



Children searching through the rubble of damaged houses in the Gaza Strip

Reporting Period: 31 May 2023

State of Palestine

Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2

Escalation of Hostilities

Highlights

- The escalation of hostilities in and around the Gaza Strip has affected all children and communities, leading to casualties, extensive damage, and worsening living conditions. Before the escalation, many residents of the Gaza Strip already required humanitarian assistance.
- The mental health and psychosocial well-being of children and caregivers have been severely impacted by the escalation, exacerbating pre-existing challenges. Children show signs of distress, while caregivers seek support amid economic strains. Rehabilitation of damaged education facilities and housing units is urgently needed, along with increased support for public health services and water and sanitation infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. The West Bank has also experienced ongoing tension and military operations, resulting in casualties.
- UNICEF has already released prepositioned medical supplies, including drugs and consumables, to support the health system in the Gaza Strip. UNICEF has also supported the immediate repair and restoration of access to WASH services for more than 80,000 people. Additionally, UNICEF is providing educational materials and recreational kits for more than 2,500 people. Psychosocial support services are ongoing and plans for summer activities are underway. Through its Humanitarian Cash Transfer Programme, UNICEF is collaborating with other partners to assist affected households.
- The State of Palestine Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) for 2023, issued by UNICEF, requires US\$ 20.3 million to expand life-saving services for women and children in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Despite generous contributions, the appeal still faces a significant funding gap of 79 per cent. UNICEF emphasizes the urgent needs of children in areas such as child protection, mental health, education, water, sanitation, and health and highlights the need for re-prioritization and replenishment of emergency supplies.

Situation in Numbers

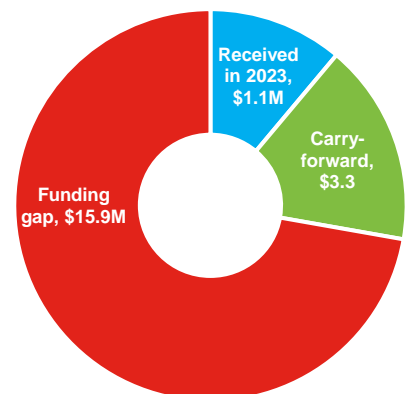
1.1 million children in need of humanitarian assistance

2.1 million people in need (OCHA Jan 2023)

UNICEF Appeal 2023

US\$ 20.3 million

Funding Status (in US\$)



UNICEF's Response and Funding Status

Sector	Requirements (USD)	Funds available			Funding gap	
		Humanitarian resources received in 2023	Other resources used in 2023	Resources available from 2022 (Carry-over)	\$	%
HEALTH & NUTRITION	1,970,000	245,000	0	234,764	1,490,236	76%
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	6,300,000	157,981	0	629,647	5,561,960	88%
Child Protection, GBVIE & PESA	4,057,240	657,382	0	462,963	2,936,895	72%
EDUCATION	3,800,000	0	0	1,142,966	2,657,034	70%
Cross-Sectoral (SBC, RCCE and AAP)	100,000	14,376	0	50,146	38,961	39%
Cluster coordination	1,040,000	50,000	0	29,000	961,000	92%
Social Protection & Cash Transfers	3,061,080	0	0	727,084	2,333,996	76%
Total	20,328,320	1,124,739	0	3,276,570	15,980,082	79%

Funding available includes carry-over and funds received in the current year.

Funding Overview and Partnerships

The State of Palestine Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) for 2023, issued by UNICEF in December 2022, requires US\$ 20.3 million. The primary objective of this appeal is to expand life-saving services for women and children in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. UNICEF sincerely appreciates all public and private donors for their generous contributions thus far. However, the 2023 HAC still faces a substantial funding gap of 79 percent. In close coordination with respective Clusters, OCHA, and partners, UNICEF highlights the funding gaps in its ongoing HAC and HRP projects, with a focus on prioritizing the urgent needs of affected children in child protection, mental health, and psychosocial support, remedial education, summer activities, water, sanitation, and health. Urgent re-prioritization of existing interventions is required to address these needs and replenish essential emergency supplies as a result of the recent escalation of hostilities in and around the Gaza Strip. Failure to secure sufficient funding would result in thousands of people being deprived of access to adequate water and sanitation and thousands of children of the necessary psychosocial support and education services required to overcome the learning loss they have experienced.

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

The situation in the State of Palestine (SoP) continues to be dire, with political instability and increasing levels of violence throughout 2022 and 2023, compounding the protracted protection crisis. The May 2023 escalation of hostilities in and around the Gaza Strip led to casualties and extensive damage, further worsening the already dire situation for children and their families, already deeply scarred by three major escalations in the last 24 months. The escalation has led to the death of six Palestinian children, including four girls and two boys, while another 64 were reported injured. Overall, in 2023, 26 Palestinian children (7 in the Gaza Strip and 19 in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem) and 4 Israeli children were killed in conflict-related violence.¹

Despite the current state of relative calm and the presence of a fragile ceasefire, the lasting impacts of the recent events are still being experienced.

According to the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) before the recent escalation, 1.3 million or 58 per cent of the Gaza Strip residents needed humanitarian assistance, with 29 per cent of households categorized as in 'catastrophic' or 'extreme' conditions, compared with 10 per cent in 2022. The Gaza Strip was already grappling with enduring mental health difficulties among numerous children and caregivers, compounded by a lack of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) and limited access for children. The latest escalation has intensified the pre-existing MHPSS needs, giving rise to considerable apprehension about re-traumatization among existing cases and the overall trauma and psychosocial distress faced by the population. It is anticipated that regions severely impacted by the conflict will face heightened levels of mental health challenges, exacerbating the severity of the situation.²

Field visits conducted by UNICEF and partners to families affected by the escalation in the Gaza Strip have shown that children are bearing the brunt of the escalation, with many of them showing signs of distress, hyperactivity, violence, bed wetting, and sleeping problems. Caregivers are also distressed and seeking support for themselves, especially those with strained economic situations, which reflects negatively on their ability to support their children. Psychosocial and financial support for families impacted by the escalation continues to be needed, especially those living in remote areas. This needs to be well coordinated among the various working groups under the Protection Cluster, as well as other relevant clusters.

While conducting field visits, it was noticed that certain families showed a strong inclination toward providing caregivers with the necessary strategies and tools to better assist their children during difficult times. These valuable skills and information could be incorporated into existing positive parenting programmes.

According to the Education Cluster's Rapid Needs Assessment, nearly 49 education facilities, consisting of 28 schools (21 public schools, 6 UNRWA schools, and one private school) and 21 kindergartens (KGs), have been damaged. Out of these, six facilities have suffered major damage, while the rest have sustained moderate damage. The five-day closure of schools during the escalation has only worsened the already existing learning loss. The ongoing crisis has also adversely affected the mental health and well-being of children, teachers, and families.

The Gaza Strip is already facing a shortage of classrooms, leading to more than half of the schools having multiple shifts to accommodate more students. This reduces daily learning hours, and the damaged schools have only added to

¹ OCHA Protection of Civilians data as of 31 March 2022.

² According to the 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), more than 532,909 children in the Gaza Strip require MHPSS and child protection services. Data from MHPSS assessments conducted after the escalations in May 2021 and August 2022, as part of the MHPSS Working Group's efforts, revealed that slightly over half (54.6 per cent) of the surveyed children exhibited below-average levels of well-being, with 45.8 per cent displaying average levels. Furthermore, approximately 36 per cent of the surveyed children reported experiencing moderate to severe levels of anxiety. In general, children in the North governorate displayed higher levels of stress and anxiety compared to children in other governorates, likely due to the area's increased exposure to escalations and conflict. Moreover, girls demonstrated more noticeable signs of distress and anxiety than their male counterparts.

the problem. It is essential to urgently rehabilitate the damaged classrooms to make them safe and accessible to children.

Numerous housing units in the Gaza Strip have been destroyed or significantly damaged, with some being rendered uninhabitable. This has impacted hundreds of families and thousands of individuals, with many being displaced from their homes. Reportedly, 2,700 households had their houses partially damaged, and 250 households destroyed; these are refugee and non-refugee families.

This escalation of violence has placed even greater strain on the already struggling public health system in the Gaza Strip. Chronic shortages of health commodities and the ongoing violence have made it extremely challenging to provide essential care to the population, especially maternal, newborn, and child health services.

The WASH service providers in the Gaza Strip need more financial and technical capacities to respond to the WASH needs during emergencies, even more considering that the operation and maintenance of WASH facilities is a recurrent problem.

The escalation has further impacted the availability of water and sanitation services for the population in the Gaza Strip. Three water wells in Gaza City, Beit Hanon, and Khan Younis, as well as various water and sewer pipelines, suffered minor damages. This includes damages to the facilities' buildings, electromechanical systems, and pipes.

Moreover, the scarcity of power supply resulting from the depletion of fuel for the operation of the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) has disrupted the normal functioning of water and sanitation facilities. This includes water wells, sewer pumping stations, and desalination plants, significantly impacting the provision of water and sanitation services for the people residing in the Gaza Strip.

In the West Bank, tension has continued, including military operations in Nablus and Jenin, resulting in casualties and injuries. Repeated demolitions, settlement expansion, loss of access to grazing land, and settler violence continue to cause concern about the coercive environment, which, together with the loss of homes and access to lands, generate more humanitarian needs.³

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Health

UNICEF has already released prepositioned medical supplies, including drugs and consumables, to the Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip to support the health system in better responding to the health needs of around 12,000 people for at least one month.

UNICEF is procuring additional essential drugs and consumables as part of its system strengthening and emergency preparedness response. A process started in Aug 2022 and pending additional clearances and approvals.

UNICEF is closely coordinating with the Ministry of Health and the Health Cluster to mobilize additional resources and contributions to address other needs.

WASH

UNICEF completed the prepositioning of 50,000 liters of fuel in Khan Younis, Dier AlBalah, and Buriej to support the emergency operation for 120 critical water and sanitation facilities serving around 700,000 people to maintain the minimum WASH services in the Gaza Strip during emergencies.

Building on the WASH cluster and CMWU report on WASH-damaged facilities, UNICEF has released – from its prepositioned stock - water and sanitation spare parts (water and sewer pipes, maintenance hole covers and bases, water hoses, repair collar bands, and tapping saddles) that were used to fix damages affected WASH networks in Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahia, Jabalia, Gaza, Nussirat and Rafah, benefiting more than 80,000 people

The WASH Cluster contributed to the HRP prioritization exercise to define the required WASH response to maintain the WASH services in the Gaza Strip. The prioritized interventions are about the operation and maintenance support for the critical WASH facilities in the Gaza Strip, with a budget of US\$1.7 million.

The WASH Cluster and UNICEF are advocating for additional resources for the prepositioning of sufficient quantities of spare parts and consumables for the emergency operation of the water and sanitation facilities and to ensure a minimum stock of chemicals required for the chlorination and production of water in the desalination plants to avoid public health risks affecting the entire population of the Gaza Strip.

³ Palestinian community compelled to relocate amid Israeli settlement practices – OCHA – May 2023

Education

UNICEF has prepositioned essential education in emergency stationery kits adequate for 34,000 children, ready for distribution. These supplies will help the most vulnerable children to continue learning and access educational opportunities for immediate response. Discussions with the Ministry of Education are ongoing to provide age-specific summer activities to keep children engaged and provide mental health and psychosocial support. The children in grades 1- 6 will be reached through Fun learning days' activities, while those in grades 7-11 will be reached through Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) clubs. The summer programmes will integrate play-based learning activities into recreational programs to mitigate learning losses experienced by children and to support their preparedness to return to school when schools re-open for the new academic year.

UNICEF's response will focus on the following:

- Provision of essential education in emergencies teaching and learning materials to the affected children
- Support learning and recreational programmes during the summer break to keep the children engaged, mitigate learning loss through fun learning activities and support their well-being.
- Provide remedial education and catch-up classes to children to enhance the acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy skills and mitigate the risk of school drop out of school.

Child Protection

Case managers and counsellors working within UNICEF-supported family centres and five Governorate Protection Focal Points provided at least 814 children and caregivers in the Gaza Strip with virtual psychosocial first aid services during the escalation days. After the ceasefire, face-to-face services are provided, including psychosocial first aid, recreational activities, case management, and PSS services, reaching 1,563 children (48% girls) and 742 caregivers (74% females) through the family centers and community outreach. Children detected during community outreach to be in need of further protection services are referred to the nearest family center or other service providers. Life-saving awareness-raising messages on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) were also delivered to children and caregivers.

In close coordination with the CP AoR and the Ministry of Social Development, UNICEF is currently distributing 298 psychosocial kits to affected families, including those whose houses sustained partial or total damages. Similar kits were distributed after the August 2022 escalation and proved to be very helpful in engaging children with caregivers and supporting their wellbeing during the recent escalation, taking their minds off the hostilities and relieving their stress. UNICEF is planning structured outreach activities to areas most affected by the recent escalation, which will maximize coverage and serve as a detection platform to identify children and caregivers needing further support.

UNICEF continues strengthening mechanisms for monitoring grave violations against children to inform UNICEF advocacy and programmes.

The need to expand outreach activities, including mobile teams, remains high to ensure the provision of structured and specialized Child Protection, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services.

Social Policy and Humanitarian Cash Transfers

Under the Gaza Cash Working Group, the UNICEF Social Policy and Humanitarian Cash Transfer programme is collaborating closely with other agencies to evaluate the needs of the 2,950 households directly or indirectly affected by the recent escalation. These households consist of both refugees and non-refugees, and efforts are being made to provide assistance to each group accordingly. UNRWA will extend support to the refugees, while UNICEF will focus on supporting the non-refugee population. Ongoing coordination among the agencies ensures a collaborative and mutually reinforcing response.

Social Behaviour (SBC), Community Engagement, Prevention of Sexual Abuse & Accountability

UNICEF has taken a proactive approach in utilizing its expertise in Social Behaviour Change (SBC) to lead the national task force of Risk Communication and Community Engagement. The office has made significant investments in advancing its portfolios on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), addressing potential risks within its operations and misconduct by the personnel involved in programme delivery. Through close collaboration with stakeholders and partners, UNICEF has institutionalized AAP systems to enhance community and children's access to feedback platforms, integrating their perspectives into decision-making and programme design processes. To ensure appropriate and effective responses, UNICEF has worked with stakeholders and partners to implement accountability frameworks through community engagement, transparent information sharing, and feedback mechanisms. The organization utilizes three feedback channels, including an Inter-Agency hotline, an NGO hotline for cases related to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and a UNICEF email address. Standard operating procedures and data handling procedures have been established, and processes are in place to handle sensitive cases related to SEA or gender-based violence. UNICEF also plays a leading role in establishing the

interagency PSEAH Network, reflecting its efforts to prevent the risk of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH).

Humanitarian Leadership, Coordination, and Strategy

UNICEF actively collaborates with other organizations and local stakeholders as part of the UN and Humanitarian Country Teams, ensuring coordinated efforts. In this partnership, UNICEF takes the lead in the WASH Cluster, co-leads the Education cluster with Save the Children, and leads the Child Protection Area of Responsibility and the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Working Groups within the Protection Cluster. Furthermore, UNICEF co-leads the Nutrition Working Group with the World Health Organization under the Health Cluster, both in the Gaza Strip and at the national level. UNICEF and its partners are committed to fostering synergies between humanitarian and development assistance in the State of Palestine, with a strong focus on emergency preparedness. Aligning with the existing Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and Humanitarian Appeal for Children (HAC), UNICEF collaborates closely with OCHA and partners to prioritize needs heightened by the recent escalation and to determine the financial resources necessary to address these needs effectively.

Human Interest Stories and External Media

- On May 13: [Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell on escalation of hostilities in Israel and the State of Palestine](#)
- On May 12: [6 children were killed in the Gaza Strip in the past 72 hours](#)
- On 9 May: [Four children were killed in the Gaza Strip](#)
- On 9 May: [Tweet on the demolition of a primary school in the West Bank](#)

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