



First deliveries of life-saving supplies for children enter Gaza

UNICEF renews appeal for sustained humanitarian access to provide desperately needed assistance as situation worsens

21 October 2023

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AMMAN / NEW YORK 21 October 2023 – Over 44,000 bottles of drinking water supplied by UNICEF – just enough for 22,000 people for 1 day – were driven through the Rafah Crossing today as part of a 20-truck convoy with the Egyptian Red Crescent, the World Health Organization and the World Food Programme.

“With one million children in Gaza now facing a critical protection and humanitarian crisis, the delivery of water is a matter of life or death. Every minute counts,” said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. “This first, limited water will save lives, but the needs are immediate and immense – not just for water, but for food, fuel, medicine, and essential goods and services. Unless we can provide humanitarian supplies consistently, we face the real threat of life-threatening disease outbreaks.”

Large parts of Gaza’s infrastructure, including critical water and sanitation systems, have been reduced to rubble in nearly two weeks of escalating violence. Water production capacity is at 5 per cent of normal levels, and the nearly 2.3 million residents in Gaza are now surviving on 3 litres of water per person per day. About a million people are displaced, around half of them children, and many have taken shelter in overcrowded shelters with extremely limited access to water, sanitation and hygiene – conditions that are especially dangerous for young children.

“Every child must be protected and humanitarian agencies, like UNICEF, must be able to safely and predictably deliver assistance to children and families in Gaza who are in desperate need,” Russell said. “Above all, all parties must unconditionally protect every child from harm and afford them the special protection to which they are entitled, in accordance with obligations under international humanitarian law.”

UNICEF has prepositioned additional emergency supplies for up to 250,000 people at the

Rafah crossing that can be brought into Gaza in a matter of hours, with more enroute. Humanitarian supplies must be allowed to safely reach children and families in need wherever they are, in accordance with the rules of war.

To respond to the dire situation for children in Gaza in the midst of this violence, UNICEF is calling for:

- All access crossings into Gaza to be opened for the movement of humanitarian supplies and workers.
- Urgent medical cases in Gaza to be allowed to leave or to be able to receive critical health services.
- Safe and sustained access to water, food, health, and fuel, which is necessary to enable those essential services.
- Respect and protection for civilian infrastructure such as shelters, health, electric, water and sanitation facilities.
- The protection of the medical mission to prevent outbreaks of diseases and provide care to the sick and wounded.

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