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HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE –GAZA

OVERVIEW:

The ceasefire, declared on the 18 January, entered its 8th day. Extensive destruction was caused to homes and public infrastructure throughout the Gaza Strip, with many families losing their entire possessions (MoH).

Preliminary findings from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) indicate the complete destruction of over 4,000 residences and partial destruction of 17,000 buildings and housing units. PCBS also notes damage or destruction to 23 mosques, 25 schools, hospitals and universities, 31 security headquarters, 16 ministry buildings and 1,500 factories, workshops and other commercial establishments. PCBS figures so far detail damage to or destruction of two bridges, 10 water and sewer lines, 10 electricity generating stations and 50 kilometers of road. The direct economic losses from damage to infrastructure and buildings, along with harm to various economic activities, amount to over \$1.9 billion.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that an estimated 90,000 people have been displaced, including up to 50,000 children. At the height of hostilities, UNRWA was operating 50 emergency shelters for over 50,000 displaced persons. Thousands of other Gazans sought refuge with family members. Following the cease-fire, many displaced persons started leaving the emergency shelters to join other family members' homes or, to the extent possible, back to their own homes. The number of people taking refuge in 15 UNRWA emergency shelters is now at 8,500.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) and WHO report that 34 health facilities were damaged or destroyed and 16 ambulances were damaged in direct or indirect shelling. Since 27 December 2008, 16 health personnel were killed and 22 injured while on duty, according to the MoH health information centre in Gaza.

During the conflict, 50 UN buildings, 1 UN compound, 1 NGO installation, and 4 convoys sustained damage (OCHA).

Electricity coverage is still of only 8-12 hours a day. The water and sanitation system is under extreme duress.

CASUALTIES:

Since 27 December, the total number of casualties provided by the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) stand at 1,314 Palestinians killed and 5,450 injured during the twenty two days of fighting. This includes 412 children or and 110 women killed, and 1,855 children and 795 women injured as at 19 January. More bodies are being discovered in areas previously inaccessible and new figures are expected early next week.

Nine Israeli soldiers were killed during the operation. According to the Magen David Adom national society (Israeli equivalent to Red Cross and Red Crescent Society), Israeli civilian casualties stand at four, and 182 injured - four critically injured, 11 moderately injured and 167 lightly injured since 27 December.

On the morning of the 22nd, Israeli troops fired and injured a child east of Gaza City near the border. Four Palestinians were also injured by shell fire from an Israeli gunboat reportedly firing at Palestinian fishermen on the Gaza coast.

Unexploded ordnance remains a major threat. Two Palestinian children were killed on 20 January by unexploded ordnance in Az Zaitoun.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS:

Most schools in Gaza opened yesterday to accommodate children who have been out of school since 27 December.

The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes, and the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry visited Gaza on the 22 January on a five-day mission to review humanitarian needs in Gaza. Sir John Holmes highlighted the need to open all border crossings to enable aid workers to enter Gaza and address urgent needs. On the 23 January, the UN Secretary General briefed the Security Council on his recent mission to the Middle East.

UNICEF is to take part in an inter-agency Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA), which will enter Gaza tomorrow following the completion of security clearance. The assessment will focus on life-saving needs, including restoration of basic social services and emergency repairs of essential infrastructure. Information gathering has already started through a network of UN staff and partners in Gaza and preliminary data on damage is becoming available.

Data from the assessments will feed into an inter-agency appeal, which will be launched on 2 February in Geneva to address both urgent humanitarian and early recovery needs.

WHITE PHOSPHOROUS - The Israeli media reported that the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) have acknowledged it used two types of ammunition containing phosphorous during its operations in Gaza. Accordingly, the IDF is investigating the misuse of one of these types in Beit Lahiya.

UNICEF ACTION

EDUCATION

Most schools (UNRWA and Ministry of Education operated schools) opened yesterday enabling children to return to classes. UNRWA reported that 100 per cent of their schools are working, and the MoE reported an 80 per cent attendance rate. For the next coming weeks, informal school sessions will provide a safe environment with the opportunity for children to gain a sense of normalcy through interaction and space to play.

Challenges resulting from the conflict include the risk of unexploded ordnance (UXO) and the need for temporary facilities due to damaged schools. The number of schools working in double shifts - already high before the crisis - is now set to increase and some may work in triple shifts to accommodate those children whose schools have been damaged. The education authority is conducting an assessment of the level of damage caused to schools in Gaza during the conflict.

UNICEF is raising awareness of the dangers of UXO through the distribution of material and airing of messages on radio spots, and is also printing games with UXO messages for immediate distribution. The new materials will include the police hotline number set up for the public to report on UXO.

UNICEF has supplied the Ministry of Education (MoEHE) with 12,000 water bottles targeting an equal number of school students.

The inter-agency coordination group for education was set up on the 22 January to discuss key issues around education in Gaza.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Assessments are underway to evaluate immediate health needs and damage to health facilities. UNICEF, in coordination with the World Health Organisation (WHO), began a Rapid Health Assessment for Primary Health Centres (PHC) settings and hospitals including premises, staff, supplies and ambulances. It should be concluded next Tuesday. The MoH in Gaza is conducting a needs assessment and has asked each hospital to assess damages. The 54 MoH PHC are functional at 90 per cent capacity, with the exception of two severely damaged clinics (Atatra clinic in Beit Lahia and Hala Shawa clinic in Zaitoun). 34 of these clinics are now providing vaccines.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has identified priority health concerns to include: immediate treatment of traumatic injuries, burns and acute surgical needs, mental disorders and psychosocial support due to the distress, treatment and care for chronic conditions, and communicable diseases, including diarrhoeal disease outbreaks due to disruptions in water and sanitation services.

UNICEF is providing ongoing child survival and immunization support and scaling up integrated maternal and child illness services, psychosocial support and nutrition aid. UNICEF and UNRWA are working together to immunize all children against Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) in Gaza. 56 Primary Health Centres (PHC) managed by the MoH and another 18 managed by UNRWA have all resumed childhood vaccination programmes. With UNICEF support, an important vaccine storage facility in Gaza is now functional, and routine vaccines will be available until March. Vaccines are being provided in 34 clinics as normal, and access for patients has improved.

UNICEF has supplied the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MOH) with 18 midwifery kits equipment; 20 midwifery kits and supplies sufficient for 100 deliveries for at least one month; 400 first aid kits for 4,000 people; 24 surgical kits for 2,400 patients; 102 resuscitation kits sufficient for 100,000 patients.

UNICEF has also provided the MOH with Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) drugs sufficient for 40,000 children for a period of six months.

Antenatal clinics, school health programme, health education programme and nutrition monitoring surveillance have resumed their work at 60 per cent capacity.

Two UNICEF-supported therapeutic centers in Gaza and Khan Younis are working at full capacity to provide services for 180 malnourished children and their mothers on a daily basis.

WASH

Serious public health concerns persist due to damaged waste water systems in Gaza, Beit Hanoun, Jabalia and Beit Lahiya. The International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Society (ICRC) reports that one fifth of the population of Gaza remains without direct access to safe drinking water and depends on drinking water purchased from private suppliers.

The first needs assessment in this sector has been completed. Gaza's Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) initial report showed damages to the water sector (water networks, waste water networks, water wells, pressure lines) reaching a total of \$3.8 million.

UNICEF has provided five non-governmental organization (NGO) partners with 4,343 family hygiene kits sufficient for 30,000 people. The kits will be distributed to the most vulnerable including displaced and other vulnerable families. UNICEF has also delivered over 1,300 water purification tablets to provide safe drinking water for 30,000 people over the next three months.

UNICEF has disbursed \$50,000 to (CMWU) for rapid repairs to the water network. The CMWU has conducted emergency repairs, however, supplies such as pipes are urgently required for further repairs. ICRC reports difficulties in getting urgent supplies into Gaza.

UNICEF is leading the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene inter-agency group, which includes UN agencies, international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the CMWU to coordinate response in these sectors.

CHILD PROTECTION and ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT/PARTICIPATION (ADAP)

UNICEF is leading the mine risk awareness operation. UNICEF is airing two radio announcements on four different radio stations on the protection of children from UXO. UNICEF has also ensured that 100,000 copies of a leaflet on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) and UXO are distributed throughout Gaza to raise awareness of the risks. On the 23 January, UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), Mine Action Group (MAG), and Norwegian's Peoples Aid began an assessment of UXO in Gaza. UNICEF earlier advocated for the Police Explosive Unit to start the marking/clearance of UXO. A toll free number has also been created for reporting on UXO.

Partners in the psychosocial sector started home and hospital visits today. UNICEF carried out a psychosocial coordination meeting with partners and agreed on prioritizing families whose houses were destroyed. Partners will also distribute a UNICEF guidance book on how to deal with children after war during home visits.

The assessment of youth centers by UNICEF ADAP partners in Gaza, MAAN and TAMER, are almost finished. Out of 28 youth centers, 3 have been destroyed, some centers sustained minor damages. Two tents were delivered to MAAN for activities to resume in two of the damaged adolescents learning centers.

UNICEF continues to support a national NGO, Palestinian Centre for Democracy and Conflict resolution (PCDCR), which runs a toll phone line providing one-on-one support to parents and children daily between 9:00AM and midnight.

UNICEF is providing inputs to the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) report on alleged grave child rights violations committed during the Gaza crisis.

COMMUNICATION

UNICEF's regional Goodwill Ambassador Mahmoud Kabil visited wounded Palestinian children in Egyptian hospitals close to the Gaza borders on Thursday. New UNICEF photos and video from Gaza are continued 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

SUPPLY

The UNICEF Gaza office is distributing supplies from Jerusalem.

Today 25 January, UNICEF sent 4 trucks of humanitarian supplies into Gaza. This included 401 basic family water kits for 4,010 families, emergency drugs for 255,000 children under-five years, hygiene pallets for 168 families, and medical kits for approximately of 130,000 people.

On Thursday, two trucks with UNICEF supplies went into Gaza: one carrying 14,400 water jerry cans from Amman; the other with 232 basic family water kits procured by the oPt office.

FUNDING

UNICEF has requested \$20 million in humanitarian funding for the Gaza crisis. Funds received so far include \$143,062 from the UNICEF National Committee in Finland, \$73,100 from the UK National Committee, and \$1.5 million from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). The Government of Japan announced on Friday that it will fund UNICEF's health, water and sanitation activities in Gaza with \$3 million as the first government donation in response to UNICEF's Gaza appeal.