



Press Release

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Save the Children Begins Large-scale Relief Effort for Children in Gaza Following Ceasefire

Baby Kits and Hygiene Kits Arrived and Distributed in Gaza Today

JERUSALEM (Jan. 18, 2009) —Save the Children is moving quickly to move aid into Gaza and swiftly deliver it to children and families in need, following the announcement of a ceasefire by all parties today. A truckload of 100 baby kits, 150 hygiene kits and more than 1,400 packages of diapers prepared by Save the Children was transported this morning into Gaza, where staff and local partners began delivering the items to families at UNRWA shelters in Beit Lahia and Jabalia.

Save the Children welcomes the ceasefire by all parties and hopes it will be sustained, paving the way for a durable peace that will benefit all children both within Gaza and Israel. The agency also calls for sustained, unhindered humanitarian access to humanitarian agencies to reach very vulnerable Gazan families with life-saving relief.

“Save the Children welcomes the immediate access for humanitarian agencies into Gaza following the ceasefire, which allowed us to quickly move much-needed relief items into Gaza,” said Annie Foster, Save the Children's team leader for the Gaza emergency response. The situation is dire. Children and their families have been without basic services and supplies for nearly a month. Our staff delivering supplies at one shelter today told us people broke out into applause when diapers for infants and toddlers were delivered.”

Save the Children Reaches More than 25,000 Children and Families with Aid

Since the conflict began on December 27th, the global humanitarian agency has reached more than 25,000 people, half of them children, with food packages in north and south Gaza. An additional 4,000 people were reached today in Jabalia, Beit Lahia and East Gaza City with food parcels, packages of diapers, baby kits (containing items such as blankets, baby clothing, diaper rash cream and diapers) and hygiene kits (containing items such as hand soap, dish soap and toilet paper).

Over the next few days, Save the Children expects to deliver plastic carpets to act as a barrier between mattresses and the cold ground, bottled water, clothing kits and food packages to families at shelters. In addition, Save the Children is preparing hygiene and baby kits to be transported and distributed into Gaza.

"Save the Children is scaling up to be able to broaden our response in Gaza," said Annie Foster. "Over 3,000 women have delivered newborns, often with little support, and without basic supplies to meet their babies' specific needs. In addition, there has been no support for children suffering from the stress of what has been happening around them.."

In preparation for an expanded response, Save the Children submitted the names of five key emergency staff members to the UN for its priority staff list to enter the area as soon as humanitarian agencies and additional personnel are permitted to enter the conflict zone, and is renewing its global appeal for \$10 million to be able to scale-up its relief efforts.

Helping Children Recover and Return to Normalcy

"Our immediate focus is on meeting the life-saving needs of children and their families. But, much more must be done to address the child-protection crisis that has developed as a result of more than three weeks of fighting," added Foster.

Save the Children will print child-protection leaflets early next week for distribution with its other supplies. The leaflets will feature help lines for children to call, with pictures on how to identify unexploded ordnance and other dangers, and advice for parents on how to console their children if they are suffering from signs of stress. The organization also is packaging safe play kits for quick distribution to Gazan children, which will support their coping mechanisms and allow a return to normalcy.

"The best way to deal with emotional distress is to get children back into a routine — that is, to sleep the night through, play with their friends, go to school and return to their family routine," said Foster. "Our initial response will focus on establishing areas where children have the space to be children."

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