

# UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

# OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

**DONOR UPDATE 19 OCTOBER 2005**

- **To date, some US\$ 10.3 million for 2005 has been received. An additional US\$ 4.8 million is in the pipeline.**
- **US\$ 4.2 million is urgently needed for health services, educational and psychosocial support.**

## 1. ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

Some of the most significant changes in the five-year conflict in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) have occurred over the last nine months. Aside from the disengagement in the Gaza Strip and withdrawal of four settlements in the northern West Bank, which has reduced the exposure of children to death and injury, there has been a continued system of closures in the West Bank which seriously affects both the economic and social fabric of the Palestinian society – including the right to education, play, health and nutrition. The number of Palestinian children in Israeli detention remains at the same level as in early 2004, with some 285 children in detention.

Children are still living with distress and continue to be vulnerable. The chronic anxiety undermines self-esteem and feelings of loss of control due to the erosion of households' coping mechanisms adversely affect family relationships. The violence in homes and schools is an issue of increasing concern and closely linked with the surrounding pressures stemming from the external environment. Furthermore, the situation in West Bank and Gaza remains volatile. The most recent incidents in late September in and around Gaza illustrate this, and indicate how children and schools can be affected. No doubt with half of the 1.3 million residents under the age of 18 years and three quarters of all households having at least one child in school, daily events in Gaza affect children in an immediate and significant manner. More and more households are deprived of their income, isolated from basic services and cut off from their usual social support networks. As a result, several studies indicate that affected family and social relationships trigger high levels of violence in homes and schools.

### HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Chronic malnutrition (stunting) in children under five has increased to almost 10 percent, with children in the Gaza strip most affected. Thus 50,000 children are malnourished. The burden of malnutrition is mostly carried by children 12-23 months old – more than 15% of them are malnourished at this critical period, making them vulnerable after the end of the infant period.

Basic equipment for maternal and new born health is lacking and families and communities are insufficiently equipped with the necessary knowledge and practices to prevent and manage the most common childhood diseases. Current practices in clinics and hospitals do not use enough cost-effective interventions for mothers and newborns, in order to increase their chances for survival and growth.

The adoption, expansion and scaling up to full implementation of an integrated strategy in managing common childhood illnesses is key to ensure the health and wellbeing of Palestinian children, including psychosocial care of the young child as an integral part.

## **EDUCATION**

The major issue of concern is to ensure full access to education services and to guarantee that high-quality learning is provided in a child-friendly environment. Access to education continues to be challenged by restrictions of movement, in particular for the teachers. The quality of education is showing signs of decline and in the worst affected areas, the learning achievements for students are deteriorating. Few children have the opportunity to experience a child-friendly learning environment with safe spaces and opportunities for sports and recreation. In addition, children lack educational materials and schools lack good teaching aids. While the child-friendly school concept is being promoted throughout oPt, the concept is challenged in particular in confrontational areas. In these areas it is necessary to adapt the child-friendly school concept to learners' needs and link it with psychosocial and child protection services, while ensuring outreach to local communities.

## **ADOLESCENTS**

Adolescents have limited opportunities to play and exercise in areas safe for them. Close to half of the children in West Bank and Gaza spend very limited time on extra-curricular activities like sports or playing outdoors. Overall, young Palestinians spent their spare time at home and few girls get opportunities to interact with peers outside their homes. Violence in the lives of adolescents is on the increase – both at home and in school. There is now, more than ever, a need to create safe and friendly spaces to foster opportunities for play and exercise.

## **CHILD PROTECTION AND PSYCHOSOCIAL WELLBEING**

Although general levels of violence have decreased in 2005, the situation in the West Bank and Gaza remained tense – even after the disengagement period. After the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the withdrawal of four settlements from the West Bank, children in Gaza are not exposed to military incursions and house demolitions as they were earlier. More than ever, children need sustained psychosocial support in order to return to normalcy. The withdrawal will inevitably give rise to new expectations for youth, which, if they are not fulfilled, might in turn increase their frustration. In a changing environment, they need new outlets and to be fully involved in the improvement of the lives of their communities.

The threat of unexploded ordinance (UXO) is on the increase and has become an issue of greater concern within the last few months. This is due to the fact that children have access to areas they previously could not reach and with the withdrawal of the settlers and IDF from Gaza and the settlements of Ganim, Kadim, Sanur and Homesh the danger to children, particularly in the surrounding areas, has increased. Between January and end June this year, three children have been killed and 16 injured by explosive remnants of war.

## **2. ACTION FOR CHILDREN**

UNICEF's humanitarian action is based on our core commitments for children and focuses on child survival, nutrition, ensuring that children are able to continue learning despite schooling being disrupted, and to catch up once schooling resumes. Children receive psychosocial support after the occurrence of violent events and receive follow-up support for themselves and their caregivers. Safe spaces are created for children and adolescents to meet with their peers and to enjoy recreational and sports activities.

In the West Bank, UNICEF focuses on five main areas: Jenin, Tulkarem, Qalqiliya, Nablus and Hebron. In the Gaza Strip the focus is on three flashpoints: Rafah, Khan Younis and Northern Gaza. In addition, three other areas (Al Mawasi, Siafa and Al Ma'Ani) are of key concern because of their isolation. The UNICEF zonal offices in Jenin, Tulkarem, Nablus, Hebron, Rafah and Gaza ensure assessment, swift response and monitoring of humanitarian assistance. UNICEF has a total of 11 international and 59 national staff on the ground in OPT.

## **HEALTH AND NUTRITION**

With a view towards ensuring that no child is left behind, UNICEF is providing routine and emergency immunization for the nine major vaccine-preventable diseases. Through the Ministry of Health, UNRWA and NGOs, routine immunization services have been extended to half a million children under the age of 5 as well as to 100,000 girls in schools. This has brought the coverage rates beyond 90 per cent. Due to an outbreak of mumps and rubella, an immunization campaign for measles, mumps and rubella was commenced in May reaching more than 653,000 children between 6-18 years in all the 10 districts of the West Bank. The remaining 600,000 children in Gaza will

receive their injection in November. Furthermore, 80,000 children were immunized against Polio in two rounds in April and May in order that oPt can remain Polio free. Given that the region has seen several outbreaks of Polio, this intervention is crucial.

In the lead-up to the Gaza disengagement, medical care was ensured for some 10,000 people in isolated enclaves. During almost two months of closures, eight fully equipped medical teams were supported by UNICEF providing stand-by, round-the-clock medical care. About 60 volunteers were trained in first aid procedures and facilitation of community awareness sessions in hygiene promotion and breastfeeding. Safe water supplies, generators and other non-food items were provided. In addition, Emergency Health Kits for 210,000 people for one month, midwifery sets and obstetric care kits, and 1,250 Safe Water Kits for 6,000 families were distributed.

With a view towards helping health care workers recognize and treat signs of psychosocial distress in children, the training of trainers was undertaken for 30 health professionals in Gaza and the West Bank. This means that for the first time, when a child enters a clinic, he or she will not only be examined for physical health problems but also for signs of distress. More than 400 health workers were trained on early detection of the health problems and improved management of the health facilities.

## **EDUCATION**

Faced with the risk of some 15,000 children not starting the new school year and some older children not returning to school after the summer break (drop-out per cent around 1%), UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) initiated a Back-to-School Campaign in early September. The campaign targeted approximately one million children, and focused on the importance of quality education in the West Bank and Gaza. Posters were installed in 1,000 schools; billboards were installed in strategic areas of the West Bank and Gaza in addition to TV spots and radio spots with messages on the importance of returning to school and staying in school. A "Road Safety Project" was initiated involving 85 schools in West Bank and Gaza during which 220 teachers, counsellors, and schools supervisors in 14 districts were trained. The teachers subsequently trained some 1,700 students, who twice a day assisted children in safely reaching schools and ensuring that children could cross roads and intersections safely.

Remedial education activities are crucial for ensuring that children are able to continue the learning process when they are not able to reach school and, at the same time, will be able to catch up once they are able to return to school. One element of these activities is to provide children at risk of not reaching school with a colourful folder that supplements the textbooks in Math, Arabic, English and Science. This year alone, 120,000 children have received these Remedial Education Folders and a total of 4,800 CD-ROM copies have been distributed to supplement the books. Some 200 schools in West Bank and Gaza Strip are involved in this project.

Making schools child-friendly and having a learning experience supportive of child development is crucial; accordingly, 100 schools in 11 districts were supported to achieve this environment. A total of 800 teachers and 60 directorate staff (educational supervisors, school counselling supervisors, and school health supervisors) were trained on child-friendly concepts.

Play and recreational activities are rare in the West Bank and Gaza. To meet this need, UNICEF supported the establishment of 48 sports clubs during the period of June – August, in six districts in the West Bank. About 5,700 students benefited from activities including: sports, life skills, child's rights, health and environment corner, and art and handcrafts corner.

## **ADOLESCENTS**

To provide opportunities for children and adolescents to spend free time in play, recreation and social activities, UNICEF has helped local municipalities to establish 26 safe play areas in Gaza, and 9 in West Bank, 20 of which are provided with suitable outdoor play equipment. Children and adolescents find outlets to their stress and frustration in these areas through regular structured group activities offered by trained animators and volunteers from the local community. During September, 364 such activities have been conducted with the participation of at least 200 children and adolescents in each activity; and 22 animators were trained to facilitate additional activities. 13 new safe play areas in towns and villages affected by the barrier will be opened till the end of the year.

To give adolescents in oPt opportunities to live and develop under normalcy and participate in the well-being of their communities, 256 elected members of 8 child municipal councils in West Bank and Gaza have been trained during September to assess children and adolescent needs in their communities and develop small projects that reach out to other adolescents and get them involved in cultural, sports or awareness raising activities.

In a grinding conflict that has dragged on for more than five years, it is crucial that adolescents have a meaningful channel to discuss their anxieties and concerns. To this effect, 60 university students were trained to provide peer psychosocial support to adolescents, mentoring and recreational activities for adolescents living in areas most affected by the conflict. Following the training, the peer counselors were grouped in twenty eight groups of adolescents who conducted a series of psychosocial support sessions with over 730 adolescents, providing them with opportunities to relieve their stress and frustration, learn stress management techniques and express their opinions, views and concerns. In addition to the peer-to-peer sessions conducted in the field, a toll-free hotline managed by the trained university students was supported by UNICEF. The hotline was open six days a week, 7 hours a day and was accessible for all adolescents living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. To promote awareness on HIV/AIDS among adolescents, peer-to-peer awareness sessions were supported in 9 schools and 6 youth clubs targeting a minimum of 5,000 adolescents.

## **CHILD PROTECTION AND PSYCHOSOCIAL WELLBEING**

Twelve psychosocial emergency teams are currently operating in oPt: seven in the West Bank and five in Gaza, covering 12 out of 15 districts. Three of these (Bethlehem, Ramallah and Qalqiliya) have been established in July 2005. Since January, 31,693 children have participated in activities aiming at reinforcing their capacity to protect themselves and to cope with violence. Out of these, 21,570 have participated in activities during the period June-September. In Gaza, during the month of August alone, 7,323 children have been reached reflecting the intensification of activities in light of the disengagement. Children who have been identified during the activities as in need of further support have been referred to specialized agencies. A festival involving all participating children is organized as a way to conclude the process and a total of three festivals have been organized in Gaza so far. Each team has been provided with five recreational kits, containing both indoor and outdoor materials to carry out activities with children. In parallel, since January, 18,499 caregivers have been equipped with skills on how to support their children in distress and how to promote a harmonious family environment, as well as on how to deal with their own stress. Out of these, 14,199 caregivers were reached during the period June – September. In Gaza during the month of September, 5,114 caregivers were reached.

As preparedness for the Israeli disengagement, all teams were reinforced with volunteers (graduate students). They have been trained and will continue to work with the teams in the future. In the West Bank, they have been mostly selected from the villages under potential closures and curfews, ensuring presence in these locations at all times. In light with the changing situation on the ground, the teams have gradually introduced the issues of domestic violence and abuse in their sessions with both children and parents. Psychosocial teams have proven an appropriate and effective entry point to tackle violence in general. Also, adolescents are being trained for peer support and integrated as a back up to the teams.

In cooperation with the National Mine Action Committee (NMAC), the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation and EUCOPPS and with support from the Government of Canada, UNICEF has launched an extensive mine risk education campaign. Special attention is given to raising the awareness of children and their communities in high risk areas. Educational materials have been distributed in communities and in schools; TV programmes are shown nationally and regionally in the West Bank and Gaza. Children internalize the messages through the development of animated films, art competitions, theatre plays with children having leading parts and the development of games and catchy tunes. Since June 2005, over 7,080 children have benefited directly from these activities in Gaza and 6,500 in the West Bank.

### 3. 2005 APPEAL REQUIREMENTS AND RECEIPTS

As part of the 2005 Consolidated Appeal for oPt, UNICEF requested US\$ 14.2 million to provide humanitarian relief to the affected children and women in oPt. This amount has been increased as a result of programme assessments in Gaza following the disengagement with an additional requirement of US\$ 4.2 million. Total appeal requirement is now US\$ 18.4 million. To date, some **US\$ 10.3 million** has been received as follows:

<b>Table 1: CONTRIBUTIONS TO 2005 APPEAL BY DONOR AS OF 15 OCTOBER 2005</b>	
<b>Donor</b>	<b>Funds Received (US\$)</b>
Canada	2,032,525
Japan	3,185,440
Netherlands	1,800,000
Sweden	711,250
European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO).	602,410
German NatCom	367,077
Italian NatCom	361,446
Spanish NatCom	236,895
UK NatCom	1,030,444
<b>Total (*)</b>	<b>10,327,487 (*)</b>

(\*)Government of Austria provided some US\$ 352,781 for Psychosocial support in late 2004 for activities in 2005, this amount is not included in the funding figures but the funding needs have been adjusted accordingly.

In addition to the above contributions the Government of Spain has announced EUR 1 million for educational activities and the Saudi Committee for Relief of Palestinian People has pledged US\$ 3.6 million for health and education activities.

The UNICEF's requirements for the next 3 months amount to US\$ 4.2 million for the following sectors, US\$ 1.5 million for health, US\$ 1.5 million for education and US\$ 1.2 million for psychosocial activities.

Further details of the emergency programme can be obtained either by visiting the UNICEF OPT website at [www.unicef.org/opt](http://www.unicef.org/opt) or from:

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