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## **UNICEF provides shelter and sanitation to families and children displaced by conflict in Libya**



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UNICEF WASH Specialist Imad Eldin Hasan and displaced Libyan children play football at a camp in Darnah.

**By Rebecca Fordham**

BENGAZI, Libya, 25 May 2011 – Young boys are playing football in the yard and a group of girls are skipping to ring-a-roses in the far corner while their parents look on. A fourteen-year-old boy in a wheelchair is sitting in the shade talking to a group of friends.

With no end in sight to the conflict, these children and their families are staying at a camp for displaced people in Darnah on the Mediterranean coast of eastern Libya. They were forced to leave Brega and Ajdabiya because of the fighting, which has engulfed their home towns.

### **Meeting immediate needs**

“There was bombing near our house and we could hear shooting,” says Nada, 8, who fled her home in Brega with her family when their house came under fire.

People displaced by the conflict are registered at Darnah by the Libyan Scouts, before being hosted by community members or placed in camps, where they stay until it is safe for them to return to their homes.

“We were received very well here and we feel at home. The latrines are clean enough and the general environment is good,” says Yousef Omar, father of Nada, and a businessman in Ajdabiya. “We have solid waste disposal facilities and the bins are located nearby.”

The solidarity of the hosting community is evident from the food and other supplies the Omar family and other displaced people have received from the local population. UNICEF is coordinating Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) activities as part of the humanitarian emergency response to the on-going conflict in Libya.



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Children displaced by the conflict play at a camp in Darnah in eastern Libya.

Hygiene kits are being distributed in the camp and messages prepared to raise awareness of good sanitation and hygiene practices, such as hand-washing, so that the communities are better able to care for their families in these difficult circumstances.

“The coordination with local partners is to ensure the operation and maintenance of sanitation and hygiene facilities and services in the camps, while improving the quality,” says UNICEF WASH Specialist Imad Eldin Hasan.

UNICEF is covering sanitation needs for 50,000 displaced people in the eastern part of Libya. In opposition controlled areas, water supply is adequate, but it is an on-going logistical operation to ensure that people there, particularly women and children, have access to hygienic facilities.

### **Contingency planning**

The Great Man Made River – an underground pipe that funnels water from water basins in the south east and south west of the country – supplies drinking water to many of the coastal towns.

Shortages of fuel and chemicals for the pumping engines and desalination systems are reported and could affect water supply in the coming months, although access to water has reportedly returned to much of the city of Misrata.

Access to the western part of Libya remains challenging. Further information is needed about WASH needs in the Nafusa Mountains and the humanitarian community continue to call for access to the region.

As Libyan crisis continues, contingency plans are evolving in order to ensure that UNICEF and partners can meet the WASH needs of displaced people as they arrive in towns across Libya, and at border camps in Egypt and Tunisia.