# UNICEF delivers supplies for children suffering as a result of critical shortages of food, fuel and medicine in Gaza

<http://www.unicef.org.au//More/MediaCentre/Mediareleases/UNICEFdeliverssuppliesforchildreninGaza/tabid/250/Default.aspx>

**AMMAN, JORDAN, 6 January 2009** - In an effort to reduce the suffering faced by children in Gaza, UNICEF is delivering urgent supplies of food, fuel and medicine to Gaza hospitals.

Hospitals are struggling to cope with the current crises, lacking medical staff, drugs, equipment and space to treat wounded civilians. The Ministry of Health in Gaza said that even before the latest round of hostilities started, 105 items on the essential drug list were nearly depleted. The main hospital, Shifa, is reportedly using four obstetric wards as surgery rooms and has stopped admitting women for deliveries. Only half of Gaza’s 58 ambulances are operational.

The escalation in violence follows an 18-month blockade on most goods entering or exiting Gaza that has left the small but densely-populated coastal strip with shortages of all essential supplies, including food, fuel and electricity. Only limited supplies of humanitarian goods such as food and medicine have entered Gaza since the current fighting began.

**UNICEF ACTION**
UNICEF has provided the Ministry of Health's Medical Stores in Gaza with 355 First Aid Kits containing basic disposable items (gauze bandages, tape, analgesics, gloves); and 20 Resuscitation Kits containing different size airways, suction pumps, gloves and gauze sufficient for 10 - 15 critical operations. Five emergency health kits, each enough to serve 10,000 people for 3 months are being diverted from the West Bank into Gaza. In the past months, UNICEF had already pre-positioned 13 emergency health kits in Gaza.

UNICEF supports five psychosocial teams, each composed of 20-30 social workers, psychologists, lawyers and volunteers, which provide immediate, direct assistance to children and their families following emergencies. The teams will conduct emergency home and hospital visits, and provide psychosocial and socio-legal assistance as soon as conditions permit.  Plans are underway to expand the teams and the scope of their assistance to meet growing needs.

In partnership with UN Agencies and NGOs, UNICEF 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; and emergency support to 24 health facilities designated as emergency care centers;
• 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 and;
• Support to the water and sanitation sector including advocacy for critical supplies such as chlorine and parts for urgent repairs, as well as providing safe water to vulnerable populations.

Beyond the current crisis, UNICEF assistance in Gaza includes providing all vaccines and micronutrients for children; strengthening water and sanitation networks; developing capacity within schools; and strengthening the protective environment for children.