# UNICEF: During short ceasefire, some life-saving supplies delivered in Gaza

http://www.unicef.org.au//More/MediaCentre/Mediareleases/DuringceasefiresuppliesdeliveredinGaza/tabid/248/Default.aspx

**AMMAN, JORDAN, 7 January 2009** – A three-hour ceasefire today provided a limited opportunity for UNICEF to release some life-saving supplies for delivery to families in Gaza, including 560 family water kits (each kit can serve six people) and five health kits. These materials were already positioned inside Gaza.

The ceasefire is a first small step in addressing the urgent needs of children caught in the conflict, but a great deal more needs to be done to protect the vulnerable, including children, and an immediate and durable cease-fire by all parties is the only means by which their urgent needs can be met.

Many have fled their homes, seeking shelter with friends, relatives or in schools.

Many families are sleeping in the cold – either because of house windows were blown out or because they have opened them to avoid injury from broken glass due to explosions. Parents say children have had very little sleep and they show the common signs of trauma including severe anxiety, bed wetting, loss of appetite and general malaise.

Over a million Gazans, approximately 75%, do not have electricity, according to information UNICEF has received. Lack of electricity and shortage of fuel are constraining households from heating water for purification. Furthermore, sanitation services, including solid waste removal, have been discontinued due to the ongoing fighting.

UNICEF is advised that only nine bakeries remain open throughout Gaza, with limited supplies that are rationed to households. The bakeries have not received wheat flour since the beginning of the ground operation (12 days ago) and prices have doubled in some areas and there is a lack of cash with which to buy any available food. Shortages of cooking gas and other fuel are constraining households from cooking food. Some 80 percent of the population normally rely on food assistance provided by international humanitarian actors.

In addition, reports state that only three out of 56 Palestinian Ministry of Health primary health care clinics are currently open due to restrictions on movement and the effective division of Gaza due to fighting. Hospitals are struggling to function, with the availability of fuel – needed to keep generators running – at precariously low levels. Gaza's water and sewage system is on the verge of collapse due to the lack of fuel and power.

As of Tuesday (6 January), according to the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) around 800,000 people in North Gaza, Gaza and Middle Area have no running water.

WHO reports that three mobile clinics were damaged during fighting on Monday (5 January) which resulted in new specialized medical equipment being destroyed, and that the continued fighting and insecurity has meant many health workers have not been able to reach their workplaces. Meanwhile, the capacity of emergency rooms and intensive care units to treat the injured is fast being overwhelmed.

**UNICEF ACTION**
More than half of Gaza’s 1.4 million residents are children. The immediate priority at the outset of violence was to provide urgently needed medical supplies to hospitals and health facilities treating the wounded. UNICEF’s team also reported concerns about water quality (for those who have access) as waste water is starting to contaminate water sources.

Since Saturday (3 January), UNICEF has provided 355 First Aid kits, 20 resuscitation kits, and transported into Gaza five additional emergency medical kits,  each meeting the needs of 10,000 people over three months.  UNICEF is working closely with partners to stockpile drugs and supplies to meet needs in coming months and to move them to the affected area. Supplies ranging from family hygiene kits, water purification tablets and emergency education material are already on route from UNICEF country offices in the region.

UNICEF is also working with child protection partners to produce and broadcast radio and television messages designed to help parents keep their children as safe as possible and to enable them to identify and manage symptoms of distress.

Five UNICEF-supported psychosocial teams, each composed of 20-30 social workers, psychologists, lawyers and volunteers, are on standby to conduct emergency home and hospital visits, and provide psychosocial and socio-legal assistance as soon as access is possible and security permits.

UNICEF is the lead UN agency focussing on education, nutrition, water and sanitation and child protection, and is also providing leadership on programme sector planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting processes.

As soon as circumstances permit, UNICEF in partnership with UN Agencies and NGOs will provide:

\* Trauma, surgical and emergency health supplies to health facilities; fuel, logistics and back-up support to Gaza’s 13 hospitals and medical stores; as well as emergency support to 24 health facilities designated as emergency care centre;:

\* A quick assessment of emergency needs in education and remedial education support to enable children to maintain or catch up with their studies;

\* A rapid survey of child protection needs;

\* Support to the water and sanitation sector includes the provision of safe water for vulnerable populations and advocacy for critical supplies such as chlorine and parts for urgent repairs. Emergency supplies that have been pre-positioned with the Coastal Municipality Water Utility and are ready for distribution once conditions permit include 500 water kits (each serving 10 families) and mobile water tanks.