

Gaza Emergency WASH Cluster weekly situation report

Number 7

10th March

Summary overview

- 50,000 people remain without access to water through the public network, while 100,000 others have intermittent supplies
- ACF, CARE, Oxfam and PHG continue to deliver water by tanker to affected neighbourhoods
- The lack of materials and equipment for the WASH sector continues to hamper repair and rehabilitation efforts.
- Results showed 12% of water samples from January and 14% from February were contaminated with *Total Coliform* and *Faecal Coliform*
- WHO identifies a possible corresponding increase in diarrhoeal rates

General situation

There are no changes in amounts of households receiving water from the general network, i.e. 50,000 persons are completely without access to water and an additional 100,000 are virtually without water, receiving water only every 5 or 6 days in Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahiya, Az Zaitoun, Jabalia and east Khan Younis.

The humanitarian community continues to seek clearance for items essential to rehabilitation of the water system in Gaza. Some WASH items have not been permitted to enter Gaza for over a month, and the shortage of materials and equipment is of grave concern given CMWU have limited stocks remaining. The majority of WASH actors now rely on a dwindling local market for supplies.

On the January 20 the public health laboratory in Gaza resumed its function in collecting water samples from all water networks and wells, especially from areas targeted during the recent crisis to investigate the presence of microbiological pollutants. Recently released results show that 13 (12%) out of 108 water samples taken in January and 47 (14%) out of 335 water samples taken in February were contaminated with *Total Coliform* and *Faecal Coliform*

Recently released information on *Watery Diarrhoeal* diseases among children 0-3 years attending UNRWA facilities was collected on weekly bases during January and February 2009 and compared with corresponding weeks in 2008. An increase in the incidence of the disease by 18% was reported during three weeks, from Jan 19 to Feb 8. This increase could be related to the severe damage to the water supply system during the crisis. The epidemiological surveillance system in Gaza strip resumed functionality on the January 20. (*WHO Gaza Sub-Office*)

Water Quality Issues

Further investigation by the Cluster highlighted that CMWU (Gaza's water utility) continues to monitor water quality at its 550 sampling sites across the Gaza Strip, and

to work on water and wastewater networks. Water samples at 8 sites in North Gaza (Al-Seefa Municipality tank, Al-Nat Camp, Hisham Abu Hashish house, Mahmoud El-'Attar house, Nizar Abu Halimeh house, Nizar Abu Halimeh house, Saleh Abede Rabbo house, Water transportation vehicle [Daghmash]) and 2 sites in Gaza City (Sheikh 'Ijleen reservoir [well], Tal El Hawa Butchery store) tested positive (range 1 to >100) for faecal coliforms on 1 Feb (Gaza City) and 2 and 8 Feb (North Gaza). CMWU staff responsible for water treatment with chlorine followed up at these sites. Ministry of Health and WHO staff reported an increase in acute watery diarrhoea cases at nearby clinics. The WASH Cluster is following up on the findings, but considers there is currently no cause for alarm. The CMWU (Majed Ghannam) discussed water quality issues at a water and sanitation workshop in Gaza on 10th March. Coordination issues, lack of chlorine, and the poor maintenance of chlorine dosing equipment in Gaza Municipality could be related to the deterioration in water quality? Further consultation and investigation will be required.

Further concerns are also being expressed about the possible contamination of water sources by white phosphorus and other toxic materials from munitions. The Cluster is seeking advice on this issue from water quality experts in UK.

WASH Cluster humanitarian response

Drinking and domestic water

PHG, Oxfam and ACF continue with their water distribution activities.

CARE has also started distributions, 157 m³ of potable water was distributed to 4,122 beneficiaries (approx 5l/p/d) between 23rd February and 3rd March. 293 m³ of domestic water were distributed to 1,924 beneficiaries during the same period.



Water distribution in North of Gaza, picture provided (credit: ACF)

WASH partners are now starting to discuss possible exit strategies from the water tankering activities. A meeting to discuss this issue will be arranged with CMWU and other key actors. Maintaining supplies for vulnerable communities with limited economic resources must however remain a priority for the sector. The WASH Cluster is available to lobby donors for further resources if identified as a priority.

Solid waste

Disaster Waste Recovery (DWR), an organization specializing in waste management and rubble clearance activities are in the process of finalizing a ToR for a waste needs assessment. DWR will support WASH partners involved in waste management activities, as well as identifying opportunities for small-scale interventions, as well as providing training on health and safety issues related to handling waste. DWR will also be requested to identify and advise on environmental issues related to WASH.

Wastewater



Partially treated sewerage discharging into the sea, Swedish Village, Rafah (credit: Tim Forster)

CMWU provided clarification on sewage discharges to the sea. The Beit Lahiya Wastewater Treatment Plant in the North is not yet completed. The only constructed items being infiltration basins, which were damaged by the conflict. The existing Northern Wastewater Treatment Plant can partially treat 18,000 m³/day of wastewater. This waste does not go to the sea, but to the large infiltration basin then to the smaller one. For Gaza City, 40,000 m³/day out of 60,000 m³/day of wastewater

produced is fully treated at Gaza City Waste Water Treatment Plant. This means 20,000 m³/day of untreated wastewater is discharged directly into the sea. At Rafah, partially treated wastewater is discharged into the sea, around 5,000 m³/day. In the middle area, around 10,000m³ of raw sewage is discharged into Wadi Gaza. In total, around 35,000 m³/day mount of partially treated/raw sewage is discharged daily into the sea.

Hygiene and NFIs

WASH partners from the Cluster have expressed interest in strengthening the hygiene component of the WASH response in Gaza, and they are being encouraged to set up Hygiene Promotion sub-group. It has been agreed that the GAZA WASH Cluster will review the hygiene kits currently being distributed, as some of the items are considered inappropriate for the context. It is hoped to establish a recommended minimum standard for hygiene kits.

WASH cluster activities

Graham Henderson, the WASH Cluster focal point in Gaza, is currently active in strengthening the Cluster's presence. Graham first task will be to strengthen links with the Health Cluster, particularly in identifying the links between increased diarrhoeal disease and poor water quality. Graham now has the support of an information manager Najla Shawa. Najla will support on training partners in the use of 3W form and other information tools. The next major IM tool to be piloted in Gaza is the Comprehensive Assessment Tool (CAT), which will be rolled out as a monthly monitoring tool to identify potential gaps at a household level. The PCBS has been requested to provide technical support on statistical aspects of the monitoring survey (design, sample size, field worker training, and data analysis) and PHG will be tasked with data collection.

The WASH cluster continues its initiative to build an informal WASH advocacy group. The group held its second meeting to identify the main goal and the main WASH issues, leading to the development of an advocacy action plan. This initiative is being coordinated with OCHA and the HCT advocacy group and will cover both Gaza and West Bank issues. Issues identified to date include; access in WB and Gaza; permits for working in zone C and the Gaza buffer zone; the coming drought in WB;

and inequitable use and allocation of water resources. Quality data on diarrhoeal rates and poor water quality would provide a strong evidence base for such work.

The Cluster Coordinator attended a meeting at OCHA to discuss possible roles of the Cluster in relation to the West Bank drought. A further meeting will be held in the coming week.

Constraints

The main constraint continues to be access of the necessary materials into Gaza. The most urgent priorities continue to be pipes, fittings, pumping equipment, electrical equipment, and construction materials such as cement. CMWU and key WASH partners continue to maintain the priority WASH materials list for Gaza updated. Discussions are taking place with Logistics Cluster to organise a visit to CoGAT in Tel Aviv for the WASH Cluster Coordinator. CMWU and PWA are currently discussing the access issue with the Israeli authorities.

Restrictions are also being applied to more humble items. The Logistics Cluster Situation Report for 27 Feb – 4 March highlighted that:

“On 03 March a shipment of 704 packets of washing powder was rejected by Israeli authorities at Kerem Shalom crossing because the cargo did not have an “environmental certificate”, without any explanation as to what this is. The washing powder is part of hygiene kit distribution by World Vision in Gaza. On 26 February an identical cargo for World Vision was delivered to Gaza through Kerem Shalom crossing”.

Highlights for next week

- **Finalising agreements with PHG and PCBS in order to roll out the CAT monitoring tool**
- **Further training for WASH partners on the 3W form (provided by OCHA)**
- **Next Gaza WASH Cluster meeting, Tuesday 17th March**
- **Next Ramallah/Jerusalem WASH Cluster meeting, Thursday 19th March**
- **Holding a sub-working group meeting on water tankering in Gaza (date to be confirmed)**
- **Continued consultation with WASH Cluster partners in Gaza.**

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