

A YEAR OF TEARS

12 months of war on children

Three children looking out a bus window, in the city of Rafah, south of the Gaza Strip.
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Situation analysis

One year of war marked by killing, injury, abduction, displacement, disease, malnutrition, dehydration, constant fear and profound trauma, have brutally disrupted the lives of children and their families across the State of Palestine, in Israel and in the region.

In Gaza, at least 14,000¹ children have reportedly been killed, many more injured, while thousands are likely under the rubble, and an estimated 17,000 others are unaccompanied or separated from their caregivers. More than 55 displacement orders remain in effect, covering up to 86 per cent of the Gaza Strip. Children have lost access to quality healthcare, education, and other services. All children are now in need of mental health and psychosocial support. One year into the war, children's most basic needs remain unmet. Persistent restrictions on the entry of humanitarian aid and commercial commodities, and the inability of humanitarians to safely reach all children and families, have rendered the Gaza population acutely food insecure². All 335,000 children under five are at high risk of malnutrition.

The attacks on health facilities, relentless displacement of almost all of the population multiple times, overcrowding conditions and the collapse of electricity as well as water provision have created a public health catastrophe. Waterborne diseases, including diarrhea, hepatitis A and polio, have been thriving in these highly unsanitary conditions, threatening the lives of children, especially children under five. Poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) was detected in Gaza in July 2024, after 25 years of absence.

Regular attacks on schools – which have been serving as shelters for displaced civilians – and continued displacement orders have rendered access to regular, full-time education impossible for over 658,760 school children in Gaza. One year of classroom learning has already been lost, and education will not be able to restart in this academic year either. Children's education is projected to be set back by up to five years.³

¹ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/stories-loss-and-grief-least-17000-children-are-estimated-be-unaccompanied-or>

² <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1157985/?iso3=PSE>

³ <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/notes/ongoing-war-gaza-will-set-children-and-young-people's-education-back-five-years>

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, extensive militarized operations by Israeli forces, coupled with spiking settler violence and large scale demolitions have markedly increased children's exposure to conflict related violence, grave violations and displacement. In the one year following 7 October 2023, there has been a 209% increase in the number of Palestinian children killed in conflict related violence in the West Bank, compared to the same period the year before (7 October 2022-6 October 2023). More than one thousand Palestinian children have been injured, almost half by live ammunition. Over 65 per cent of conflict-related killings and violence in the West Bank have happened in the northern governorates of Jenin, Nablus, Qalqilia, Tulbas and Tulkarem. Widespread access restrictions and closure regimes have been impacting children's access to basic services.

On 7 October 2023, 37 children were killed in attacks in Israel and 36 children were abducted into the Gaza Strip. The war that has followed these attacks continues to inflict unimaginable suffering on children throughout the region. This has to end now. A ceasefire is long overdue.



Children Walk through damaged roads and streets in the Nur Shams refugee camp, northern West Bank.
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Impact of war on children (as of 6th of October 2024)

14,500

Palestinian children reportedly killed (Gaza)

24,000

Palestinian children injured (Gaza, as of April 2024)

1,554,700

Children in need of humanitarian assistance

990,000

Palestinian children displaced in Gaza

17,000

Estimated unaccompanied and Separated children in Gaza

1,106

Attacks on health in the Gaza Strip

658,760

Children out of learning in the Gaza Strip⁴

87.4 %

School buildings in the Gaza Strip have been directly hit or damaged

500,400

Children in Gaza affected by malnutrition (Projection 2024)

37

Children killed in Israel (7 October)

36

Children in Israel taken hostage in Gaza (2 remaining in captivity)

2

Israeli children killed (West Bank, including East Jerusalem)

6

Israeli children injured (West Bank, including East Jerusalem)

50,000

Israeli children displaced

170

Palestinian children killed (West Bank, including East Jerusalem)

1,047

Palestinian children injured (West Bank, including East Jerusalem)

85

Palestinian children in administrative detention



Madeline is a mother of 5 from Gaza who lost her husband. This assistance made a huge difference, especially since I lost my husband. This cash helps me and my family a lot.
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UNICEF programme response

As Gaza's cities and infrastructure have been almost entirely destroyed, lives shattered and the population forced into displacement and aid dependency, UNICEF's programming has become a lifeline for countless families. Through multi-sectoral approach in the areas of child protection, education, health, nutrition, humanitarian cash, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), UNICEF interventions have made the difference between life and death for thousands of the most vulnerable children. For premature and newborn babies. For malnourished children. For children separated from their families. For children with lost limbs. For caregivers who could no longer feed their families. But UNICEF's presence in the Gaza Strip is not just about survival; it's about nurturing hope and rebuilding futures, one child at a time. UNICEF is focused on the future of children by providing pathways for a return to learning, by supporting basic trade through humanitarian cash transfers, while restoring people's dignity. But there is so much more to do. The enabling environment to do so is not there. Gaza is the most dangerous place for humanitarian workers to operate in. We need a sustainable ceasefire immediately and a set of longstanding asks and requirements to be met. We need a ceasefire now.

UNICEF's lasting impact for the protection of children in Gaza

Resumption and maintaining immunization services as part of primary health care

Through the first year of the war, UNICEF played a leading role in resuming and maintaining immunization. In November 2023, UNICEF transported available vaccines from the central cold chain warehouse in the North to the South to adapt to the large-scale displacement of population. Thereafter regular procurement of routine vaccines, consumables as well as vaccine carriers, ice boxes or refrigerated trucks was ensured and delivered to the Gaza Strip avoiding any major stock out. Following the detection of the poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) in July 2024 in Gaza's sewage system – a critical public health threat, especially for children – UNICEF and other health partners implemented a vaccination campaign reaching 559,000 children early September, or an estimated 95 per cent of eligible children at governorate level.



Tamer 9-year-old walks through the rubble of his destroyed neighborhood in Khan Younis, southern the Gaza Strip.
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Early detection and treatment of malnutrition

Global acute malnutrition was never a concern for children under 5 in the Gaza Strip. The beginning of the hostilities and the restrictions imposed on the delivery of humanitarian aid and commercial goods, have severely impacted the lives of the population, especially children, in the Gaza Strip. As the cluster lead agency on nutrition, UNICEF set up the foundation of a nutrition programme scaling up the screening and acute malnutrition treatment through a wide range of partners. Since the beginning of the conflict, nearly 16,500 children 6 to 59 months with moderate wasting and more than 4,600 children 6 to 59 months with severe wasting were admitted for treatment. In total more than 314,000 children benefitted from nutrition services, saving the lives of the most vulnerable among them and helping avoid life-long effects for all.



Resuming learning opportunities

658,760 school age children in the Gaza Strip lost one academic year since the beginning of the war. Resuming learning is a crucial step for their psychological recovery and return to formal education for a generation of children who – after COVID-19 and escalations of hostilities affecting Gaza in 2021, 2022 and 2023 – had already suffered from major disruptions to their education. In collaboration with partners, UNICEF supported the resumption of learning through the establishment of temporary learning spaces (TLS), the mobilization of teachers and the provision of teaching and educational materials together with water points and sanitation units ensuring a minimum of quality learning. In total since the resumption of learning, 64,700 children accessed formal or non-formal education, including early learning, while more than 83,520 children received individual learning materials. These TLS also serve as a platform to provide additional services, such as child protection and health and nutrition services.

Promotion of care, mental health and psychosocial well-being

Protection risks to children in the Gaza Strip are many and have increased over time. With limited to non-functioning child protection and social services systems, UNICEF has focused its support on prevention, including of family separation, and has helped identify at-risk children and their caregivers, and provided them with relevant emergency services. More than 314,100 children and caregivers accessed community-based mental health and psychosocial support and 820,000 children and caregivers reached by MHPSS messages and awareness activities on child protection risks. Furthermore, life-saving support was provided to child survivors of violence – including gender-based violence, children with acute conflict-related injuries and disabilities, children at serious risk of harm or death and children without parental care. In total, 35 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) were reunited with their parents/caregivers, while UNICEF together with WHO works on enabling the medical evacuation of child patients with urgent medical conditions.



Maintaining continuous access to safe water

As a major actor in the water sector, UNICEF played a key role in sustaining and increasing gradually the water production through the support of the repair and maintenance of water systems, the delivery of 3.3 million liters of fuel for wells, desalination plants and generators for mobile water desalination plants as well as the distribution of water treatment chemicals. After all energy sources were cut off from Gaza in October 2023, this desalination plant's output was reduced to 10 to 15% of its capacity – using backup generators. Through advocacy efforts, UNICEF managed to reestablish the direct electric feeder line to the plant, providing an important boost to water production in this part of the Gaza Strip. Up to 2.6 million population benefitted from safe water for drinking and domestic needs at one point in time. Emergency water trucking was supported in IDPs shelters disconnected from the water distribution network, while access to sanitation and vital hygiene supplies, such as soap and menstrual hygiene products benefited more than 1,100,000 people.

Innovative digital humanitarian cash programme

Leveraging its pre-existing humanitarian cash transfer programme, UNICEF scaled it up reaching – one year later - almost every second person in the Gaza Strip. The humanitarian cash programme benefitted a wide range of vulnerable groups, including 6,041 households with children with disability and more than 34,000 pregnant and breastfeeding mothers providing them with a source of income to cater for their basic needs. As a result of the fast-evolving situation and the challenges faced in terms of cash liquidity availability, UNICEF has shown agility in adapting its programme to channel the cash digitally via e-wallet allowing through this modality to continue to reach hundreds of thousands vulnerable families.

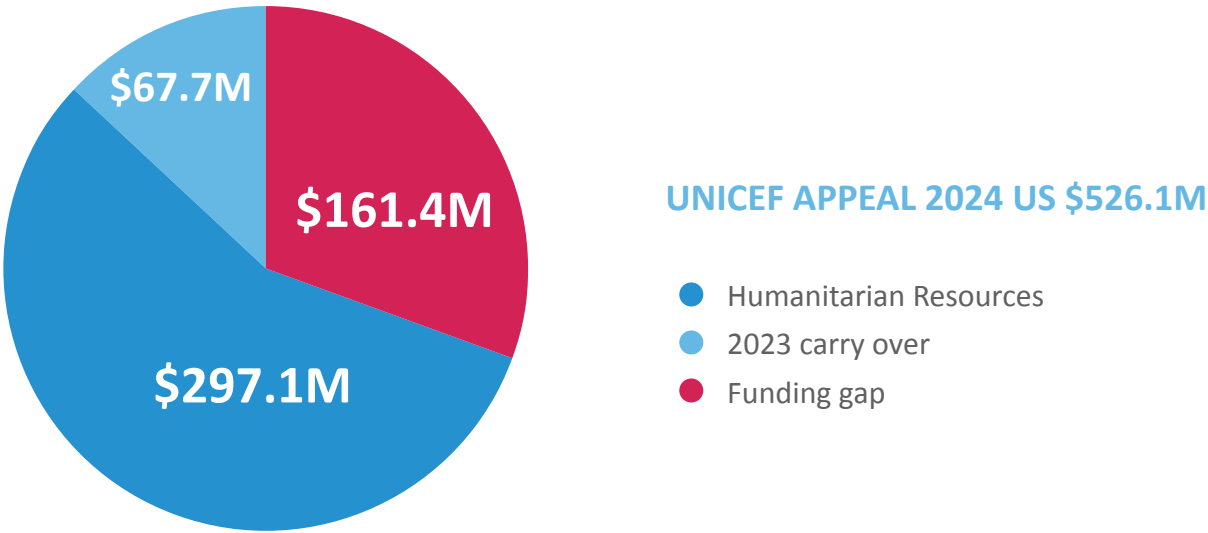
The programme also further expanded to include incentive payments for frontlines workers to ensure basic services are not interrupted.

In addition, UNICEF is the cluster lead agency for WASH, Nutrition, Education and Child Protection Area of Responsibility, leading on the coordination on these thematic areas.

Much more children need to be reached with clean water, health services, nutrition, access to education and protection services and a sustainable ceasefire is the only way to do that. Children and their families have suffered beyond imagination. They are exhausted and deeply traumatized. The road to healing and reconstruction will be long.

Resources required to continue UNICEF’s support for children

FUNDING STATUS(IN US\$)**



Funding available includes; funds received in the current year; carry-over from the previous year;and repurposed funds with agreement from donors