

# UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION UPDATE

## OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

### 23 December 2008

- Since January 2008, at least 79 children killed in conflict with Israel, up from 43 in 2007
- 18-month Gaza blockade causing severe distress
- Rising trend of Israeli settler violence
- Internal Palestinian rift hampering service delivery



## I. ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

Life has gone from bad to worse for most Palestinian children and women in 2008, particularly in Gaza.

Health facilities in Gaza lack critical equipment and face recurrent shortages of medicine. In November, Gaza's power plant shut down three times for lack of fuel, and five of six mills closed for lack of wheat grain.<sup>1</sup> Some 80 per cent of water wells are only partially functional,<sup>2</sup> garbage is piling up on the streets, and around 80,000 m<sup>3</sup> of raw and untreated sewage is pumped daily into the sea.<sup>3</sup> Reports of households using flammable material such as wood and paper for food preparation are increasingly common.<sup>4</sup>

West Bank communities are increasingly isolated by a tightening web of physical obstacles to movement. The number of checkpoints, roadblocks, earthmounds, etc. has risen from a monthly average of 472 during 2005 to 630 in October 2008. Around 57 per cent of the Barrier's 723km route is complete. Most of the route (86%) runs inside the West Bank, further isolating communities.<sup>5</sup> Access to basic services is especially challenging for residents in Area C, which is under full Israeli military and administrative control, communities in the 'Seam Zone' between the Barrier and Green Line, and areas near Israeli settlements and military zones.

In 2008, the intra-Palestinian rift killed 10 children. Public sector strikes by health and education workers in Gaza, called at the end of August, will last to the end of the year. Over 180 community-based organizations in Gaza were shut down in July and August, including 10 UNICEF-supported adolescent-friendly learning centres. All have since re-opened, but US\$65,000 of confiscated equipment has not been returned.

Humanitarian access deteriorated in 2008, notably through a reduction in the number of crossings (from 12 to 4) through the West Bank Barrier for UN goods, new procedures applied to the movement of UN agencies including searches of UN property, and refusal to accept UN identification. Restrictions on goods into Gaza have suspended around US\$150 million of UN construction projects.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. UNICEF RESPONSE: ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS

UNICEF's assisted emergency programmes focus on health, education, protection and adolescent development, targeting eight districts where the needs are greatest – Gaza City, North Gaza, Deir Al Balah and Khan Younis in Gaza, and Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah / El-Bireh and Hebron in the West Bank. UNICEF is the sector lead in education, nutrition, water and sanitation and child protection, providing leadership for the coordination of programme sector planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting processes.

### Health and Nutrition

As at mid-December, 20 per cent of hospital staff and 27 per cent of PHC staff were still on strike in all five districts of Gaza. Antenatal clinics, school health programmes, and nutritional surveillance were functioning at 60% capacity.<sup>7</sup> In mid-November, 20 per cent of essential drugs (including vaccines) were at zero level in Gaza.<sup>8</sup>

The number of patients referred for specialized treatment outside Gaza continued to rise in 2008 – from a monthly average of 734 in 2007 to an estimated 1,039 per month during the first half of the year. Only 66 per cent of requests for medical permits during January–August 2008 were approved, compared with 80 per cent during the corresponding period in 2007.<sup>9</sup> At least 51 people including 11 children died after denials or delays in accessing medical care outside of Gaza between October 2007 and July 2008.<sup>10</sup>

The Consumer Price Index for food increased by 28 per cent in Gaza and 21.4 per cent in the West Bank between June 2007 and June 2008, in part due to a severe drought in the West Bank. Food insecurity levels rose from 34 per cent in 2006 to 38 per cent in 2008. More than 1.4 million Palestinians were estimated to be food insecure in April 2008, with a further 500,000 persons at risk of becoming so.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> OCHA Protection of Civilians Weekly Report 26 November - 02 December 2008

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF Gaza

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF-oPt

<sup>4</sup> OCHA Protection of Civilians Weekly Report 26 November - 02 December 2008

<sup>5</sup> oPt Consolidated Appeal 2009 Summary

<sup>6</sup> oPt Consolidated Appeal 2009 Summary

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF weekly update 5-11 December 2008

<sup>8</sup> OCHA Humanitarian Monitor November 2008

<sup>9</sup> oPt Consolidated Appeal 2009 Summary

<sup>10</sup> WHO, Access of Patients to Specialized Medical Services, Summary Situation, July 2007-July 2008

<sup>11</sup> oPt Consolidated Appeal 2009 Summary

UNICEF supports MoH, UNRWA and NGOs to maintain health service delivery through:

- Provision of all EPI vaccines and related supplies for all children under 15 months old (117,000 children) and vaccine forecasting (2009-2013) support to MoH;
- Pre-positioning medical supplies with MoH and union of health workers committee including 452 first aid kits, 13 emergency health kits, 10 midwifery kits, 16 obstetric surgical kits and 60 newborn resuscitation kits to meet the needs of up to 7,170 beneficiaries;
- Supplying MOH, UNRWA and NGOs with vitamin A and D and other micronutrient supplements for all children (over 107,000) below 1 year old as well as salt-testing kits;
- Support for a rapid nutrition survey in three Gaza districts; and
- Support to Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI), Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), maternal and child health (MCH) and nutrition activities including training on newborn care; strengthening information management; training and monitoring on micronutrients; and behavioural change communication related to fortified food.

### **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**

Waste water and solid waste treatment services in Gaza are curtailed for lack of fuel and supplies. The quantity and quality of water continues to deteriorate: in November, residents in Gaza City had access to water only several hours a week. Chlorine supplies, needed to disinfect water, have dropped significantly.

Following a severe summer drought, heavy rains in October overwhelmed drainage networks in severe need of repairs, flooding sections of northern and southern Gaza. Streets in Jabalia Camp were filled with sewage and storm water, trapping residents in their homes and posing health and safety risks.

UNICEF works with the Palestinian Water Authority and the Coastal Municipal Water Utility (CMWU) to strengthen and improve water and sanitation systems, especially in schools and health centres. Support this year has included:

- In Gaza, restoring nine sewage pump stations damaged in Israeli military incursions; constructing two water wells that serve about 40,000 people, meeting around 15% of urgent needs in marginalized areas in the middle and south; tankering water to 120 schools, reaching 220,000 students and teachers; constructing 10 sanitary units at a girls school for 1,700 students; pre-positioning water pumps, spare parts and fuel to run the water pumps; and delivering six mobile fuel tanks. UNICEF also provided protective clothing and 60 bicycles to enable water and sanitation workers to access work sites when there was little or no fuel for transportation.
- To respond to the drought in the West Bank, UNICEF provided water and storage tanks to 922 families (over 5,600 people) in the Jordan Valley and east Jenin.
- Developing a contingency plan and partnership roster; and in partnership with a national NGO, monitoring water quality in the West Bank.

### **Education**

Only a fifth of 16,000 Gazan sixth-graders, and only about half of their peers in Nablus and Jenin, passed standardized exams in Math, Arabic, Science and English last term.

The strike by education workers in Gaza at the start of the school year affected 381 Palestinian Authority schools, and around 250,000 students. Around half of Gaza's 9,000 teachers adhered to the strike and have been replaced, in many cases by individuals lacking training to teach, especially in math and science.

Frequent electricity outages mean that many students in East Gaza study in dark classrooms and energy-reliant classes such as IT and science labs are often cancelled. Spare parts are lacking for photocopiers and printers, teaching aids and stationary are in short supply.

During the 2007-2008 school years, 256 UNRWA school days were disrupted due to Israeli military operations and since January 2008, 21 UNRWA students and three teachers were killed during Israeli military operations.<sup>12</sup> Between July 2007 and July 2008, there were at least 23 reported attacks on schools; 15 by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) and eight by Israeli settlers.<sup>13</sup>

UNICEF is working with the MoEHE and NGOs to improve education quality and student performance. Support this year includes:

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<sup>12</sup> OCHA

<sup>13</sup> 1612 Working Group

- 50,000 school bags and supplies provided in early October; 50,000 sets of copy books en route to meet the needs of 50,000 children;
- Remedial classes in Math and Arabic and recreational activities (sports, music, art and drama) for 3,400 low-performing students in 90 schools (60 in the West Bank and 30 in Gaza) for one month during summer;
- Activating 50 libraries to promote reading. Support included training facilitators and animators on story telling, and supplies such as stationery and books;
- Strengthening information management by producing 68,688 student profiles covering first graders; and developing/distributing 30,000 copies of an early childhood development booklet for teachers and caregivers;
- Remedial support programmes are being reprogrammed temporarily through NGOs.

### **Child Protection**

As at end-November, 79 children had died in the conflict with Israel since beginning of the year, and at least 493 were injured, many seriously.<sup>14</sup> In the first three months of the year alone 40 children were killed in comparison to 43 in the entire 2007. Intra-Palestinian violence has killed 10 children since the beginning of the year.

In the first 10 months of 2008, OCHA recorded 290 settler-related incidents targeting Palestinians and their property, surpassing the previous two years (182 and 243 in 2006 and 2007, respectively). Similarly, Palestinian deaths and injuries resulting from settler-related incidents in 2008 exceed the number of Palestinian casualties in each of the previous two years (131 in 2008, compared to 74 in 2006 and 92 in 2007). A significant majority of settler incidents recorded by OCHA are carried out by groups of Israeli settlers, rather than lone individuals. Approximately half of all Palestinian injuries from settler violence each year since 2006 have been made up of children, women, and the elderly.<sup>15</sup>

Some 327 children remained in Israeli prisons and detention facilities as of end November. Among them, five children, including two girls, were being held in administrative detention (without charges or trial).

UNICEF supports Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and NGO partners in activities to reduce stress; mitigate the impact of violence; and strengthen coping mechanisms of children and caregivers. Support this year includes:

- Psychosocial assistance for 20,767 children and adolescents; and in-depth counselling for 3,739 children in distress;
- Fun days to relieve stress and encourage interaction for 25,986 children;
- Emergency home and hospital visits following violent events benefiting 3,047 children; and
- Socio-legal assistance to more than 2,179 children provided through three centres, not including 1,029 children who received advice through the centre's toll-free line.
- UNICEF is the sector lead in psychosocial support. Ongoing activities within the sector include training for caregivers on children in distress; reporting and advocacy within the 1612 working group on children in conflict; and support to MoSA in establishing a national child care and protection protocol towards building a child protection system.

### **Adolescent Development and Participation**

The conflict has had a particularly damaging impact on adolescents, who comprise a large, vulnerable and volatile group. In November, 90 per cent of children being held in detention were 16-17 years old.

Adolescents who are two or three levels below their normal grade often end up dropping out of school and joining the unskilled labour market. Most adolescents have no access to learning or recreational programmes outside schools, and spend the majority of their time at home. There are around 500 youth clubs in the West Bank and Gaza, but most lack funding, and are poorly managed and equipped.

In Gaza over 184 community-based organizations, including 10 UNICEF-supported adolescent friendly learning spaces (AFLS), were shut down in July. All UNICEF centres have since re-opened, but around US\$65,000 worth of confiscated equipment including computers have not been returned.

<sup>14</sup> OCHA Humanitarian Monitor August 2008

<sup>15</sup> Unprotected: Israeli Settler Violence Against Palestinians and Their Property; December 2008; OCHA

UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) and NGO partners to improve secondary school retention; reduce violence among adolescents; increase the participation of adolescents in planning; and improve their knowledge on healthy lifestyles. This year UNICEF has supported:

- 68 adolescent friendly learning spaces with literacy and numeracy activities to improve secondary school retention, along with recreational activities such as sports, music and drama, that reach approximately 44,000 adolescents in the West Bank and Gaza;
- Equipping these adolescent-friendly spaces with sports and musical instruments to implement activities throughout the year;
- Life skills-based education (communication and leadership skills, awareness on HIV/AIDS and protection from abuse and exploitation) for 11,000 adolescents; and
- Training for 350 adolescents on action research covering topics that impact their lives – violence, poverty, environmental issues, and participation in their communities.

### 3. FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

UNICEF's component of the UN Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP)<sup>16</sup> was US\$20.5 million based on the needs assessment framework completed in November 2007. The target was revised downwards during the Mid-Year Review to US\$17 million. To date, UNICEF had received more than US\$12.3 million, or around 73% of the target. UNICEF-oPt expresses its deep gratitude to the donors that have provided timely funding.

**Table 1: Funds received against Appeal (US\$)**

Appeal Sector	Original 2008 HAR requirements	Funds received	Revised funding requirements	Unmet Requirements	% Unfunded
Education	6,444,000	3,652,462	4,241,159	588,697	14%
Child Protection & Psycho-Social	3,833,530	3,376,682	3,833,530	456,848	12%
Health & Nutrition	7,508,650	2,675,090	6,140,321	3,465,231	56%
Water & Sanitation	2,792,800	2,666,079	2,792,800	126,721	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,578,980</b>	<b>12,370,313</b>	<b>17,007,810</b>	<b>4,637,497</b>	<b>27%</b>

\*Funds received against this appeal will be used to respond to both the immediate and medium-term needs of children and women as outlined above. If UNICEF should receive funds in excess of the medium-term funding requirements for this emergency, UNICEF will use those funds to support other, under-funded emergencies.

\*\*The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7%. The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF's 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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<sup>16</sup> UNICEF oPT's CAR and HAR budgets are equivalent.