

Humanitarian Impact of Operation Protective Edge in Gaza Strip, oPt

24 July 2014



	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Important	Major
Expected impact				X	
Need for international assistance			X		

This is an update of the Briefing Note on the Humanitarian Impact of Operation Protective Edge on the Gaza Strip, published by ACAPS on 17/07/2014, in which drivers of the current conflict are fully elaborated.

Key Findings

Anticipated scope and scale

- As of 23 July, **697 Palestinians have been killed and 4,120 injured** as a consequence of the hostilities. 77% of Palestinian casualties are civilians, including 161 children, according to OCHA.
- More than **140,000 Palestinians, almost 8% of Gaza's population, have been displaced**. This is more than double the number displaced in the 2008-9 crisis. The displaced reside in over 83 UNRWA shelters, in Ministry of Education schools, and with relatives. All available UNRWA schools in Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip are now used as shelters.
- Some 3,230 homes have either been destroyed or damaged; another 3,750 housing units sustained damage and need repair.
- A 3km-wide strip taking up 44% of the territory has been declared a 'buffer zone' by the Israeli military.

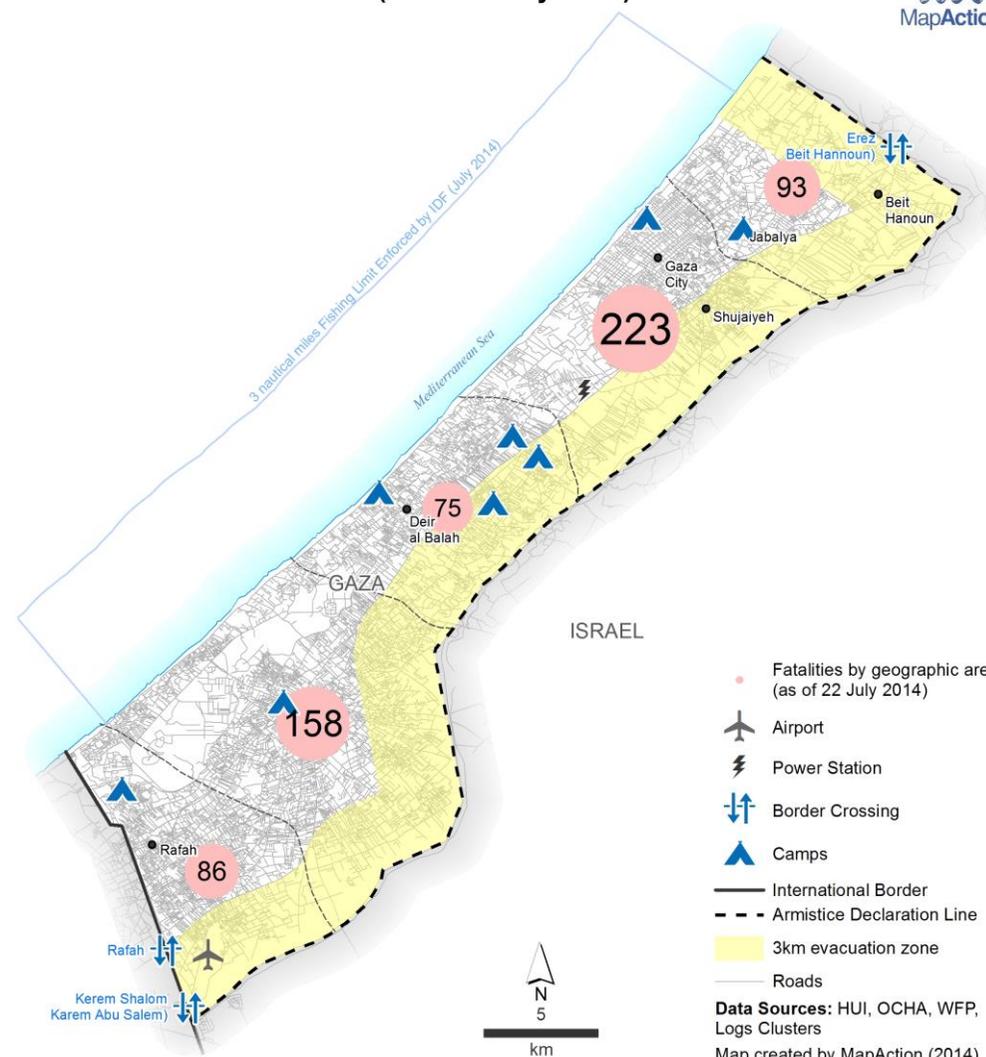
Priorities for humanitarian intervention

- An estimated 1.2 million people – or 70% of the total population – lack adequate access to water and sanitation services.
- Emergency food assistance is needed for over 140,000 displaced.
- 135,500 people are in need of shelter and NFI assistance.
- Low water supply to shelters is a major concern.
- At least 140,000 children require psychosocial support.
- Following direct hits by airstrikes, Gaza's only power plant has shut down. Hundreds of thousands of people are completely without electricity, and 80% of the population experiences rolling blackouts of up to 22 hours per day.

Humanitarian constraints

Humanitarian pauses in the ongoing hostilities and humanitarian access are urgently needed to complete search and rescue operations in Ash Shuja'iyyeh; reach IDPs and families in northern Gaza; and repair critical water and electricity infrastructure to avert the outbreak of public health diseases.

Gaza: Situational overview (as at 24 July 2014)



Crisis Overview

- Operation Protective Edge, launched by Israel against Hamas on 8 July, is now in its third week. In addition to maritime and air strikes, a ground incursion was launched on 18 July and is now in its seventh day (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- The hostilities were triggered by the abduction and murder of three Israeli yeshiva students, for which Israel holds Hamas responsible, and the revenge torture and murder of a Palestinian teenager by vigilante Israelis (PMO 08/07/2014; Haaretz 14/07/2014; ICG 14/07/2014).
- As of 24 July, over 697 have been killed; 4,120 have been injured; and over 140,000 people have been displaced. 74% of casualties are civilians, including 170 children; 108 casualties are members of armed groups; and 71 people are of unknown status (Protection Cluster quoted by OCHA, 24/07/2014; UNRWA, 24/07/2014). International media reported that following the shelling of a UN shelter in Beit Hanoun on 24 July, the death toll is now approaching 750 (Reuters, 24/07/2014). There is as yet no confirmation from humanitarian actors on the ground.
- 29 Israeli soldiers have died in military operations (one is missing in action and presumed dead). Two Israeli civilians and a foreign migrant worker have been killed, and up to 30 civilians injured or treated for shock following rocket fire into Israeli territory (Protection Cluster quoted by OCHA, 24/07/2014; MoH, 24/07/2014; Human Rights Council 21st Special Session, 23/07/2014).
- Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups have continued indiscriminate attacks, firing more than 2,900 rockets, as well as mortars, into Israeli territory (Human Rights Council 21st Special Session, 23/07/2014).
- Humanitarian ceasefires took place on 17 July – a five-hour humanitarian window – and on 20 July – a two-hour ceasefire brokered by the ICRC in Ash Shuja'iyyeh (AFP, 20/07/2014).
- After calling on 12 July for de-escalation and reinstatement of the previous ceasefire agreement, on 20 July the UN Security Council held an emergency meeting on Gaza, emphasizing the need to improve the humanitarian situation through humanitarian pauses (UN, 20/07/2014).
- UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has initiated intensified diplomatic efforts, including talks with Abbas and Netanyahu.
- In a visit to Egypt, John Kerry stated the Egyptian proposal should form the basis of a ceasefire (BBC, 22/07/2014). On 23 July, Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal rejected the proposed ceasefire unless the conditions set out by Hamas, including a lifting of the Gaza blockade, are negotiated (Al Jazeera, 24/07/2014).
- On 23 July, the UN Human Rights Council decided to form an international commission of inquiry for alleged Israeli war crimes in Gaza (OHCHR, 23/07/2014). UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay stated there is a strong possibility that Israel is violating international humanitarian law and its principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution, and is possibly committing war crimes (Human Rights Council 21st Special Session, 23/07/2014; OCHA, 23/07/2014).

- Despite a decrease since the start of the ground offensive, indiscriminate firing into Israel by Palestinian armed groups in Gaza continues, with most projectiles falling in open areas or being intercepted by the Iron Dome system. Military assets are located in, and attacks are launched from, densely populated areas, leading to accusations that Hamas is using civilians as 'human shields'. In addition, stashes of rockets have been found in two vacant schools. UNRWA demanded full respect for the sanctity and neutrality of its premises in Gaza, and is taking all possible measures for the removal of the rockets in order to preserve the safety and security of the schools, now being used to shelter IDPs (OCHA, 23/07/2014; BBC, 20/07/2014; UNRWA, 22/07/2014).

Crisis Impact

Humanitarian and Operational Constraints

- A new humanitarian pause and humanitarian access are urgently needed:
 - to complete search and rescue operations in Ash Shuja'iyyeh, where many residents are reported missing;
 - to reach IDPs and families in northern Gaza; and
 - to repair critical water and electricity infrastructure to avert the outbreak of diseases (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- The movement of ambulances for medical evacuations is impossible due to the ground invasion and continuous and heavy fire in residential areas (Gisha et.al., 18/07/2014). On 23 July, a short suspension of fire, negotiated by the ICRC, allowed ambulance convoys in flashpoint areas in Ash Shuja'iyyeh to retrieve the wounded (ICRC, 23/07/2014).
- The communication between and movement of child protection staff and emergency psychosocial support (PSS) teams is impeded by ongoing hostilities and major electricity outages (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- UNRWA's sanitation staff could not reach Al Maghazi, Bureij, and Deir El Baleh camps due to heavy fighting and access restrictions (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- Palestinian Red Cross Society members have been exposed to direct and indirect attacks (PCRS, 22/07/2014).
- Verification of information, in particular in regards to casualties, remains difficult, as does the assessment of the impact on school infrastructure (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- **Beith Hanoun (Arba-Arba) Crossing** is closed until further notice (OCHA, 24/07/2014).
- **Kerem Shalom Crossing** continues to operate under restrictions for the transfer of fuel, food, and medicine. On 23 July, 106 truckloads of goods, and 23 truckloads of fuel and cooking gas entered the Gaza Strip (Gisha, 23/07/2014).
- **Erez Crossing** is operating under restrictions for the transit of medical patients and their companions. On 23 July, ten patients and seven medical emergencies travelled through the crossing (Gisha, 23/07/2014).

- **Rafah Crossing** operated from 0900 to 1500 on 23 July for the transit of casualties, holders of foreign residency/citizenship and their families only. In the days before, no one was permitted to leave the Gaza Strip via this crossing (Gisha, 23/07/2014).

Impact on Critical Infrastructure

- Public infrastructure and services continue to be hit and sustain damages, including health facilities and ambulances (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- Electricity supply is a major concern. Hundreds of thousands of people are completely without electricity, and 80% of the population experiences rolling blackouts of up to 22 hours per day, with numbers likely to rise (Gisha, 23/07/2014; OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- The Gaza power plant was directly hit by airstrikes on 22 and 23 July and has been shut down until further notice. The ICRC is attempting to coordinate with Israeli authorities over repairs (Gisha, 23/07/2014).
- Of 120 megawatts purchased from Israel, only 48 megawatts are currently flowing to the Gaza Strip due to damage to infrastructure (Gisha, 23/07/2014). Two of ten feeder lines – counting for 20% of Gaza's electricity supply – from Israel to Gaza were damaged three days ago. They have been repaired on the Gazan side, but not on the Israeli side (OCHA, 23/07/2014; JPost 15/07/2014).
- Water and sewage infrastructure is functioning at reduced capacity. Pumping of water to houses for domestic consumption and to medical facilities has been interrupted, as has pumping for sewage treatment and transport (Gisha, 23/07/2014). There is an urgent need to repair 15 wells, six sewage pumping stations, and water and sewage lines that are not operating due to damage by air strikes (OCHA, 23/07/2014). Some 25% of all WASH facilities have no electricity and transformers and rely on generators only (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- WASH facilities east of Salah ad Din road and in north Gaza, both in the recently announced 'buffer zone', have not been accessible for repairs, and are also likely to be inaccessible to water trucking (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- Since 1 June, 84 UNRWA installations have sustained damage, including schools, health centres, water pumps, a rehabilitation centre, and warehouses containing vital stock for UNRWA operations. On 22–23 July, seven UNRWA installations were damaged, including six schools in Middle Area and one school in North Gaza (UNRWA, 23/07/2014).

Displacement

- More than 140,000 Palestinians are now displaced, almost 8% of the total Gaza population and is more than double the number displaced in the 2008-9 crisis. 32,500 were reported displaced in the last briefing note published on 17 July.
- Since the ground offensive started on 17 July, the number of IDPs doubled between 17 and 18 July, and rose by more than 10,000 people in every 24-hour period since, up until 22 July (UNRWA, 24/07/2014).

- Most of the displaced reside in 83 UNRWA schools and eight government schools in Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip. In some cases a shelter hosts up to 5,000 people (Human Rights Council 21st Special Session, 23/07/2014; PI, 23/07/2014; OCHA, 24/07/2014). The government school shelters are managed by the Palestinian Ministry of Social Affairs and their locations have been communicated to the Israeli military (OCHA, 23/07/2014). Nonetheless, 116 schools (75 UNRWA and 41 government schools) have been affected by shelling (OCHA, 24/07/2014).
- At least 4,850 people have sought shelter in buildings not opened as shelters, including five government schools, a mosque and Gaza City's Greek Orthodox Church, and buildings under construction. These shelters are considered unsafe (OCHA, 24/07/2014).
- Additional shelters are needed to reduce overcrowding and accommodate new IDPs, alongside replenishment of food, water, and NFIs (OCHA, 23/07/2014).

Food Security

- Over 135,000 IDPs need emergency food assistance (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- The military ground incursion is limiting access to food warehouses, making emergency food distribution to over one million people extremely difficult (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- Farmers, breeders and fishermen's livelihoods are heavily compromised. It is estimated that animal feed is needed for 3,000 herders to avoid further loss of livestock and erosion of livelihoods (OCHA, 23/07/2014; FAO/WFP, 21/07/2014).
- Half of Gaza's bakeries and four of Gaza's six wheat mills are not operating due to difficulties in staff accessing premises. Operating bakeries have wheat stocks for at least one week. Dairy production plants have also reduced their operational capacity due to lack of security and damage to facilities due to military attacks (OCHA, 24/07/2014).
- Residents of Gaza report increases in the price of vegetables as farmers cannot reach and harvest their lands or get their produce to the market. Goods which require refrigeration are not available in some places due to shortages of electricity (Gisha, 23/07/2014).

WASH

- An estimated 1.2 million people – or 70% of the population in the Gaza Strip – have no or limited access to water and sanitation services due to damage to the electricity system or lack of fuel to run generators, or damage to the water supply infrastructure (PI, 23/07/2014; OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- More than 140,000 IDPs need water for drinking and domestic use; emergency water delivery to over 140,000 IDPs is required (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- Some shelters are being supplied with as little as three litres per person per day, to be used for drinking and hygiene (OCHA, 24/07/2014).

- Conditions and shortages at eight UNRWA schools in northern Gaza are of great concern, as they could not be reached from outside for two consecutive days due to ongoing hostilities (OCHA, 24/07/2014).
- Many families are forced to purchase unsafe water from unregulated water vendors and distributors (OCHA, 16/07/2014).

Health

- At least 140,000 children, up from the 25,000 reported on 17 July, require direct and specialised psychosocial support after having witnessed or experienced death, injury, or loss of their homes in the past thirteen days (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- 18 health-related facilities have been hit by airstrikes and shelling and require repair (OCHA, 24/07/2014).
- There is urgent need for 71 essential drug items and 20 disposable items at Gaza hospitals. Eight anaesthesia machines, ten ventilators, five electrosurgical units, 20 vital sign monitors, ECG machines, five defibrillator machines are also urgently needed. Psychotropic drugs for patients with mental illness, trauma, and anxiety are in critically short supply (OCHA, 23/07/2014). (Mental) health needs for displaced families sheltering in UNRWA schools need to be addressed immediately (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- Al Wafa rehabilitation hospital was shelled on 23 July, severely damaging the building. On the same day, shells were fired into the garden of Beit Hanoun hospital, damaging the water network and injuring ambulance drivers (OCHA, 24/07/2014).
- Al Aqsa hospital in Deir El Balah came under direct fire at least four times on 21 July. The surgical ward, the intensive care unit, and lifesaving equipment were severely damaged, disrupting essential medical services (ICRC, 21/07/2014).
- Shifa hospital urgently needs neurosurgeons, anaesthesiologists, plastic and general surgeons, and orthopaedic specialists, as well as 20 ICU beds, a digital C-ARM machine for orthopaedic surgeries, two operating tables and a lighting system for the five operation rooms (OCHA, 22/07/2014).
- Out of six mental health centres, only Rafah and Zwaydeh are functioning (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- Adequate protection of health facilities and personnel is lacking, impeding emergency assistance to the sick and injured. 27 Palestinian Red Crescent Society health workers have been injured so far (OCHA, 23/07/2014; PCRS, 22/07/2014).
- Access to the injured, as well as healthcare for patients with acute and chronic illness, is restricted due to ongoing military operations. In addition, access for referral cases out of Gaza is reduced due to movement difficulties and delays in processing referrals (OCHA, 23/07/2014; OCHA, 16/07/2014).
- Several areas are experiencing sewage flooding, in particular in Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya, posing public health hazards (OCHA, 24/07/2014).

Shelter and Non-Food Items

- Since the start of the emergency, 116 schools (75 UNRWA and 41 government schools) have been affected by shelling. In the past 24 hours, six more UNRWA schools were damaged by shelling (OCHA, 24/07/2014).
- Human rights organisations have estimated that since the start of the emergency, the Israeli military has targeted and destroyed or severely damaged 564 residential properties, including many multi-storey buildings, causing civilian casualties and displacing the survivors (OCHA, 24/07/2014).
- 135,500 people are now in need of shelter and NFI assistance, up from 8,200 since the last briefing note was published on 17 July. This figure includes 19,400 individuals (3,230 families) whose shelters were totally destroyed or sustained major structural damage. Houses of 22,500 people (3,750 families) sustained damage but are still inhabitable (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- Intense overcrowding, compounded by the limited access of humanitarian staff to certain areas, is undermining the living conditions at many shelters (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- UNRWA's NFI stock is at zero, and cash assistance is needed to allow 2,655 displaced families to cover rental fees and urgent expenses. Additional shelter is also needed for IDPs to reduce overcrowding at UNRWA schools (OCHA, 23/07/2014).

Protection

- Incidents continue to be reported in which civilians or civilian objects have been directly hit by Israeli shelling, raising concerns about the principles of distinction and proportionality under international humanitarian law (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- On 24 July, at least 15 people were killed, and 200 injured, in the shelling of a UN school in Beit Hanoun (Al Jazeera, 24/07/2014). On 22-23 July, six UNRWA schools were damaged by shelling (OCHA, 24/07/2014). On 21 July, one of the UNRWA schools in Maghazi refugee camp, central Gaza, was shelled. At the time, approximately 300 IDPs had sought refuge in the school (UNRWA, 22/07/2014). UNRWA has communicated the location and function of the schools as shelters to the Israeli authorities (UN Human Rights Council Session on Gaza, 23/07/2014).
- 44 complete families have been killed in the targeting of their homes (OCHA, 23/07/2014; IMEMC, 24/07/2014).
- Intense overcrowding of shelters, compounded by the limited access of humanitarian staff to certain areas, is raising protection concerns including child abuse, exploitation and violence (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- Especially children are at risk of unexploded ordnance (UXO) (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- Displaced children hosted by relatives remain largely unreached by child protection interventions (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- Initial reports indicate that people, mostly children, are filling jerry cans from desalination units during night hours (when the electricity is switched on), raising safety and protection concerns (OCHA, 16/07/2014).

- According to police figures, 931 Palestinians have been arrested over the last three weeks in relation to protests: 295 in Jerusalem, and 636 inside Israel (i.e. Palestinians with Israeli citizenship). The arrests in Jerusalem have so far produced 71 indictments (Jpost, 19/07/2014; Haaretz, 19/07/2014; Arabs48, 24/07/2014).

Potential Aggravating Factors

Access

Restrictions imposed by Israel and the Gaza administration constrain humanitarian actors moving in and out of Gaza as well as their ability to deliver aid (SRP OCHA 2014).

Critical Infrastructure

Gaza Strip's utilities are suboptimal. Delivery of basic services has been undermined due to an ongoing energy crisis, involving power outages of up to 12 hours per day (OCHA, 16/07/2014). Compromised water supply and sanitation networks, with high summer approaching, heightens the risk of waterborne disease outbreaks. Shortages of electricity and building materials are undermining livelihoods. Shortages of fuel have gradually worsened, with most of Gaza's 180 fuel stations forced to close or severely limit operations (OCHA, 12/05/2014).

Displacement

Most of Gaza's population – 1.5 million of the 1.8 million – are refugees. The psychological and, in many cases, material consequences of secondary or tertiary displacement cannot be ignored (UNRWA 01/01/2014).

Food Security

Food insecurity in Gaza grew from 44% in 2011 to 57% in 2012, and has since remained unchanged. Food insecurity is driven by high food prices, unemployment and economic shocks. (SRP OCHA 2014; UNRWA, FAO, WFP, Government, 03/06/2014).

WASH

- People in Gaza lack access to basic water and sanitation services as urgently needed large-scale infrastructure development is restricted by Israel (e.g. wastewater treatment plants), the ongoing blockade in Gaza, cyclical droughts, and population growth. 90% of groundwater is not suitable for human consumption; and limited supplies as well as high prices and quality of tankered water are of great concern. Since the closure of tunnels towards Egypt, the situation has deteriorated significantly (SRP OCHA 2014).
- Wastewater treatment plants in Gaza are overloaded and working beyond their designed capacities. About 89 million litres of untreated or partially treated sewage are discharged into the sea daily. Also, solid waste remains a major concern with the proliferation of uncontrolled dumpsites (SRP OCHA 2014).

Health

- The healthcare system has limited capacity to meet the needs of its population. The blockade since 2007 has led to a gradual deterioration through destruction and lack of maintenance. Continuity of medical care is threatened by the financial crisis. Electricity shortages severely disrupt critical hospital functions. All health facilities are affected. The Ministry of Health drugstore reported in May that stocks of 118 (of 481) essential medicines have been completely depleted (OCHA, 12/05/2014). Procurement of essential drugs and other medical supplies has declined due to budgetary restrictions faced as well as the political schism (SRP OCHA 2014).
- The impact of the protracted crisis on the health of Palestinians has been both direct, such as with violence-related deaths, traumas and injuries, mental health disorders; and indirect, linked to the different obstacles in access to essential health services, leading to an increased burden of care for the sick and injured, normally borne at the household level by women and girls (SRP OCHA 2014).

Protection

- Population density and the scarcity of space make any military operation challenging if civilian casualties are to be averted or at least minimised. Many rocket launch sites, production facilities, and storage caches are reported to be either within, or in striking proximity to, civilian infrastructure.
- Psychosocial distress was already prevalent and rising pre-crisis, due to violence and other consequences of the Gaza Strip's closure (SRP OCHA 2014). Rising unemployment and poverty have resulted in increasing child labour (SRP OCHA 2014).

Education

- Following military operations in 2008-9 and 2012, nearly 300 educational facilities were damaged or destroyed, affecting more than 275,000 students. Half of the population in Gaza are children under the age of 18. Israel's closure policies since 2007 have prohibited the construction, rehabilitation, and upgrade of nearly all educational infrastructure, resulting in 85% of schools running on double shifts (SRP OCHA 2014).

Response Capacity

Local, National and International Response Capacity

- To address urgent humanitarian needs resulting from the current ongoing hostilities, the Humanitarian Country Team is developing a Gaza Crisis Preliminary Response Plan which will be finalized by 1 August (OCHA, 24/07/2014).
- NRC is currently setting up response in support of the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the water supply system; for psychosocial support within the educational response with UNRWA schools; and for administrative support of collective centres hosting displaced populations (PI, 23/07/2014).

- Daily emergency food rations are provided by UNRWA and WFP to IDPs, hospital patients and staff across the Gaza Strip (OCHA, 23/07/2014; FAO/WFP, 21/07/2014).
- WHO is coordinating with MoH and health sector partners on the most urgent needs for donations, informing donors and facilitating procurement and delivery to Gaza (OCHA, 23/07/2014).
- WFP is mobilising more food to the Gaza Strip through local procurement and by airlifting food from the UN Humanitarian Response Depot in Dubai (WFP, 23/07/2014).
- UNRWA is working to improve access to drinking water in shelters; has provided NFIs to meet the rapidly expanding needs in its shelters; and its health services have continued operating since the start of the crisis. Solid waste has been continuously collected from refugee camps and shelters throughout the conflict. UXO awareness is provided in shelters to address protection concerns (UNRWA, 23/07/2014).

Information Gaps and Needs

- Lack of information on IDPs residing in private shelters, needed in order to provide emergency food assistance (OCHA, 23/07/2014).