

BRIEFING NOTES

FACT SHEET ON THE GAZA CRISIS

Even before the recent conflict, the children of Gaza suffered from years of conflict, blockade, lack of adequate social services, and poverty. Coping mechanisms of communities had already been eroded prior to the conflict. Access to basic needs and the creation of a sense of security and a safe environment is essential for the well-being of children.

The recent hostilities in Gaza have taken a great economic, social and psychological toll on the lives of Gazans. Almost two-thirds of the households polled by UNDP said they needed assistance, identifying emotional and psychological aid as a top priority, followed by employment, housing, financial support and medical attention. The survey also cited signs of stress among children, such as bedwetting, nightmares, aggressive behavior and anxiety.

Following is a summary of the impacts of the Gaza crisis on children during the 22 days of conflict and after the ceasefire agreement, from 27 December to 23 February:

Children Killed and Injured:

- Children account for roughly a third of the dead and wounded due to the hostilities. 1,440 Palestinians were killed during the hostilities, of whom 431 are children and 114 are women. This number does not include those who have died due to lack of access to regular health care. (Gaza Ministry of Health)
- The number of injuries still stands at 5,380, of whom 1,872 are children and 800 are women. (Gaza Ministry of Health)
- Three Israeli civilians were killed and 183 injured since 27 December by rocket and mortar fire by Palestinian militants from Gaza. (Israeli Magen David Adom)
- Handicap International estimates that up to 30 percent of people injured (including up to 560 children) have sustained severe injuries that, without proper rehabilitation, could result in permanent disability.
- Since the ceasefire, 2 children have been killed (20 Jan – UXO) and 7 children injured (29 Jan – airstrikes) (Save the Children).

Attacks on Health Facilities:

- 58 health facilities (15 hospitals and 43 PHC clinics) were damaged or destroyed (WHO).
- 29 ambulances were damaged or destroyed during the hostilities. (OCHA Humanitarian Monitor January)
- 16 medical personnel were killed and 22 injured in the line of duty. (WHO)
- Primary health care services were reported to have declined by about 90%, and many programs such as vaccination schemes and neonatal care, stopped completely for significant periods during the hostilities. (WHO)
- As of 23 February, 56 out of 62 PHCs, or 90 percent, are functional in Gaza, despite supply and electricity shortages (UNICEF). UNICEF is working closely with the Ministry of Health and

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WHO on identifying the essential supplies required to meet the needs of these 56 PHCs and selected pediatric hospitals in Gaza.

Attacks on Schools:

- 10 schools out of 407 were severely damaged during the hostilities, and 170 schools out of 407 were partially damaged during the hostilities. Repairing damaged schools remains an urgent priority. Also, children's clothes and stationary items continue to be priority items and essential for children's return to school. (OCHA)
- 2 schools in southern Israel were damaged by rocket fire from Gaza. (Save the Children)
- Approximately 440,000 students in Gaza lost five days of the new school term, and the first-term exams, which were being sat when the conflict began, were postponed. (UNRWA, OCHA and the Gaza Ministry of Education)
- Children living in southern Israel up to 40 kilometers from Gaza lost 10 days of school. (IRIN)
- The school term in Gaza resumed after the hostilities on 24 January.

Psychosocial effects on children and their families

- It is estimated that 25,000 to 50,000 people – including some 14,000 to 28,000 children - will need some form of psychological intervention for longer-term psychological effects from the hostilities. The loss of care and protection of parents or primary caregivers, disruptions to daily life including school and play activities, and loss of adequate nutrition can mean that children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to psychosocial distress (WHO).

Denial of Humanitarian Access

- Access constraints continue to hinder relief efforts in Gaza. Urgently needed construction materials to rebuild destroyed or damaged schools, hospitals, clinics and homes are not allowed to Gaza. Neither are urgently needed educational supplies, or recreational and sports equipment that are essential tools for helping children recover. Only a very restricted list of items is being allowed into Gaza; as of 18 February, UNICEF has been able to bring in USD 2 million worth of medicine, hygiene kits and blankets, as well as pre-positioned education supplies.
- For the month of December up to the 26th, a daily average of 30 trucks entered Gaza, compared to 475 truckloads before the Hamas takeover in June 2007. (OCHA Humanitarian Monitor, Dec 2008)

Displacement:

- At the height of the crisis, an estimated 100,000 people were displaced including those in shelters and with host families (UNFPA).
- At the peak of displacement, UNRWA was accommodating almost 51,000 people, among them approximately 28,560 children, in 44 shelters across Gaza.
- As at 23 February, 178 people are residing in UNRWA shelters including 99 children. Thousands of Gazans remain homeless. Most Gazans who have suffered displacement have been

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able to stay with host families. These families are now faced with shortages of food, blankets, water and electricity. (OCHA)

Water, sanitation and electricity

- At the height of the conflict, virtually all of Gaza's 1.4 million people were without electricity.
- At any given time during the conflict, at least 500,000 people were without water. (OCHA)
- Petrol and diesel for public use were last allowed into Gaza on 2 November 2008. As a result, most of the 240 Gaza fuel stations have closed (OCHA).
- Most of Gazan households are receiving only intermittent electricity and unscheduled power cuts continue as of 23 February. Gaza's power utility, GEDCO, is in urgent need of materials and concrete to repair damage to the network (OCHA).
- At least 2,200,000 litres of sewage leaked out of Gaza's waste water system due to damage from shelling, affecting at least 91,727 people, including 51,367 children. The sewage system has now undergone emergency repairs; however, more supplies are needed for full-scale repairs (Inter-agency WASH cluster).
- Around 50,000 persons were completely without access to water in Gaza and an additional 100,000 were receiving water only every 7 to 10 days as at 23 February. Emergency repairs to the water infrastructure are ongoing; however no major repairs can be done due to access restrictions on both expert assistance and necessary items for repairs. The most urgent needs include enhancing household access to tap water through distribution and repair of roof top tanks and restoration of the water network. There is also a need for mobile toilets for those who are internally displaced (Inter-Agency WASH cluster).
- As of 9 February, UNICEF staff reported of solid waste accumulating in most assessed areas (with the exception of many areas in Gaza City).

Food and Nutrition

- Approximately 90% of Gaza's population is now dependent on food aid (FAO).
- Food availability in Gaza is volatile and dependent on access, recovery time for the agricultural sector and the resumption of the cash economy and employment. The destruction of crops, fertile land, animals, agricultural assets and key infrastructure is preventing the production and distribution of fresh food, with widespread protein and micronutrient deficiencies predicted to worsen. Gaza's agricultural sector was already weakened by the 18-month long blockade and rising costs of inputs (FAO).
- Around 74% of Gazan infants under 6 months of age are not exclusively breastfed, exposing them to a high risk of infection or malnutrition from using breast milk substitutes prepared with potentially contaminated water (PCBS and UNICEF).
- Close to half of children under 2 in Gaza are anaemic. (UNRWA study)

Flash Appeal

The inter-agency Gaza Flash Appeal was launched on 2 February for a total of \$613 million to support 1.4 million Gazans over a nine-month period. UNICEF requested a total of \$34.5 million for

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activities in the sectors of child protection, psycho-social and mental health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene, nutrition, and health. The bulk of UNICEF's funding requirements will cover child protection programmes amounting to \$12 million, followed by education projects totaling \$9.5 million.

UNICEF action

UNICEF is focusing its response to the crisis in Gaza on Child Protection, Education, Health, Nutrition and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services. UNICEF is the cluster lead in Child Protection, WASH, and the Child Protection sub-cluster, and shares leadership in the Education cluster with Save the Children.

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