



Gaza Crisis Update

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Gaza Crisis Update – UNICEF

BACKGROUND

UNICEF is focusing on three flashpoints in the Gaza Strip: Rafah, Khan Younis and most recently the Northern Gaza region due to a major military offensive launched on 28 September. Causes of the crisis in these flashpoints relate to military incursions (large and small scale), house demolitions, land leveling and severe restriction of movements due to internal closures. In addition three other areas – Al Mawasi, Siafa and Al Ma'Ani – are areas of key concern due to total closure and very limited access to health services and schools facilities.

Many Palestinian families, including these who were self-reliant before the Intifada, have now exhausted the means that enabled them to cope during the past four years. Three-quarters of the population in Gaza live under the poverty line. Thus aid dependency has been growing in parallel, undermining the population's self-esteem and sense of control over their lives. Aid dependency ratio in the Gaza Strip has risen from 1:6 to 1:18 from 1999 to 2004.

These negative trends are adding pressure on families to meet their basic needs and creating additional sources of distress, anxiety and sense of powerlessness on a population already heavily affected by constant violence and movement restrictions. For instance there are clear signs of psychosocial distress among children in Gaza, and children are increasingly exposed to violence in the home and in school. Sixty-one percent of parents in Gaza feel that they do not have the ability to meet the needs of their children in terms of care and protection.

With half of the 1.3 million residents under the age of 18 years and with three quarters of all households having at least one child in school, daily events in Gaza affect children in an immediate and significant manner. Child rights are not being realized on a daily basis - whether it is the right to a safe and protective environment, quality education, clean water or health.

For instance, frequent closures and curfews cause severe disruptions to education. About one third of children in 580 schools have had their education disrupted and 42% of students in Gaza are reported to have recorded lower school achievement.

In the most recent offensive in Jabalya, a residential area with one of the highest population densities in the world, a four-day crisis has led to more than 50 Palestinians being killed, at least 15 of which were children. Some 5000 families are under siege, unable to leave their homes. More than 200 people have been injured, and as many as 80 houses have been destroyed in the four days. When a house is demolished family members lose most belongings, including children losing their clothes, school materials and toys.

The events in Jabalya come in the wake of earlier incursions into Khan Younis and Rafah. In 2004 alone, an average 120 residential buildings every month – or 4 each day – have been destroyed. On average, 1,200 people each month are made homeless.



ISSUES

- Military incursions damage water distribution systems resulting in limited or no access to clean water. Poor hygiene and sanitary conditions are causing water born diseases, dehydration and infection.
- Restrictions on mobility of children and caregivers hinder access to primary health care facilities. Essential drugs are not being delivered to health facilities which become over-stretched.
- Pregnant women have reduced or no access to obstetric care and skilled attendants at birth causing life threatening complications for the mother and the newborn.
- Children and families lose their personal belongings such as clothes, toys and school materials due to house demolitions. Families have to relocate and seek shelter, requiring children to change school and lose friends.
- In flashpoints children are prevented from reaching schools and have to catch up with loss of school days. Many schools are exposed to life fire while children are in their classrooms. In addition many schools are damaged including water and sanitation facilities, classrooms, play and sports areas.
- Students in closed areas of Al-Mawasi, Siafa and Al-Ma'ani experience continuous difficulties to reach their schools and are exposed to dangerous situations on their way to the schools or have school days curtailed.
- Increased distress levels among children are prompting negative behavioral change and have a negative impact on family and school life. Ability to concentrate and learning potential is deteriorating.
- Clear signs of psychosocial distress among children who are increasingly exposed to violence in the home, in and on the way to school.
- Children are being exposed to unexploded ordnances and dangerous material creating a high risk of death and injury.

ACTION

- Distribution of basic family water kits, collapsible water tanks and generators to providing families with water containers to carry and store water as well as water purification tablets and soap.
- Distribution of emergency health kits to health facilities or mobile teams in conflict areas, containing drugs, medical supplies, basic medical equipment and sterilization items. One kit covers 30,000 beneficiaries for one month.
- Distribution of midwifery kits to health facilities who are not normally equipped to respond to emergency deliveries but have to do so because pregnant women in labour are prevented from reaching an appropriate facility. One midwifery kit allows to set up a delivery room and to manage 50 deliveries. The emergency obstetric kits allow to conduct 50 complicating deliveries, including obstetric surgeries
- Distribution of family kits with clothes, shoes, toys, school stationery to those made homeless.
- Distribution of a three sets of school materials for students, teachers and school administrations as well as recreational materials for after school activities.
- Psycho-social mobile teams are immediately dispatched to affected families to provide counseling sessions to children. Counseling sessions are subsequently continued in groups with children and their parents by trained professionals.
- UXO awareness campaign, with TV spots, awareness sessions in schools, dissemination of posters and leaflets, and coordination with law enforcement.

IMPACT

- Sufficient clean water and appropriate sanitation as well as hygiene material are available to children and families in the crisis locations.
- Basic health care needs are provided to children and their families in the worst affected areas. Injured children with no access to medical facilities have access to basic treatment.
- Pregnant women have access to safe delivery and emergency obstetric care thereby reducing child morbidity and maternal mortality.
- A sense of normalcy is injected to children's life by providing them with clothing, school and recreational material as well as toys.
- Schools have ability to resume normal education activities and are in a position to provide remedial education to children who have missed school days.
- Children are provided with psychosocial support and helped in healing the distress and shock.
- Children are not exposed to unexploded ordinances and dangerous materials thereby reducing the rate of death and injury.

OVERALL BUDGET:

The budget below is based on UNICEF's core commitments to children, taking into account assistance provided by other agencies and international NGOs such as UNRWA, WHO, WFP, UNDP, ICRC and others. The budget is part of the 2004 Consolidated Appeal and covers estimated needs to be met in Gaza between 28 September and 31 December 2004.

1) Health	
5 Emergency health kits and physical trauma kits	54,000
4 Midwifery kits, emergency obstetric kits, early newborn care	8,000
2) Water and Sanitation	
750 Family Water Kits and collapsible water tanks	118,000
3) Education	
154 school kits	36,000
1,400 teacher kits	18,000
1,225 Recreation Kits for students	50,000
School bags and stationary (9,000 students)	90,000
Educational toys (Early Childhood)	20,000
4) Shelter and relief items	
750 Family kits for families made homeless	80,000
5) Child Protection – Psycho-social care	80,000
6) UXO awareness	
Public Awareness campaign and school awareness sessions	15,000
Subtotal	569,000
UNICEF indirect programme support cost 12%	68,280
Grand Total	637,280

*) The actual recovery rate on individual contributions will be calculated in accordance with the Executive Board Decision 2003/9 of 5 June 2003.

Details of the Gaza emergency programme can be obtained from:

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