

Gaza Emergency Education Cluster Update

24 Feb– 13 Mar 2009

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General Situation

Background

- As 56% of the Gaza population is under the age of 18, the key issue facing the education system in Gaza is how to meet the needs of a large and growing school age population. About 60% of schools are operating on a double shift basis.
- The Israeli military operation in Gaza began on the first day of exams for students. As a result, all schools in Gaza were closed; students missed almost one month of classes and could not take their mid-term exams.
- An inter-agency assessment of the governmental and private education system found that 10 schools (8 government and 2 private) were severely damaged if not totally destroyed; 156 government and 12 private schools were partially damaged; 8 kindergartens were severely damaged, and 54 were partially damaged;
- A preliminary assessment indicated that over 71,000 people have been displaced, children have lost textbooks, notebooks, uniforms, clothes, and other learning materials which need to be replaced

Situation Update:

- The Palestinian Authority Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza (2009-2010) was released on 2nd March. The plan focuses on two interventions in the education sector – (1) Reconstruct & rehabilitate totally destroyed kindergartens, schools & university buildings, including supplies, safety equipment & furniture; (2) Rehabilitate & restore partially destroyed kindergartens, schools, and university buildings, including supplies, safety equipment & furniture
- The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) seeks complementarities between the Gaza Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan (GERRP), the Flash Appeal and the PRDP and does not want new plans to affect existing development plans. Attention is now being given to considering what can be done immediately through regular programs.
- The MoEHE in Gaza have stressed the need to improve the psychosocial well-being of children within schools, recommending that child-centered teaching and learning practices be incorporated in current teacher training curricula so as to equip teachers to address psychosocial needs of children within the classroom.
- School repairs including availability of drinking water and sanitation facilities remains a key priority as restrictions on entry into Gaza of construction materials has affected

rehabilitation of damaged schools. Except for few cases, minor repairs of windows and doors also remain unaddressed.

- The Psychosocial Sub group in Gaza was formed on 1st March and approximately 10 organizations participated in the first meeting. SHAREK Youth Forum volunteered to take responsibility for administration, coordination and facilitation of the sub-group.
- A taskforce on assessment comprised of three local universities, NGOs and INGOs met in Gaza to discuss the feasibility of conducting an assessment of immediate needs in destroyed and partially damaged schools. A Ramallah-based taskforce comprised of members from UNESCO, the IASC Gender taskforce, Save the Children and MoEHE, and convened by UNICEF, will support the process.
- Subsequently, the PSS sub-group and the Assessment task force met in Gaza on 5 March to combine efforts and develop a comprehensive action plan.

Education Cluster Planning and Coordination:

Weekly Gaza Education Cluster meetings have focused on developments in the sub-group meetings and specific strategies to address the psychosocial support needs of children in the classroom before the end of the school year. At its 5 March meeting the Jerusalem/Ramallah Cluster discussed a specific ToR for its support role vis-à-vis the Gaza including the possible integration of the cluster into the existing –development-oriented- Education Sector Working Group (ESWG)



Photo Courtesy of Save the Children

Education and Psychosocial Support Sub-group Established

The objectives of the sub group for psychosocial support and education are (1) to discuss the nature of interventions undertaken by the institutions and universities in the area of psychosocial support in schools and universities; (2) to ensure coordination between UN, NGOs and INGOs and UNRWA in joint planning and collaboration; and (3) to identify future actions by members of the group with regard to the identification of needs and provision of psychosocial

support for teachers and students. Among the priority activities

for the group, the following are to be noted:

- Inter-agency coordination through geographic and programmatic mapping
- A review of existing training manuals and tools and assessment results to map out resources and initiatives to ensure better planning and coordination
- Setting priorities for action before the end of the current school year with a focus on the preparation for training of teachers as soon as possible
- Support for specialized centers in the area of psychological support and treatment services (GCMHP and the Trauma Center of the Ministry of Health).
- Formation of a core group consisting of representatives from the MoE, Save the Children, UNRWA, Universities, Gaza Community Mental Health Program, the Palestinian Society for

Psychological science and education and the Palestinian Center for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (PCDCR) to review materials and agree on standards for teacher training

Information Management

The Gaza Response Activity Database (GRAD) is online. Agencies that have not yet received a username and password to access the system should contact Lynnette Larsen at UNICEF (LyLarsen@unicef.org). Group and individual training on use of the system is available.

The Education Cluster page is up on the OCHA website. Please visit the page at <http://www.ochaopt.org/cluster/clusters.php?domain=11>

Funding:

The Palestinian Authority Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza (2009-2010) estimates that USD \$ 55.351 million are needed for restoration of the education sector

Advocacy messages:

- Humanitarian workers need unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza and more humanitarian goods need to be allowed into Gaza, including school construction materials and school supplies.
- More funds need to be made available for the education response and for longer grant periods.
- All humanitarian agencies must be allowed to coordinate and provide assistance to relevant education providers and administrators in Gaza.

For further information contact:	
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Meeting Schedule:

Gaza - Every Tuesday 11 am at UNICEF.

Ramallah/Jerusalem - will meet every two weeks