Hundreds of thousands of people including children risk losing water supply as critical facilities vandalized

TRIPOLI, 1st August 2021 - It was reported that a main station of the man-made river at the eastern track of Hassawna system was vandalized on Thursday, affecting the water supply to four main cities, Bani Walid, Misrata, Al-Khums, Zliten and other surrounding areas.

On 24 July, a major leak had occurred in the water transmission line in Tazerbo, Benghazi located close to the city of Awjila, leading to a large volume of water to be wasted.

In the past two weeks alone, one of the wells of Al-Hasawna, Al-Juffra Water System in the western and southern field was destroyed and totally put out of service. The well has high daily production capacity of over 5000 cubic meters of water.

UNICEF deplores vandalizing water systems which cut off children and their families from water, increasing the likelihood of water-borne diseases spreading in the affected areas.

As Libya’s stifling summer heat hits residents, amidst acute power cuts and Coronavirus pandemic spreading fast, continuous damage of the water system further jeopardizes levels of health and hygiene among the population and increases the risk of epidemics and spread of communicable diseases to already embattled Libyans.

“When access is cut off, children are often forced to rely on unsafe sources. This increases their risks of contracting diseases, especially in very young children,” said Cristina Brugiolo, UNICEF Deputy Special Representative to Libya. “Deliberate and indiscriminate damage of water and sanitation systems – and power supplies required for them to function – is a great violation of fundamental rights.” she added.

The Man-Made River is the largest water supplier in Libya and provides 60% of all freshwater used in Libya - the repeated assailants attacks on its main systems threatens the water security of the entire country and puts millions of lives at immediate risk of losing access to safe water.

UNICEF calls on national and international partners to make the pressing issue of protecting the water infrastructure a priority concern and step-up security measures including the potential deployment of civil forces at the wellfields. The urgent allocation of necessary resources to carry out maintenance will ensure continuity of adequate water supply and sanitation services.

UNICEF is working with its partners on water trucking to secure water supplies to the most affected and vulnerable population in hospitals, health facilities, detention centers and the internally displaced people camps. A UNICEF technical team is working with the
General Company for Water and Wastewater to review urgent response options and identify alternative water sources.

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About UNICEF Libya:
Since 2012, UNICEF has promoted the rights and wellbeing of children and their families in Libya. Together with our partners, we work throughout the country to reach children and their families through our Health, Nutrition, WASH, Education, Child Protection and Emergency Response interventions. We strengthen the linkages between humanitarian action and development programming, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and conflict-affected children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere in Libya.

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