

Gaza Crisis, UNICEF oPt External Information Note

20 February 2009



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Children playing near their destroyed homes in the Zeitoun neighborhood in eastern Gaza City.

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). The population density in Gaza is 3,881 people per square kilometer (OCHA).
- At the height of the crisis, an estimated 90,000 people were displaced including those in shelters and with host families. As at 16 February, the total number of displaced persons is unknown; however, three non school UNRWA emergency shelters remain open in Gaza, hosting 359 people including 200 children (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.

General overview

Humanitarian agencies have faced unprecedented denial of access to Gaza since 5 November.

Health/Nutrition

UNICEF is 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 lack of access to clean tap water.

UNICEF Response

A UNICEF-supported measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) campaign targeting 120,000 students in grades 8 and 9 is ongoing at the Ministry of Education and UNRWA schools in Gaza. The campaign includes awareness sessions about infectious diseases, and each student will receive a dose of Vitamin A. The campaign ends March 2 and is implemented by both the Ministry of Health and UNRWA.

Education

UNICEF staff reports that the education situation in Gaza remains very difficult, in particular in the north and near the border areas. Access restrictions to Gaza continue to hinder efforts to support education services. In addition to shortage of piped water in many schools, children are lacking education and recreation materials. School repairs, education supplies and psychosocial support for children remain a priority in the education sector.

Students of eight severely damaged schools are accommodated in other schools that are now operating in double or even triple shifts. Despite these restrictions, school attendance has been good in the last days (over 95%), except in the northern area where in some schools attendance is around 85% (MoEHE). Due to the damage inflicted on schools during the hostilities, parents are fearful of sending their children to school. For some displaced children, the distance to school remains a constraint.

UNICEF response

UNICEF distributed 21 tents to Gaza on 19 February, for use as shelter for educational and psychosocial support activities in damage-stricken areas.

UNICEF also distributed 150 school-in-a-box kits between 13 and 20 February, benefiting 120,000 students.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

As at 19 February, 50,000 persons are completely without access to piped water and an additional 100,000 are virtually without water, receiving water only every 5 or 6 days. The Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) estimates that without getting additional repair materials into Gaza these people will remain without water, since major repairs can not take place due to lack of materials. The most urgent priorities currently are pipes, cement and fittings.

UNICEF response

UNICEF continues to support the CMWU in carrying out emergency repairs of the water network in Gaza. UNICEF will in the coming days support CMWU in repairing pipes and fittings, as well as by purchasing sodium hypochlorite for disinfection. This project will benefit a total of 50,000 people in getting access to the drinking water.

UNICEF continues its efforts in securing water tankering to populations in need in Gaza. These services stand to benefit up to 25,000 people, including 6,000 children. UNICEF is also finalizing plans to deliver 2,000 hygiene kits through its partner organization, Oxfam. The kits in the pipeline for distribution include 1000 baby hygiene kits, 400 family hygiene kits and 600 family water kits, benefiting approximately 2,000 families in need in Gaza.



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A girl attends lessons at the Omar Ben al-Khattab School, in Beit Lahiya, northern Gaza.

Child Protection/Adolescent Development and Participation

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.

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

Supplies and Logistics

A total of \$2.5 million worth of supplies has been distributed in Gaza since the onset of the crisis. Three UNICEF trucks were able to cross to Gaza on 19 February with supplies worth \$480,000. The supplies included water testing kits, water purification tablets, fleece blankets, medicine, therapeutic milk and 150 school-in-a box.

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.