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Community Action for Health: Gemeinsam für Gesundheit

Terre des hommes Foundation, Palestine Gaza Nutrition Project

The Terre des hommes Foundation and its partner Ard Al Insan recently completed a nutrition project in the Gaza Strip which coincided with the withdrawal of Israeli forces in September 2005.

1.2 million Palestinians live in Gaza and make it one of the most densely populated places on earth. An Israeli controlled security fence surrounds the entire Strip. The most serious deterioration of the living conditions in the Gaza Strip began after the onset of the second Intifada in September 2000, which was accompanied by severe Israeli measures and further restrictions on the movement of the population, not only outside the Gaza Strip, but also within the strip itself. The total closure on Gaza stopped the daily flow of more than 120,000 Palestinian workers to Israel.

An assessment of the health and nutritional status of children in the Gaza strip has revealed a very close relationship between the continued deterioration of the economic conditions of the population and the health status of families, especially children. Therefore Terre des hommes and Ard Al Insan conducted a joint emergency project focusing, in a first step, on the treatment of a higher number of malnourished and anaemic children thorough the four permanent Ard Al Insan clinics in the Gaza Strip. The project staff rotated among the clinics of Gaza City, Deir El Balah, Khanyounis and Rafah for the medical screening and treatment of new cases arriving.

Community based activities involved village health workers conducting home visits in various areas and referring less than five years old malnourished and anaemic children to the four clinics. The community team was also responsible for the follow-up of the visits, for food distribution, ambulatory health and nutritional assessments.

A database was prepared to register medical records of children admitted to the program (anthropometric measurements, haemoglobin recording, associated diseases, feeding patterns). And medical records were updated at each follow-up visit. The database is used to monitor the treatment by detecting “passive” mothers, children not compliant with the treatment and children who were not taken to the clinics after the visits. In the first half of the project,

approximately 7600 children between 0 and 59 months suffering from nutritional disorders received medical treatment and iron supplementation according to their degree of malnutrition or anaemia.

Country/region: Palestine, Gaza

Duration: Phases I, II, III: 1998-2004; Phase IV: 2004-2005

Swiss Organisation: Fondation Terre des hommes

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Information: A full report with detailed analysis of the data base and the findings was published in December 2005.

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