of complex, interrelated issues:
  - Water distribution systems at the farm level were often old and inefficient; and where network water was used by farmers, frequently there were problems caused to other domestic users as the systems were not designed for such heavy usage;
  - Users were increasingly unable to pay water bills under current economic conditions as poverty increased and income streams diminished; the impact on women was noted as particularly bad in relation to poor water availability in some areas;
  - At the same time, frequent interruptions to supplies caused additional hardships for consumers—both large and small—and could have devastating economic consequences;

- There was a major problem noted of illegal connections and the lack of regulatory authority to deal with these connections; in addition the construction of unofficial and illegal wells had a detrimental impact on existing agricultural wells and made overall management of the resource base harder to achieve;
- Fragmentation in land ownership and small agricultural production units made managing demand extremely difficult from an institutional perspective and led to higher unit costs as a result. It also entailed reduced 'crop per drop' and therefore an economically less productive sector.
- Recommendations:
  - Greater leadership on strategy and policy was important which should be in parallel with improved institutional clarity on roles and responsibilities between, on the one hand, national and local public sector institutions, and on the other between the public sector and civil society organisations—particularly NGOs;
  - A unified pricing policy and stricter regulatory environment would serve more efficient and effective management of the resource, though limits to regulation were acknowledged under present circumstances;
  - Training of technical staff should be accorded a far higher priority than at present whilst attention should be paid to oversized (and costly) administrative staff working in water management institutions at a local level;
  - There should be greater control of Israeli settlement contamination of groundwater and protection of the most vulnerable recharge areas;
  - Finally, in developing more effective sector strategies and in improving links to other sectors, poverty reduction approaches should become a central, and guiding, feature.

## 2 Introduction

This report provides a summary overview of the findings of four one-day stakeholder workshops held in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as part of the Sustainable Management of the West Bank and Gaza Aquifers Project (SUSMAQ). The project is carried out under the auspices of the Palestinian Water Authority and receives funding from the UK Department for International Development.

The workshops, convened by the socio-economic research team under the leadership of Yasser Shalabi in Palestine and coordinated by Alan Nicol, complement broader studies undertaken on socio-economic dimensions of demand for water in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The team convened four local workshops across the West Bank and Gaza—in each of the main regions of the West Bank and one in Gaza<sup>1</sup>. Participants included a variety of local stakeholders both directly involved in the water sector—ranging from representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations working in the water—to other local government employees and representatives of international organisations working in Palestine (a full list of participants is provided in the Annex). In addition end-users were also represented by participating farmers and an effort was made to ensure gender balance through encouraging the attendance of women working in agricultural and other related sectors.

Each of the four workshops began with an overview of SUSMAQ project activities followed by a definition of the socio-economic project component and how it relates to water issues. The workshop aims and objectives were then spelt out with an emphasis on the desire to elicit the views and opinions of participants on water management issues, including sectoral and geographical distribution and problems faced by water users and providers.

The facilitator posed a number of key questions as prompts for workshop discussions and to provide an overall framework:

1. ***Institutional aspects of local water management***: What practical experience of management issues have the local institutions working in water and related sectors? To what extent does water availability impact on water use patterns? What are the key institutional issues arising at the local level surrounding source management, water distribution and quality, and inter-institutional relations with the national level?
2. ***Non-institutional issues***: What non-institutional factors affect the views of participants on source management from a social, economic and technical perspective?
3. ***Future perceptions and expectations***: What type of arrangements would participants envisage as ideal under a future independent Palestinian State?

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<sup>1</sup> The first workshop was held in Nablus (North West Bank) on August 13, 2003; the second in Jericho (Central West Bank) on January 1, 2004; the third in the Bethlehem area (Southern West Bank) on January 10, 2004; the fourth in Gaza City on March 21, 2004 and included participants from all Gaza Strip Governorates.

The discussion format was structured around the above questions, with summaries of points made presented by the facilitator after each section and then at the end of the session. In general the workshop output provided many insights into local level impediments to effective water management regimes and revealed important steps that could be taken under a future state structure in order to improve management systems. The summarised results of the workshops are presented below.



Stakeholder workshop discussions in Bethlehem, January 2004.



Full report/document is not available online