

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION UPDATE

OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

18 JULY 2008

UNICEF'S EMERGENCY PROGRAMMES FOCUS ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, PROTECTION AND ADOLESCENTS

- At least 68 children killed in conflict with Israel since beginning of year
- Despite truce, ongoing fuel and electricity shortages impede basic services in Gaza
- Growing food insecurity in households, rising malnutrition among children
- Tightening restrictions on humanitarian access across West Bank



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

1. OVERVIEW

More children have died in the conflict with Israel in the first half of 2008 than during all of 2007.

Despite a ceasefire with Israel, Gaza's borders remain largely closed. Shortages of fuel and electricity translate into electricity cuts of 8 – 10 hours/day, disruptions in water distribution, sewage treatment, and to a lesser extent, health care.

Previously self-reliant families are increasingly food insecure, notably in Gaza. Across oPt, the share of spending on food over total household expenditure is as high as 64% in urban areas and 60% in rural areas¹. In Gaza, a UNICEF-supported assessment linked rising child malnutrition to insufficient meat and fruit intake and less household income².

In the West Bank, new procedures applied to the movement of UN agencies including searches of UN property, refusal to accept UN identification, and requiring UN Palestinian staff to walk across crossings pose significant challenges to humanitarian operations.

UNICEF's programmes focus on health, education, child protection and adolescent development, targeting eight districts in particular where the needs are greatest – Gaza City, North Gaza, Deir Al Balah and Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip, and Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah / El-Bireh and Hebron in the West Bank.

2. ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

The Ministry of Health (MoH) faces serious challenges in maintaining a full range of health services due to the closure of Gaza and access and movement restrictions in the West Bank. In Gaza, the European hospital suspended 50 per cent of elective surgeries in May since only a quarter of MoH fuel tanks capacity was filled for operating emergency generators. In the West Bank, access and movement restrictions and shortages in mobile outreach vehicles hamper health care delivery in isolated areas such as south Hebron. However, immunization and child nutrition services were maintained in the face of extraordinary financial and logistical challenges in past months.

Under-5 mortality rates are stagnating and vary between 28 and 32 per 1,000 live births; nutritional status is threatened by household poverty and poor quality foodstuffs. The UNICEF-Ard El Ensan rapid assessment in three Gaza districts showed that 2.5 per cent of the surveyed children were underweight and 10.3 per cent were stunted, with 3.4 per cent at risk of dying, based on mid upper arm circumference assessment.

The survey showed that 14.5 per cent of surveyed mothers breastfeed exclusively, 17.3 per cent of children received Vitamin A & D supplements frequently, while 16.6 per cent received iron supplementation. The average monthly income of the surveyed household sample was estimated at NIS 1,943.7 (US\$570), with 62.6 per cent stating that household income was insufficient to meet their food needs.

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Due to power shortages in Gaza, a quarter of the population receives only 4 – 6 hours of water every 4 days. None of the waste water treatment plants function normally, so around 77,000 m³ of raw or poorly treated sewage is pumped into the sea daily³. Some 600 tons of rubbish pile up on the street each day⁴.

¹ WFP/UNRWA/FAO rapid survey on food security, 2008

² UNICEF/Ard Al-Ensan rapid survey on child nutrition, 2008

³ UNICEF Gaza Office / OCHA Humanitarian Monitor, May 2008

⁴ Briefing to the Security Council on the Situation in the Middle East, 27 June 2008

The most severe drought in a decade has brought water consumption in the northern West Bank to one third of the 100-liter per capital per day minimal requirement. Average per capita consumption across the West Bank is only 66 liters, and this figure includes water for livestock, meaning even less water for personal use. Impact is most acute in villages either not connected or only partially connected to water networks⁵.

In deeply impoverished communities with poor sanitary conditions (Jordan Valley, Tubas, Tulkarem, East Bethlehem and South Hebron) children face the risk of water-borne infections such as trachoma, conjunctivitis, dysentery, gastro-enteritis, ascariasis and hookworm. Unsafe drinking water also raises risks of diarrhea, hepatitis A, typhoid fever, paratyphoid and gastro-enteritis.

EDUCATION

Restrictions on access and movements challenge students' and teachers' ability to reach schools. With standards plummeting in Math and Arabic, education quality remains a major challenge. Schools lack basic materials, and few teachers have the required skills to create child-friendly learning environments.

The violence that surrounds children is also seeping into school yards and classrooms. Incidents affecting schools and pupils increased from 2 in April to 11 in May. Five involved the Israeli military, four involved Israeli settlers and two were by unknown assailants. One student was killed and at least 52 injured⁶.

During the summer holidays, many activities were cancelled due to the non-availability of funds. Outside classrooms, students have few opportunities for sports and recreation, especially as costs for extra-curricular activities are borne by parents.

CHILD PROTECTION

The combination of the conflict and internal violence is expected to worsen children's psychosocial well-being and in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, requests for assistance from UNICEF-supported psychosocial teams continue to increase. As of 30 June, 68 children had been killed in direct conflict with the Israeli military this year, including 61 in Gaza. This is more than the total child death toll in all of 2007⁷.

Some 322 Palestinian children including five girls remained in Israeli prisons and detention facilities as of end June. Among them, 12, including one girl, were being held in administrative detention (without charges or trial)⁸.

ADOLESCENTS

The conflict has had a particularly damaging impact on adolescents, who comprise a large, vulnerable and volatile group. Those most directly exposed to violence have the greatest need for productive learning and recreational opportunities. Adolescents, who are two or three levels below their normal grade often end up dropping out of school and joining the unskilled labour market. Worsening socio-economic conditions point to the likelihood that the numbers of adolescents vulnerable to abuse, violence, and exploitation will increase. Almost all children in Israeli detention facilities are between 15 and 17 years old⁹.

Most adolescents have no access to learning or recreational programs outside schools, and spend the majority of their time at home. There are around 500 youth clubs in the West Bank and Gaza, but most lack funding, and are poorly managed and equipped. Programs offered by these youth clubs are usually limited to simple sporting activities.

⁵ B'tselem Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights, 1 July 2008

⁶ OCHA Humanitarian Monitor 2008 / 1612 Working Group

⁷ Defense for Children International – Palestine

⁸ Defense for Children International – Palestine

⁹ Defense for Children International – Palestine

3. UNICEF ACTION

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

UNICEF supported MoH, UNRWA and NGOs to maintain health service delivery through:

- Procuring vaccines and related supplies for 117,000 children (under-five) and more than 100,000 women of child bearing age;
- Pre-positioning medical supplies with MoH and PRCS including 452 first aid kits, 13 emergency health kits, 10 midwifery kits, 16 obstetric surgical kits and 60 resuscitation kits;
- Supplying MOH, UNRWA and NGOs with the required supplies of Vitamin A and D for children aged 0-12 months and salt-testing kits; and
- Carrying out a rapid nutrition survey in three Gaza districts;
- Ongoing activities within the health sector include training on newborn care; strengthening health information management systems; technical support to MoH on EPI, IMCI and nutrition; training and monitoring on micronutrients; and behavioural change communication related to fortified food.

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

UNICEF worked with the Palestinian Water Authority and the Coastal Municipal Water Utility (CMWU) to strengthen and improve water and sanitation systems, especially in schools and health centres. Support this year has included:

- Cleaning and restoring nine sewage pump stations damaged as a result of incursions in Gaza;
- Constructing two water wells in disadvantaged communities in the middle and south of Gaza, serving about 40,000 people;
- Tankering water to 120 schools, reaching 220,000 students and teachers;
- Constructing 10 sanitary units at Farabi Girls Primary School in Gaza, for 1,700 poor students.
- Pre-positioning supplies including water pumps, spare parts and fuel needed to run the water pumps;
- Delivering 6 mobile fuel tanks, 60 bicycles, and protective clothing for CMWU staff in Gaza; and
- Developing a contingency WES plan for the West Bank in case of intensified conflict.
- UNICEF is the sector lead in WES; other activities include coordination workshops; support to CMWU in GIS mapping on assets, partners and interventions; awareness-raising on personal hygiene and environmental sanitation in schools and selected vulnerable communities.

EDUCATION

UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and NGOs to improve education quality and student performance. Support this year includes:

- For one month during the summer, providing remedial classes in Math and Arabic and recreational activities (sports, music, art and drama) for 3,400 low-performing students in 90 schools (60 in the West Bank and 30 in Gaza);
- Activating 50 libraries to promote reading. Support included training facilitators and animators on story telling, and supplies such as stationary and books;
- Other programmes in the sector include strengthening the national education management information system by producing 68,688 student profiles covering first graders; and developing, printing and distributing 30,000 copies of an early childhood development booklet to raise awareness among early childhood teachers and caregivers.

CHILD PROTECTION

UNICEF supports Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and NGO partners in activities to reduce stress; mitigate the impact of violence; and strengthen coping mechanisms of children and caregivers. Support this year includes:

- Psychosocial assistance for 17,950 children and adolescents; and in-depth counseling for 3,719 children in distress;
- Fun days to relieve stress and encourage interaction for 24,063;
- Emergency home and hospital visits following violent events benefiting 2,987 children;
- Socio-legal assistance to more than 1,960 children provided through three centres, not including 480 children who received advice through the centre's toll-free line;
- UNICEF is the sector lead in psychosocial support. Ongoing activities within the sector include training for caregivers on children in distress; reporting and advocacy within the 1612 working group on children in conflict; and support to MoSA in establishing a national child care and protection protocol towards building a child protection system.

ADOLESCENTS

UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) and NGO partners to improve secondary school retention; reduce violence among adolescents; increase the participation of adolescents in planning; and improve their knowledge on healthy lifestyles. This year UNICEF has supported:

- 68 adolescent friendly learning spaces with literacy and numeracy activities to improve secondary school retention, along with recreational activities such as sports, music and drama, that reach approximately 44,000 adolescents in the West Bank and Gaza;
- Equipping these adolescent-friendly spaces with sports and musical instruments to implement activities throughout the year;
- Life skills-based education (communication and leadership skills, awareness on HIV/AIDS and protection from abuse and exploitation) for 11,000 adolescents; and
- Training for 350 adolescents on action research covering topics that impact their lives – violence, poverty, environmental issues, and participation in their communities.

4. APPEAL REQUIREMENTS AND RECEIPTS

UNICEF's CAP was budgeted at US\$ 20.5 million based on the needs assessment framework completed in November 2007. As of 14 July, UNICEF had received US\$7.9 million in commitments/disbursements, or around 38% of the appeal target. UNICEF oPt expresses its deep gratitude to those donors that have already provided timely funding.

Table 1: Funding received against appeal (US\$)

Sector	Appeal target	Funded	% Funded
Health & nutrition	7,508,650	2,314,323.60	31%
Water, sanitation and hygiene	2,792,800	1,481,655.60	53 %
Education	5,160,000	1,905,499.60	37%
Child protection	2,973,530	1,331,776.60	45%
Adolescents	2,144,000	906,677.60	42%
TOTAL	20,578,980	7,939,933	38%

Details of the occupied Palestinian Territories' emergency programme can be obtained from:

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