



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Executive Board

Hundred and ninetieth session

190 EX/39

PARIS, 13 August 2012
Original: English

Item 39 of the provisional agenda

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF GAZA: IMPLEMENTATION OF 189 EX/DECISION 20

SUMMARY

This document is presented in compliance with 189 EX/Decision 20. It summarizes progress UNESCO made since the 189th session of the Executive Board in providing assistance to the reconstruction and development of the Gaza Strip.

There are no financial or administrative implications. No decision is proposed.

1. This document complements document 190 EX/38 and presents an update on the UNESCO response to the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip since the 189th session of the Executive Board. It covers the period from January to July 2012. All activities were implemented through the Gaza Antenna Office, which is situated in the UNDP compound in Gaza City, and falls under the direct supervision of the UNESCO Ramallah Office.

EDUCATION

2. The programme of emergency support to the reconstruction of the education sector in Gaza is now operationally completed and was subjected to an external evaluation in January/February 2012. The evaluation characterized the interventions as relevant and appropriate to the emergency situation in Gaza, as they benefited from their insertion into a sector-wide perspective and catered for the needs of subsectors isolated from the main focus of attention, most notably secondary and higher education. They also proposed innovative ground in terms of linking education and protection concerns in a school/community based intervention anchored on the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, which led to the formulation of the conflict-disaster risk reduction for schools in Gaza. All these projects were effective in the achievement of their expected goals, and most importantly were conceived to link to the longer strategic perspective of building a resilient education system while providing ownership by the beneficiaries, from the schools to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

3. With the financial contributions from Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser of Qatar and the Islamic Development Bank, the following activities were implemented:

- (a) **Support to higher education.** The delivery and installation of material and equipment for the science faculties of two universities in Gaza experienced delays related to the ongoing blockade, but the project was virtually completed by the end of June 2012.
- (b) **Schools as safe spaces** (crisis-disaster risk reduction) covered 29 of the most vulnerable schools in Gaza with an integrated training and community development package combining education and protection elements. All partners are ready to continue working together to cover the remaining 50 most vulnerable schools.

4. Making schools safer is of crucial importance given the grave consequences on the lives and the wellbeing of both Palestinian and Israeli children. According to the information gathered by the Protection Cluster's Working Group on grave violations against children, of which UNESCO is a member, 26 children were reported injured during the period covered by this document (information available for January-February 2012). Four incidents of attacks on schools and six incidents of denial of access to education were also reported. In addition, UNESCO received data and information from the Israeli authorities on the harmful effects of continues exposure to missile attacks from Gaza on the condition of children in the south of Israel; damaging their development, emotional and psychological well-being, and scholastic abilities.

5. UNESCO continued its support to the INEE minimum standards community of practice established in Gaza as an outcome of the programme. Trainees from this programme took part in an Education Cluster-sponsored similar training in the West Bank and shared the Gaza experience. More information on this issue can be found in document 190 EX/38.

6. The steering committee of the UNESCO/Her Highness Office Partnership on Education in conflict-affected areas was held in Paris on 3 July 2012. The achievements of the five projects close to completed in Gaza were presented and UNESCO's actions were found relevant and effective, including high added value in terms of bridging the gap between humanitarian and development intervention. However, support for continued involvement is not yet secured.

CULTURE

7. Technical assistance for the conservation of the archaeological site of Saint Hilarion Monastery/Tell Umm Amer in Nuseirat, funded by the Government of Switzerland, experienced a five-month delay of activities when a team of international experts was denied entry to the Gaza Strip. This created an alarming situation on the site, especially during the winter period, when heavy rains affected the excavated area. The problem was solved in April 2012 and, after the reactivation of expert missions, activities on site have progressed well.

8. Within the MDG-F Joint Programme, the cooperation between UNESCO and UN Women produced significant outputs concerning the revival of quality handicraft in the Gaza Strip, focusing on jewelry and other traditional crafts.

COMMUNICATION and INFORMATION

9. The local celebration of the World Press Freedom Day was held in Gaza, where around 80 participants discussed the legal and ethical framework for journalism. Within this framework, supported by Canal France International, four Palestinian participants joined the main World Press Freedom Day commemoration held in Tunis.