



FACT SHEET:

Children of the Gaza Crisis

9 February 2009

Access

The humanitarian community requires immediate, full and free access to children and their families in the Gaza Strip in order to respond to the current crisis.

- UNRWA has suspended all imports of aid into the Gaza Strip following two incidents of confiscation of aid by Hamas authorities. On 3 February police personnel confiscated over 3,500 blankets and 406 food parcels in Gaza, destined for some 500 families in the area, and on 5 February two hundred metric tons of rice and one hundred metric tons of flour were taken away in Ministry of Social Affairs trucks. Some 900,000 Gazans, including around 504,000 children, are dependent on UNRWA food aid. ([UNRWA](#))
- As of the morning of 28 January, approximately 30 international NGO staff members were in Gaza, along with approximately 22 UN international staff members. Currently, there are outstanding requests for over 200 people to enter Gaza and this number is growing by the day. ([OCHA](#))
- Only a very restricted list of items is being allowed in. For example, paper and supplies for printing textbooks remain outstanding. ([UNRWA](#))
- Since the ceasefire, the average number of trucks to enter Gaza per day has been 80.5 through Kerem Shalom crossing ([OCHA](#)). These shipments do not begin to meet the huge humanitarian needs in Gaza, and is far below the capacity for import – in 2005, an average of 305 trucks entered the Gaza Strip from Israel per day ([AMA](#)).
- From 19-22 January, the Karni conveyor belt was opened, allowing of 173 truckloads of wheat grain into Gaza - less than one third of the quantities for July 2008. ([OCHA](#))

Protection

Children have the right to be protected from violence, neglect, exploitation and abuse in times of conflict and in recovery. Displaced children are particularly vulnerable protection risks because of the highly insecure, unstable and stressful environment in which they are forced to live. There is also a continued and serious threat to children from unexploded ordinance.

- Two children from Gaza City were killed by unexploded ordinance. Children also continue to be injured by Israeli air strikes on Gaza. ([OCHA](#))
- Even before the military operation, an estimated 10 percent of the population had moderate or severe impairments. It is estimated that up to half of those that have been injured, including up to 430 children, may suffer life-long impairment, exacerbated by the inability of rehabilitation workers to provide early intervention. ([OCHA](#))
- As of 2 February, three non-school UNRWA shelters remain open in Jabalia, Beach

Camp and Deir Al Balah, hosting 388 displaced people, including around 217 children. ([OCHA](#))

- In a telephone survey of 605 Gazans conducted just after the ceasefire was declared, Near East Consulting found that 37% of Gaza's population, more than 500,000 people including 280,000 children, were displaced at some time during the hostilities. ([NEC](#))
- A preliminary assessment carried out between 22 and 25 January indicates that, in 45 surveyed non-refugee localities in Gaza, 71,657 people, including around 40,128 children, were staying with host families. Most Gazans who have been displaced are currently staying with host families, which are overstretched and face shortages of food, non-food items (mattresses, blankets) and water and electricity. ([OCHA](#))
- In 48 of 61 localities which have reported results, the survey found that about 22.6 percent of housing units were damaged or destroyed. Most of the damage has been reported in rural areas which have higher non-refugee populations, meaning the non-refugee population has been disproportionately affected by the damage to housing ([OCHA](#))
- Loss of care and protection of parents or primary caregivers, disruptions to daily life including school and play activities, and loss of adequate nutrition can mean that children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to psychosocial distress. WHO estimates that 25,000 to 50,000 people – including some 14,000 to 28,000 children - will need some form of psychological intervention for longer-term effects. ([WHO](#))
- About 96% of Gaza residents feel depressed and disheartened ([NEC](#)). This, as well as other factors including displacement and increased poverty, could increase the risk of exposure of children to domestic and sexual violence. In the past, surveys indicated that around one in two children in the occupied Palestinian territories were exposed to violence in the home, and 10 percent of women were exposed to sexual violence. ([PCBS](#))

Food, Nutrition and Health

Quality of food and nutrition, as well as healthcare, have been clearly demonstrated to have an impact on the health of the people both in their adult and early life, including life expectancy, infant and child mortality rates and risk of developing chronic diseases. Poor social circumstances are associated with chronic malnutrition in mothers and children and with infections - especially during pregnancy and infancy - and can threaten the child's survival and his or her physical and intellectual development.

- Together, WFP and UNRWA have expanded their food distributions to cover an additional 255,000 people including 142,800 children. This brings the total number of people in Gaza dependent on food aid from these two organizations to 1,265,000 people including 708,400 children. ([OCHA](#))
- The risk of outbreaks of waterborne and foodborne diseases is currently high and will increase if water, sanitation and food control services are not fully restored. ([WHO](#))
- Shops and markets continue to offer limited food supplies at prices which have doubled or tripled since before 27 December. This makes food extremely difficult to obtain due to the shortage of currency. ([OCHA](#))
- UNICEF estimates that approximately 8,000 children may be acutely malnourished in Gaza. Ard El Esan are currently running a nutrition program for acutely and chronically malnourished children. ([UNICEF](#))

- The food and nutrition cluster has drafted a statement on infant and young child feeding. The cluster members are concerned about the increased free donations of breast milk substitutes in Gaza ([OCHA](#)). Before the conflict, the exclusive breastfeeding rate in Gaza was only 26.6 percent. ([PCBS](#))

Water, Sanitation and Electricity

Basic services are essential to the health and wellbeing of children. Without the complete restoration of basic services in Gaza, children will remain at risk of disease and psychosocial, educational and livelihood recovery will be significantly impaired.

- According to the CMWU, 50,000 people, including around 28,000 children, currently are not receiving any running water. And additional 150,000 – 200,000 people, including around 84,000 – 112,000 children, receive water every 5 or 6 days ([OCHA](#)). The remainder of the population of the Gaza Strip receives running water for a few hours every second or third day ([OCHA](#)).
- It is estimated that 80 percent of the water supply in the territory is be unsafe for drinking. ([WHO](#))
- OCHA reports that solid waste is accumulating in most areas affected by the hostilities. ([OCHA](#))

Education

All children have the right to education. Large-scale damages to schools, which have forced some schools to run triple shifts, compound the strain for Gaza's already struggling education system, which has been operating under severe shortages of teachers, electricity, supplies and classrooms for some time. It will be essential to restore normal schooling as soon as possible, making sure that the most vulnerable children have access.

- UNDP has assessed 170 government and private schools. Ten schools are severely damaged, and 160 were partially damaged. An additional 8 kindergartens were severely damaged and 60 were partially damaged. ([OCHA](#))
- In a recent assessment of the material needs of non-refugee displaced people and host families, children's clothes and stationary items were both listed as priority items and are both essential for children to return to school. (OCHA)
- On 24 January, Gaza's government and UNRWA schools opened with reported student attendance rates of 80 percent and 89 percent respectively. ([OCHA](#))

Livelihoods

Ensuring that families have sufficient livelihoods is essential for the survival and development of children.

- According to WFP, between 35-60 percent of the agriculture industry has been damaged by the Israeli military operation. FAO estimates that 13,000 families who depend directly on farming, herding and fishing have suffered significant damage to their livelihoods. ([OCHA](#))
- Poverty in January 2009 has increased to reach 67 percent in the aftermath of the Israeli attacks, as opposed to 57 percent in December 2008. The highest levels of poverty were observed in the North Gaza and Gaza governorates. ([NEC](#))
- The proportion of the unemployed in January 2009 increased to 36 percent, as opposed to 28 percent in December 2008. ([NEC](#))

General Gaza Statistics

- The total population of Gaza is 1,417,000. ([PCBS](#))
- The total number of children in Gaza is approximately 793,520, or 56% of the population. ([PCBS](#))
- There are a total of 1,048,125 refugees in Gaza, or 74% of the total population. Among them, approximately 586,950 are children. ([UNRWA](#))

For more information, please contact:

Kate Conradt – Washington DC, **GMT -5 hours**

Director, Media and Communications

kconradt@savechildren.org

Office: (972) (2) 297-3632/3/4

Mobile: (972) (054) 313-4229

Sarah Tyler – London, **GMT**

Alliance Media and Communications

sarah.tyler@save-children-alliance.org

Cell number: +447958337624