

## UNICEF SOP Update for MASG Meeting - 24 October 2023

### Gaza:

The hostilities directly threaten the lives and well-being of **1 million children** in the Gaza Strip. The Gaza Ministry of Health reported Monday (23 Oct) that **the number of children killed has passed 2,000;** (5,087 total killed, including 2,055 children, 1,119 women). The level of destruction, including school damage is massive. As of 21 October, **206 schools (39% of total schools) have sustained damage<sup>1</sup>, many of these schools and others may be contaminated by ERW.**

Given the massive use of explosive weapons<sup>2</sup> **emergency Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) and Conflict Preparedness and Protection (CPP) interventions are essential** to address risks from the new and ongoing contamination. Considering that statistically a significant number of these explosive weapons do not explode on impact, that these weapons/munitions are being used by all parties from the smallest to the biggest, and in densely populated areas, children and their communities should receive emergency EORE to prevent further deaths and injuries now and in the longer term.

**As of 23 October, UNICEF staff (33 in total including 4 in Child Protection) are displaced to shelters in different locations with their families.** The same situation prevails for many of the UNICEF partners on the ground.

Given limited connectivity, lack of electricity, and high level of displacement (1 million people), **UNICEF is currently packaging Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) messages to be used in different digital platforms already in place, including SMS. UNICEF is planning to integrate emergency EORE through these platforms.**

**The Surge Mission to Cairo was established** based in the UNICEF Egypt Country Office in Cairo. The mission became operational on October 17, and it is expected to grow in the coming days staffed with colleagues from across the organization with relevant experience and expertise. The mission directly reports to the UNICEF Country Office in SOP.

In terms of immediate support, **UNICEF is prioritizing cash and supply assistance to the most vulnerable. For example, last week cash transfer was provided to 1,057 vulnerable households in the Gaza Strip to support their children's basic needs.**

Prior to the ongoing escalation of hostilities between Israel and SOP, **UNICEF partners in Gaza were operating within the 12 established Family Centers, conducting Child Protection activities including EORE. All interventions were coordinated with UNMAS.** However, these Family Centers are not currently operating.

In 2022 alone, almost **10,000 children** (9,894) and their caregivers (67 per cent children, 55 per cent girls) **were reached with EORE.**

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<sup>1</sup> See attached infographic from the education cluster

<sup>2</sup> By 13 October already "4,000 tons of bombs hit the Gaza strip"

**West Bank (WB):**

Daily violence is occurring in the West Bank resulting in high injuries and fatalities. Since the attack in Israel and escalation in Gaza at least 90 Palestinians have been killed including 27 children and at least 150 children injured as of 22 October. Prior to 7 October, children in the West Bank were already exposed to the highest levels conflict-related violence in 20 years, with 41 Palestinian children and 6 Israeli children killed.

**UNICEF is currently working on an Emergency Preparedness Response Plan for the West Bank as it is expected that the situation will deteriorate. EORE is included in the plans.**

Over the last 2 years law enforcement operations in the West Bank have become increasingly militarized, including **use of weapons such as rockets, IEDs and drones used with higher frequency in populated areas**. This is linked to daily operations as well as specific military operations such as in Jenin in July and more recently in Nor Shams and Tulkarem.

UNICEF has recently supported EORE with UNRWA in Jenin camp soon after the July military operations as they are conducting orientation on EORE for their staff, including schoolteachers. UNICEF is working with a number of partners operational in the West Bank focusing on Child Protection awareness raising and MHPSS, and stands ready to scale up EORE, provided that orientation and specific material is available. The Child Protection Area of Responsibility as part of the Protection Cluster, is coordinating the work of 83 partners is ready to take the lead.