

Gaza Crisis, UNICEF oPt External Information Note

13 February 2009



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Facts and figures

- Total population of Gaza: 1,417,000. The total number of children in Gaza is approximately 793,520, or 56 percent of the population. (PCBS)
- At the height of the crisis, an estimated 90,000 people were displaced including those in shelters and with host families (OCHA).
- Children account for roughly a third of the dead and wounded. 1,440 Palestinians were killed during the hostilities, of whom 431 are children and 114 are women. This number does not include those who have died due to lack of access to regular health care. The number of injuries still stands at 5,380, of whom 1,872 are children and 800 are women. Three Israeli civilians were killed and 183 injured since 27 December by rocket and mortar fire by Palestinian militants from Gaza.
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General overview

Three non-school UNRWA shelters remain open for 388 displaced people, including 217 children. Thousands of Gazans remain homeless. According to UNDP estimates, over 14,000 homes have been totally or partially damaged during the hostilities in Gaza. As a result, families are currently living in temporary housing arrangements including dilapidated buildings and in cramped quarters with host families.

Almost four weeks after the ceasefire agreement, the health and well-being of Gazan children remain under threat. Full and unrestricted humanitarian access to Gaza is required to meet the increasing needs of children. UNICEF school supplies for children, along with major WASH equipment for rehabilitation of safe water supply schemes have so far been denied access.

Violent incidents continue to undermine the cease-fire agreement, leading to a number of casualties.

Health/Nutrition

The interagency Food/Nutrition cluster reports that some 1.3 million people, including 728,000 children, are relying on food aid or about 91% of the Gaza population.

UNICEF Response

Currently 56 out of 62 Public Health Centres (PHCs), or 90 percent, are functional in Gaza, despite supply and electricity shortages. UNICEF is working closely with the Ministry of Health and WHO on identifying the essential supplies required to meet the needs of these 56 PHCs and selected pediatric hospitals in Gaza.

A measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccination campaign is scheduled to take place on 14 February. The campaign will target 120,000 students aged 11-15 years, through UNRWA and Governmental schools and selected primary health care clinics. UNICEF is working closely with MoH on preparations for the campaign, including ensuring that all cold room storage is functioning and that warehouses for drugs and vaccines have enough fuel reserves, as electricity coverage is only 12-16 hours a day.

In collaboration with the MoH and MoEHE, UNICEF has supported the distribution of fortified biscuits (294,650 boxes) in 300 preschools targeting 80,000 preschool children aged 3-5 years old.

Education



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A UNDP rapid damage assessment of 170 out of the 407 government and private schools in the Gaza Strip found that ten schools (eight government and two private) were severely damaged, and that 160 government and ten private schools were partially damaged, during the Israeli military operation. Eight kindergartens were severely damaged and 60 were partially damaged. According to UNRWA, as at 9 February, an average of 98% of the nearly 200,000 students in UNRWA schools was in attendance over the past week.

Repairing damaged schools remains an urgent priority. Also, children's clothes and stationary items continue to be priority items and essential for children's return to school.

UNMAT and partners are close to completing clearance of schools with known UXO contamination: only three remain uncleared and should be completed over the course of the coming week.

UNICEF response:

Despite access restrictions, UNICEF has significantly increased educational supply distribution between 9 and 13 February. The majority of these supplies were part of pre-positioned stocks prior to the conflict.

Between 9 and 13 February, UNICEF distributed: 116 math kits and 116 science kits benefiting around 10,440 children; 392 school in a box benefiting around 31,000 children; 280 recreational kits benefiting around 25,000 children; and 99,100 note books to six education directorates in Gaza.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)



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According to figures from CMWU on 9 January, 50,000 persons are completely without access to water and an additional 150,000 – 200,000 are virtually without water in Gaza, receiving water only every 5 or 6 days. Solid waste is accumulating in most areas affected by the crisis.

UNICEF response

UNICEF and the UNICEF-led interagency WASH cluster continue to report a lack of supplies due to access restrictions, which is hampering the rehabilitation process. Heavy rains are exacerbating the need to repair sewage lines in Gaza.

Between 9 and 13 February, 155 hygiene kits were distributed in Gaza. A further supply of baby hygiene kits, family water kits and hygiene kits will be distributed in Gaza in the next few days.

Child Protection/Adolescent Development and Participation

UNICEF is concerned with wellbeing of adolescents in Gaza as psychosocial support remains one of the major concerns. Up to 25 percent are reported as not being able to return to school due to economic or other reasons.

UNICEF response

Since the beginning of the emergency operations, UNICEF has reached out to some 1,725 children through recreational sessions organized by community based organizations. Psychosocial support has been provided to 400 beneficiaries using a toll free number operated by a UNICEF partner. In addition, 2,460 care givers have been provided with support to deal with distress amongst children.

In collaboration with the Palestinian Center for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (PCDCR), UNICEF distributed 1,135 baby blankets and 1,000 baby hygiene kits in Gaza between 9 and 13 February. In addition, UNICEF distributed 150 hygiene kits to 150 in-camp families in Gaza through partner organization CTCCM.

Adolescent friendly learning spaces continue to provide support to targeted adolescents through recreational activities in 21 different locations.

Communication

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.