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Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

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# 182 EX/55

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## REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF GAZA

### SUMMARY

This document is presented in compliance with 181 EX/Decision 59. It summarizes progress made by UNESCO since the 181st session of the Executive Board, in providing assistance to the reconstruction and development of the Gaza Strip. The Director-General intends to issue an addendum to the present document before the 182nd session of the Board.

No financial or administrative implications.

1. This document presents updated information on the UNESCO response to the reconstruction and development of the Gaza Strip since the 181st session of the Executive Board. It covers the period between April and June 2009.
2. During the period of reporting, UNESCO deployed intensified efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of the population within the Gaza Strip, in close cooperation with the United Nations and other humanitarian actors, through the creation of a Project Antenna in Gaza City and the earmarking of funding (both regular and extrabudgetary) for the six project activities introduced by UNESCO in the United Nations Gaza Flash Appeal (February 2009). These are as follows: (i) emergency rehabilitation of higher education institutions (\$800,000); (ii) provision of emergency secondary education in non-UNRWA schools (\$800,000); (iii) support for crisis planning and management for affected school principals and district officials (\$400,000); (iv) training in INEE Minimum Standards (\$320,000); (v) promotion of schools as safe zones (\$420,000); and (vi) safety and protection of journalists and press freedom in Gaza (\$200,000). In this context, the UNESCO response continued to focus mainly on education (Part I), but also on the safety and protection of media professionals (Part II).

### Part I – UNESCO humanitarian response in the field of education

3. As reflected in the five education projects introduced in the United Nations Gaza Flash Appeal, UNESCO focuses on gap areas. The goal is to promote a comprehensive approach to the restoration of educational services in Gaza and contribute to closing the widening gap in the delivery of Palestinian educational services between the West Bank and Gaza. These areas, which were not covered by interventions of other agencies or humanitarian actors, are: (i) the urgent

reactivation of educational services in upper secondary and higher education; and (ii) the promotion of quality standards in education in crisis situations.

4. Important progress was achieved in mobilizing funds for the five education projects. In addition to the funding received through Japanese Funds-in-Trust (\$100,000), \$214,796 was granted by Saudi Arabia, as well as \$61,736 from H.R.H. Princess Firyal of Jordan, Goodwill Ambassador for UNESCO. The totality of these funds was channelled to the project "Provision of emergency secondary education in non-UNRWA schools". This project supports alternative learning opportunities for students in the upper secondary education (11th and 12th grades), with a view to enhancing their performance at the general secondary exams.

5. In May 2009, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser al Missned, First Lady of Qatar and UNESCO Special Envoy for Basic and Higher Education, indicated her willingness to give additional support to the five UNESCO Emergency Education projects under the Gaza Flash Appeal, for a total amount of \$2.8 million. This commitment was materialized through the signing of a framework agreement on 8 July 2009 at UNESCO Headquarters with the Office of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah.

6. The following activities have been completed and their design and implementation developed in close consultation with other United Nations agencies and humanitarian actors on the ground, in order to ensure full consistency in the support provided to restore educational services in Gaza, and to respond to the operational challenges imposed by the political and security situation.

- (a) From April to early June 2009 and as part of the project on "Provision of emergency secondary education in non-UNRWA schools", UNESCO supported catch-up courses for upper secondary education students in Gaza, who were sitting for the general secondary Tawjihee exam ending the upper secondary education cycle in June 2009. This initiative benefited more than 5,000 students from six government schools located in the areas most affected by the recent conflict in Gaza and aimed at addressing the learning gap caused by the conflict when schools were closed for one month. The activity contributed to improved access and opportunities for higher education for students in Gaza. The implementation of this activity was made possible thanks to the \$100,000 contribution from the Japanese Fund-in-Trust for Capacity-Building of Human Resources. Based on needs expressed by local stakeholders for similar courses for the new Twajihee students, an extended programme of catch-up courses is being organized during this summer and early autumn. Funds are being received from Saudi Arabia and H.R.H. Princess Firyal to support it. It should finally be noted that an external evaluation of the initial catch-up course programme is planned this summer. The findings of the evaluation will guide the design and implementation of the extended programme.
- (b) In order to improve the quality of educational services in Gaza, UNESCO, with technical support from the Beirut Office, organized a five-day training of trainers workshop on Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies and Schools as Safe Zones in Gaza City from 9 to 13 May 2009. The training involved a group of 30 education specialists, teachers, school supervisors and NGO workers and was facilitated by three specialized trainers. The purpose of the training was to introduce the INEE Minimum Standards as a tool and a standard set of criteria to cope with education in emergencies and crisis periods, as well as in recovery situations. In addition, the training introduced preparedness methods for dealing with schools as safe zones in the particular context of Gaza. A follow-up specialized INEE Master Training for a group of selected highly motivated trainees is scheduled for early August 2009. Once the Master Training is completed, a three-day INEE training course will be held at the district level throughout the Gaza Strip.

7. It is to be noted that the project on Emergency Rehabilitation of Higher Education Institutions entails support to the Islamic University, which is the most affected university in Gaza. The project will enable the institution to continue teaching and conducting examinations when possible.

## **Part II – Communication and Information: Protection and Safety of Journalists**

8. The Gaza Flash Appeal project on the “Safety and Protection of Journalists and Press Freedom in Gaza” (\$200,000) has been partially funded by Finland (\$100,000) and partially from IPDC (\$26,000) and from the regular programme. The project has allowed immediate needs to be addressed in terms of psycho-social support for Palestinian journalists and photographers, as well as safety and first-aid training for local media organizations. An initial training session is scheduled to take place on 29 and 30 June. In addition, the project will create a support network for media professionals in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to monitor and address violations against press freedom. It will also provide opportunities for journalists to strengthen their professional capacities and exchange best practices.

## **Conclusion**

9. During the reporting period, the implementation of UNESCO activities, as those of other humanitarian actors, continued to be marked by limitations on free and sustained movement of goods and personnel into Gaza. Despite this situation and the lack of reconstruction of infrastructure, it has been possible to provide humanitarian assistance, notably in UNESCO’s fields of competence. The end of year examinations both for secondary and higher education were facilitated as were necessary alternative learning opportunities for school children and students.

10. Thanks to the additional funding granted by various donors, in particular Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser al Missned, First Lady of Qatar and UNESCO Special Envoy for Basic and Higher Education, UNESCO humanitarian assistance to the recovery of the education system in Gaza will be considerably scaled up. As such, an internal review of UNESCO’s early response to the Gaza crisis will be undertaken in July 2009, with a view to providing recommendations on the strategic focus and modalities of a larger mid-term response to the ongoing crisis.

11. In addition, at the request of the Palestinian Authority, UNESCO remains committed to supporting the implementation of the Gaza Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan (GERRA), launched at the Sharm-el-Sheikh Conference (2 March 2009), notably with regard to education and cultural heritage components.

12. It should finally be noted that in parallel to its response to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza as described above, the UNESCO Ramallah Office continued consolidating its overall development-oriented assistance in support of the reform and development programme of the Palestinian Authority addressing the West Bank and Gaza. At the time of reporting, such assistance programmes on education, culture, media development and women’s empowerment, amounted to a total of more than \$15 million, most of which is extrabudgetary funding (see document 182 EX/54).

13. The Director-General intends to issue an addendum to the present document before the 182nd session of the Executive Board.



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# Executive Board

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## REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF GAZA

### ADDENDUM

#### SUMMARY

This document provides an update on UNESCO's action for the reconstruction and development of Gaza since the issuance of document 182 EX/55, and proposes a draft decision in this regard.

Decision proposed: paragraph 7.

1. This addendum presents an update on UNESCO's action for the reconstruction and development of Gaza and progress made in relation to its participation in the United Nations humanitarian response since the issuance of document 182 EX/55.
2. In the field of education, thanks to funding from Saudi Arabia and from HRH Princess Firyal of Jordan, a **summer camp** for over 780 Tawjihee students from 12 different public schools was organized in Gaza in July and August 2009. Classes entailed five main subjects including English, Arabic, sport, cultural activities and art.
3. A **Master Training Workshop on the INEE Minimum Standards in Education** was held in Gaza City from 2 to 6 August 2009. The purpose of the training was to increase understanding on how the INEE Minimum Standards may be applied and adapted to enhance the education response in the current crisis situation. Nineteen participants, including representatives from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, four Gaza universities, UNICEF and educational NGOs, took part in the training. This activity laid the foundation for a larger training programme in Gaza, which will encourage teachers and school head masters to use the INEE Minimum Standards as a tool to improve the quality of education in the classroom, despite the difficult circumstances.
4. In parallel to the implementation of the above-mentioned activities, an **internal review** of UNESCO early response activities in the field of education was undertaken in July 2009. It confirmed the pertinence of UNESCO's strategic positioning in gap areas such as upper levels of secondary education and higher education and provided recommendations on how UNESCO can further contribute to improve the quality of education in schools in Gaza given the prevailing

situation on the ground. The review recommends expanding the running project activities in line with the project outlines submitted as part of the Gaza Flash Appeal. For secondary education, this will include year-round remedial classes for students in upper levels of secondary education summer schools, as well as the Tawjihee catch-up courses before the end of year exam, in June 2010. For higher education, the focus will remain on providing access to knowledge and professional networks for the academic community including university access for vulnerable student groups, such as IDPs. Building on past activities, the response will continue to focus on quality improvement through training for education providers on the INEE Minimum Standards. In line with the recommendations of the review, the two remaining UNESCO projects in the Flash Appeal will also be initiated.

5. Thanks to the funding (US \$25,000) received from Goodwill Ambassador Ms Ute-Henriette Ohoven during the UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors Annual Meeting in May 2009 for the project on “Empowering the Isolated and Marginalized Young People in the Gaza Strip”, three training courses are currently held in Gaza on **promoting media and ICT** as tools for restoring social cohesion and reconnecting youth and students from Gaza with youth in the West Bank and abroad. These courses aim at developing participants’ skills and capacities for content production in ICT and media, in order to contribute to job creation and the establishment of support networks and partnerships through Internet.

6. In August 2009, 35 media professionals from 20 media outlets in Gaza participated in a **safety training course** in Cairo, funded by regular programme and IPDC funds (US \$51,000) and organized in cooperation with the Palestinian Ma’an Network. Participants were also given psycho-social support and taught techniques for dealing with the stress and trauma endured by media professionals due to the tough situation on the ground.

7. In view of the information provided in document 182 EX/55 and Add., the Executive Board may wish to adopt the following draft decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling the provisions of the four Geneva Conventions (1949), the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and the related Protocols, and the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), and the Recommendations, Resolutions and Decisions of UNESCO on the protection of cultural heritage,
2. Having examined document 182 EX/55 and Add.,
3. Having also examined document 182 EX/54 and Add.,
4. Noting with deep concern the very heavy toll suffered by Palestinian civilians, the deaths and injuries inflicted on Israeli civilians, during the escalation of violence and hostilities in December 2008 and January 2009,
5. Also noting the destruction of infrastructure, the significant deterioration of basic services, and the damages to schools, universities and cultural heritage sites caused by the escalation of violence and hostilities in December 2008 and January 2009, and recognizing that schools, universities and cultural heritage sites should not be involved in military conflicts,
6. Recalling the information meeting held by the Director-General on 6 February 2009 to provide Member States with an update on the outcome of the rapid needs assessments conducted in the Gaza Strip, and UNESCO’s participation in the humanitarian response to the situation resulting from the escalation of violence and hostilities in December 2008 and January 2009,

7. Also recalling the strong commitment made by the international community in favour of the Gaza Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan presented at the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction in Gaza (2 March 2009, Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt),
8. Congratulates the Director-General for UNESCO's rapid response to the situation in the Gaza Strip, thanks him for the opening of a UNESCO project antenna in Gaza City and the initiatives that have already been implemented in the field of education and for the safety of media professionals, as reflected in the six UNESCO projects retained in the United Nations Flash Appeal for Gaza;
9. Calls upon the Director-General to continue contributing to the United Nations humanitarian response in Gaza within the Organization's fields of competence;
10. Notes in this regard the importance of free and sustained movement of personnel and relief humanitarian items for the successful implementation of the above-mentioned projects;
11. Calls upon the Director-General to actively participate in the integrated United Nations response to the Gaza Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan developed by the Palestinian Authority, by focusing on UNESCO's contribution to its educational and cultural heritage protection components;
12. Thanks Member States and donors, in particular Sheika Mozah Bint Nasser al Missned, First Lady of Qatar and UNESCO Special Envoy for Basic and Higher Education, for their generous financial contributions to the UNESCO projects retained in the United Nations Flash Appeal for Gaza, and invites Member States, international governmental and non-governmental organizations and relevant international and national institutions, as well as private institutions, to further assist in this regard through extrabudgetary funding;
13. Decides to include this item on the agenda of the Executive Board at its 184th session, and invites the Director-General to submit to it a progress report thereon.