

## Gaza Crisis, UNICEF oPt Information Note

30 January 2009

### General overview

Per the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) field update on Gaza for 27-29 January, Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) figures as at 28 January are: 1,366 Palestinians dead, including 430 children and 111 women. This number does not include those who died due to lack of access to regular health care (including obstetric care and treatment for chronic diseases). The number of injuries stands at 5,380, including 1,870 children and 800 women.

UNICEF, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and other agencies continue to highlight the danger posed by unexploded ordnance (UXOs) following the deaths of two children by UXOs on 20 January. All UNRWA schools have been checked and cleared of UXOs. Eight UNICEF-supported government schools were also cleared by 28 January.

Thousands of Gazans remain homeless, although the exact number of people displaced is still unknown. An assessment of 48 out of 61 localities found that more than 66,000 people had not yet returned to their homes and were staying with relatives or other hosts, many of whom face shortages of food, items such as mattresses and blankets, as well as water and electricity.

The electricity situation has returned to its pre-27 December status, with much of Gaza receiving only intermittent electricity. While the main power lines have been repaired, many low-voltage lines providing electricity directly to households are not working. Thirty-eight transformers essential for the repair of the electricity system are still waiting permission to be allowed into Gaza.

Humanitarian organizations continue to face restrictions in entering Gaza. As at 28 January, approximately 30 international NGO staff members were in Gaza, along with approximately 22 UN international staff members. Currently, there are outstanding requests for over 200 people to enter Gaza and this number is growing by the day.

The level of truckloads of aid allowed into Gaza daily is insufficient to meet the needs. Since the cease-fire on 18 January, an average of 80.5 truckloads per day crossed through the Kerem Shalom crossing. The Israeli authorities have assured the humanitarian community that Kerem Shalom would be improved to allow 150 trucks per day. However, except for 2 days, capacity has not exceeded 120 truckloads.

### Health

Hospital capacity is gradually freeing up for the provision of routine care for chronically-ill patients now returning for treatment, as well as regular services such as elective surgery. Because of the Israeli closure of the Gaza Strip which has now lasted over a year and a half, hospitals are run down and much of the equipment is unreliable and in need of repair. Some medical supplies, including heavy painkillers and medicines for treating cancer patients and patients with bleeding disorders, are not available, according to ICRC.

As reported by OCHA, over half of the 5,380 injured during the conflict may suffer life-long impairment, exacerbated by the inability of rehabilitation workers to provide early intervention.

### Education

All government and UNRWA schools re-opened on 24 January. On 28 January, student attendance in UNRWA's 221 schools was 96 percent and teacher attendance was 99 percent.

UNICEF continues to provide essential educational equipment and materials to re-establish learning and recreational activities, create safe environments, and provide a sense of normalcy for children. UNICEF has provided 130 school-in-a-box kits, including items such as pens, pencils, and exercise books for 10,400 children, 84 recreational kits targeting 6,720 children, 42 maths and 42 science kits for 4,200 children.

### **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)**

Although approximately 70 percent of water wells are functioning, certain localities are not receiving water due to localized damage, including 10,000 people in Beit Hanoun. The Gaza City Wastewater Treatment Plant was partially repaired on 23 January, and wastewater is no longer leaking into surrounding agricultural fields. Following additional repairs, sewage is no longer leaking in the streets of Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahia.

Gaza's Coastal Municipality Water Utility (CMWU) continues to work on urgent maintenance of water and waste water systems, although it is unable to complete the repairs without the entry of needed spare parts. UNICEF has provided safe drinking water and financial support to CMWU for urgent repairs.

### **Nutrition**

Shops and markets continue to offer limited food supplies; prices have doubled or tripled since before 27 December. The shortage of currency and sharp increases in food prices make it extremely difficult to obtain food. The number of people in Gaza dependent on food assistance is now at 1.3 million or 91 per cent of the population, including 714,168 children (OCHA).

### **ADAP / Child Protection**

UNICEF partner Palestinian Centre for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (PCDCR) conducted 450 initial support visits to households, health facilities and shelter this week.

28 UNICEF-supported adolescent learning centres are now operational; five are within schools, and five will be identified as family centres.

A rapid assessment on child protection needs should be completed by early next week.

UNICEF has been raising awareness of the danger posed by UXOs, and has distributed 75,000 leaflets and aired two radio spots on four different radio stations on protection from UXOs.

### **Supplies**

One UNICEF truck entered Gaza on 30 January containing medical supplies (sodium chloride). Five UNICEF trucks entered Gaza on 29 January containing blankets and medical supplies.

Six trucks containing high energy biscuits, basic family water kits and more blankets are scheduled to enter Gaza on 1 February.