



Press release

JERUSALEM (January 4, 2009)

## **Save the Children Delivers Food to Families in Gaza Despite Violence**

JERUSALEM (January 4, 2009) — Save the Children staff members today began delivering much-needed food to children and families in Gaza despite continued violence.

On Sunday staff members delivered food parcels to 641 families — or nearly 6,000 people, including over 3,000 children — in Gaza City, east Jabalyah, Beit Lahia, Beit Hanoun and Um Al Nasser. However, air assaults and ground fighting are making movement dangerous for needy families and Save the Children staff trying to assist them.

“The situation has reached a critical level for children who are exposed to and experiencing violence, fear and uncertainty,” said Annie Foster, Save the Children’s team leader for the emergency response. “Parents are facing enormous challenges to protecting and caring for their children. Either they cannot leave their house to attend to basic needs for fear of being caught in the crossfire — or they are being forced from their homes, into harm’s way, to find shelter.”

Dwindling resources in homes is increasing the vulnerability of children as is the collapse of Gaza’s electricity and sanitation infrastructure. Save the Children warns that lack of electricity for heating at night presents a hypothermia risk for children, particularly babies and newborns.

“The cold only adds to the stress and health threats — including scarce food and water and a lack of sanitation — faced by children and their parents in Gaza,” said Annie Foster, Save the Children’s team leader of the emergency response. “Families must leave windows open at night so that they will not be broken by percussive shocks or flying debris from the ongoing bombardment. This means children, the majority of them poor and malnourished, are essentially spending the night exposed to the elements.”

Even before the latest outbreak of violence, 50,000 Gazan children were malnourished, more than two-thirds of all children suffered from vitamin A deficiency and almost half of children under age 2 were anemic. Lack of access to food, clean water and medical supplies exacerbates threats to children’s health and well-being.

Save the Children is calling for a peaceful solution to the current crisis that endangers the lives of nearly every child in Gaza, and the lives of Israeli children in areas subject to attacks. Save the Children is calling for a cessation of hostilities by all parties including air and ground assaults from Israel and rocket attacks from Gaza. The agency is seeking free access for humanitarian assistance to allow aid agencies to provide much-needed relief to vulnerable children.

Since the fighting began, 59 children have been killed, according to Gaza health officials and major news media. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) reports that some 2,000 Gazan families have been displaced. Many families have taken in relatives and neighbors, adding to the household burden and stress on parents and children.

Once a humanitarian corridor opens, Save the Children also will be able to provide baby hygiene kits, household kits and safe play kits.

Save the Children has worked in the area for more than 30 years.

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