

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION UPDATE

OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

17 DECEMBER 2007

UNICEF IS RESPONDING TO THE URGENT NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN

- Health officials warn of an impending crisis in 2008, with a gap of \$42 million in drugs and consumables.
- Military operations, curfews, strikes, lack of educational material and classrooms hamper education of children.
- This year, more children have died in internal violence than in the last two years.



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

OVERVIEW

Gaza's border crossings have been closed for half a year except for urgent medical cases. Since 28 October, fuel supplies to Gaza have also been reduced: diesel (used for ambulances and service vehicles) by 47 per cent and industrial gasoline (used by the Gaza Power Plant) by 9 per cent.

Across the West Bank, military incursions, barrier construction and the closure system continue to choke socio-economic life. In November, only 25% of essential drugs were available, and the majority of diagnostic and x-ray equipment were no longer functioning at Ministry of Health facilities. Materials to build and repair water and sanitation systems remain blocked outside Gaza. Schools were running out of paper. Localized shortages were reported for wheat grain, dairy products and powdered milk, and food prices have increased since June: wheat flour by 46%, bananas by 43%, and yogurt by 20%.

Worsening socio-economic conditions in Gaza seem to be raising levels of violence against women. According to surveys in Gaza, two in five women reported being victims of violence in 2007, up from one in five in 2006. There were 12 so-called "honor killings" this year, up from four in 2004.

UNICEF's programmes focus on health and nutrition, education, water and sanitation, child protection and adolescent development, targeting communities where the needs are greatest. This support is needed more than ever before to help prevent a further deterioration in children's well-being.

ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

Health and Nutrition

The proportion of deaths among hospitalized under one-month olds in Gaza between January and October 2007 was 20% higher on average than the corresponding period last year, and UNRWA clinics report up to a quarter more visits by children younger than three.

In November, first-line pediatric antibiotics were not available at all within the Ministry of Health because the factory in Gaza that produces the drug cannot import chemical precursors. The labor induction drug Dinoprostone was also unavailable, which will increase the proportion of C-section deliveries. Seven out of 17 incubators in Gaza pediatric hospitals need urgent maintenance because spare parts are unavailable.

Health officials warn of an impending crisis in 2008, with a gap of \$42 million in drugs and consumables.

Water and Sanitation

In October, the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility in Gaza got only half the fuel required to operate wells, pumping stations and treatment plants 24 hours a day. Some 23 Utility-run wells were affected, leaving 210,000 people, or just under 15% of the total population, with only 1-2 hours of water per day.

No UNICEF-funded spare parts and equipment required for maintaining or rehabilitating water / waste water networks have entered Gaza since July. As of mid-November, 10 wells serving 150,000 people needed their electric motors replaced, and 10 pumping stations serving 600,000 have gone without repairs for lack of spare parts.

While repairs to the collapsed embankment of the waste water treatment facility at Um Al Nasser are now complete, a third lagoon is required to absorb extra volumes of sewage during the winter months. Construction of a permanent treatment plant is halted for lack of material. Recurrent strikes by unpaid municipal workers and lack of fuel have led to an accumulation of solid waste in the streets.

Education

Schools in Gaza are running out of paper for printing text books and exam sheets, spare parts for copiers and fax machines, and construction material to repair or build facilities and buildings. NGOs also report having had to suspend educational / psychosocial activities for lack of material.

Internal Palestinian fighting and IDF military incursions also prevent children from learning; in October the disruptions included masked men preventing students from entering their schools; and gunmen throwing home-made explosives into an elementary school yard.

To cope with the lack of classrooms, many schools operate two shorter shifts, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Teaching standards seem to have slipped along with student performances: data released by UNRWA show that around 80% of fourth- to ninth-graders in Gaza are failing their Math exams, and that 40% are failing in Arabic.

In the West Bank, military operations and curfews interrupt schooling, as does renewed infighting between the Palestinian Teachers' Union (PTU) and the Palestinian Authority over salaries and working hours. Teachers have conducted strikes, and threaten to escalate action.

Child Protection

As of end-October, 88 children had died and 317 were injured either in the conflict with Israel or in Palestinian internal violence. This year, more children have died in internal violence than the total child death toll from internal violence over the two preceding years. At the same time, the proportion of children being injured in Israeli operations in the West Bank is rising, from 64% in September to 73% in October.

Social workers in Gaza say more and more children are showing signs of stress including hyperactivity, insomnia, anxiety and depression. In Gaza, up to 40% of children are suffering from insomnia, and 34% from anxiety. More than one fourth of parents report severe to very severe anxiety.

As of 1 November, there were 319 Palestinian children being held in Israeli detention, including 12 under administrative detention. This year, four girls have been held in Israeli custody. While imprisoned, girls are held in the adult female section of the prison and have no access to educational programmes.

Adolescent Development and Participation

The ongoing conflict has had a particularly damaging impact on adolescents, who comprise a large, vulnerable and volatile group. With few opportunities for positive, productive activity, many are caught in the direct line of hostilities. The occupation and the internal Palestinian fighting are having a profound impact on Palestinian adolescents, heightening their vulnerability to abuse, violence and exploitation.

Most adolescents have no access to learning or recreational programs outside schools, and spend the majority of their time at home. There are around 300 youth clubs in the West Bank and Gaza, but most lack funding, and are poorly managed and equipped. Programs offered by these youth clubs are usually limited to simple sporting activities.

Adolescents who are two or three levels below their normal grade often end up dropping out of school and joining the unskilled labour market. Several UNICEF counterparts say this plays a role in pushing youth to join militant factions. Worsening socio-economic conditions point to the likelihood that the numbers of adolescents vulnerable to abuse, violence, and exploitation will increase.

UNICEF ACTION

Health and Nutrition

In partnership with the Ministry of Health, WHO and partners, UNICEF works towards preventing sickness and death among children, and in improving nutritional conditions. In 2007, major accomplishments included:

- With the Ministry of Health (MoH) and UNRWA, maintaining vaccination coverage rates above 90%.
- Procuring all needed vaccines and cold chain supplies for 2007 and 2008. To ensure vaccine quality, assessments on the integrity of the cold chain system and vaccine stock management were conducted across oPt for both MOH and UNRWA health services at central, district and peripheral levels.
- Procuring two refrigerated trucks for vaccine transport, and four land rovers for health monitoring, along with emergency kits, essential drugs and pharmaceuticals for young children, and emergency fuel supplies for health services.
- Improving care for newborns and infants, by upgrading 17 neonatal facilities with equipment and supplies, training 344 health workers on maternal and newborn care package, and developing the "Mother and Child" handbook.
- With MoH, Ministry of National Economy, UNRWA, NGOs and the private sector, providing broad micronutrient support for young children and women; promoting use of iodized salt against iodine deficiency disorder and iron fortified flour against anemia.
- With WHO, WFP, MoH, NGOs and the private sector, supporting improvements in data quality through strengthening the nutrition surveillance system, and in standardizing heights and weights measurements by introducing the new WHO growth standards.

Water and Sanitation

In partnership with the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility, the Palestinian Water Authority, the Palestinian Hydrology Group, donors and NGOs, UNICEF has worked to prevent outbreaks of water-related diseases by expanding access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities at schools, hospitals and in un-served or poorly served communities. Major projects included:

- Constructing or rehabilitating 6 wells and 11 water networks serving about 55,000 people;
- Providing daily drinking water to 343 schools and 32 health facilities reaching 250,000 students, teachers, patients and health workers;
- Delivering 125 tanks and installing 40 drinking fountains serving about 100,000 people; and
- Constructing sanitation facilities in 52 schools and 8 clinics that benefit about 44,000 people.

As sector lead, UNICEF coordinated emergency repair work to the UI Al Nasser wastewater embankment collapse in north Gaza, benefiting some 15,000 nearby residents.

UNICEF also conducted awareness raising activities related to water use and conservation, and in sanitary waste disposal among students, patients and health workers.

Education

With the Ministry of Education and Higher Education,, UNICEF's work has focused on raising enrolment rates, ensuring equity by gender, geographical location and special needs; and on improving learning achievement. To that end, UNICEF has supported:

- Training for almost 7,000 teachers and education administrators on child-friendly teaching fundamentals, methods and approaches.
- Providing 6,665 children in hard hit areas with remedial text books, or school supplies and uniforms.
- Supplying 300 schools with interactive teaching tools, recreation kits or emergency education material.
- Contributing to developing the Education Management Information System, which will track individual student performance.

- Equipping National Institute Training Centers with computers and supplies for in-service teacher training.

Child Protection

With the Ministry of Social Affairs and a broad network of partners, UNICEF's assistance in child protection aims at strengthening the protective environment for children against abuse, exploitation and violence. UNICEF's major works in 2007 have included:

- Reaching 50,000 children and 35,000 parents with psychosocial support immediately following emergencies.
- Establishing 34 outreach centres in Gaza and two toll-free lines in both Gaza and the West Bank to provide multi-layered support to children and women.
- Continuing support for five socio-legal defense centres established in 2006 to provide psychological, legal, and social assistance to child victims of violence.
- Establishing three multidisciplinary child protection networks to detect, refer and follow up on cases of abuse.
- Training 587 Ministry of Education staff at 132 schools in high risk areas of the West Bank on the dangers of land mines, UXOs and small arms and light weapons.

Adolescent Development and Participation

With the Ministry of Youth and Sports and partners, UNICEF is working towards fulfilling adolescents' rights to develop and participate actively in their society. In 2007 UNICEF has:

- Enabled 1,600 adolescents to take the lead in advocating for the National Youth Policy and its dissemination through mass media to at least 150,000 adolescents.
- Enabled 40 youth centres and 600 caretakers to offer structured literacy, math, life skills, computer, sports and music courses to 18,000 youngsters. At least half are girls who would otherwise have few opportunities for such activity.
- Developed a database of needs across 580 youth centres in the West Bank; conducting a similar assessment in Gaza now.
- Organized summer activities across the West Bank at 100 schools for 10,000 children during an otherwise violent summer.
- Enabled 124 adolescents to conduct 25 science projects and disseminate their results to their peers.

4. APPEAL REQUIREMENTS AND RECEIPTS

UNICEF's CAP was budgeted at US\$ 25.2 million based on the needs assessment framework completed in November 2006. As of 10 December, UNICEF had received almost \$13 million, or just over half of the appeal target. The breakdown is as follows:

2007 APPEAL REQUIREMENTS AND FUNDING BY SECTOR (as of November 29, 2007)				
Sector	Target (US\$)	Funded (US\$)	% Funded	Unfunded (US\$)
Health and nutrition	8,292,500	2,219,957	27%	6,072,543
Water and sanitation	4,345,100	2,201,660	51%	2,143,440
Education	6,337,300	2,511,180	40%	3,826,120
Adolescents	3,158,640	3,102,141	98%	56,499
Child protection	3,131,815	2,922,779	93%	209,036
Total*	25,265,355	12,957,717	51%	12,307,638

*The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7%. The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF Executive Board Decision 2006/7 dated 9 June 2006.

2008 APPEAL REQUIREMENTS	
Health and nutrition	7,508,650
Water and sanitation	2,792,800
Education	5,160,000
Child protection/psychosocial	2,973,530
Adolescents	2,144,000
Total*	20,578,980

*The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7%. The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF Executive Board Decision 2006/7 dated 9 June 2006.

Details of the occupied Palestinian Territories' emergency programme can be obtained from:

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