

# UNICEF oPt Monthly Update

15 May 2009

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## MAJOR ISSUES

- **World Bank report says closure and conflict have led to near collapse of water supply reliability in Gaza. Israeli restrictions against repair materials worsening impacts.**
- **In a UN survey, Gazan residents rated psychosocial distress as their main health problem and expressed an urgent need for psychosocial support.**

## Child Protection

An unexploded ordnance (UXO) detonated on 3 May in northern Gaza, injuring three children, according to UN Security. Five children have been killed by UXOs since ceasefires were declared on 18 January.

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. Equipment to safely remove ordnance has not been allowed in by the Israeli authorities since the end of major military operations on January 18.

UNICEF and implementing partner Palestinian Centre for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (PCDCR), have trained 30 additional psychosocial support workers for children and caregivers in Gaza, raising the number of trained staff to 160. With PCDCR and other partners, UNICEF is providing psychosocial support, remedial education, and recreational activities through seven family centres across Gaza, including three that are



*Children in the marginalised Arab Ramadeen community in the West Bank.*

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operating out of tents. Mine risk and first aid education is also provided for children and their parents.

In April, partners noted an increase in the number of fathers attending caregiver sessions that are usually attended mostly by mothers. Parents attributed the increased interest to improvements they noticed in their children's behavior, in response to skills and approaches they learned in the caregiver sessions.

### *Children in administrative detention*

Defense for Children International-Palestine (DCI-PS) reports that there were 391 children detained by the Israeli authorities at the end of April, including six girls. A sharp increase in the arrest and detention of minors was observed at the beginning of 2009 immediately after the start of Operation Cast Lead. Between December 2008 and February 2009, the number of children detained by Israel had increased by 23 per cent; the number has since started to decrease but is still 19 per cent higher than this time last year.

Among the 391 children detained at the end of April were two boys held without charge or trial in administrative detention. Five additional boys turned 18 in March and are no longer included in child detainee statistics. Two of the seven boys are serving their second administrative detention order; three are serving their third order; one is serving his fourth order; and one, detained since December 2007, is serving a fifth detention order.

As a policy, Palestinian children are prosecuted through Israeli military rather than civilian courts, and in the same jurisdiction as adults if aged 16 or over. Children as young as 12 can be detained for up to six months if there are *'reasonable grounds to presume that the security of the area or public security require*

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*the detention*'. The initial six month period can be extended by additional six-month periods indefinitely.

The 1612 Working Group led by UNICEF actively monitors grave violations against children, including detention, in Israel/oPt, as per UN Security Council Resolution 1612. NGOs and UN agencies have been preparing a report with a full annex of violations committed against children in Gaza during December 2008/January 2009.

*Settler incidents and displacement*: The month of April was marked by violent incidents involving settlers. On 2 April, a Palestinian man killed a 13-year-old boy living in the Israeli settlement of Bat Ayin, west of Bethlehem, and injured a 7-year-old.

In Hebron, a 17-year-old Palestinian boy was fatally shot, and seven children injured in several incidents involving beatings and stonings by settlers. In Nablus, a 16-year-old boy was reportedly shot at by a settler, while another child was injured during attacks by settlers on their village.

The number of children displaced in April is more than double the figure for any of the first three months in 2009. Seventy-nine children were displaced in the demolitions of 20 residential structures by Israeli authorities.

### Health/Nutrition

There have been no reported cases of swine influenza across oPt. UNICEF, in cooperation with WHO, UNRWA and NGOs, adapted awareness-raising materials in Arabic and English that was distributed to health clinics across oPt in early May.

On 27 April, the 36-day disruption of referral services for health services not available in Gaza ended when the Referral Abroad Department resumed working. WHO records indicate that four children died in March and April before they could access health services outside of Gaza.

West Bank patients also underwent long delays crossing checkpoints to access specialized treatment in East Jerusalem.

To improve the nutritional surveillance system and monitoring in Gaza, UNICEF has worked with the Ministry of Health, WHO, UNRWA and a local NGO, Ard El Ensan, to set up a systematic process of data collection, analysis and dissemination at 21 sentinel sites including 11 primary health centers and 10

newborn units. Each site will report monthly on a range of maternal, newborn and child health services as well as on nutrition and health indicators.

Some 65 essential drugs are out of stock in Gaza, in April, compared with 52 in March. These include medicines for chronic diseases. On 13 May, the Ministry of Health in Ramallah announced a shipment of 13 truckloads of drugs and disposables, including those needed for kidney dialysis into Gaza. The transfer was facilitated by UN agencies.

The Israeli blockade, meanwhile, continues to prevent the import of spare parts and equipment needed in hospitals and health facilities.

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 this year.

### FEATURED



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Mona Salah al-Ashqar, 17, sits with her mother, Um Said, in their home in northern Gaza.

UNICEF and ECHO are working to help Palestinian children and their families cope with the conflict and violence that frames their lives. Mona, 17, lost her left leg during the 22-day military operation in Gaza that ended on 18 January.

See how this support is making a difference in her life: [http://www.unicef.org/oPt/media\\_5622.html](http://www.unicef.org/oPt/media_5622.html)

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### Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Around 150,000 Gazans including 84,000 children are still completely without electricity and 90 per cent of Gaza's population are affected by intermittent power cuts. The number of children without any access to piped water declined to 17,900 (compared to 19,600 in March) and 56,000 children have access to piped water only every two to three days. The electricity and water shortages are a combined result of shortages of fuel, spare parts and water-treatment supplies due to Israeli restrictions.

The increase in pressure over the wastewater lake adjacent to the Khan Younis treatment plant in southern Gaza has resulted in the back flow of raw sewage to residences and into the network. Gaza's water and wastewater utility (CMWU) is taking steps to reduce the pressure but says the current situation could have been avoided had Israel allowed the entry of steel pipes.

UNICEF is constructing a new well in central Gaza that will increase access to water from four to eight hours per day for about 20,000 residents. Rehabilitation on networks in the Jabaliya (northern) district that will provide an additional 15,000 residents with greater access to water, is also underway. Both projects are being implemented with the Coastal Municipality Water Utility, and are slated for completion in July.

UNICEF is also working to construct six small desalination units at six wells across Gaza in order to provide around 40,000 residents with 10 liters per person per day of drinking water. End date for construction is 24 August.

By April, UNICEF had also distributed 60 tonnes of chlorine to all water networks across Gaza through CMWU. The chlorine is used to disinfect water.

A World Bank report released in April identifies Palestinian mismanagement and Israeli restrictions as the primary reasons for severe water shortages in Palestinian areas. Palestinians get only a quarter of the water that Israelis receive. Existing problems affect not just daily supply but the development of water resources, water use and wastewater management. According to the report, public health costs associated with waterborne diseases in children below the age of 5 are estimated at 0.4 per cent of GDP.

### Education

According to the Gaza Ministry of Education, 164 students and 12 teachers from Palestinian Authority schools were killed during Israel's "Operation Cast Lead", and 482 students were left disabled. Seven schools were totally damaged, including six in north Gaza, and 157 sustained partial damages.

UNICEF will distribute an additional 150 sets of interactive Maths and Science teaching kits to schools in Gaza. Emergency education supplies distributed thus far include 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 enable students to keep studying at home despite military operations or closures.

UNICEF is working with Tamer Institute at 13 centres staffed by four trained facilitators to provide remedial

### FEATURED



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UNICEF and Right to Play cooperate on a 'fun day' in the West Bank

For children living in isolated West Bank enclaves surrounded by the Israeli-constructed barrier, access to basic services – schools, health centres, water and sanitation – is far from guaranteed. Play is a luxury that eludes too many. Watch the children of Arab-Ramadeen come together for a few rare hours of laughter made possible by Right to Play Palestine and UNICEF.

See <http://www.unicef.org/oPt/5662.html>

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support in Arabic and math to students in the second to fifth grades. At each of the centres, 160 students, identified together with the relevant community schools on the basis of pre-testing, receive extra learning support twice a week. In April and May, the groups are reviewing material that will be tested in final exams.

UNICEF is also working with Tamer Institute through 20 community-based organizations – 12 in Gaza and 8 in the West Bank, on a Story Telling project to encourage literacy, creativity and expression among children. The project will run until January 2010 and reach 8,000 children living in conflict-affected areas. Groups of up to 40 students meet twice weekly after school hours and participate in story telling, drama, and writing activities. During May, the groups in Gaza are spending half of each session reviewing for their final examinations. All of the facilitators received 10 hours of training on working with children.

### Adolescents

A child rights analysis published by Defense for Children International-Palestine and Save the Children Sweden calls for special attention to children and adolescents living in East Jerusalem. Despite strong Israeli laws and policies protecting children, the report claims that Palestinian children living in East Jerusalem are vulnerable to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Main reasons are weak law enforcement by Israeli authorities in terms of allocation of protection services and discriminatory application of the law to Palestinians.

In 2009, in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and Ma'an Development Center, UNICEF opened five adolescent friendly learning centers at community-based organisations and schools in East Jerusalem. These centers offer daily after school remedial learning in math and Arabic, along with recreational activities, including drama, music and sports. The centers also provide life skills-based education including on drug abuse, smoking and HIV prevention. Most importantly, the centres provide adolescents with a much-needed safe space to learn and interact with their peers.

UNICEF's Adolescent Development and Participation programme supports a total of 73 adolescent friendly learning spaces across the West Bank and the Gaza, and 60 additional centres across the West Bank receive support in organising recreational activities and life skills-based education. A major component of the programme is the active participation of the

adolescents themselves, through adolescent-led initiatives and action research.

### FEATURED



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Girls in conflict-affected Gaza attend class in a temporary tent facility.

More than three months after the ceasefires, no major repairs have been carried out in Gaza schools. Listen to UNICEF Gaza education officer Ibtisam Abu-Shammala describe the challenges that students and schools face in getting back to the books.

See [http://www.unicef.org/oPt/media\\_5665.html](http://www.unicef.org/oPt/media_5665.html)

### FEATURE

#### *West Bank children get breathing space*

In Tulkarem refugee camp in the northern West Bank, the sound of raucous music fills a youth club. More than a dozen boys pound away on drums and shake castanets while a teacher plays an electronic keyboard.

It's a rare release for these young people living just 15 kilometers (9 miles) west of the major Palestinian city of Nablus, and an equal distance from the Israeli coastal town of Netanya.

Tulkarem is separated from Israel by the barrier that Israel is constructing in and around the West Bank, while its access to the rest of the West Bank is

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controlled by Israeli checkpoints. Travel to Israel is virtually off-limits, and difficult even to other West Bank cities. Unemployment has soared due to the conflict with Israel and access and movement restrictions, and by 2008, half of Palestinian families were living in poverty, according to UNDP.

“Life here has a lot of pressure – economic, social and personal,” explains Nooreddin Amara, 14. “The economy is usually very bad. There is a lot of unemployment.” And, he said explaining how overcrowded the camps were, “here is the club, and here is a house. If I make any noise at all, they can hear it.”

“The camp is small,” says Muhanned Abu Libdeh, 15, a youth representative of the management committee at the Tulkarem after-school programme. “Your life is limited by what is here.”

### Creating space

UNICEF support gives these young people more choices. In Tulkarem UNICEF funding provided by the Italian Cooperation has helped thousands of adolescents to make music, play sports, take fine arts, improve their math and Arabic, and learn important life skills.

Similar adolescent-friendly learning centers are implemented by UNICEF partners Tamer Institute and Ma’an Development Centre across the West Bank and Gaza. Some 5,000 boys and girls have participated in the ongoing two-month programme in Tulkarem. In 2008, the centres reached over 44,000 adolescents living in conflict-affected areas with much-needed support.

“It’s a simple programme, but so necessary,” says Tamar representative Zakia Masoud. “There is no garden here, no places to relax, and the center has filled that gap.”

### Books open doors in the Beit Dajan enclave

On the other side of Nablus, the military checkpoint leading to the village of Beit Dajan is closed each night. Behind it, almost 15,000 residents must wait until sunrise to leave the area.

Despite these restrictions, something exciting is happening in Beit Dajan.

Once a week, 25 sixth and seventh grade girls meet after school to talk about reading and books. When

they go home, they take a book with them to share with their families.

On a recent afternoon, approximately 30 girls sat coloring next to open picture books in the Beit Dajan library. They were eager to share what they had learned in their reading.



*A young girl at the Beit Dajan library colours a scene from a story she has read.* ©UNICEF/2009/Magnusdottir

Noor Ikram, 14, said her favorite book was one on how bodies work like machines. Another girl, Rana Bahjat, 13, held up a cardboard three-dimensional illustration of her favorite story. A princess sat on a paper balcony, ready to defeat a dragon and save her friends.

“Before the programme, they barely entered the library,” says the school’s librarian, Firial Hammad, smiling. “Now they love it.” She wants to expand the programme, saying that more students want to participate. Right now, she doesn’t have enough chairs and tables to fit them all in the room.

“They can read everything,” says Hammad. “Their parents are so excited – they’re even more interested in reading than in completing their studies.”

The UNICEF-supported programme promoting literacy targets children living in especially vulnerable areas across the West Bank and Gaza. UNICEF has provided over 12,000 books to 30 libraries and 20 community centres in the West Bank and Gaza, in addition to stationery items. UNICEF support also includes incentives paid to teachers to run the after-school activities, which reach around 2,000 children between 6 and 12 years-old each week.

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### Basic Indicators

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 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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