

Information Note – Tuesday 20 January 2009- 5:15 PM Jerusalem / 10:15 AM US EST

Source: UNICEF oPT

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE –GAZA CASUALTIES

According to the Ministry of Health, casualties as at 19 January are 1,314 killed (412 children and 110 women) and 5,450 injured (1855 children and 795 women). Exact figures are not available as identification of bodies discovered in areas, previously inaccessible, continues.

Nine Israeli soldiers have been killed during the operation. According to the Magen David Adom national society (Israeli equivalent to Red Cross and Red Crescent Society), Israeli civilian casualties stand at four , four critically injured, 11 moderately injured and 167 lightly injured since 27 December.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS & IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON CIVILIANS

With a ceasefire entering its third day, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is expected to visit Gaza very shortly to view first-hand the devastation of a 22-day Israeli offensive.

The number of casualties continues to grow as a result of the high level of contamination of unexploded ordinances (UXOs) in Gaza. This morning, UNICEF received reports of two children killed in Sheja'eyya neighborhood, east of Gaza.

On 19 January, Amnesty International accused Israel of war crimes, saying its use of white phosphorus munitions in densely populated areas of Gaza was indiscriminate and illegal. White phosphorus is frequently used to produce smoke screens, but can also be used as a weapon, producing extreme burns if it makes contact with skin. Israel did confirm the use of white phosphorus today but said that all its weapons used in Gaza complied with international law.

UNICEF ACTION

UNICEF and partners are preparing for an inter-agency rapid assessment to take place this week as soon as UNDSS gives clearance and access.

Education - Based on the data and information of school damages, UNICEF will be engaged in minor school repairing such as replacing broken glasses and repairing/replacing classroom desks and chairs. The repairing will also include providing safe drinking water and clean sanitation facilities especially for girls. The goal is to open all 373 government schools as soon as possible. In the first wave, UNICEF will provide 40,000 students (1st batch) with school supplies as required and to also equip 200 primary schools in Gaza with school-in-a-box, recreation kits and math and science kits

WASH- Until entry in Gaza, WASH is relying on remote assessment through network of informers conducted by the WASH cluster, assessment by CMWU as well as NGOs in Gaza who share info with WASH cluster.

Out of six trucks loaded with family hygiene kits entering Gaza today, two will be distributed to 650 IDPs living in UNRWA schools (in Khafa and in Khan Younis). Balance -3380 kits- will be stored in UNICEF warehouse for distribution to IDPs hosted with families as soon these beneficiaries are mapped by NGO partners. Water purification tablets (chlorine) will also enter Gaza today and will be temporarily stored in UNICEF warehouse to support the water-trucking response with current actors –ACF, Oxfam, municipalities (contact ongoing). The 1310 tablets

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are enough to purify drinking water to 30,000 p. during 3 months (each tablet disinfect 250 l. Total 65,000 cubic metres are enough for 30,000 p with 25 litre/d during 3 months).

Health/Nutrition- Plans are also being made with partners to conduct a Rapid Nutrition survey and scale-up the response with a focus on infant and young child nutrition, the needs of pregnant and lactating women, treatment of severe acute malnutrition and micronutrient supplementation.

With UNICEF support, cold chain vaccine storage facility in Gaza is now functional and routine vaccines are available until March. MOH has started distribution of vaccines to its 34 PHC clinics that provides the immunization services. The MOH is also preparing for an MMR vaccination campaign (Measles, mumps and Rubella), targeting 120,000 9th grade students at UNRWA and government schools.

Two therapeutic feeding centres, Ard El Ansan, supported by UNICEF are now working at full capacity providing services to 120 malnourished children per day.

CHILD PROTECTION and ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT/PARTICIPATION

As part of the assessment efforts, a video link conference between Jerusalem and Gaza is taking place today with UNICEF partners in Gaza. The focus will be on the establishment of 30 family centres in Gaza.

UNICEF has been asked by SRSG CAAC to document and prepare a report on child rights violation during the Gaza crisis. This report will be part of many inputs given to a final CAAC document on grave violations committed against children during the recent conflict

Extremely concerned with reports of the type and number of UXOs and remnants of war, two UNICEF radio spots on mine risk/UXO education will be aired as of today in four local radio stations in Gaza. UNICEF has also ensured that 100,000 copies of a leaflet on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and UXO are currently being distributed through UNICEF CP partners in Gaza.

COMMUNICATION –Please see the global website for new video, audio and text stories. Daily media/ interview logs, directly or via UNICEF National Committees, with oPT and MENARO are available upon request. UNICEF oPT continues to share new photos and videos from Gaza with HQ- all available via DoC/New York.