

# UNICEF oPt Monthly Update

## October 2009

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### IN BRIEF

- A UN report released in September 2009 warns that Gaza’s underground water system is in danger of collapse and points to very elevated levels of nitrates in drinking water. With UNICEF funding, Gaza’s Coastal Municipality Water Utility is installing six desalination units at wells across Gaza. Each will serve up to 3,500 residents once completed at end-October. UNICEF also provides safe drinking water to 66 schools serving around 50,000 students. Under the Israeli blockade, now entering its 28<sup>th</sup> month, cement, pipes, and other material for reconstruction are banned from entering Gaza.
- UNICEF and Save the Children are developing 20 family centres in areas of Gaza severely affected by “Cast Lead”. The centres are intended to provide a broad range of services including remedial education, basic health care, psychosocial support and recreational activities, with the goal of enabling vulnerable families to meet basic needs and live in dignity. The family centres will be operational in November. UNICEF currently supports three family centres.

### Education for all

UNICEF works to ensure that every child – regardless of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background or circumstances – has access to quality education. In emergency contexts, UNICEF works to return children to safe learning environments as quickly as possible – an unparalleled means for restoring a sense of normalcy and hope to children and their families.

Despite the extraordinary odds stacked against them, going to school and becoming educated remains a cherished priority among Palestinian children. Across

### BUILDING CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS



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A young girl celebrates the first day of school at Qalandiya Basic School on 1 September.

The formal education system has undergone substantial development since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. Since 1994, it has seen a two-thirds growth in student numbers at basic education level, and a trebling in secondary education. In 2009, there were 1.12 million children in grades 1-12 attending over 2,500 schools. Around 70% attend Palestinian Authority schools, 22% go to UNRWA schools, and around 8% attend private institutions. Palestinian Authority law mandates compulsory education to completion of grade 10 (the end of basic education). A new school curriculum applying across the West Bank and Gaza has been in place since 2006.

There are four types of educational institutions:

**Governmental:** The Palestinian National Authority runs and finances the majority of basic and secondary schools. In Jerusalem, government schools are run by the Islamic Endowment (Waqf) Department under the supervision of MoEHE.

**UNRWA:** The United Nations Relief and Works Agency runs schools and post-secondary institutions for Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and Gaza, where most refugee camps are located.

**Private:** These schools are run and financed by foundations, charitable societies, religious denominations, individuals and companies. They can be for profit or non-profit.

**Pre-schools and universities:** Almost all pre-schools are private. Most higher education institutions are non-profit institutions that fundraise and receive government funding as well.

Source: MoEHE, EDSP 2008-2012

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## EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES



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Sabrin al-Attar, 8, plays and studies in a tent amid scattered rubble. Her house was one of 3,540 homes totally destroyed during “Cast Lead”. Her school was also totally destroyed. As at October, almost nine months after the ceasefire, neither have been rebuilt due to the Israeli blockade, which bans most reconstruction material from entering Gaza. See the full photoessay at [www.unicef.org/opt](http://www.unicef.org/opt).

UNICEF has a long track record of quick and effective response to emergencies, particularly in re-establishing spaces for learning. UNICEF’s approach to education is grounded in the rights of the child, which are most at risk during crises and their aftermath. Experience show it can take as long as two decades for a conflict-affected country to move through the initial humanitarian relief phase into reconstruction and development. If education is not a priority from the beginning, the chances for an early and sustainable recovery are greatly reduced.

oPt in 2006-7, basic enrolment rates in Gaza were 85.8%, and 82.7% in the West Bank. More boys than girls were enrolled in basic school in Gaza (89.3% compared with 82.2%), while girls posted slightly higher enrolment in the West Bank (83.6% compared with 81.7%). Literacy rates among 15-24 year olds, at 99.1%, are the highest in the Arab world.

For too many children across oPt, however, school is not a positive experience. Teachers are inadequately trained, and classrooms, especially computer and science laboratories, are ill-equipped. Two out of five students say they are beaten by their teachers, and some students admit to using violence against their teachers and peers. In oPt’s heavily politicized environment, even education is affected: since 2007, strikes have replaced thousands of teachers in Gaza with others who possess less training and experience.

In Gaza, many of the 280 schools damaged or destroyed during “Cast Lead” have not been repaired or reconstructed due to Israel’s ban on cement and other building materials. Even prior to “Cast Lead”, around 85% of schools in Gaza were already running double shifts in order to accommodate the number of students, resulting in fewer classes and shorter learning hours. Since 2007, blockade restrictions have also made it difficult to build or repair schools, and there are chronic shortages of basic educational supplies such as textbooks, stationery and chalk. Many students accepted at universities abroad have not been allowed to leave Gaza.

In the West Bank, many students must cross military checkpoints, roadblocks and other barriers to movement getting to and from school everyday. In Area C, which is under Israeli civil and military control, and which covers 60 per cent of the West Bank, school structures that include tents, tin shacks and crude cement buildings, fall far short of basic safety and hygiene standards, with little protection from either the heat or the cold. In East Jerusalem, fewer than half of nearly 90,000 children aged 5-18 are enrolled in municipal schools due to a severe shortage of classrooms, and around 5,000 students cannot afford any form of schooling at all, according to the Association for Civil Rights in Israel.

Across oPt, pre-school education for children aged between a minimum of three years and eight months and a maximum of five years and eight months is almost exclusively provided by the private sector, although licensed by MoEHE and subject to regulatory oversight. Despite a doubling in the number of pre-schools since 1995, the data suggests that between 1996/7 and 2006/7, pre-school participation declined from one in three to one in four. Moreover, because of the costs related to enrolling at privately-owned pre-schools, most children attending kindergarten come from high- or medium-income families.

## A crisis in learning

School drop-out and repetition rates improved steadily since 1994, with declines since mid-2006.

Learning outcomes have plummeted. In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education conducted standardised exams across the West Bank. Only 43% of fourth-graders passed in Math and 66.7% passed in Arabic; while only 45.8% of ninth-graders passed in Science. Also:

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- The 2009 “Tawjiji” national matriculation exam results reveal downward trends in both sciences and literature. West Bank results in literature dropped by 12.7% and Gaza results in science dropped by 9.6% compared with 2008.
- In 2008, only one in five out of 16,000 Gazan sixth-graders passed standardised tests in Math, Science, English and Arabic; along with about half of their peers in Nablus and Jenin.
- The USA Department of Education’s 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) showed that Palestinian 8<sup>th</sup> graders scored 133 and 96 points below the global average in mathematics and science; in 2003, their scores were 38 and 76 points below the global averages.

### UNICEF approach

Globally, UNICEF works with partners, teachers, communities and children to build child-friendly schools (CFS). The CFS approach deals systematically with quality issues and establishes standards for improvement of the following elements:

- Safe school buildings (location, design, construction, maintenance)
- Infrastructure and main facilities (water, sanitation, energy, playgrounds)
- Links between schools and their communities (school boards, parent-teacher associations)
- Training for teachers (child-centred pedagogy, reflective practitioner)
- Caring for children’s basic needs (school meals, health checks, deworming)
- Emphasis on learning through play for younger children (joyful learning)
- Focus on self-identity, negotiating skills and coping behaviours (life skills)
- Availability of learning resources and teaching aids (stimulating classrooms)
- Care and protection of learners (the school as a protective environment)
- Support for child participation (the school as a democratic institution)
- Appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour (curriculum relevance)
- Achievement of prescribed learning outcomes (school effectiveness).

### REACHING MARGINALIZED CHILDREN



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UNICEF Regional Goodwill Ambassador Mahmoud Kabil talks to Bedouin students in al Maleh, Jenin. Al Maleh is in Area C, which covers about 60% of the West Bank, is under full Israeli administrative and military control, and where construction, or expansion, including for schools, is heavily restricted. Students in this community must travel up to 12 miles every day to get to their classrooms, many of them on foot. Many school structures – including tents, tin shacks and crude cement buildings – fall far short of basic safety and hygiene standards.

Watch the video and read the story of Mahmoud Kabil’s visit at [www.unicef.org/infobycountry/oPt\\_51179.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/oPt_51179.html)

In oPt, UNICEF is working to support the Ministry of Education’s five-year plan, which includes targets to increase enrolment by three per cent and expand by 25 per cent the proportion of young children accessing early childhood care and development services. Major areas of work include:

- Promoting child-friendly schools: Since 2003, UNICEF has worked with MoEHE to institutionalise the CFS approach in 100 governmental schools in the West Bank and 50 in Gaza. The CFS concept has been officially adopted into the oPt curriculum, and a training package has been developed for teachers. In 2008, UNICEF and UNRWA piloted the programme in four UNRWA and six PA schools in the West Bank. An evaluation of the CFS programme is underway

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- Supporting child-friendly learning: To help stem further declines in learning outcomes in Math and Science, UNICEF developed interactive Math and Science teaching kits including measuring tools, science implements, brightly colored cones and triangles that encourage hands-on, active learning. More than 8,500 kits have been distributed across oPt, and hundreds of teachers trained in their use. The kits have been selected as a UNICEF best practice innovation, serving as a learning model for other UNICEF country offices.
- Expanding access to early childhood care and development opportunities: While pre-schooling is neither a criterion nor a prerequisite for enrolment in elementary education, it plays an essential role in improving children's readiness to start primary school on time, particularly children who are marginalized. UNICEF is working with MoEHE and Yale University to develop a policy framework and action plan to support MoEHE's goal of universal enrolment in pre-primary school by 2020.
- Preventing school drop-outs: UNICEF supports structured, extra-curricular remedial learning opportunities at 73 adolescent-friendly centres across Gaza and the West Bank. With partners Ma'an Development Centre and Tamer, the centres provide daily remedial support in Arabic, Math and English, along with computer literacy, life-skills based education, and a broad range of extra-curricular activities including drama, sports and art. Each of the centres provides remedial support to 1,000 adolescents.
- Improving water and sanitation facilities in schools: In Gaza, where only 5-10% of the water from the aquifer is fit for consumption, UNICEF is providing safe drinking water to 66 schools. In the West Bank, UNICEF is constructing or rehabilitating sanitation facilities at 23 schools.
- Capacity building: support, including training for teachers on child-friendly approaches, and work to support information management at central and district levels. As Education Cluster Lead, UNICEF also conducted three training sessions in Gaza and one in the West Bank on Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies. The training module was developed by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergency
- "Learning for enjoyment": UNICEF and partners supported remedial education and recreational activities in 60 schools targeting 6,000 children over the summer. The children were selected by teachers based on low achievement scores, and received 36 hours of instruction, along with 36 hours of recreational activities. UNICEF also supported partners in conducting creative writing and story telling sessions at thirteen community-based organizations for 360 children, and "open" recreational days at 66 kindergartens serving some 5,640 young children. Around 410 teachers and school supervisors received training on child-friendly teaching methods.
- Reducing violence in schools: Together with MoEHE, UNICEF has developed a draft zero-tolerance policy on violence in schools that will be piloted in 87 schools in Gaza and the West Bank over the coming months.

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### Basic indicators

Indicator	Data
Under-five mortality rate 2007 (per 1,000 live births)	27
Infant mortality rate 2006 (per 1,000 live births)	24
Life expectancy at birth, 2007	73
Annual number of births (thousands), 2007	145
Annual no. of under-5 deaths (thousands), 2007	4
1-year-old children immunized against TB, DPT, polio, measles, HepB and Hib	99
% under-fives with suspected pneumonia to appropriate health care provider, 2000-2007	65
Proportion of under 6 month-olds exclusively breastfed, 2000-2007	27
Proportion of under-fives moderately or severely stunted, 2000-2007	10
Primary school net attendance ratio, females, 2000 – 2007 (%)	92
Primary school net attendance ratio, males, 2000 – 2007 (%)	91
Secondary school gross enrolment ratio, females, 2005 – 2006 (%)	79.5*
Secondary school gross enrolment ratio, males, 2005 – 2006 (%)	69.8*
Number per 100 population (2006) of internet users	7
Maternal mortality ratio	No data
Total population (thousands), 2007	4,017
Total population (thousands) under 18, 2007	2,095
Total population (thousands) under 5, 2007	685
Total fertility rate, 2007	5.2
GDP per capita average annual growth rate (%), 1990-2007	-2.9
GNI per capita (US\$), 2007	1,230
ODA inflow in millions US\$, 2006	1,449
ODA inflow as a % of recipient GNI in 2006	33

*All data from the State of the World's Children 2009 unless otherwise cited.*

*\*Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2007*

New UNICEF photos and video are available to be used by UN agencies, partners, and international media outlets. To request photos, please contact: [photo@unicef.org](mailto:photo@unicef.org); to get videos, please visit: [thenewsmarket.com/unicef](http://thenewsmarket.com/unicef).

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