

Gaza Crisis, UNICEF oPt External Information Note

24 February 2009



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A boy receives his MMR immunization at the School of Suleiman Sultan in Gaza City on 19 February 2009.

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 of 23 February, the total number of displaced persons is unknown; however, two UNRWA emergency shelters remain open in Gaza, hosting 178 people including 99 children (OCHA). Concrete, cement and other construction materials have not been allowed into Gaza since 5 November, hindering major repair of damaged houses.
- 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. The amount of goods allowed in to Gaza does not meet the humanitarian needs.
- Violent incidents, such as rocket and mortar fire, continue to undermine the ceasefire.

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 lack of access to clean tap water. As WFP reports, some fruits are available on the market in Gaza but the prices are high.

In its 19 February bulletin, UNRWA's Health Department highlighted the need to focus in the coming weeks on watery diarrhoea among children under three years of age, as the number of cases breached the alert threshold between weeks four and six of 2009.

UNICEF Response

The UNICEF-supported MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccination campaign entered its tenth day on 24 February. The campaign is targeting 120,000 students in grades 7, 8 and 9 and will conclude on 2 March. The campaign includes awareness sessions about infectious diseases, and each student will receive a dose of Vitamin A.

UNICEF continues to support the MOH with awareness raising (IEC) materials for the promotion of flour fortification and salt iodization with proper hygiene practices.

UNICEF is jointly preparing an 8-10 day Rapid Nutritional Assessment with partners, which will be carried out in March 2009. UNICEF is liaising with MoH on their involvement in the assessment. The target population is children under 5 and breastfeeding/pregnant women, refugees and non-refugees. The sample will be representative of all five governorates in Gaza. Following the assessment, UNICEF plans to reactivate the Nutrition Surveillance System through the local facilities. Preliminary results are expected by the end of March.

Education

Access restrictions to Gaza continue to hinder efforts to support education services. In addition to shortage of piped water in many schools and overcrowding, children are lacking education and recreation materials. School repairs, education supplies and psychosocial support for children remain a priority in the education sector.

UNICEF response

UNICEF's Iraq office sent 58 pallets or 1998 boxes of student stationary which entered Gaza on 23 February. The boxes contain pencils, black and colored, pencil sharpeners, erasers, rulers and student geometry sets to accommodate 80,000 students.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

As at 24 February, 50,000 persons were still completely without access to piped water and an additional 100,000 were virtually without water, receiving water only every 7 to 10 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 Nusairat, Beit Lahia, Beit Hanoun, Jabalia, Rafah and Moghraga. This project will benefit a total of 50,000 people in re-gaining access to the drinking water.
- UNICEF is finalizing plans to support its partner implementation organization, Oxfam, in providing emergency water delivery by tankers, conducting hygiene and clean up campaign as well as hygiene kit delivery. The water tankering services stand to benefit up to 25,000 people, including 6,000 children. 2,000 families will receive hygiene kits. As a part of this partnership agreement, UNICEF provided partner organization Oxfam, on 20 February, with 185 family hygiene kits, 100 basic family water kits, and 1000 baby hygiene kits for immediate distribution.
- UNICEF has focused its efforts during the crisis on the provision of emergency drinking water to at least 50,000 displaced families, emergency repairs to water and sanitation networks, and monitoring water quality, notably through surveying 153 water wells and distribution points. UNICEF has conducted hygiene promotion in 282 schools and 30 hard hit communities, and distributed 40,000 family kits and 7,000 baby and family hygiene kits.



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Girls attending lessons at the Omar Ben al-Khattab School, in Beit Lahiya, northern Gaza, in February 2009.

Child Protection/Adolescent Development and Participation

UNICEF response

- Since the beginning of the emergency operations, teams from the Palestinian Centre for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (PCDCR), UNICEF main partner in the psycho-social work in Gaza, reached the following population in the most affected areas:

- 555 children attended 37 group sessions; 760 caregivers attended 38 sensitization sessions; and 173 emergency visits were conducted.
- UNICEF-partner PCDCR and MoEHE are engaging in the following support activities with 30 Government schools between 10 to 25 February:
 1. Training of 600 teachers, with the training focusing on providing teachers with the skills to deal with children affected by the conflict;
 2. Encouraging schools to refer 150 children (five from each school) who are in need of individual counseling;
 3. Distribution of 20,000 fliers targeting 20,000 parents and children through schools in order to increase the awareness of parents and children on how to overcome stress.
- The UNICEF-supported PCDCR team in Middle area in Gaza has opened a counseling point in an IDP shelter located in a sports club; the shelter is accommodating 15 families who lost their homes.
- Since the cease-fire agreement, TAMER, UNICEF's partner, has provided 624 adolescents with remedial and recreational sessions in their seven centers. UNICEF has provided TAMER with 8 tents, 54 recreation kits, 500 hygiene kits, 4 sports kits, 10 first aid kits 4 and 500 baby hygiene to be used in the seven centres. UNICEF also provided Maan with two tents and 120 recreational kits to be used in their 18 centers.

Supplies and Logistics

As at 23 February, a total of \$3.1 million worth of supplies has been distributed in Gaza since the onset of the crisis. 58 pallets of student stationery which was previously denied entry by the IDF was sent to Gaza on the 22nd of February.

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.

Next Information Note: Tuesday, 3 March 2009.