

UNICEF oPt Monthly Update

20 August 2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Focus on Child Protection

A unique child protection context	1
Gaza, seven months after “Cast Lead”	2
West Bank: displacement	2
Children in armed conflict.....	3
Basic indicators	5

MAJOR ISSUES

- ♦ Gaza: 26 months into the blockade, OCHA reports on its impact: 120,000 jobs lost and 40% unemployment; and three out of four are “food insecure”, up from 56% in early 2008. Due to lack of reconstruction material, most of the 6,410 homes totally or severely damaged in “Cast Lead” have not been reconstructed. Some 10% have no electricity supply, and 10,000 people have no access to running water. Only 5%-10% of water extracted from Gaza’s aquifer meet WHO safety standards, and 80 million litres of sewage are discharged daily into the environment.
- ♦ In May and June, OCHA reported the highest number of demolitions and demolition orders in the West Bank including East Jerusalem since it began systematically tracking data in 2006. More than 125 eviction, stop-construction and demolition orders were issued, and more than 100 full or partial demolitions took place, affecting more than 1000 people. In May and June last year, OCHA reported on four house demolitions affecting 25.

A unique child protection context

UNICEF uses the term ‘child protection’ to refer to the prevention of, and response to, violence, exploitation, neglect, and abuse of children. In emergency contexts including conflict and natural disaster, UNICEF’s role is to protect children and women, ensure the rigorous application of international standards covering their rights, and provide them with the resources and tools for recovery.

There are unique and complex child protection concerns in oPt: some related to the conflict with Israel; others to intra-Palestinian violence and division;

PROTECTING CHILDREN



© UNICEF-oPt/2009/Pirozzi

The vision and approach of UNICEF is to create a protective environment, where girls and boys are free from violence, exploitation; and where laws, services, behaviours and practices minimize children’s vulnerability, address known risk factors, and strengthen children’s own resilience. This approach is human rights-based, and emphasizes prevention as well as the accountability of governments and duty bearers. It enhances aid effectiveness by supporting sustained national capacity for child protection. Finally, it reflects children’s own roles and resilience as agents of change in strengthening the protective environment.

yet others to entrenched socio-cultural norms and behaviours. OPT’s environment of chronic insecurity amplifies and compounds risks for children, and poses severe challenges to the protective mechanisms of governance, law and order, and social services. UNICEF is working to:

- ♦ Strengthen laws, policies and services related to child protection, with a focus on reducing violence in schools and homes
- ♦ Promote awareness of child rights, including in the context of conflict, in particular through the UNICEF-led oPt / Israel group monitoring on grave violations against children in conflict
- ♦ Build the capacity of partners, focusing on social workers, police and the judiciary
- ♦ Provide community-based psychosocial support for children and caregivers in conflict-affected areas, including immediately after emergencies
- ♦ Raise awareness on unexploded ordnance and small arms and light weapons
- ♦ UNICEF leads the Child Protection sub-cluster; and co-leads the Mental Health and Psychosocial Working Group with WHO.

UNICEF oPt Monthly Update

Gaza, 7 months after “Cast Lead”

UXOs: Unexploded ordnances such as bombs that failed to detonate during the military operations, continue to pose a grave threat to children. At least 12 people including six children have been killed by UXOs since 19 January, and 23 others injured, including four children. Rubble removal works that began on 7 July confirm the presence of UXOs and anti-tank mines.

UNICEF has led partners in efforts to collect and verify data on injuries and deaths caused by UXOs, as well as to reduce the risk of additional deaths or injuries by raising prevention awareness. The UN Mine Action Team has been on the ground since February 2009, but the purchase and importation of explosives required to safely dispose of UXOs faces ongoing delays.

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT: UNICEF child protection partners report that while there has been some improvement in psychosocial conditions for children and their families, the long-term effects of the recent Israeli military operations are beginning to show. Signs include chronic depression, a sense of hopelessness, and fears about the future.

UNICEF is coordinating efforts of over 30 child protection partners in Gaza to reach children with community-based psychosocial support including individual and group counselling. Three family centres also provide a broader range of services including remedial education, basic health care, and recreational activities, helping to increase the ability of Gazan families to meet basic needs and live in dignity. UNICEF also supports 26 youth centres that provide daily, structured learning and recreational activities for vulnerable adolescents.

WASH: Water and sanitation systems are under severe pressure due to the lack of material and equipment for rebuilding, maintenance and operations. According to the water utility, “Cast Lead” caused USD 6 million in damage to WASH systems, including to over 30 kms. of water networks and 11 water wells. Supplies of chemicals including chlorine needed to operate desalination plants and disinfect water are limited; and 90% of water in Gaza is unfit for human consumption.

UNICEF is the WASH cluster lead, responsible for coordination, information management, meeting gaps, and advocating for additional investment and a lifting of the blockade.

GAZA BLOCKADE



©UNICEF-oPt/2009/EI Baba

Najah Zuroub, 10, speaks to the press on 28 July from the rubble of the American International School (AIS) in Beit Lahiya, Gaza, accompanied by the school’s director, Ribhi Salem. AIS is one of 18 schools totally destroyed during “Cast Lead” more than half a year ago. It has not been rebuilt due to the ban on construction materials into Gaza. The press briefing was organized by UNICEF and the Save the Children Alliance, and led by the UN Humanitarian Coordinator.

With partners, UNICEF has supported rehabilitation of five water and sewage systems that service more than 100,000 people; constructed one well in central Gaza benefiting 12,000 people; and provided 4 KVA generators to support water pumping and wastewater treatment. When schools re-open UNICEF will provide safe drinking water to 70 schools.

EDUCATION: Over the summer holidays, UNICEF and partners supported remedial education and recreational activities in 60 schools targeting 6,000 children. The children were selected by teachers based on low achievement scores, and received 36 hours of instruction, along with 36 hours of recreational activities. UNICEF also supported partners in conducting creative writing and story telling sessions at 13 community-based organizations for 360 children, and “open” recreational days at 66 kindergartens serving some 5,640 young children. Around 410 teachers and school supervisors received training on child-friendly teaching methodologies.

Some 280 schools and kindergartens were damaged during the Israeli military offensive, including 18 schools that were completely destroyed. Despite

UNICEF oPt Monthly Update

welcome moves to allow educational supplies into Gaza, there remain shortages of paper, textbooks and uniforms. Even prior to “Cast Lead”, Gaza’s school system was plagued by deteriorating infrastructure, overcrowding and an inability to accommodate the natural growth of the student population.

Since the ceasefires, UNICEF has distributed an extensive range of supplies. These include: 21 school tents; educational supplies for more than 100,000 children; teaching material for at least 2,000 teachers; 100 kindergarten kits benefiting around 5,000 young children, as well as recreational material.

West Bank demolitions

Since the beginning of the year, OCHA has recorded the demolition of 221 Palestinian-owned structures, including 90 residential structures, which have displaced over 500 people. In July, OCHA recorded five demolitions displacing 24 Palestinians, all living in East Jerusalem.

Tensions escalated in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem in early August as Israeli security forces evicted two families from their homes, displacing more than 50 people including 20 children. In July, Israeli settlers, accompanied by Israeli security forces, moved into an uninhabited home in the same neighbourhood. The area in question contains 28 buildings housing around 500 Palestinians that are subject to a protracted legal dispute over land ownership.

According to “Broken Homes”, a report issued by Save the Children UK, the Palestinian Counseling Centre and the Welfare Association, “families who experience house demolitions fall into a protection abyss, without a coordinated safety net to support them and their additional needs.” Impact on children includes psychosocial distress; and longer-term, lower educational achievement and behavioural problems.

UNICEF-supported YMCA emergency teams provide displaced children and caregivers across the West Bank including East Jerusalem with emergency support including counseling, referrals and legal assistance. The emergency teams also organise structured recreational activities for children.

As schools prepare to welcome students for the 2009-2010 academic year, learning conditions for children living in Area C, which is under Israeli civil and military control, are of increasing concern.

CELEBRATING YOUTH AND ADOLESCENCE



©UNICEF-oPt/2009/Aruri

Adolescents and young people celebrating International Youth Day at Al Manar Square in Ramallah. This year, under the global theme “Sustainability: Our Challenge, Our Future”, adolescents in 133 UNICEF-supported youth centres across the West Bank and Gaza participated in activities to clean up and improve their communities. Initiatives included cleaning up beaches, starting anti-smoking campaigns, or making youth centres truly youth-friendly; the campaign will last until the end of the year.

Many school structures – including tents, tin shacks and crude cement buildings – fall far short of basic safety and hygiene standards, with little protection from either the heat or the cold. Construction or expansion requires a permit from the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA), a process that is extremely complex and time-consuming. Even requests to rehabilitate rudimentary schools established by the ICA in the 1970s have been rejected.

Several school construction projects have been repeatedly postponed pending building permits, while other projects that have initiated construction without the permits have been served with demolition orders, or stopped works. In early August, the Israeli High Court of Justice issued an interim order barring the Israeli Civil Administration from demolishing a building constructed of tires and mud – an eco-friendly initiative supported by the Italian NGO *Vento di Terra* that was to serve as a school and kindergarten for a Bedouin community northeast of Jerusalem. Two weeks later, the order was temporarily rescinded.

UNICEF oPt Monthly Update

Children and armed conflict

A recent Security Council Resolution may require Israel and oPt to report to the Council on grave violations committed against children in conflict situations.

Resolution 1882, passed unanimously on 4 August, expands the criteria in selecting the countries / parties that must report on such violations to include killing/maiming and rape/sexual abuse. The new resolution builds on the 2005 Security Council Resolution 1612, which mandated reporting by countries / parties with patterns of child recruitment.

As at August 2009, there were 15 countries with 1612 Task Forces reporting regularly on six grave violations: the three "mandatory reporting" criteria; as well as abduction; attacks on schools and hospitals; and denial of humanitarian access.

In oPt, UNICEF has led a group of 12 Palestinian, Israeli and international NGOs, together with OCHA, OHCHR, UNRWA and WHO, in voluntarily reporting to the Security Council on the six violations, as well as on detention, torture and displacement.

Since the Gaza ceasefires, the child protection working group has monitored the impact of "Cast Lead" on children. Major findings are that:

- over 350 children were killed and 1,600 injured;
- In two separate incidents, at least 5 children were reported to have been used as human shields by Israeli forces;
- There are reports of 13 children killed while bearing arms;
- Ambulances were not provided with access to at least 66 children who had been killed for periods ranging from several hours to up to 12 days.
- In several cases, ambulances were attacked as they tried to reach injured or dead children.

UNICEF and the oPt / Israel child protection working group will continue to monitor, report and advocate for stronger protections for children in conflict situations.

A CHILD'S VIEW



Photo by Hiba Esmail

Hiba Esmail, 17, takes a photograph of a young girl at Qalandiya Camp. Hiba and 35 adolescents were part of week-long UNICEF-sponsored children's photography workshops held at Al Qattan Foundation in Gaza and with Tamer in Ramallah. Their photographs will be featured at exhibits to mark the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 20 November.

UNICEF oPt Monthly Update

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 are available to be used by UN agencies, partners, and international media outlets. To request photos, please contact: photo@unicef.org; to get videos, please visit: thenewsmarket.com/unicef.

For more information, please contact:

Marixie Mercado, Chief, Communication, UNICEF-oPt + (972) 54 77 87 604; mmercado@unicef.org

Next monthly update: Tuesday 15 September 2009