

Gaza Crisis, UNICEF oPt External Information Note

10 March 2009



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A boy peeks out of a hole in his classroom wall in the Jabalia School in Gaza. The school was heavily damaged during the hostilities.

Facts and figures

- Total population of Gaza: 1,417,000. The total number of children in Gaza is approximately 793,520, or 56 per cent of the population (PCBS).

General overview

- Humanitarian agencies are still facing unprecedented denial of access to Gaza, blocking relief and reconstruction efforts. The amount of goods allowed in to Gaza does not meet the humanitarian needs.
- Violent incidents continue to undermine the fragile ceasefire. OCHA reports that home made rockets and mortars were fired into southern Israel from Gaza between 2 and 9 March. In the same period, Israeli military forces fired missiles into Gaza causing five deaths and 12 injuries. On 7 March, two Palestinians, including one child, were injured when Israeli patrol boats opened fire on a village west of Rafah (OCHA).

Health/Nutrition

UNICEF remains concerned that the nutritional status and general health of children in Gaza is likely to deteriorate given the dependency of Gazan families on food aid and cash assistance, as well as the lack of access to clean water. The Food Security inter-agency cluster reported last week that food availability in Gaza is volatile, dependent on the opening of border crossings and resumption of local production.

A series of articles published last week by the Lancet medical journal concludes that the occupation, the recent conflict in Gaza and the enduring hostilities in Palestine are undermining the health and development of the population. According to the Lancet, a two-year international investigation has revealed an increase in the number of stunted children in oPt and conditions so extreme that Palestinian women have on occasion been forced to give birth at Israeli military checkpoints.

UNICEF Response

Between 3 and 10 March, UNICEF supplied the Ministry of Health with 3,572 cartons of normal saline infusion, 200 vaccine carriers, obstetric surgical kits and medicine. These quantities can serve up to 100,000 patients for a period of three months.

Additionally, on 6 March, UNICEF dispatched 190,000 mother to child health (MCH) handbooks and 3,000 cooking sets to Gaza, in addition to five solar vaccine freezers and 12 electric vaccine freezers.

Education

The education system in Gaza is under severe strain from infrastructure damage, access restrictions on education materials, and the ongoing education sector strike.

UNICEF response

UNICEF is working closely with the Ministry of Education on planning a teacher and student counsellor training programme. Twenty-five psychosocial support trainers from Jordan will be conducting a training of trainers that is scheduled in a few weeks. The Ministry will provide the training venues.

UNICEF support to the full re-establishment of the education sector continues. Between 3 and 10 March, UNICEF supplied PA schools in all six directorates with:

- 6 pallets of stationary,
- 14,639 remedial folders for grades 1,
- 14,036 remedial folders for grade 2,
- 15,207 remedial folders for grade 4,
- 1,985 student stationary boxes.

Two pallets of UNICEF t-shirts and four pallets of education extra curriculum kits were refused entry to Gaza on 3 March on the grounds of not qualifying as a humanitarian priority. The t-shirts were being delivered under a UNICEF education programme to improve girls' participation in 50 schools in disadvantaged areas of Gaza.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

Water and sanitation infrastructure remains inadequate as essential materials such as pipes and spare parts continue to be prevented entry to Gaza. As of 9 March, the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) reported that 50,000 people, including 28,000 children, are still without access to piped water and an additional 100,000, including 56,000 children, receive water approximately every 7-10 days. This number is not expected to decrease significantly in the near future due to repair material not being allowed to enter Gaza.

UNICEF response

UNICEF continues to strengthen its cooperation projects with CMWU to repair and rehabilitate water networks in Gaza and will in the coming days provide support to CMWU in restoring access to tap water for a further 30,000 people. In addition, to ensure and maintain water safety, UNICEF

is procuring 81 m³ of Sodium Hypochlorite to be used by CMWU to chlorinate water in water production facilities in Gaza.

Between 3 and 10 March, UNICEF distributed 600 family water kits to 6,000 families in hard hit areas in Gaza through Oxfam.

Child Protection/Adolescent Development and Participation

UNICEF response

Between 3 and 10 March, UNICEF supplied its partners with:

- 30 recreational kits,
- 6000 fleece blankets and 150 baby blankets to be distributed to children in locations where UNICEF partners are providing family support and psychosocial support activities,
- 80,000 mine risk education leaflets,
- Six computers (out of a total of 30 planned) to adolescent friendly learning centres,

Psychosocial support for children remains one of the major concerns for the well-being of children in Gaza. Between 3 and 10 March, UNICEF's partner, the Palestinian Centre for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (PCDCR), conducted activities throughout its 29 counselling points, reaching out to 200 children in eight group sessions, 100 caregivers in five sensitization sessions, 117 new individual counselling cases, in addition to following up on a previous 172 cases.

PCDCR also conducted seven emergency visits to injured children and continued providing training for 600 Ministry of Education teachers in 30 schools. PCDCR also established a new counselling point in a UNICEF supplied tent.

TAMER and MAAN, UNICEF partners working with youth, provided a total of 1,070 adolescents with remedial and recreational activities in 11 adolescent friendly learning centres. UNICEF is working closely with its TAMER and MAAN to resume activities in the remaining 17 centres.

On 6 March, Israeli authorities denied access to 14 pallets of music equipment for adolescents.

Supplies and Logistics

As at 6 March, UNICEF has dispatched USD 4,165,349 worth of supplies into Gaza since the onset of the crisis.

UNICEF Executive Director visits the occupied Palestinian territory

UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman concluded a four-day visit to the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel on Saturday 8 March with a call for stronger action to protect children.

Veneman met Palestinian and Israeli children affected by the recent hostilities in the region during visits to a school, paediatric hospital and counselling centre in Gaza, as well as a psychosocial support centre in Sderot. During meetings with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, and with Israeli Minister of Social Welfare Isaac Herzog and the head of the Israeli Supreme Court, she stressed the need for stronger protection and unimpeded access of humanitarian supplies and personnel into Gaza.



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UNICEF Executive Director, Ms Ann M Veneman, talks to two students at the Jabalia School. The school is located in a hard hit area in Gaza.

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; to get videos, please visit: thenewsmarket.com/unicef.

For more information, please contact:

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