

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY DONOR UPDATE

4 JUNE 2007

UNICEF REQUESTS US\$ 25.8 MILLION TO MEET IMMEDIATE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN

- Extremely volatile security context; intra-Palestinian fighting claiming dozens of lives.
- Ongoing public sector strikes hurting critical services including immunization and education.
- 10,000 children continue to die each year, mostly from preventable diseases and poor care for newborns.
- Some 380 children remain in detention facilities.



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

Midway into 2007, the outlook for Palestinian children is bleak. Security conditions in Gaza are at an all-time low. In the third and most intense round of factional fighting which began on 13 May, at least 37 Palestinians were killed and 114 injured. At least 20 children have died in the internal fighting since 1 Jan 2007, far more than the 11 children killed due to the conflict with Israel.

At this writing, families remained blockaded in their homes as heavily armed militants faced off on barricaded streets; high-rise apartment buildings had been set on fire and media offices shot at. Uncollected garbage was piling up on streets; and many shops and supermarkets remained closed. In past weeks, schools and internet cafes have come under attack by militants, placing children at the very heart of the violence.

Across the West Bank, there has been a sharp increase in the number of Israeli search and detention campaigns. The construction of the separation barrier, the growth of illegal settlements and outposts, and ever tighter restrictions to the movement of people and goods are crushing socio-economic life.

The Palestinian Authority itself is struggling to survive under financial sanctions imposed upon its Hamas-led government more than a year ago by Israel, the United States, the European Union and Canada. This has impacted negatively on PA ability to deliver social services in any meaningful way. Unpaid health and education workers have resumed their strikes, shutting down health clinics and schools. In May, immunization services and classes were suspended across much of the West Bank. Supplies of essential drugs remain at critical levels, while schools and youth centres lack the most basic learning and recreational materials, especially in remote areas.

Across oPt, 66% of households now fall below the poverty threshold; in Gaza, 8 out of 10 families cannot meet their daily food needs without help.

UNICEF support is needed more than ever to help prevent a further deterioration in children's well-being. UNICEF bases its programmes on our Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies, working in our areas of expertise and comparative advantage. UNICEF will scale up projects where there is need, focusing mostly in education, health, nutrition, child protection, adolescent development, water and sanitation.

2. ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

Health and Nutrition

The strike by unpaid health workers is ongoing, particularly in the West Bank. WHO's April 2007 surveillance report chronicled a notable reduction in immunization and drug dispensation services. In May, immunization services had come to a complete halt in the majority of districts surveyed in the West Bank.

Budgetary shortfalls at the Ministry of Health (MoH) have left supplies of essential drugs and disposables at critical levels. As of end-April, 81 essential drugs and consumables were out of stock in the West Bank, and 48 in Gaza.

Nutritional status is threatened by household poverty and poor quality foodstuffs. The 2006 Palestinian Family Health Survey reports that 10 out 100 children under five are stunted, with proportions highest in Gaza, reaching almost 30% in North Gaza. More than 70% of nine-month old children in Gaza are anemic.

Water and sanitation

On 27 March, the banks of an overburdened wastewater treatment plant in Northern Gaza collapsed, killing five people including two children and displacing more than 2,000 residents. The risk of flooding remains. Construction of a new plant is now two years behind schedule due to shelling in 2006.

In Gaza, people live with an average of 81 liters of water a day, while West Bankers survive on just 58 liters (as compared with the 150 liters per day the WHO says is needed to drink, cook, clean and bathe). Clean water is hard to obtain in Gaza because salinity and sewage have seeped into the coastal aquifer.

Schools and clinics have inadequate and insufficient water storage systems and sanitary facilities, and poorly maintained connections to networks. In impoverished communities with poor sanitary conditions, children face

the risk of water-borne infections such as trachoma, conjunctivitis, dysentery and gastro-enteritis, ascariasis and hookworm. Lack of clean drinking water raises the threat of diseases such as diarrhea, hepatitis A, typhoid fever, paratyphoid and gastro-enteritis.

Education

In April, 885 schools in the West Bank and 211 schools in Gaza recorded at least one day of disruption due to the strike. The irregularity that has come to characterize children's schooling will certainly influence their academic attendance and performance. Education quality is suffering.

May is a pivotal month for 12th grade students who are preparing for their Tawjihi (college entrance exam), which is scheduled for the beginning of June. There are rising concerns at MoEHE and among parents that the strike will disrupt the exam.

Palestinian National Authority schools are under heavy financial constraints. District Educational Directorates and schools lack resources and are unable to provide for teacher training opportunities.

Restrictions on access and movement continue to challenge students' and teachers' ability to reach schools; violence has become increasingly an issue of concern in school yards and classrooms; and beyond school hours, students have few opportunities for sports and recreation, especially as costs for extra-curricular activities are borne by parents.

Child protection

At end-April, 20 children had died due to intra-Palestinian fighting, compared with 11 killed due to the conflict with Israel. Schools and recreational centres in Gaza have also come under direct attack from Palestinian armed factions. On 7 May, an UNRWA school was shot at, killing one person and injuring seven, including a child. On 21 April, explosive devices were detonated at the American International School. Internet cafes have also been hit.

In April, seven children were injured by UXO and IED while handling firearms and a 4-year old shot and injured himself in the abdomen while playing with a gun. Twenty-one children were injured by rubber coated metal bullets during stone throwing confrontations against the IDF.

Numerous episodes of settler violence were reported. In Twani, near Hebron for example, two girls and one boy between 10 and 12 years old were beaten by a group of settlers on way to their school. This happened despite the presence of IDF and police.

In May, a Ramallah couple was arrested for selling their two daughters, aged 12 and 13, to young men. The parents of the young men had agreed to the transaction. The men have been charged with raping minors.

In March, 13 students from al Arrub Refugee Camp in Hebron were arrested on their way to school, and two students were detained for two days. According to Defense for Children International, 381 Palestinian children were being held in Israeli detention as of end April 2007.

Adolescents

The conflict has had a particularly damaging impact on adolescents, who comprise a large, vulnerable and volatile group. With precious few opportunities open to them for positive, productive activity, many are often caught in the direct line of hostilities. Of the 124 children killed last year in the conflict with Israel, 86 were among 13-17 year olds. Adolescents also represent the overwhelming proportion of children in detention.

Most adolescents have no access to learning or recreational programs outside schools, and spend the majority of their time at home. There are around 300 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.

Adolescents who are two or three levels below their normal grade often end up dropping out of school and joining the unskilled labour market. Several UNICEF counterparts say this plays a role in motivating youth to join militant factions. Worsening socio-economic conditions point to the likelihood that the numbers of adolescents vulnerable to abuse, violence, and exploitation will increase.

3. UNICEF ACTION

Health and Nutrition

Essential drugs and disposables worth USD 3 million have been delivered to over 400 primary health care (PHC) facilities and neonatal wards of 17 hospitals. Further supplies to the tune of USD 5 million are urgently required. Two refrigerated trucks for vaccines will be delivered in two weeks time.

With the vaccine requirement already secured for 2007, UNICEF must now commence procurement for 2008. A small portion of DPT-HIB requirement has been ordered, but the balance of all antigens will be procured pending funding. UNICEF has also ordered essential micronutrients (iron, vitamin A / D) for children aged 0-12 months.

UNICEF must continue to assist MoH in further upgrading neonatal units in hospitals with equipment and training in order to significantly improve neonatal care practices to prevent newborn deaths and sickness.

Training for doctors, nurses and village health workers on growth monitoring and surveillance has been suspended due to strikes. A situation analysis on services available for disabled children and their families is underway.

Water and sanitation

Following the Um al Nasser floods caused by the collapse of the waste water treatment plant in Beit Lahia, Gaza, UNICEF coordinated the WES response and provided the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) with financial and technical support to reinforce the embankments of the existing wastewater lagoon and pump the water surplus into safer, newly dug emergency ponds.

Since January, UNICEF has supplied all 343 primary and secondary schools and 30 clinics and two hospitals in Gaza with potable water, with needs identified at 23 additional clinics.

UNICEF has also supported improvements in either water or sanitation facilities at more than 70 schools and clinics. Two wells were completed in Gaza city while work continues Khan Younis (1) and Nuseirat (2) wells, which will serve 22,000 people. Work is ongoing to rehabilitate/construct wells in some 40 primary schools in the West Bank and Gaza. Sanitary facilities at 10 additional schools and 10 clinics also require extensive rehabilitation / reconstruction.

Five water networks have been rehabilitated by UNICEF and the Palestinian Hydrology Group and are about to be handed over to Khan Younis and Rafah municipalities. UNICEF and partners will rehabilitate / construct 14 water networks, 15 wells and boreholes, and install chlorination systems to provide safe drinking water to 1.4 million individuals in areas not reached by water networks.

Ten filling points were installed in Khan Younis while 400 domestic water tanks were distributed to families throughout the Gaza Strip. CMWU stores were replenished with spare parts for maintenance in emergencies.

Education

UNICEF distributed uniforms and school supplies to 550 children who lost all their belongings in the flooding caused by the collapse of the waste water treatment plant in northern Gaza.

UNICEF has targeted some 800 schools with child-friendly teaching and learning materials, including interactive math and science kits, emergency schools supplies, and a range of recreational material. Orders for 50,000 school bags, 800 math and science kits, and 50,000 remedial worksheet folders have been placed for the school year beginning in September.

Over the 2007 summer, 1,000 teachers are expected to begin training on how to use the UNICEF-supported remedial worksheets that have been so useful in enabling children to catch up with their studies in the face of closures and other restrictions to movement. Teachers will also be oriented in using the materials included in UNICEF's recreation kits, as well as in psychosocial counseling in emergency situations.

Child protection

Since January 2007, 5,600 children and adolescents have participated in psychosocial activities aimed at reinforcing their capacity to protect themselves and to cope with violence. Some 840 children in distress

received in-depth counseling, and almost 10,000 children participated in fun days intended to help them relieve some stress and interact with their peers. In parallel, some 7,897 caregivers have received training on how to better support children in distress and to promote a harmonious family environment, as well as on how to deal with their own stress, and emergency home and hospital visits have taken place following violent events.

These activities are implemented by the 12 psychosocial emergency teams operating in oPt (seven in the West Bank and five in Gaza, covering 12 out of 15 districts). UNICEF requires funding beyond May to continue these activities without interruption, as well as to set up two additional teams.

Five centres in Gaza city, Deir El-Balah, Khan Yunis, Hebron and Bethlehem provide psychological, social and legal assistance to victims of all types of violence, as does a toll-free counseling line. Since the beginning of the year, the centres have provided support to 1,168 children and the toll free line has received 90 calls. Another 2 should be opened shortly, again pending additional funding.

During this reporting period, mine risk education in the form of radio broadcasts and MRE sessions reached an estimated 22,763 children and 65,000 adults.

Adolescents

Since January, after-school learning and recreational programmes have been conducted daily in four adolescent-friendly spaces that have been equipped with computers, library books, sports and music equipment in Jenin and Jabalya refugee camps, Tulkarem City and Rafah. These programmes – situated in some of the most conflict-affected areas in oPt – are conducted by 64 trained facilitators and include language and math classes for low achievers and drop outs; as well as sports, music, drama, computer training and life skills based education. Around 1,280 adolescents participate each month.

Since March, daily sessions in language, math and life skills based education have been offered to around 640 adolescents monthly in 14 additional adolescent-friendly learning spaces. These sessions are facilitated by 84 trained facilitators. Forty additional adolescent-friendly spaces will be established in youth clubs throughout West Bank and Gaza Strip in the coming months to reach a much larger number of adolescents.

4. APPEAL REQUIREMENTS AND RECEIPTS

UNICEF's CAP is budgeted at USD 25.8 million, based on the needs assessment framework completed in November 2006. The breakdown is as follows:

TABLE 1: 2007 APPEAL REQUIREMENTS AND FUNDING BY SECTOR (as of 24 May 2007)				
Sector	Target (US\$)	Funded (US\$)	% Funded	Unfunded (US\$)
Health and nutrition	8,631,000	1,841,881	21%	6,789,119
Water and sanitation	4,345,100	1,483,075	34%	2,862,025
Education	6,337,300	2,372,175	37%	3,965,125
Adolescents	3,158,640	1,188,862	38%	1,969,778
Child protection	3,366,815	1,290,439	38%	2,076,376
Total*	25,838,855	8,176,432	32%	17,662,423

* The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7%). The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF Executive Board Decision 2006/7 dated 9 June 2006.

Table 2: FUNDS RECEIVED FOR 2007 APPEAL BY DONOR		
(as of 29 May 2007)		
Donor	Contribution (US\$)	Sector
Government of Sweden	2,857,200	unearmarked
Government of the Netherlands	1,852,000	Unearmarked
Government of Spain*	835,252	Adolescents
Government of Norway	822,350	Unearmarked
Government of Finland	819,672	Unearmarked
European Commission (ECHO)	606,665	Water and sanitation
CERF	201,588	Protection
United States Fund for UNICEF	77,302	Unearmarked
United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF*	58,594	Unearmarked
Government of Austria	45,809	Protection
Total**	8,176,432	

* received end 2006 for 2007

**The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7%. The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF Executive Board Decision 2006/7 dated 9 June 2006.

UNICEF expresses its gratitude to the Governments of Sweden, the Netherlands, Spain, Norway, Finland and Austria, along with the European Commission, CERF, the UK Committee for UNICEF and the US Fund for UNICEF, whose quick funding is enabling UNICEF to carry out critically needed work. Further funding is urgently required to ensure that UNICEF can continue to support basic, life-saving humanitarian interventions – particularly in terms of paediatric drugs, safe water and sanitation, emergency education materials, psychosocial support, and adolescent care.

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

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