

Children are bearing the brunt of the conflict in the Middle East. Our partners are reporting 45% of those killed in Lebanon are children. Of the 500,000 displaced, some 200,000 are children under the age of 18.

Save the Children already helping children affected by this crisis We are currently supporting at least 2000 families in the region and aims to reach over 20,000 people over the coming months.

Hundreds of thousands of children in both Lebanon and Gaza are trapped in areas without access to clean water or electricity. This also directly affects hospitals and health services at a time when injuries and illness are rapidly increasing amongst children.

Humanitarian access is a major concern. Bombings have destroyed all major roads and many secondary roads, making the transportation of normal foodstuffs and medicine difficult.



Save the Children is calling for a humanitarian ceasefire to allow people to reach hospitals and medical care, as well as to allow humanitarian agencies access to the 500,000 people displaced by the crisis. Humanitarian access is urgently needed. Due to the damage to roads and airports in Lebanon, all governments and the international community must now take extraordinary measures to ensure that essential food, water and medicine reaches the displaced.

All warring parties must abide by international humanitarian law, ensuring the protection of civilians, including children, and infrastructure vital to civilian life.

LEBANON

Humanitarian access to areas of Southern Lebanon is a massive concern. Already, travel between Beirut and southern Lebanon is difficult and sometimes dangerous. The combination of the risk of being caught up in the bombing and extensive damage to the infrastructure and supply routes make reaching those children most affected enormously difficult. If goods and supplies fail to reach the south, Save the Children is concerned that shops and hospitals could run out of essential supplies.

Azhar Balhas is 6 years old. She fled her village Siddikeen, located 15 km away from the city of Tyre in south Lebanon, together with her mother, father, 5 brothers and 3 sisters. They have been displaced twice across the southern coast before reaching the city of Sida (Sidon). "The bombing frightens me the most; I feel I will die with every rocket being fired towards our village... I dream of going back home, hugging my oldest brother who did not leave the village, and playing with my toys".

Save the Children Response to Date

Save the Children is already responding to the needs of children caught up in the fighting. In the south of Lebanon we are distributing blankets, nappies, food and other basic supplies to families affected by the conflict and working in schools in the southern part of the country which have been converted into temporary shelters for those fleeing the worst hit areas.

As access to the area improves we plan to distribute food, water and basic supplies to 20,000 people; to support 5000 children in safe play areas, with psycho-social support, access to formal and non-formal education and other protection measures; and to provide medical supplies and support for 5000 people affected by the conflict.

An emergency assessment team will travel to Beirut on or around Tuesday 25 July to support Save the Children staff already in Lebanon and conduct a formal needs and security assessment of the situation for children in the affected areas.

GAZA

The ongoing conflict in Gaza continues to threaten the physical safety and well-being of civilians and the destruction of property and infrastructure has created widespread displacement and worsening health, hygiene and nutritional status of the population. Children are trapped in their homes without sufficient food, water, hygiene and access to medicine. The evolving crisis is putting hundreds of thousands of children at risk of serious injury, emotional distress, malnutrition and is preventing them from continuing their schooling.

"The situation is devastating. The main problem is the power cuts and water shortages. Food security in homes is badly damaged because whatever stored food people have is easily ruined and so is the food in the stores. Rafah had a power cut for three successive days. Children are afraid to leave their houses due to insecurity and restrictions of movement. Any kind of help is needed in Gaza." Mahmoud Ahmad, Director of a Community Centre for children in Gaza supported by Save the Children.

Save the Children Response

Save the Children is providing packages of basic supplies to vulnerable families in Gaza. We are currently distributing household kits including food, hygiene materials and games for children to 450 families in the Al-Shoka area of southern Gaza.

We will expand these distributions over the coming months to between 1500 and 4000 families in Bet Hanoun and Bet Lahia in the north. We are also providing emergency education supplies for children to ensure that they receive some education support both in preparation for the coming school year and to sustain their psychological well-being. Save the Children is currently supporting at least 2000 families, which may increase as the situation progresses.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How is the escalating conflict in the Middle East affecting children?

In Lebanon thousands of children and families have fled their homes and are now taking shelter in schools and office buildings. Approximately 500,000 people are estimated to be newly displaced in the country, 200 000 of whom are children.

Others in Gaza are trapped in their homes without electricity and running water, unable to meet basic food, medical, and hygiene needs. The evolving crisis is putting hundreds of thousands of children at risk of serious injury, emotional distress and malnutrition, and is preventing them from continuing their schooling.

What is Save the Children doing to respond to the needs of these children?

Save the Children Alliance is responding in Gaza and southern Lebanon. See above for details on the response to date. However, humanitarian access is a major concern. Bombings have destroyed all major roads and many secondary roads, making the transportation of normal foodstuffs and medicine difficult. To enable us to reach the most vulnerable children, Save the Children is calling for a humanitarian ceasefire to allow humanitarian agencies to access the area and for people to move to safety and reach hospitals.

Is Save the Children responding to the needs of children affected by the conflict in Israel?

We are expanding our response to our programs in Nazareth, including psychosocial support. However, in any global humanitarian crisis, Save the Children responds where there is the greatest severity and magnitude of need for children and where communities do not have the capacity to respond. In Israel, the government has excellent systems already in place to respond broadly throughout the country to the urgent and immediate needs of children and families.

How long has Save the Children been working in the Middle East?

Save the Children has worked in the Middle East since 1949, when health services were provided to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Today we support a wide variety of programmes in Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Jordan and the occupied Palestinian territories. We aim to change for the better the lives of children with disabilities, refugee children and economically destitute children. Our work in recent years has been focused on responding to emergency needs in the occupied Palestinian territories and responding to other emergencies, such as the current crisis, as they arise.

Save the Children is appealing for US\$5 million to help the children of the Middle East: 0800 167 168 or www.savethechildren.org.nz