

# UNICEF oPt Monthly Update

15 April 2009

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## MAJOR ISSUES

- **Gaza blockade - ban on construction material, spare parts for public infrastructure and industrial inputs as well as education material is hampering relief and recovery efforts**
- **Poverty in West Bank - over a fifth of population able and willing to work is unemployed, and about 47 per cent now live below poverty line (PCBS)**

## Child Protection

Two children (aged 14 and 15) were killed while handling unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Gaza in March. There have been five child fatalities from UXOs since ceasefires were declared on 18 January 2009. Equipment to remove ordnance has not been allowed by the Israeli authorities into Gaza, and safe storage is needed for the explosive material.

To reduce injuries or fatalities from UXOs, UNICEF is coordinating mine risk education efforts in Gaza, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and NGOs, and in cooperation with mine and UXO clearing partners. In January, UNICEF distributed 50,000 educational leaflets to children and communities. An additional 100,000 coloring and activity books and 100,000 leaflets are now being used by MoEHE and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society to conduct mine risk education in schools and communities.



A girl attending a psychosocial counselling session at the Qabatyeh community centre in the West Bank.

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UNICEF is ramping up psychosocial support provided to children and youth. Training is underway for 145 additional Palestinian Centre for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (PCDCR) facilitators, a marked increase from the 30 counselors previously at work. Field staff indicate that activities are already having a positive impact: children are reportedly more animated, with improved social skills and relationships with their families.

Through a range of partners, UNICEF is also supporting remedial education, recreational activities and psychosocial support at seven Family Centres, three of which are operating out of tents. Mine risk and first aid education is also provided for children and their parents.

In March, one 15-year-old Palestinian boy was shot and killed in Ramallah after Molotov cocktails were reportedly thrown at Israeli soldiers near a settlement. In addition, 21 children were injured, three in Gaza and 18 in the West Bank in Israeli-Palestinian violence. Intense Israeli military activities affect villages with weekly anti-Barrier protests and frequent incidents of stone-throwing at Israeli vehicles take place.

Ten structures in and around East Jerusalem were demolished for lack of building permits (which are almost impossible to obtain) in March displacing 44 people including 29 children. All displacements from West Bank homes recorded by OCHA in 2009 have been in and around East Jerusalem.

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### Health/Nutrition

The ongoing rift between the Hamas authorities in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah has resulted in fewer critically ill patients accessing health services not available in Gaza. Since the March 22 takeover of the Referral Abroad Department by Hamas authorities, and the subsequent halting of processing of applications by the Ministry of Health in Ramallah, WHO reports of deaths among critically ill patients who are unable to access care outside Gaza.

Routine immunization services are restored in primary health care centers across Gaza; coverage across oPt is above 95 per cent for all antigens among infants. To support vaccine security, additional cold chain equipment was provided by UNICEF to all five Gaza districts.

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health (MoH) in conducting a one-round integrated MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) and vitamin A campaign in Gaza in February and March targeting 115,758 school children in grades 7-9 who had been missed in previous campaigns.

To improve maternal, newborn and child health, neonatal and obstetric kits, and medical disposables and equipment were provided to the MoH and NGO partners along with pediatric drugs and micronutrient supplements for under-fives and pregnant women. UNICEF has also focused on improving skills of health providers and caregivers in relation to managing severe malnutrition, breastfeeding and early detection of childhood illnesses.

UNICEF is providing ongoing support to the MoH in utilizing the integrated management of childhood illness approach (IMCI) as a way of significantly improving child care, focusing on 25 clinics in conflict-affected areas.

To improve maternal, newborn and child health as well as under-nutrition, basic essential neonatal and obstetric kits, medical disposables and equipment were provided to the MOH and NGO partners such as UHWC and Ard El Esan. This was complemented by essential childcare (IMCI) drugs and micronutrient supplements for under-fives and pregnant women. UNICEF has also focused in the last quarter on improving skills of health providers and caregivers in relation to managing severe malnutrition, breastfeeding and early detection of childhood illnesses.

During the first 14 weeks of 2009, UNRWA primary health clinics in Khan Younis (southern Gaza) reported significantly higher prevalence of acute bloody diarrhea than over the same period last year. Watery diarrhea and viral hepatitis are also markedly higher.

### FEATURED



UNICEF / UNRWA photo exhibit "Childhood"

UNICEF / UNRWA exhibit "Childhood" opened at the French Cultural Centre in Gaza on Palestinian Child Day, 5 April. The exhibit contrasts color UNICEF images with black and whites that span six decades from UNRWA's archive. The exhibit lasts through 17 April. It was first launched in Jerusalem in November 2008 to mark the 19th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has since opened in Nablus and is headed next for Jenin. Both Jerusalem and Nablus exhibits were hosted by the French Cultural Centre.

See [http://www.unicef.org/oPt/media\\_5599.html](http://www.unicef.org/oPt/media_5599.html).

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Emergency repairs being carried out to backfill the damaged embankment  
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### Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

The number of children without any access to piped water in Gaza decreased to about 22,400 in March from 28,000 in February. Some 56,000 children have access every two-three days.

Rising levels of wastewater in one of the two temporary wastewater disposal lagoons in Umm al Nasser village in North Gaza led to the collapse of the sand bank on 27 March, spilling 40,000 m<sup>3</sup> - 50,000 m<sup>3</sup> of partially treated sewage onto nearby lowland. Fortunately, the flood did not cause any injuries or property damages. Two years ago, a wastewater flood in the same district caused five deaths including two children.

UNICEF-supported emergency repairs, implemented by the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility, to the collapsed embankment at the sewage treatment facility in north Gaza were completed on 6 April, preventing sewage from affecting the nearby village of Umm Al Nasser.

On 1 April, UNICEF and Oxfam began tankering water to 40,000 residents in Northern Gaza who live far from water sources. The operation is expected to last for one month but may be extended depending on need.

UNICEF and Oxfam also launched a one-month cleaning and environmental awareness campaign on 15 March to clear a five-kilometer area in Gaza City of debris and rubbish that had accumulated after the recent conflict. The 22 workers responsible for clearing received a three-day training course on first aid, personal hygiene and infectious diseases. The workers were also supplied with safety boots, caps, and t-shirts. The campaign will benefit 50,000 people in northern Gaza.

### FEATURED



MMR campaign in Gaza

UNICEF Gaza Health Officer talks about impact of Gaza's crisis on child health on World Health Day, on 7 April.

Listen to the interview at  
[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/oPt\\_49142.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/oPt_49142.html)

Rainfall intensity in the West Bank at end March was below average. Less rainfall means that hundreds of families relying on rainwater harvesting will use water from unsafe sources. Poor quality water has already been reported in some cisterns.

### Education

No major repairs have been carried out in Gaza schools primarily because construction materials are not permitted to enter under the Israeli blockade. Although some stationary supplies were allowed to enter during March, restricted items in March included cash needed to fund and supply UNRWA's school feeding programme, which benefits 200,000 children, prefabricated classrooms for up to 500 children and UNICEF teacher training materials and early childhood development kits.

As of 14 April, UNICEF has distributed six small school tents and eight large school tents that are serving as temporary learning spaces for children whose classrooms were destroyed in the Gaza violence. Educational supplies provided include 520 School-in-a-Box kits (each kit meets the needs of 80 students and 2 teachers); around 160 interactive math and science teaching kits; almost 100,000 note books; and nearly 44,000 remedial folders to

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enable students to keep studying at home despite military operations or closures.

UNICEF will also be working with Tamer Institute through 12 community-based organisations across Gaza on a Story Telling project to encourage literacy, creativity and expression among children. The project will run for nine months, and reach 2,400 children.

In the West Bank, Israeli authorities forcibly entered school grounds on at least two occasions in March. On the 26th, following stone-throwing by Palestinian youth, Israeli troops raided the village of Haris in Salfit district, placed it under curfew and ordered all males between 15 and 30 years old to report to local schools for questioning. Four children were arrested.

On 23 March, in the southern Hebron Governorate, Israeli soldiers mandated to accompany Palestinian children to and from school in order to prevent settler violence against them, refused to do so, forcing the children to take a long detour. There have been two settler attacks against children during the 2008/2009 school year, and there were 14 documented cases during the last school year.

### Adolescent Development and Participation

Adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 comprise around 11 per cent of the population. They are a particularly vulnerable group as they are frequently exposed to the frontline of conflict and violence. In 2008, 80 per cent of children killed in conflict were adolescents, and most children in Israeli detention facilities are between 15 and 17 years old. Due to disruptions in schooling related to violence or closures, the number of teens falling two to three grades below their level and dropping out continues to rise.

According to a survey undertaken by Sharek Youth Forum and funded by UNDP, over half of 1,220 respondents between 16 and 25 years old said they did not feel secure. The great majority described themselves as either extremely depressed or depressed; more than half said they spend their spare time at home, with friends or relatives; and a limited proportion said they attended youth centres and clubs. Low morale was especially pronounced among Gaza refugee camp residents.

With the Ministry of Youth and Sports and national NGOs, notably Tamer Institute for Community Education and Ma'an Development Center, UNICEF provides daily after school remedial learning and recreational activities for at-risk youth at 73 adolescent friendly youth centres across the West Bank and Gaza. Trained animators conduct sessions in remedial Arabic and Math, along with activities such as sports, drama, art and life-skills education. Fully half the participants are girls, many of whom have few opportunities for interacting with their peers outside school.

### FEATURED



Children in conflict-affected Gaza celebrated World Water Day

On 22 March, children in conflict-affected Gaza came together to celebrate World Water Day. The event highlighted the importance of water, sanitation and hygiene practices among rural and urban communities. About 20 students in grades 5 and 6 participated by creating drawings on the topic of water and World Water Day.

See the photo essay at [http://www.unicef.org/oPt/real\\_lives.html](http://www.unicef.org/oPt/real_lives.html)

## FEATURE

### *Gaza's children find a safe space to heal*

Maisoun, 15, has nightmares. She doesn't like to talk about them – the most she will say is that she dreams scenes of war.

Like hundreds of other children in the Gaza Strip, Maisoun experienced 22 days of bombardment and military incursions when Israel began its operation in Gaza on 27 December.

UNICEF and its partner organization, the Palestinian Centre for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (PCDCR), are working with many of these children to return normalcy to their lives.

"Many children have sleeping disorders, bedwetting and are fearful," says UNICEF child protection officer Reem Tarazi.

"Some are still asking their mothers to accompany them to school, or to sleep in their beds. A number witnessed the killing of siblings or lost limbs that were amputated."

#### SAFE SPACES

UNICEF reaches 40,000 children annually with PCDCR through five psychosocial teams, each composed of around 25 social workers and counselors, that operate in all five Gaza districts. The teams provide emergency assistance immediately after emergencies, as well as ongoing psychosocial support to children and their families.

The centre also runs day trips to the beach and works with teachers and mothers to recreate safe spaces at home. "We teach them how to get children to enjoy themselves," says assistant director Iyad Abu Hujair.

#### RETURNING TO NORMAL

Maisoun first participated in a nine-session programme where children are encouraged to express themselves and taught coping skills. Counselors working with the children during the nine sessions are then able to identify children who require more intensive group or individual counseling, and recommend to their families that they participate in these six-month programmes.

Maisoun is being counseled individually and has shown marked improvement since she first entered the programme, say the centre's staff.

Maisoun describes the recent violence as "something unimaginable." Her family, like thousands of others, was forced to flee from their home in Zeitoun to stay with an uncle. "Strong and weak, we were all scared," she says of her seven siblings.

According to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, 1,440 Palestinians died in the Gaza operation, including 431 children and 114 women.

After living through the crisis, Maisoun is glad to have time to draw and to play with her friends at the centre. "They help us a lot," she says. "They play with us and we get away from the conflict and its memories."

Maisoun's favorite activity is drawing. "I draw girls," she says. "Every kind of girl."

When she is no longer a girl herself, she says, she dreams of being a photographer. "You need to be brave for that kind of work," she says, almost to herself.

UNICEF's work with PCDCR is funded by the Canadian International Development Agency.



*'Maisoun's favorite activity is drawing. "I draw girls," she says.'*

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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

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### Funding

Table 1: Funds received against the OPT Consolidated Appeal 2009 by sector (US\$)

**Contributions Received against UNICEF-oPt 2009 Gaza Flash Appeal & 2009 CAP**

Cluster	Appeal Target	Funds Received	Unmet Requirements	% Unfunded
Coordination & Support Services	854,000	244,324	609,676	71%
Education	18,587,340	2,162,646	16,424,694	88%
Food Security & Nutrition	2,501,160	725,380	1,775,780	71%
Health	6,571,454	2,182,135	4,389,319	67%
Water & Sanitation	8,883,928	1,883,505	7,000,423	79%
Psychosocial and Mental Health	10,750,000	5,439,577	5,310,423	49%
Protection	6,126,720	1,019,310	5,107,410	83%
<b>TOTAL (\$)</b>	<b>54,274,602</b>	<b>13,656,877</b>	<b>40,617,725</b>	<b>75%</b>

*As of April 20, 2009, donors had contributed some US\$ 13.6 million with US\$ 7.6 million in the pipeline.*

New UNICEF photos and video from Gaza are available to be used by UN agencies, partners, and international media outlets. To request photos, please contact: [photo@unicef.org](mailto:photo@unicef.org); to get videos, please visit: [thenewsmarket.com/unicef](http://thenewsmarket.com/unicef).

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**Next monthly update:** Friday May 15 2009