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REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF GAZA: IMPLEMENTATION OF 186 EX/DECISION 35

SUMMARY

This document is presented in compliance with 186 EX/Decision 35. It summarizes progress made by UNESCO since the 186th session of the Executive Board in providing assistance to the reconstruction and development of the Gaza Strip.

There are no financial or administrative implications.

No decision is proposed.

1. This document presents an update on the UNESCO response to the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip since the 186th session of the Executive Board. It covers the period from February to July 2011.
2. During the period under review, UNESCO continues to contribute to the United Nations humanitarian response in Gaza. Interventions remain focused on the educational needs of the children and youth, as well as on the safety and promotion of the freedom of expression of local media professionals. In the field of culture, UNESCO continues to contribute to the protection of cultural heritage sites at risk.
3. All activities were implemented through the Gaza Antenna Office, which is situated in the UNDP compound in Gaza City, and falls under the direct supervision of the UNESCO Ramallah Office.

EDUCATION

4. The emergency education programme, which started in 2009, is ongoing. Over the past six months, activities focused on continued support for higher education institutions, as well as assistance to some of the most vulnerable primary and secondary schools in the Gaza Strip, where an integrated programme aimed at enhancing the quality of education and making the school environment safer is implemented.

5. These activities were made possible thanks to financial contributions from Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser of Qatar and from the Islamic Development Bank (the latter within the scope of the Programme of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf for the Reconstruction of the Gaza Strip).

6. The following activities were implemented;

- (a) **Support to higher education.** Addressing the increasing number of drop-outs from Universities in Gaza, partial fee-waiver grants were provided to support access to education for vulnerable students entering the second semester 2010/2011 in four universities¹ across the Gaza Strip. Approximately 200 students coming from difficult socio-economic backgrounds directly benefited from this activity.

Much needed material and equipment is being provided to the science faculties of two universities in Gaza. After the procurement assessment was completed and bids and tenders were processed, the delivery and installation of the material and equipment are well in progress. It is expected that this activity will be completed by the end of the summer, so as to directly benefit the students starting from the next academic semester.

- (b) **Training on Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards.** Building on the capacity development and training activities undertaken in 2010, support continued for the INEE community of practice in Gaza as well as the Arab region more generally. This included direct support for the translation, distribution and promotion of the revised minimum standards into Arabic, the organizational support and participation in the regional launch of the revised INEE tools in Amman, Jordan on 17 May 2011. This event brought together more than 70 education practitioners and policy makers in the region, including the Ministry of Education representatives, UNICEF, UNESCO, IRC, Save the Children and many local and regional stakeholders to celebrate the official release of four of INEE's revised tools in Arabic.

In addition, UNESCO continues to promote the use of and adherence to the INEE standards through its education programmes in Gaza. The new component of the c-DRR project is particularly noteworthy, as it is uniquely focused on school based applications of the standards. More information about this project figures in the paragraph below.

- (c) **Schools as safe zones.** Activities for this project entered their second phase in April 2011. The pilot crisis-Disaster Risk Reduction (c-DRR) Programme which was originally targeting 12 government schools located in the vulnerable, access restricted areas close to the Israeli border was expanded to another 10 vulnerable schools. Teachers and students of the schools, which were identified through the database of the UNSC Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism for Children Affected by Armed Conflict, are currently participating in trainings on first aid, safety awareness and good practice, psychosocial support, and human rights monitoring and reporting. All trainings for these schools, as well as the original 12 schools will be completed by the end of July 2011. Moreover, an additional two activities have been introduced for all 22 schools now participating in the programme. These comprise school-based trainings on the INEE minimum standards (focused on the development of school-based contingency plans), and the introduction of an SMS warning system for each of the schools. The latter will allow for timely messages focused on the safety and security of students during difficult periods to be transmitted among the 22 educational communities.

¹ Al Azhar University, Al Aqsa University, Al Quds University and the Islamic University of Gaza.

7. In addition, under the purview of promoting schools as safe zones, UNESCO commissioned, and is currently finalizing, a mapping of the right to education in the occupied Palestinian territory. As part of this initiative, training workshops were organised to raise awareness of the human rights framework for education. One workshop was held in Gaza and one in Ramallah. The workshop in Gaza was well attended and generated significant discussion. One of the tangible outputs of this workshop has been the decision of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Gaza to commence monthly reporting focused on the Right to Education.

8. Operational progress has been discussed with donors during an April 2011 meeting with representatives of Her Highnesses Office in Doha, Qatar, as well as a meeting in Amman with representatives from the Islamic Development Bank. The need for continued support through emergency education activities was stressed on both occasions.

9. Finally, on the occasion of the Education for All Global Action Week from 2 to 8 May 2011, several activities were held in Gaza. The theme of “It’s a Right, Make it Right: Education for Girls and Women Now!” was promoted through a photo exhibition, theatre performances, and a conference on Education and Armed Conflict in the occupied Palestinian territory. Thus the EFA Global Action Week was an excellent opportunity to present the 2011 *Education For All Global Monitoring Report* in Gaza and debate on education and armed conflict in the occupied Palestinian territory. The conference was implemented in conjunction with UN Women and The Red Crescent Society. Universities in Gaza were encouraged to nominate three success stories for women and girls, which were then publicized and distributed in brochure format.

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

10. Thanks to a generous contribution from Finland, UNESCO’s partnership has continued with four local organizations focused on promoting freedom of expression, safety of journalists and empowering women in media, to support the implementation of a number of activities.

11. A training on stress management, psychosocial support and mental health (duration four days) and first aid (duration one day), was organized in March 2011 for 30 Palestinian media professionals in Gaza. This was followed in June 2011 by safety training for 51 Palestinian journalists, photographers and cameramen from 33 different media outlets in Gaza as well as the West Bank.

12. Other activities have focused on promoting freedom of expression through monitoring, reporting, peer support networking and legal aid for media professionals (implemented by the Palestinian Centre for Development and Media Freedoms). Specifically during the reporting period, an internship programme through Birzeit University Media Development Centre was initiated. Twenty female journalists in Gaza will benefit from new professional and capacity building opportunities, to be implemented starting at the end of July 2011.

13. Finally, in the context of the IPDC programme, a training on video documentary filming was organized in April and June, benefitting 15 filmmakers in Gaza.

CULTURE

14. Significant progress towards the protection and emergency consolidation of the Byzantine site of **Tell Umm Amer (Saint Hilarion Monastery)** was achieved in cooperation with the French Consulate General in Jerusalem, the *École Biblique archéologique française de Jérusalem* and the Islamic University in Gaza. The site, located close to Nuseirat, Gaza, is listed in the “Inventory of Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites of potential Outstanding Universal Value in Palestine” of the Palestinian Authority and, as such, is a priority for Palestinian heritage conservation and enhancement. Emergency protective and consolidation measures aimed at mitigating the impact of natural hazards – heavy rain, unstable sand soil – on the state of conservation of the

archaeological remains were conducted, including on the site's mosaics. The activity was carried out with funding from the French Consulate General in Jerusalem and the UNESCO Regular Programme. Additional funding was mobilized from the Swiss Federal Office for Culture for the further protection of the site against natural hazards, as well as looting.

15. This activity also has an educational component as 10 students in various cultural heritage disciplines at the Islamic University in Gaza were offered an opportunity for practical training in conservation practices on the site. The Annual Conference on Cultural Heritage organized by the same university in February 2011, was the opportunity for the students to present their work to a wider audience of researchers, practitioners and students, at a session dedicated specifically to the site of Tell Umm Amer.