



USAID/E3 Water Communications and Knowledge Management (CKM) Project

## GLOBAL WATERS RADIO

### Nader Al-Khateeb on West Bank Water Security and the Deir Sha'ar Pipeline

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**Global Waters Radio:** You are tuned into Global Waters Radio, a podcast series produced by the Water Team at the U.S. Agency for International Development. The series offers listeners insights from USAID officials, development partners, thought leaders, and experts from across the water sector, as they discuss current USAID water programming and cutting edge research from around the world.

This week on the podcast, Nader Al-Khateeb, a founding member of the Palestinian Water Authority, who today serves as Palestinian Director for EcoPeace, a regional environmental NGO with offices in the West Bank, Jordan, and Israel. Today, we are discussing the recent opening of the Deir Sha'ar pipeline, one of USAID's largest water sector investments in the West Bank in ten years. The pipeline began operations in December of 2015, and is now improving access to potable water for 200,000 residents of the Hebron Governorate in the southern West Bank. (Note: Since this interview was recorded, the number of beneficiaries receiving improved access to potable water has grown to 260,000.)

**To start things off Mr. Al-Khateeb, can you give us a sense of your background in the water sector, and what have been some of your initial impressions of the new pipeline project?**

**Nader Al-Khateeb:** Well I was one of the founders of the Palestinian Water Authority. And I was there until '97, in fact. You know, we started in Gaza and then north of Jerusalem, and I am a water engineer and I served 10 years for Bethlehem Water Supply and Sewage Authority. So I think this pipeline is a real accomplishment, and USAID is leading the investment in the water sector and the improvement of the water supply.

**GWR: So take our listeners back in time a few years. Can you describe some of the difficulties residents in the southern West Bank were facing before the Deir Sha'ar pipeline opened?**

**NK:** Well, to my knowledge, in some neighborhoods from May to almost October some neighborhoods have no access to municipal water. The pipes are totally empty because there isn't enough water, and lots of the water delivered to those neighborhoods were lost on the way—either as physical losses or because of illegal connections. In addition, I think the new

pipe made sure that there is more water available, which means also tremendous economic savings because although the people in the past did not get piped water, but it doesn't mean they do drink. They buy water by tankers, which is very costly—very, very expensive water. Even and also you cannot be sure all the time about the quality, because the quality can be deteriorated by the means of the transportation and the storage of that water.

**GWR: At the moment, the pipeline is pumping about 14,000 cubic meters of potable water into the southern West Bank every day, and it has the capacity to transport even more. So in what ways is greater water security touching people's lives? (Note: Since this interview was recorded, the daily amount of potable water pumped into the southern West Bank has increased to 18,000 cubic meters.)**

**NK:** Now I think the new pipe ensures much more water to those people, which means savings, it means better hygiene, it means better social life. But I know Hebron City, for many years, how serious was the water problem. But also I can see how villages on the way, like Beit Ummar and Halhul, I think also their water situation improved as a result of this new pipeline. So in general, the water supply in Hebron will be dramatically improved. It improves, you know, the livelihood of people in the south of Palestine, the hygienic level, and definitely, you know, there is no negative environmental impacts from such a pipeline. The Deir Sha'ar makes sure you can convey more water in a shorter period and react according to the demands, because water supply remains intermittent system in Palestine. But having such a pipeline will help you to transfer larger amounts of water in shorter periods so you can react to serious water shortages. So it allows you to better manage your limited water resources.

**GWR: The new Deir Sha'ar pipeline is replacing an older pipeline which in recent years was losing up to 45 percent of its water due to leaks and illegal tapping. The new pipeline is trying to improve water-use efficiency through a state-of-the-art water monitoring system. Can you talk a little bit more about that aspect?**

**NK:** The PWA now can monitor illegal connections and the precautions to prevent theft of water and illegal connections was introduced I think in this project also, make sure that the water goes for the needed people, and there is no abuse of this water. There will be no illegal connections and the water will get to its users as it is planned by the PWA and of course the water users associations or the municipalities.

**GWR: And with the previous pipeline, and its problems with illegal connections, had there been a particular sector of the economy that was drawing that water?**

**NK:** The problem would be agriculture, and that was the risk in the past, and in many conveyance pipelines, people were stealing water mainly for irrigation. But even with this pipeline, somebody as I have seen, they tried to do illegal connections, but it was easily discovered, and measures taken to stop that.

**GWR: Well, in addition to the new pipeline opening this past winter, what other water sector improvements have been taking place in the southern West Bank in order to improve water-use efficiency?**

**NK:** To my knowledge, you know, all the municipalities have been rehabilitating and upgrading their water distribution systems. There have been many donors; the World Bank has been an active donor, you know, in the water sector in the south; USAID has been working, you know, almost since Oslo in that area; the European Union. So there are many donors who have been helping the municipalities to upgrade and rehabilitate their water distribution systems to save the water and minimize the physical losses and provide more capacity for delivery of water. Of course, investment in water supply, I would love to see it also coupled with investment in wastewater treatment, because supplying more water means generating more wastewater. And unless that wastewater is collected and treated properly, otherwise we could endanger the pollution of the groundwater aquifers.

**GWR:** Well Mr. Al-Khateeb, thank you so much for joining us this afternoon.

**NK:** Okay. Thank you.

**GWR:** And for our listeners, if you would like more information about USAID-funded water sector work in the West Bank, please click on the links below. As always, if you have a topic you would like to see us cover in a future podcast, drop us a line at [waterteam@usaid.gov](mailto:waterteam@usaid.gov).

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