

Gaza Crisis, UNICEF oPt External Information Note

17 - 24 March 2009



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Salina, 9 years old, holds her UNICEF backpack.
Salina lost her father during the Gaza hostilities.

General overview

Access restrictions to Gaza continue. The level of humanitarian aid allowed into Gaza remains below what is urgently required. Humanitarian partners in oPt continue their advocacy on easing access of goods and personnel into Gaza.

Between 17 and 24 March, violent exchanges between Israeli forces and militants inside Gaza reportedly caused six Palestinian injuries, including one child.

Child Protection/Adolescent Development and Participation

UNICEF continues conducting sensitization sessions and home visits to targeted caregivers and injured children.

As part of efforts by UNICEF to reach out to more disadvantaged populations, UNICEF partner the Palestinian Centre for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (PCDCR) established eight new counseling spots in Rafah and Khan Younis, raising the number of counseling spots in Gaza from 23 to 31.

UNICEF continues working with partners Tamer and Maan in 28 Adolescent Friendly Learning Centers. UNICEF assisted Maan in finding replacements for three learning centers, two of which have been occupied forcibly by Hamas police and one which was exhibiting low capacity.

As part of UNICEF's agreement with local partner Maan, work with local community based organizations (CBOs) is underway to form local committees, hire new facilitators, develop action

plan for activities and attract adolescent beneficiaries through schools and home visits. Moreover, Maan is conducting a two day orientation workshop for the learning centre coordinators.

Education

Due to access restrictions to Gaza, schools and directorates are lacking educational resources and materials, resulting in deterioration of the quality of teaching and education available to children in Gaza.

UNICEF response

UNICEF provided the six education directorates with 2,000 teaching kits (including stationary), benefiting 253 government schools and about 157,000 students in grades 1-10. Moreover, 1,985 kits of student stationary received from UNICEF Iraq were distributed to 60,000 students in grades 1-4.

UNICEF provided eight large tents to the education directorates in Khan Younis and Rafah to increase the capacity of four schools which were partially damaged during the recent conflict. Each school received two tents, benefiting 320 students.

In addition, UNICEF distributed 43,883 remedial worksheets to students in grades 1-4 to enhance classroom practices and compensate the lack of text books. The Khan Younis directorate conducted two orientation sessions, of three hours each, for 106 teachers of grades 1 and 2 to brief them on how to use the remedial sheets. About 50 per cent of the teachers who attended the orientation sessions are substitute teachers for teachers who are currently on strike.

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.

UNICEF Response

UNICEF, through local partner organization the Near East Churches Counsels, distributed 28,800 bottles of ferrous sulfate to the most vulnerable areas in Gaza (including Zaitoun, Shejaia and South Gaza). The intervention will target 40 per cent of the moderate to severely malnourished and anemic 6 -59 month old children in Gaza, or 28,800 children.

UNICEF, through its local NGO partners, also distributed 2,000 water bottles and 600 baby hygiene kits, targeting 600 children in the most disadvantaged areas in Gaza. These supplies aim to prevent water borne diseases among children.

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.

Recently released results from the public health laboratory in Gaza show that 12 per cent, or 13 out of 108 water samples taken in January and 14 per cent, or 47 out of 335 water samples taken in February were contaminated with *Total Coliform* and *Faecal Coliform*. The Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) also continues to monitor water quality at its 550 sampling sites across Gaza. Water samples at eight sites in North Gaza and two sites in Gaza City tested positive for faecal coliforms on 1, 2 and 8 February. Ministry of Health and WHO staff reported an increase in acute watery diarrhoea cases at nearby clinics. The UNICEF-led WASH Cluster is following up on the findings, but considers there is currently no cause for alarm.

UNICEF response

Ensuring water safety is a major priority for UNICEF. UNICEF continues to work on restoring access to piped water for areas affected by the recent conflict. The restoration work is being carried out under the Emergency Water Network Repairs project with the CMWU. As a result,

50,000 more persons now have restored access to tap water throughout areas in Beit Lahia, Jabalia, Beit Hanoun and Rafah.

In efforts to improve water access in rural areas, UNICEF is constructing a new water well in the disadvantaged al-Moghraga area. Once the well has been established, 20,000 residents will see increased access to piped water from 4 hours to 8 hours daily.

Distribution of chlorine, through CMWU, is underway to 155 water wells, which cover 90 per cent of Gaza's water network.

Supplies and Logistics

UNICEF continues its daily advocacy efforts with the Israeli authorities' Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT). As a result, COGAT finally confirmed the approval of Math and Science Kits for Gaza after a period of four months; as well as medical equipment ordered at the beginning of 2009.

Communication

UNICEF continues to increase its visibility in both the local and international media. During the reporting period, Abu Dhabi TV covered UNICEF's distribution of remedial folders in Khan Younis.

In addition, a series of Human Interest Stories is being created in the field of Child Protection and Education. These stories will be available on the UNICEF oPt website in the coming week.

UNICEF celebrated World Water Day on 22 March. The celebration was organized by UNICEF, CMWU, the Ministry of Education and the Palestinian Hydrological Group (PHG) and included several activities, most of which aimed at educating the public about the right use of water resources.

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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Next Information Note: In the future, UNICEF oPt will publish Monthly Updates on the situation of children in oPt and UNICEF's programmes. The next Monthly Update will be published on Wednesday, 8 April 2009.