
Rubble removal urgently needed to restore basic services to Gazans

The 22 days of intense military operations in Gaza resulted in massive destruction to public as well as private buildings and housing units. An initial survey, conducted by UNDP estimates that over 14,000 homes, 68 government buildings and 31 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have been totally or partially damaged. As a result, UNDP estimates that 600,000 tons of concrete rubble will need to be removed.

"This is a top priority," said Jens Toyberg-Frandzen, UNDP Special Representative in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. "The rubble is mixed with poisonous harmful materials and may include unexploded ordnances. It needs to be urgently removed to protect the lives of Palestinians in Gaza and to facilitate immediate access to basic humanitarian and social services."

Rubble removal was included in the [UN Flash Appeal](#), launched on Monday. Once funding is secured, UNDP will clear rubble, demolish and clean-up sites of damaged buildings, and identify and remove unexploded ordnances. The project will also generate 200,000 workdays for unemployed Gazans.

The UN Flash Appeal outlines the needs arising from the recent fighting in Gaza and requests urgent funds to allow the UN and partners to restore basic social services and public utilities such as water, health, education, food and emergency repairs of critical infrastructure.

Out of US\$613 million requested in the Flash Appeal, [UNDP funding needs total \\$49.3 million](#), more than half of which is allocated for rubble removal. Other projects focus on reviving the agriculture sector and the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the water reservoirs in the Gaza Strip.

Looking beyond the emergency humanitarian assistance and towards rebuilding the lives of the 1.4 million people in Gaza, the UN, in cooperation with national and international partners, has also been conducting a comprehensive assessment of the damages and recovery needs in Gaza, following three weeks of conflict. UNDP, in its capacity as the facilitator of the UN and Partners Early Recovery Team, is coordinating the compilation and the analysis of all the data and information gathered.

"This assessment will set the basis for sustainable recovery, reconstruction and long-term development in Gaza," said Mr. Toyberg-Frandzen. "The scope of work is immense and we have a responsibility to help the people of Gaza get back on the path of sustainable human development."

Separate teams have been sent to the field to examine the damages and recovery needs of vital sectors of life in Gaza, including health, education, agriculture, infrastructure and environment. Despite the challenge presented by the humanitarian situation, surveys conducted by several UN agencies, NGOs and local authorities are being collated and corroborated by teams on the ground to ensure the accuracy of the assessment.

"Most of the data has been collected," said Mr. Toyberg-Frandzen. "The UN and Partners Early Recovery Team is now working closely with the Palestinian Authority to analyze the information." The assessment will feed into the Gaza Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan that will be presented by the Palestinian Authority at the Gaza donors' conference to be hosted in Cairo on March 2.

The most recent fighting has affected all aspects of lives and livelihood in the Gaza Strip. Over 1,300 people were killed and more than 5,300 injured, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health. Health facilities, schools, power, water and sanitation installations, and agricultural and economic production were destroyed or seriously damaged.

Gaza needs an immediate, multi-dimensional early recovery response focused on the restoration of access and movement, the reconstruction of basic services and infrastructure and the reduction of additional risks and vulnerabilities, as well as additional investments in livelihoods, shelter, governance systems, security and rule of law and environmental sustainability.

In order for UN agencies to meet the formidable challenges, essential items must be allowed into Gaza, including construction materials, pipes, electrical wires and transformers, in addition to other key equipment and spare parts. Removing Israeli restrictions on the movement of people and goods into Gaza will help rebuild the lives and livelihoods of the Palestinians living in the area.