

Fact Sheet - Education in the occupied Palestinian territory

Overview:

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) continues to be characterized by ongoing violence, restrictions on movements and serious economic decline. Restrictions on mobility of children and caregivers hinder access to primary health care facilities. Essential drugs are not being delivered to health facilities which become over-stretched. Children and families lose their personal belongings such as clothing, toys and school materials due to house demolitions.

Families have to relocate and seek shelter, requiring children to change schools and lose friends. Children are prevented from reaching their schools. Many children are exposed to live fire while on their way to schools or in their classrooms. In addition, many schools are damaged, including classrooms, play and sports areas as well as water and sanitation facilities. The long-lasting effect of rising poverty and unemployment in OPT has gradually eroded households' coping mechanisms and increased their dependency on aid, thereby putting the psycho-social well-being of children under significant strain.

The right of Palestinian children to education is also directly threatened by the restrictions of movement. Closures, curfews, barriers and checkpoints are hindering access to schools. As a result, children lose school days or have their school days disrupted. The quality of education services is affected since professional staff is restricted from reaching schools.

Issue:

- Children are prevented from reaching schools and have to catch up with loss of school days. Due to closures and curfews more than 226,000 children in 580 schools find going to school impossible or very risky. In Jenin alone, almost 10,000 children in grades 1-3 suffer from disruption of school days.
- Many schools are exposed to live fire while children are in their classrooms. In addition, many schools are damaged including water and sanitation facilities, classrooms, play and sports areas.
- Primary school enrolment rates (both sexes) are declining, down to 94.8% in 2003 compared to 96.8% in 2000.
- Children are exposed to increased domestic violence. Some 30.8% of children are reported to have been exposed to some type of violence, and over two thirds had experienced violence in the home environment, and 30% from teachers.
- Children and families lose their personal belongings such as clothes, toys and school materials due to house demolitions (at an average of 120 residential buildings every month). Families have to relocate and seek shelter, requiring children to change school and lose friends.
- High levels of stress and trauma? are prevalent among children. Some 54% of children from economic hardship-case households were reported to be experiencing chronic low school achievement and other signs of stress, including frequent and recurrent nightmares, bedwetting and aggressive behavior.
- Failures in the protection of children, between January and September 2004, 100 children under 18 years old and around 3,000 have been injured.

Action:

- In Jenin, children are helped in catching up on lost school time through remedial education activities including provision of folders in Numeracy, Literacy, English and Science that supplement school books.
- In Jenin, primary school teachers were provided training or orientation in the use of remedial education material for grades 1-3 to 5-6. They were also provided stationary items.

Impact:

- 10,000 school children in grades 1-3 and 5-6 in Jenin will acquire basic skills in Numeracy, Literacy, English and Science and maintain their educational attainment.
- 700 school teachers in the Jenin area will be able to better utilize the remedial education worksheets.