

Sustainable development of the Palestinian water sector under arid/semi-arid conditions: an environmental and socio-economic approach

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ABSTRACT Palestine is a semi-arid country with a water demand that exceeds the available water supply by 336 Mcm/yr in 2005. The average per capita consumption is about 50 l/day which is far below the 150 l/day specified by WHO standards. This paper aims at highlighting the main challenges facing the sustainable development of Palestinian water resources and how to improve them by different means including integrated water resources management. The Palestinian economy shows a huge decline in the investments in water resources development. 40% of the Palestinian communities are not served with safe water supply and proper sanitation. The current management of water resources is unsustainable due to the overexploitation of aquifers by the Israelis who imposed a political environment that constrains the efficient development of the Palestinian water sector. In addition, agriculture, demographic growth and urbanization are the major reasons of increased demand in Palestine. Pollution from sewage, solid waste and overuse of agrochemicals is a critical challenge to sustainable development of the Palestinian water sector. The establishment of the Palestinian National Council is a step forward to strengthen the institutional capacity towards the sustainable development of the water sector. This study concludes that integrated water resources management that takes into consideration structural and non-structural measures should be adopted for the sustainable development of the water sector. It is important to adjust unsustainable consumption (e.g., agricultural use) of water as well as protect water resources from pollution and support the promotion of reforms and strengthen water institutions within integrated approaches and improved governance. The participation by local people and other stakeholders in decision-making and management of water resources is recommended.



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