



Press Release

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Save the Children Ready to Begin Large-Scale Relief Effort for Children in Gaza

JERUSALEM (January 16, 2009) — With the Gaza conflict now entering its fourth week, Save the Children is warning that the humanitarian crisis for displaced children and families is deepening, and the organization is calling for full access to the area.

The agency, which has been delivering lifesaving food aid in Gaza despite the violence, is purchasing additional supplies and has its expert emergencies staff in Jerusalem prepared to enter the area as soon as humanitarian agencies and additional personnel are permitted to enter the conflict zone.

Throughout the three-week conflict, the agency has provided large food parcels to more than 21,000 people, half of them children. Its efforts to reach needy families, however, have been hampered by an increasingly dangerous operating environment that threatens the safety of staff and the people they are trying to serve.

Save the Children has increased procurement of crucial baby and household supplies for families, submitted the names of five key staff members to the UN for its priority staff list to cross into Gaza, and is renewing its appeal for \$10 million to be able to scale up its relief efforts.

In the eventuality that crossings into Gaza will open for a large-scale delivery of aid, Save the Children is preparing 2,220 hygiene kits and 1,150 baby hygiene kits, and has delivered hundreds of kits to UNWRA in the hopes that it may speed delivery into Gaza.

“Save the Children is scaling up to be able to go into Gaza as soon as crossings open, and we are allowed to enter. The situation is dire, and we will need to move as quickly as possible to reach families in need,” said Annie Foster, Save the Children’s team leader for the Gaza emergency response. “Over 3,000 women have delivered newborns, often with little support. And there has been no support for children suffering from the stress of what has been happening around them. We’re poised, ready to get in there and deliver quickly.”

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. “In Gaza, it has been impossible to set up any safe protected areas for children. Our initial response will also focus on establishing areas where children have the space to be children.”

Save the Children is calling for a peaceful solution to the current crisis that endangers the lives of nearly every child in Gaza, and the lives of Israeli children in areas subject to attacks. Save the Children also is calling for a cessation of hostilities by all parties including air and ground assaults from Israel and rocket attacks from Gaza.

NOTE:

- Hygiene kits contain items like toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, sponges and razors.
- Baby kits contain diapers, baby blankets, clothing and shampoos.