

UNICEF oPt Monthly Update

15 June 2009

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MAJOR ISSUES

- **As at end-May, only six truckloads of construction material had entered Gaza since “Cast Lead” destroyed homes, schools and critical infrastructure. Many families are using mud to rebuild homes.**
- **According to Defense for Children International, around 700 children were held in Israeli detention facilities during 2008, including 20-30 children held on the basis of secret evidence, without charges or trial.**

Child Protection

In May, one child was killed and three others injured by unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Gaza. Six children have died since the January ceasefires and many areas remain contaminated with hazardous materials including UXO.

UNICEF has worked closely with partners to strengthen and expand mine risk education efforts in Gaza, including through the production of leaflets and materials for children that are still being used in awareness-raising activities by the Red Crescent Society and the Ministry of Education.

In the northern West Bank, UNICEF-supported YMCA psychosocial teams provided emergency assistance and counseling to around 30 children following lethal factional clashes in early June.

FEATURED



With support from the Spanish Government, UNICEF developed Early Childhood Development (ECD) kits for kindergartens across oPt that are designed to encourage creativity and learning.

See how they are brightening up kindergartens across Gaza and the West Bank.
<http://www.unicef.org/oPt/5707.html>

As chair of the 1612 working group, UNICEF leads over a dozen Palestinian, Israeli and international agencies in producing bi-monthly reports on grave violations committed against children in the context of conflict in Israel and oPt for the UN Security Council. The group reports on eight indicators, including deaths and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals, denial of humanitarian access and child detention.

In May, UNICEF conducted a 3-day workshop for 32 child protection field workers in Gaza to strengthen reporting mechanisms and capacity. Training will take place for 24 child protection field workers in the West Bank in July.

A report issued today documents the corrosive impact of house demolitions on children and their families. According to “Broken Homes”, over 10,000 homes were demolished between 2000 and April 2009. The report by Save the Children UK, Welfare Association and Palestinian Counseling Centre says more than 300,000 Palestinians are at risk of losing their homes under demolition orders issued by Israeli authorities.

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Health/Nutrition

A 4-year-old girl living in Bethlehem became the first confirmed case of H1N1 in oPt on 10 June. The young girl had recently returned from visiting the United States, and was suffering from mild symptoms. UNICEF immediately provided five pediatric treatment courses, and is procuring an additional 10,000 doses for children up to 12 years old.

The Gaza Referrals Abroad Department continued normal operations in May, issuing 1,080 referral documents for urgent medical treatment. Of the 489 submitted to Israeli authorities, 55 per cent were approved, 3 per cent denied, and 42 per cent remained under review at the end of the month. Two patients died before they could access critical medical treatment outside Gaza in May according to WHO.

In May, 82 essential drug items were at zero level at Gaza's Central Drug Store, compared with 65 in April. WHO coordinated entry into Gaza of one shipment of drugs and disposables, but four additional shipments including x-ray materials, medical and IT equipment, await clearance from Israeli authorities. Shipments of medical goods have faced longer delays since the Gaza conflict. Infant scales and growth measurement boards for example have not been allowed to enter Gaza in four months.

Data from a February 2009 WHO surveillance study indicate 7 per cent stunting rates among children 9-12 months old, up from 4.4 per cent in 2006, and anemia prevalence of 65.5 percent.

Around 300 health care providers in Gaza were trained on using the Maternal and Child Handbook and new WHO standard growth monitoring systems and standards under a joint UNICEF, UNRWA, WHO, Ministry of Health and Japan International Cooperation Agency programme.

Gaza's fishing catch in April 2009 was only one-third of amount two years ago, according to the World Food Programme, due to Israeli restrictions that limit fishing activity to 3 nautical miles from the shore. On 19 May, the sardine price ranged between NIS 23-25/Kg compared with NIS 10-12/Kg last year.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Around 28,000 residents in northern Gaza still cannot access the water networks due to pipes damaged in "Cast Lead". Households are now buying water from

FEATURED



A healthworker explains the importance of breastfeeding

Mothers in Jbara, a community encircled by the Barrier surrounding the West Bank, congregate at a neighbor's house for a long-awaited visit by a team of healthworkers. The village's 300 residents have little access to health care and basic services due to Israeli movement and access restrictions. Doctors said children's health showed signs of years of neglect.

Watch the video: www.unicef.org/oPt/media_5702.html

private vendors and paying as much as double pre-crisis rates.

UNICEF, with funding from the Government of Japan, is providing two large desalination units, each with a production capacity of 50 cubic meters per hour, for wells in Rafah and Khan Younis. The units are expected to improve access to drinking water for 80,000 residents.

UNICEF also delivered spare parts, pipes and fittings to construct four small desalination units and rehabilitate water networks to the Coastal Municipal Water Utility. The supplies will help improve access to water for 45,000 residents.

Water quality assessments in April point to a faecal coliform count of 13 per cent in 63 out of 484 samples collected at wells and water points across Gaza, pointing to a high risk of disease outbreaks. The majority of the contaminated samples were from water storage tanks at houses, schools, clinics, hospitals and

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private wells. No contamination was found in water samples collected from the public wells and water networks.

UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Education and the International Relief Development to rehabilitate sanitary facilities at 12 schools in North Gaza and Gaza City, benefiting around 14,000 students.



UNICEF health officer Samson Agbo pre-inspects a desalination unit at Ashdod warehouse in southern Israel. The units are funded by the Government of Japan and will be delivered to wells in Gaza. © UNICEF-oPt/2009/Halawani

Education

Over 86,000 students are sitting for “Tawjihi” college entrance exams that kicked off on 8 June and will last through 1 July.

According to a UNICEF/ Save the Children assessment in Gaza, 245 government and private schools and kindergartens were severely or partially damaged during “Cast Lead”. Most schools have not been rebuilt and repaired for lack of construction material. Schools are also chronically short of the basics – textbooks, uniforms, stationery, and furniture. Gaza’s education system serves around 450,000 children through 373 government schools, 221 UNRWA, and 36 private schools.

UNICEF has distributed a wide range of educational supplies ranging from tents to serve as temporary learning spaces, basic stationery and school supplies. Additional math and science teaching kits that promote interactive learning were shared with UNRWA in May.

Thirty-three participants from all Gaza directorates attended a five-day training of trainers workshop on education in emergencies. The UNESCO / Save the

Children workshop follows a UNICEF-sponsored workshop in 2007 that also focused on the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies Minimum Standards of educational quality and access in emergencies, chronic crises and early reconstruction phases.

Adolescents

UNICEF-supported adolescent-friendly learning centres across oPt are providing extra remedial learning support to students sitting for the college entrance exams currently underway in the West Bank and Gaza.

As part of participation-focused activities organised through the learning centres, adolescents in both Gaza and Ramallah have identified topics of concern to them that will serve as the basis for advocacy campaigns they will develop over the coming months.

On 4 June, 40 participants from the West Bank and almost 30 participants from Gaza had a workshop to begin developing an advocacy campaign on clean environments. Working groups were set up for preparatory work and during the summer, they will determine their main audiences, messages, methods, and action plan. The campaign will develop four themes selected by the adolescents: general cleanliness, recycling, safe drinking water, and smoking. The campaign is supported by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the National Committee for Summer Camps, PYALARA, Ma’an Development Center, Al-Nyzak and Tamer Institute.

During the summer, all UNICEF-supported adolescent friendly learning centres, family centres and sports clubs across oPt will implement a broad range of much needed remedial learning and recreational activities. With PYALARA, an NGO that promotes the use of media among young people, UNICEF will also implement a peer support project to reach 3,000 adolescents in Gaza with opportunities for training in creative writing and photography.

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REAL LIVES

Bringing innovation to classrooms in oPt

GAZA, 29 May 2009 - Bright coloured cones, triangles and measuring tools are scattered across the school desks in the sparsely furnished fifth grade classroom of Mustafa Hafez primary school in Gaza City. The math teacher, Ruba al-Zebdah, is pleasantly surprised as she watches students immersed in measuring and calculating the area of a bright yellow circle.

Today, as part of a wider distribution of educational materials in Gaza, UNICEF delivered interactive math and science teaching kits to this conflict-affected school. The teaching kits were locally developed by UNICEF in 2006 as part of an initiative to improve both the quality and content of education in oPt.

“The kits turned the class into an active one in a very untraditional way,” said Ruba al-Zebdah. “I think this kit is a treasure for every math teacher.”

Innovation in a challenging environment

Across the West Bank and Gaza, the lack of teaching facilities and overcrowded classrooms has led to lower learning outcomes. In 2008, only 19.7 per cent of 16,000 sixth-graders in Gaza passed standardized tests in Arabic, math, science and English. In Gaza, the situation is exacerbated by the recent conflict and two years of a virtual blockade that has barred many goods including some educational materials.

UNICEF designed the math and science kits to meet needs both during emergencies and for regular classroom teaching. More than 8,500 kits have been distributed to schools in oPt.

The kits have brought new energy to this Gazan classroom. “The practical part of the math class is much better for me than the theoretical one because I get the idea more quickly,” said Dalal Sbeeh, 10, as she momentarily looks up from her calculations.

International recognition

In 2007, the interactive teaching kits were selected as a UNICEF best practice innovation, serving as a learning model for other UNICEF country offices. UNICEF has included the teaching kits in the standard list of UNICEF educational supplies that are designed for both emergencies and regular programming. Schools in Lebanon and Syria have also start to use the kits in their schools.



Zahra al-Khudari and Kholood al-Mzeeni try out the tools of the interactive kit at Mustafa Hafez primary school in Gaza City. © UNICEF-oPt/2009/EI Baba

Reaching the students and the teachers

To maximise the impact of the teaching kits, UNICEF has trained over 6,000 teachers on their use and created a teacher’s guide and a training manual in Arabic.

“Through the training and the use of the kits the project is working to improve the teaching and learning environment,” says Potung Shao, UNICEF’s head of education in oPt. “We aim to challenge passive learning with hands-on activities that motivate both the teachers and the students.”

Through its education programmes across the West Bank and Gaza, UNICEF works to enable children to keep learning, despite the conflict, closures and violence. The utilization of the kits has partially filled a gap in education supplies and stimulated children’s enthusiasm for studying science and mathematics.

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Facts and Figures

Indicator	Data
Under-five mortality rate 2007 (per 1,000 live births)	27
Infant mortality rate 2006 (per 1,000 live births)	24
Life expectancy at birth, 2007	73
Annual number of births (thousands), 2007	145
Annual no. of under-5 deaths (thousands), 2007	4
1-year-old children immunized against TB, DPT, polio, measles, HepB and Hib	99
% under-fives with suspected pneumonia to appropriate health care provider, 2000-2007	65
Proportion of under 6 month-olds exclusively breastfed, 2000-2007	27
Proportion of under-fives moderately or severely stunted, 2000-2007	10
Primary school net attendance ratio, females, 2000 – 2007 (%)	92
Primary school net attendance ratio, males, 2000 – 2007 (%)	91
Secondary school gross enrolment ratio, females, 2005 – 2006 (%)	79.5*
Secondary school gross enrolment ratio, males, 2005 – 2006 (%)	69.8*
Number per 100 population (2006) of internet users	7
Maternal mortality ratio	No data
Total population (thousands), 2007	4,017
Total population (thousands) under 18, 2007	2,095
Total population (thousands) under 5, 2007	685
Total fertility rate, 2007	5.2
GDP per capita average annual growth rate (%), 1990-2007	-2.9
GNI per capita (US\$), 2007	1,230
ODA inflow in millions US\$, 2006	1,449
ODA inflow as a % of recipient GNI in 2006	33

All data from the State of the World's Children 2009 unless otherwise cited.

**Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2007*

New UNICEF photos and video from Gaza are available for use by UN agencies, partners, and media outlets. To request photos, please contact: photo@unicef.org; to get videos, please visit: thenewsmarket.com/unicef.

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