

Gaza Crisis, UNICEF oPt External Information Note

17 March 2009



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Three girls head home after a day of school in Gaza City. The fragility of the ceasefire continues to threaten the security of children in Gaza.

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

- The restrictions on humanitarian aid to Gaza continue, severely hindering relief and reconstruction efforts. Essential supplies such as construction materials, spare parts for water and wastewater infrastructures, industrial inputs and livestock remain restricted from entry into Gaza.
- The ceasefire in Gaza remains fragile. As OCHA reports, two Palestinian children were killed and 11 children were injured during the month of February in Israeli-Palestinian violence in Gaza.

Health/Nutrition

UNICEF remains concerned that the decline in socio-economic and physical security in Gaza will lead to a slow deterioration of the health and nutritional status of the Gazan population, especially children. WHO reported an 18 per cent increase in the incidence of watery diarrhoea among children aged 0-3 years between 19 January and 8 February, compared with the same time period in 2008. This increase could be related to the severe damage to the water supply system during the Gaza crisis.

UNICEF Response

Between 10 and 17 March, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health with basic EPI cold chain equipment, including 12 electric vaccine deep freezers, five solar vaccine freezers, in addition to essential drugs. UNICEF also provided partners with midwifery kits, obstetric kits, sodium chlorite solutions, obstetric surgical kits and medicine and 1000 baby hygiene kits sufficient for the needs of 20,000 women for a period of six months. UNICEF also continued to support UNRWA with 50,000 Maternal and Child Health Handbooks.

As part of strengthening and extending the national nutrition surveillance system for children under the age of five, UNICEF supplied the Ministry of Health with micronutrients benefiting up to 120,000 children. In addition, to enhance disease control, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health and partners with 30,000 100 ml bottles of Vitamin A and Vitamin D, and 120,000 bottles of iron supplements to prevent and treat vitamin deficiency and anemia amongst children in Gaza.

Education

The education system in Gaza is under severe strain from infrastructure damage, access restrictions on education materials, and the ongoing education sector strike (which began on 24 August 2008). UNRWA reports that attendance is consistent at 98 per cent for both UNRWA and government schools, however the shortages of classrooms, textbooks, stationary, piped water and repair materials for damaged schools are adversely affecting the quality of education available to children in Gaza.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

Essential materials for the repair and maintenance of the Gaza water network, such as pipes and spare parts, continue to be prevented entry to Gaza. According to reports for the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU), approximately 28,000 children in Gaza have no access to piped water and an additional 56,000 children have access to water only every seven to ten days.

UNICEF response

UNICEF procured Sodium Hypochlorite (81m³) is now being distributed to water production facilities in Jabalia, Beitlahia and Nussirat. The Hypochlorite will be used by the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility in chlorinating water to ensure and maintain water safety.

Between 10 and 17 March, UNICEF supplied partner organization Oxfam with 5 water monitoring kits to be used in training of personnel from five Gaza Strip municipalities on the proper monitoring of the water quality.

Child Protection/Adolescent Development and Participation

Psychosocial support for children remains one of the major concerns for the well being of children in Gaza.

UNICEF response

Between 10 and 17 March, UNICEF's partner, Palestinian Centre for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (PCDCR) conducted activities throughout its 29 counseling points reaching out to 100 children in seven group sessions, 70 caregivers in four sensitization sessions, 59 new individual counseling cases in addition to following up on 186 older cases.

TAMER and MAAN, UNICEF partners working with youth, provided a total of 1,050 adolescents with remedial and recreational activities in 11 adolescent friendly learning centres. In addition, UNICEF supplied four centers with furniture. UNICEF partner, PYALARA, continues to provide training for thirty youth workers on peer support.

Between 10 and 17 March, UNICEF supplied its partners with 3000 cooking sets.

Supplies and Logistics

As at 13 March, UNICEF's interventions in Gaza have amounted to a total worth of USD 7,866,039. These supplies include pre-positioned supplies, supplies ordered before 27 December and supplies dispatched since the onset of the emergency.

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.

For more information, please contact:

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