



Shaima, 8 years old, waits her turn in the crowd to get a meal from a charitable hospice that distributes free food in the city of Rafah, southern Gaza Strip.

© UNICEF/UNI456587ZAGOUT

UNICEF in the State of Palestine

2023 Year End SitRep



Reporting Period: 1 January to 31 December 2023 (2023 consolidated)

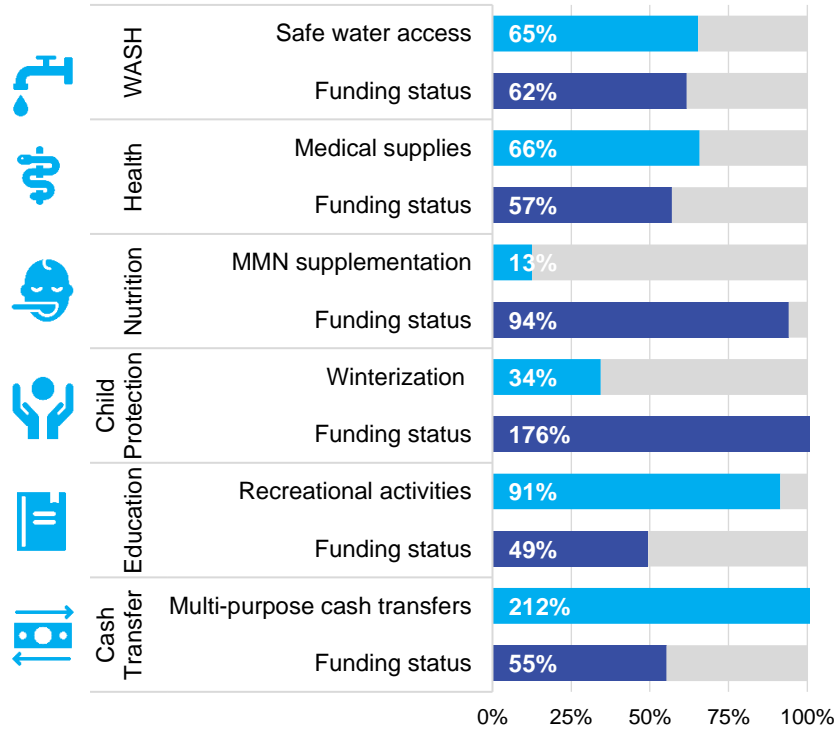
Highlights

- 2023 saw a stark increase in tension and violence across the State of Palestine (SoP). At least 22,185 Palestinians were reportedly killed in the Gaza Strip from 7 October to 31 December 2023, including more than 5,350 children.
- 2023 was the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank, with a total of 506 Palestinians killed, and also the deadliest for children with more than three times as many killed as in 2022.
- All children under five in the Gaza Strip – 335,000 – were at high risk of severe malnutrition and preventable death at the end of December 2023.
- UNICEF's timely responses to the increasing humanitarian needs in the State of Palestine have reached more than 1,300,000 affected people in 2023.
- UNICEF provided lifesaving WASH services reaching 1,326,000 people, including over 676,260 children, and also provided lifesaving health activities in the Gaza Strip, including the delivery of over 966,000 doses of vaccines. To enable timely response, UNICEF scaled up supply operational capacity through Egypt / Rafah.
- Cash assistance in the Gaza Strip through UNICEF covered the basic needs of 578,763 people (74,354 families; 296,306 children).
- Child Protection structured mental health and psychosocial services in the West Bank were provided to 6,641 children and 8,612 caregivers. In the Gaza Strip, more than 55,000 children received support for their wellbeing.
- Further achievements include strengthened healthcare infrastructure, improved malnutrition management, heightened community awareness, and specialized training interventions, all contributing to enhancing the well-being of vulnerable populations and enabling an effective response to emergencies.

Situation in Numbers

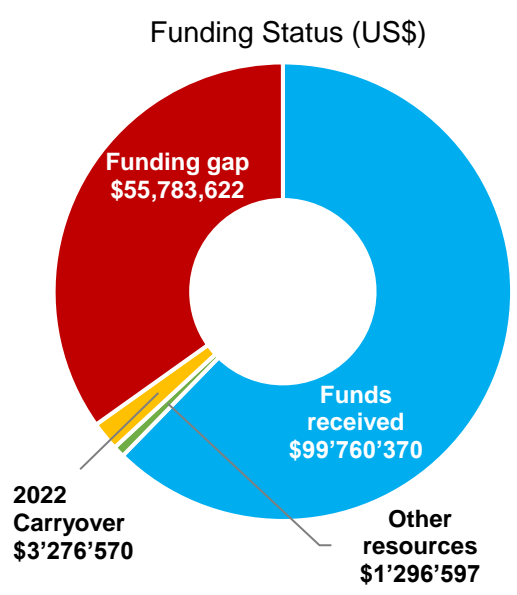
- 3.1 Million** people in need nationally (OCHA Flash Appeal, Nov 2023)
- 1 Million** Children affected in the Gaza Strip (PCBS, 2023 population projections)
- Estimated 1.9 Million** Internally displaced persons (UNRWA, 3 January 2024)
- 378 schools (76%)** sustained damage in the Gaza Strip (Education Cluster, 19 Jan 2024)
- Over 90% of population** face high levels of acute food insecurity in the Gaza Strip (IPC Phase 3 or above, 21 Dec 2023)

UNICEF's Response and Funding Status



UNICEF Immediate Needs

US\$ 154.4 million



Funding does not include loans received from within UNICEF. See Annex A for additional explanations.

Funding Overview and Partnerships

The initial humanitarian appeal for UNICEF SoP in 2023 was for US\$ 20.3 million. Following the escalation of hostilities on 7 October, a revised Inter-Agency Flash Appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territories was issued on 6 November covering October to December 2023. The appeal identified a financial requirement of approximately US\$ 1.2 billion to meet critical needs for 2.7 million people, 2.2 million population in the Gaza Strip and 500,000 people in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In line with the increasing needs after the 7 October escalation of hostilities and aligned to the revised Flash Appeal, UNICEF issued an updated Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal for October to December 2023. The UNICEF funding requirement was adjusted to US\$ 154.4 million for critical humanitarian services in the State of Palestine (SoP), intended to support 2.1 million people including 1.2 million children. At the end of 2023, the revised HAC had a US\$ 55.8 million (36 per cent) funding gap.

UNICEF would like to sincerely thank partners for their contributions, including the governments of Australia, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom as well as the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Education Cannot Wait, the European Commission / DG ECHO and the World Bank. UNICEF also thanks the UNICEF National Committees of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom and the United States. UNICEF would also like to thank the UNICEF private sector fundraising offices of Chile, Croatia, Egypt, Greece, Gulf Area Office, Philippines, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Thailand and Uzbekistan, which have supported initial relief efforts in response to the recent escalation of hostilities. Last but not least, UNICEF benefited from Global Humanitarian Thematic Funding, which provided an added level of flexibility to respond to the crisis, enabling UNICEF to effectively anticipate and meet the needs of the most vulnerable children and their families in Gaza and the West Bank. UNICEF has also received US\$ 8.75 million from the internal Emergency Programme Fund and exceptionally US\$ 10 million of an internal capital loan both of which will need to be replenished (these loans are not reflected in funds received).

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

Across the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, children and their families faced death, injury, displacement, disease and malnutrition in 2023 at an unprecedented and unparallel scale. There were estimated to be 3.1 million people with humanitarian needs across the State of Palestine in 2023, with 2.2 million persons out of which 1 million children affected by the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip alone. The year 2023 was the deadliest one for Palestinians in the West Bank since OCHA began recording casualties 18 years ago with a total of 506 Palestinians killed. It was also the deadliest year for children, with more than three times as many killed as in 2022.

The humanitarian impact was marked by the conflict in the Gaza Strip from 7 October 2023 which to the end of the year had led to more than 5,350 children reported killed, over 8,663 children reported injured, and over 1.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs)¹. Over 90 per cent of the population in the Gaza Strip face high levels of acute food insecurity, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report, amounting to about 2.08 million people who were classified in IPC Phase 3 or above (crisis or worse). Risk of famine conditions was heightened due to restricted access to commercial and humanitarian aid across the Gaza Strip, with all children under five – an estimated 335,000 children – projected to be at high risk of malnutrition and preventable death. UN Women estimated that 70 per cent of people killed since 7 October were girls and women in addition to one million being internally displaced. The overcrowding in the shelters had a huge impact on women's access to privacy and basic humanitarian needs including menstrual hygiene items and gender disaggregated facilities.² The conflict from October in Gaza came on top of the May 2023 escalation which lasted for five days, and which resulted in the death of six Palestinian children with a further 64 children injured.

In the Gaza Strip, basic services were highly impacted with the Education Cluster reporting that 370 schools sustained damage. In the health sector 27 hospitals of the 39 total hospitals across the Gaza Strip sustained damage. Lack of power supply, fuel shortages, and restricted access continued to hamper the provision of critical WASH services to the affected population in the Gaza Strip.

In the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the number of children reported killed in 2023 in the West Bank was over three times the number in 2022, and over seven times the rate of 2021. Since 7 October at least 85 Palestinian children were reported killed in conflict-related violence, with nearly 60 per cent of incidents in the Jenin, Nablus and Tulkarem governorates of the northern West Bank and nearly one quarter of incidents in the Ramallah and Jerusalem governorates. Military law enforcement operations inside Palestinian communities and camps involving high use of live ammunition, explosive weapons, and aerial strikes, as well as settler violence and movement restrictions, continued to

¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/01/gender-alert-the-gendered-impact-of-the-crisis-in-gaza>

² <https://palestine.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-security-humanitarian-response/facts-and-figures/conflict-in-palestine>

put Palestinian children at higher risk of violence, grave violations, and displacement, and impacted their access to services. From 7 October, at least 2,262 Palestinians including 1,083 children were displaced, mainly in Area C and East Jerusalem, due to settler violence and access restrictions, home demolitions, and destruction of residences during military operations.

The Palestine Ministry of Education reported that 4,156 students and 221 teachers were killed in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank from 7 October 2023 to 2 January 2024. In the same period, 7,818 students were reported injured in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and 708 teachers and administrative personnel injured.

Israeli sources reported that approximately 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals were killed from 7 October 2023 until the end of 2023, mostly in the attacks of 7 October, and more than 7,500 people were reported injured. At least 35 children were reported killed. Around 250 Israelis, including more than 35 children were abducted into the Gaza Strip, of whom 34 were released, with very limited information available on any children remaining in captivity.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

In the Gaza Strip, at the beginning of 2023, UNICEF supported winter preparedness and response through the provision of protective clothes and water system maintenance tools reaching approximately 31,059 people (7,951 girls, 8,303 boys, 7,357 women, and 7,448 men) and protecting them from flooding risks in vulnerable areas. UNICEF supplied essential water treatment chemicals, sustaining water facility operations until the end of March 2023 benefiting approximately 750,000 people (192,000 girls, 200,492 boys, 177,658 women, and 179,850 men).

In the aftermath of the May 2023 escalation, 50,000 liters of fuel were pre-positioned in strategic locations to sustain the operation of 120 critical water and sanitation facilities, serving approximately 750,000 people. UNICEF also facilitated the release of prepositioned spare parts for water and sanitation networks, enabling the repair and rehabilitation of affected WASH systems across the Gaza Strip.

Due to the escalation of hostilities after 7 October, WASH infrastructure was heavily damaged across the Gaza Strip. Lack of power, fuel shortages, and restricted access continue to hamper the provision of critical WASH services to the affected population in the Gaza Strip. UNICEF delivered interventions in spontaneous concentration points, shelters and host communities, intended to reach the needs of the most vulnerable populations and to reduce the risk of communicable diseases. In response to urgent WASH humanitarian needs, through the UN mechanism³, UNICEF provided over 1.05 million liters of fuel which allowed public and private water wells and desalination plants to produce clean water, reaching 1.32 million people, including over 676,000 children with water for drinking and domestic needs in Deir Al Balah, Khan Younis and Rafah areas. In addition to this, 3.1 million liters of bottled water were distributed benefitting over 858,000 people including over 437,000 children.

To enhance water distribution and household storage capacity for the affected population living in shelters, UNICEF, with partners, distributed 36 water tanks (capacities from 1.5 cubic meters to 30 cubic meters) and over 60,400 jerrycans of 10 liters capacity benefitting over 609,000 people. Furthermore, UNICEF distributed 34,911 dignity and hygiene kits, including 104,000 sanitary pads, benefitting 313,000 people including women and adolescent girls.

Additionally, through the UN mechanism, UNICEF provided fuel and supported the repair of one wastewater treatment plants enabling sewage treatment and safe disposal, benefitting over 275,000 people, including 140,250 children in Rafah. To respond to solid waste disposal needs, in partnership with WASH actors, UNICEF scaled up WASH service delivery in IDP hosting communities through an integrated package of WASH services.

The WASH Cluster coordinated the response in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank through sub-national coordination platforms. UNICEF continued to lead and coordinate the WASH cluster, which had 68 partners. As the lead of the WASH Cluster, in 2023 UNICEF organized a WASH Operation and Maintenance (O&M) campaign in the Gaza Strip to advocate for improving the coordination between the humanitarian, development and governmental WASH actors supporting the WASH O&M component. Moreover, a WASH in schools working group was established.

Health

In 2023, UNICEF continued to support the Ministry of Health and local NGOs to provide essential maternal, neonatal, and child health (MNCH) services for high-risk women, adolescent girls and young children. For the provision of critical Maternal, Emergency Obstetrical, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Care to the population in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, inter-agency emergency health kits (IEHK) designed to meet the initial primary health care needs, including for MNCH in emergencies, were prepositioned. Each IEHK kit contains consumables for a population of 1,000 people for three months, with 50 kits pre-positioned in 2023 for 50,000 people, and a further 12 IEHK medicine kits were procured. The IEHK were distributed to 15 hospitals across the West Bank in October and November to enhance the

³ Through a signed agreement with UNRWA, UNICEF receives fuel to support water service providers in the operation of water and wastewater systems. UNICEF refunds UNRWA for the fuel.

preparedness capacity of emergency and MNCH departments across the West Bank. Additionally, over 50 engineers were trained in oxygen system maintenance, and 120 health professionals in ventilation, resuscitation, and oxygen therapy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In 2023 in the Gaza Strip, UNICEF provided essential medical supplies to the Ministry of Health benefiting over 398,000 individuals, including newborns, children, women, and healthcare professionals. While 93,231 children, and women accessed primary health care in UNICEF supported facilities.

In the aftermath of the 7 October escalation of hostilities, UNICEF continued to provide medical supplies to functional health facilities and partners across the Gaza Strip, and scaled up interventions for child immunization. Shipments of routine vaccines included a total of 966,300 doses (BCG, bOPV, Penta, PCV, Hepatitis B, DTP, DT, IPV, Rota, MMR and Td). Through these vaccines an estimated 134,283 children under the age of 18 months old will be protected against vaccine preventable diseases. UNICEF continued to provide multisectoral supplies and interventions to prevent and respond to the growing number of diseases such as diarrhoea and respiratory illnesses, through scaling up the Primary Health Care (PHC) interventions through continued support to MOH and local partners. This support reached some 15 MoH facilities in middle and southern Gaza governorates, and 23 shelters in North Gaza, covering antenatal, post-natal and post trauma care, and care for acute and chronic illnesses.

Nutrition

The UNICEF-led Nutrition Cluster was activated following 7 October 2023, on the basis of the fast-deteriorating humanitarian needs. In 2023 in the Gaza Strip, 12,300 children under five years were reached with nutrition interventions. To manage malnutrition among children in the Gaza Strip UNICEF partnered with national and international NGOs who provided nutrition services for 350 children (177 boys and 173 girls), with 70 children receiving treatment for severe acute malnutrition.

From the escalation of hostilities on 7 October, UNICEF supported the provision of therapeutic services and supplies for children affected by acute malnutrition, alongside working with Nutrition Cluster partners to provide preventative nutrition supplies including High Energy Biscuits (HEB). UNICEF continued efforts to address the nutritional needs for children and mothers delivering key nutrition commodities to the Gaza Strip. Supplies delivered included Ready to Use Infant Formula (RUIF) to address the need of 2,260 non-breastfed 0-5 months infants for one month⁴; therapeutic milk to cover the need of 562 wasted children with medical complications; anthropometric measurements for the Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM); multiple Micronutrients tables (MMS) to reach 18,120 Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women (PBW); Vitamin A supplementation to reach 30,336 children 6-11 months; and iron-folate supplementation to reach over 40,562 pregnant and breastfeeding women (PBW). The delivery process of those quantities of supplies to UNICEF partners was ongoing to the end of the year to reach targeted beneficiaries.

The Nutrition Cluster was launched in 2023 in response to the crisis in Gaza with over 15 partners active in the cluster in 2023. The nutrition cluster finalized and disseminated Standard Operation Procedures for Infant and Young Child Feeding practices in emergencies (IYCF-E); Breast Milk Substitute (BMS); and Mother Baby Areas (MBAs) which can be found here: [Infant, and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies \(IYCF-E\) Standard Operating Procedures | Global Nutrition Cluster](#), [Standard Operating Procedures \(SOP\) for Breast Milk Substitute \(BMS\) Management for the State of Palestine | Global Nutrition Cluster](#) and [Mother and Baby Areas Guidance for the State of Palestine | Global Nutrition Cluster](#). Over the course of January to December 2023, in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, these collaborative efforts reached 41,914 children and 44,833 women benefited from nutrition services.

Child Protection

In 2023, UNICEF through local partners successfully reached 51,370 children (48 per cent of whom were girls) and 10,094 caregivers (48 per cent of whom were women) with structured and non-structured psychosocial support services. Of those, 36,664 children in the Gaza Strip (48 per cent of whom were girls) and 5,364 caregivers (54 per cent women) benefitted from structured psychosocial support services via Family Centers. Furthermore, at least 1,163 children (45 per cent girls) were supported through individual case management and referrals to child protection services. These initiatives also extended to caregivers and child protection professionals, with 307 child protection professionals (59 per cent women) received training in child protection detection and referral and 2,846 caregivers (59 per cent women) participated in awareness-raising sessions focused on positive parenting and safeguarding skills, thereby strengthening families to prevent domestic violence and child abuse. With the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR) and the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), 400 psychosocial kits were provided to families impacted in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, educational sessions on the safe handling of Explosive Remnants of War reached 6,877 children and their caregivers (47 per cent children, 62 per cent girls), promoting their safety and knowledge on this critical matter.

⁴ UNICEF is committed to supporting mothers to exclusively breastfeed their infants to 6 months of age and to continue breastfeeding to age 2 and beyond with appropriate complementary foods. In exceptional circumstances, UNICEF provides breastmilk substitutes, since in an emergency situation some infants are not breastfed or only partially breastfed. These infants are highly vulnerable and require urgent and targeted protection and support given their increased risk of morbidity and mortality.

In the Gaza Strip, since the escalation of hostilities on 7 October, UNICEF provided psychosocial support services for 44,855 children and 10,024 caregivers. Of those, more than 30,149 children received in-person structured psychosocial support services including 278 children with disabilities; 15,455 girls; and 5,331 caregivers (2,921 females and 2,410 males). Additionally, 3,040 people (1,090 children) received educational sessions on Explosive Remnants of War. Moreover, 112,001 people were reached with blankets and winter clothing items. Additionally, 13 children from the Gaza Strip received legal aid in military detention in the West Bank.

Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) programming was accelerated through a number of initiatives including: the establishment of a MoSD-led inter-ministerial committee on UASC tasked to develop Guidelines for Medical Evacuations currently awaiting Cabinet approval; the issuance by MoSD of a moratorium on the adoption of children from the Gaza Strip; the establishment of a Technical Working Group (TWG) on UASC under the CP AoR co- led by UNICEF and UNRWA and constituted by approximately 20 NGOs; the provision of capacity building on identification, documentation, tracing and reunification (IDTR) for the CP AoR; the development of case management SOPs and tools; and the provision of interim care arrangements for UASC in Gaza through SOS Palestine. UNICEF, with partners, identified 17 (UASC). A total of 5 are receiving interim care arrangements through a partner, while 4 cases (2 adolescent girls and 2 infants) are currently being assessed for placement by a joint team composed by UNICEF-UNRWA-MOSD and SOS Palestine. The remaining eight children were still under assessment at the time of this report. The conceptualization of an integrated cash assistance programme for kinship care targeting 100 families was finalized and implementation is due to start in the Rafah Governorate in the next two weeks.

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, UNICEF has maintained the provision of essential child protection services including Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), case management, legal services, recreational activities, and awareness-raising sessions on child rights to children and families at risk of and directly affected by political and family violence. A total of 6,641 children (49 per cent girls), along with 8,612 caregivers received structured mental health and psychosocial services. Additionally, 6,225 children and 1,327 parents and caregivers were actively engaged in recreational activities, remedial education, digital and child rights awareness and parental counselling. Legal aid services, including legal counselling and representation, were offered to 1,231 children across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, including legal consultations for their parents. Additionally, 366 psychosocial kits were distributed in the West Bank. Outreach of these services has reached 1,305 individuals, including 428 women and 595 children (393 girls, 202 boys). UNICEF supported the MoSD child protection counsellors to manage 250 child protection cases (including 159 girls and 91 boys) in areas directly affected by security incidents, including Ramallah, Qaliqya, and Nablus. To enhance quality assurance mechanisms in child protection UNICEF continued to support seven child protection counsellors (3 females, 4 males) through supervision sessions. A further 24 child protection practitioners enrolled in the recently accredited child protection diploma offered by Bethlehem University.

In alignment with its leadership role in the CP AoR and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) TWG, and by following the priorities outlined in the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), UNICEF effectively coordinated the planning and delivery of critical child protection services to children and families in need. The MHPSS Inter-Cluster TWG was established in 2023 for both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to bolster the provision of quality MHPSS services. Moreover, a concerted effort was made to establish a unified understanding of MHPSS programme standards and activities. This involved a tiered approach based on the IASC MHPSS Intervention Pyramid, which highlighted staff qualifications and competencies required at each level. This clarity ensured that interventions were tailored to specific needs. Over the course of January to December 2023, in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, these collaborative efforts reached 159,917 children (including 80,758 girls and 132,538 boys) and 94,010 adults (59,680 women and 34,330 men) benefited from CP and MHPSS services. This included at least 2,679 people with special needs.

Education

Prior to the conflict 4,605 children (2,648 girls and 1,957 boys) benefited from a holistic approach to a protective learning environment to enhance their safe access to learning. In the Gaza Strip, hygiene kits containing cleaning and disinfection materials were provided to ensure the safety of the school environment. Moreover, student hygiene packages were distributed, benefiting a total of 114,210 students (61,673 girls and 52,537 boys) and the school staff. To improve learning outcomes for the most marginalized students and prevent dropout rates, UNICEF provided remedial education, reaching 9,241 children (4,454 girls, and 4787 boys). Furthermore, 189 core subject teachers (99 females and 90 males) of Arabic language and Mathematics and 189 assistant teachers (all university graduates), were trained to conduct remedial education classes focused on Arabic language and Mathematics for students in grades 3 to 6. A further 8,108 teachers (3,958 males and 4,150 females) were trained on how to manage learning loss. This training equipped teachers with the necessary skills to identify gaps in Arabic language, mathematics, and science and effectively address them in their teaching.

To enhance the efficiency of emergency responses, UNICEF established five youth emergency groups in the five directorates in the West Bank, each comprising twenty young boys and girls aged 16-24 years old. These youth were trained to respond effectively to both natural and man-made disasters. This initiative involved close coordination with local entities and the Ministry of Local Government. UNICEF took measures to bolster preparedness by procuring and prepositioning essential stationery kits adequate for 82,300 children. These kits were readily accessible in warehouses for immediate distribution when required.

In response to COVID-19, UNICEF continued to work closely with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and supported 180 schools in the Gaza Strip to develop and implement action plans to operationalize the COVID-19 preventive measures and protocols. This was done through the establishment/ activation of School Health Committees that were trained in developing action plans. The committees were also provided with prevention and protection kits (cleaning and disinfection items) and student hygiene packages (62 packages per school) to enhance the preventative measures of the COVID-19 pandemic in schools and solve other hygiene problems benefitting 114,210 children (54 per cent girls) that are attending these 180 schools. Awareness-raising sessions were conducted with 4,500 parents and caregivers (55 per cent women) about common hygiene issues, contagious diseases, and COVID-19 preventative measures and protocols. Implementation of the 180 action plans of Safe School developed by the Schools Health Committees (SHCs) was underway.

To mitigate the learning loss caused by school closures due to conflict-related concerns and teachers' strikes, UNICEF provided training to 8,108 teachers (51 per cent women) in the Gaza Strip to enhance capacity in preparing learning assessment tools and to recover gaps in teaching and learning. This training equipped teachers with the necessary skills to identify gaps in Arabic language, mathematics, and science and effectively address them in their teaching.

To address the MHPSS and the well-being needs of children, UNICEF worked closely with the Ministry of Education and supported 9,634 children (5,252 girls, 4,382 boys) with age-specific summer interventions in Gaza and West Bank during the summer break in August 2023. Younger children, 3,736 children (2,024 girls, 1,712 boys) enrolled in grades 1-6 were reached through fun learning days' activities while older children, 5,898 adolescent students (3,228 females, 2,670 boys) enrolled in grades 7-11 were reached through Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) clubs. The summer programs integrated play-based learning activities into recreational programs to mitigate learning losses experienced by children and to support their preparedness to go back to school when schools re-opened in September. The summer interventions were implemented in 160 schools. Since the outbreak of hostilities on 7 October, recreational activities were provided by UNICEF implementing partners in support of children's well-being in the Gaza Strip benefitting 50,871 children and adolescents, of whom were 26,908 girls and 565 children with disabilities from 57 shelters. Furthermore, UNICEF worked with implementing partners in the Gaza Strip exploring opportunities to open non-formal education including for the provision of MHPSS and recreational activities.

UNICEF strengthened the incidents reporting mechanism, covering the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, to provide partners with real-time data, trend analysis, and triggers for effective responses to incidents affecting the education system.

UNICEF continued to co-lead the Education Cluster and the Education in Emergencies Thematic Working Group. The Education Cluster advocated for children's safety and facilitated safe access to schools through protective presence partners in the H2 area of Hebron and Jerusalem. Advocacy included publications of documents including on school at risk of demolition. The Education Cluster continued to build the capacity of its partners, including with 154 partner staff (104 female) trained on disability inclusion, and ten partners trained on needs assessment and preparedness. Over the course of January to December 2023, in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, these collaborative efforts reached 204,874 children (including 107,301 girls and 97,573 boys) and 9,787 adults (5,102 women and 4,685 men) benefited from Education activities. This included at least 565 children with special needs.

Social Protection

In the first half of 2023 UNICEF continued to pilot a child-sensitive cash-plus grant programme in close cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development, supporting the basic needs of vulnerable households with children in the Gaza Strip. Through this effort, and prior to 7 October 1,168 households were reached, including 4,528 children (2,222 girls and 2,306 boys), with 165 children having disabilities. Alongside cash transfers, UNICEF supported households with specific protection needs to for children to connect to child protection services and psychosocial support through Family Centers facilitated by UNICEF partners.

Since the escalation of hostilities on 7 October, despite the extremely difficult security situation, distorted markets and communications blackouts, UNICEF exponentially expanded its cash programme reaching 578,763 people (74,354 families; 296,306 children) in the Gaza Strip who have benefited from Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) and top ups provided by UNICEF. Thus, every fourth person in Gaza has been reached by UNICEF's first round of cash assistance since the beginning of the escalation. Of these beneficiaries, 340,481 people (47,362 families, including 158,895 children, 16,195 people with disabilities, and 12,882 female-headed households) were supported with the first round MPCA which constitutes 53 per cent of all MPCA provided in the Gaza Strip. To ensure adequacy of support UNICEF provided 28,558 people (3,765 households) with a 2nd round of MPCA payments from December 2023.

Responding to the growing food insecurity and nutrition concerns, from December, UNICEF started to provide nutrition top up cash payments of New Israeli Shekel (NIS) 400 (approximately US\$ 100) reaching cumulatively 27,145 pregnant and breastfeeding women (PBW) (approximately 17.4 per cent of the estimated PBW in the Gaza Strip). These top ups were estimated to benefit 238,282 people, including 22,766 children under two years of age, and 60,760 children above two years.

On 31 December UNICEF provided its first top up payment of NIS 250 (app. US\$ 70) for families with children with disabilities reaching 5,079 families (approximately 35,553 people as indirect beneficiaries). This was on top to the first MPCA round with a value of NIS 754 per family (app. US\$ 208), which amounted to 60 per cent of the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) – the definition of what a household required pre-conflict in order to meet basic needs.

In close cooperation with the WASH team, the first incentive payment for frontline workers programme was introduced in the area of waste management. The programme engaged 100 volunteers for solid waste management at Al-Quds university to benefit 20,000 temporarily sheltered residents.

UNICEF has been closely monitoring the performance of cash programme, the situation of markets and the consumption patterns of beneficiaries through an innovative post distribution monitoring implemented through RapidPro. From December 2023, nutrition focused questions were integrated in the post distribution monitoring surveys that enabled to generate vital data on the dietary diversity of children and pregnant and breastfeeding women in Gaza.

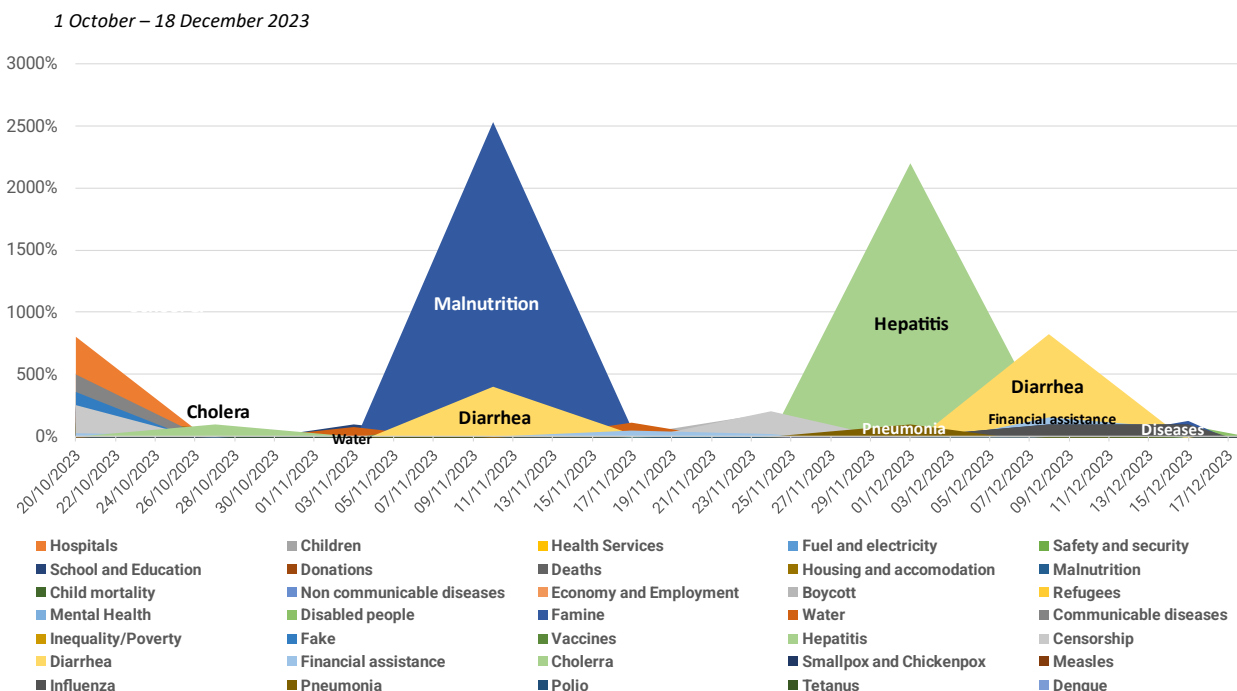
Recognizing the importance of a holistic social protection system, UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Social Development and key stakeholders to develop a Shock Responsive Social Protection (SRSP) action plan. UNICEF undertook a study assessing local social protection measures during the COVID-19 pandemic with insights from the analysis contributing to the development of national SRSP protocols.

Social and Behaviour Change (SBC)

Since the beginning of the escalation of hostilities on 7 October, UNICEF has sought opportunities to deliver timely, life-saving messages to families and children in the Gaza Strip. This has been seriously limited due to the destruction of mass media broadcasting infrastructure (for radio and TV), the total interruption of electricity supply into the Gaza Strip and the destruction of mobile phone infrastructure, therefore limiting access to the internet. As a result, there are no radio stations broadcasting from within the Gaza Strip and access to the internet is uneven, inconsistent and unreliable. Lack of fuel as a backup mechanism to run this communications infrastructure has also contributed to recurrent periods of total communications blackout. Despite these limitations, UNICEF was able to deliver key messaging related to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), unexploded ordnance, and separated and unaccompanied children through SMS to approximately 400,000 people, reaching beneficiary families from the cash program and to all subscribers of one of the two mobile phone companies with coverage in the Gaza Strip.

UNICEF was also conducting Social Listening of social media content in English and Arabic related to the situation in the State of Palestine, with a focus on children, humanitarian issues, and perceptions of international organizations. The graph below visualizes the range of issues flagged in social media across the Gaza Strip and neighbouring countries since October 2023 – it shows how social media users were discussing and reacting to issues in Gaza.

graph: Weekly increase in humanitarian issues, including health issues over time



Source: YouScan (publicly available social media)
 N= 1.3M social media posts | Languages: English and Arabic | Geographies: Palestine, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon
 *Mentions refers to the number of social media posts mentioning Gaze-related topics

The sub-regional public's online discourse surrounding the situation in Gaza since October reflected a range of concerns including the health crisis and outbreaks, the lack of functioning hospitals and the hunger crisis. More specifically, online discussions showed concern of IDPs having inadequate shelter for heavy rain and the flood risks they faced. It was

pointed out that tents provided to displaced people were not sufficient to shield them from the heavy rain. There were additional online reports of increasing desperation and hunger among displaced civilians, leading to days without food due to insufficient food supplies. Finally, health concerns were being voiced online due to the lack of vaccination among children, posing a significant risk of outbreaks of preventable diseases. Overcrowding in shelter centers was pointed out as an increased risk for disease spread. Also, in December 2023, the topic of hepatitis spiked in social media communications. Demands for aid or support for individuals were increasing.

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) / Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

In close cooperation with implementing partners, UNICEF has institutionalized an Accountability to Affected Population (AAP) approach to improve access of communities and children to appropriate feedback platforms (e-mail; SAWA hotline, and inter-agency hotline), integrating their views in decision-making and programme design processes. This included the operationalization of accountability frameworks through community engagement, transparent information sharing, and feedback components to ensure appropriate and effective responses. Through a large-scale community engagement campaign - Voices of Change - UNICEF reached more than 384,800 people to disseminate information and raise awareness about the new UNICEF feedback channels available to affected individuals. Through targeted messaging and mobilization sessions within communities, the campaign aimed to build a culture of accountability within Palestinian communities, emphasizing their role in reporting issues and providing feedback, as well as their right to participate. By actively engaging and involving community members, the campaign sought to establish trust in the reporting mechanisms and build confidence in the processes involved, ensuring the safety of those reporting about UNICEF programmes, as well as fraud or SEA. Overall, in 2023 UNICEF received 3,736 feedback pieces to the dedicated AAP channels.

The Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (PSEA) is a priority area of UNICEF to ensure the right of communities to receive aid in safety, to ensure the principle of do no harm and to be treated with dignity and respect. These are central to creating a safe and protected humanitarian environment for affected people, partner organizations and humanitarian workers. Through a comprehensive helpline to report safeguarding and PSEA but also to access first psychological aid, MHPSS and referrals, UNICEF continuously works to enhance access of communities to safe and confidential channels that lead to assistance and investigation. In 2023 18,896 counselling sessions were conducted. In parallel, UNICEF provided capacity building and monitoring to implementing partners and aid workers to be aware of their roles and obligations related to PSEA. Ten training sessions were conducted in 2023 targeting 110 people and UNICEF partners were all assessed against PSEA risk and received technical assistance. Effective SEA investigative procedures were also put in place. In addition to the reach achieved through Voices of Change, other programmes reached 305,042 people with awareness messages on PSEA in 2023.

Humanitarian Leadership, Coordination and Strategy

Throughout the year, UNICEF was an active member of the UN Country Team and the Humanitarian Country Team and closely coordinated with other organizations and local partners, including women-led organisations. UNICEF also led the coordination of the WASH and Nutrition Clusters and co-led the Education Cluster with Save the Children. Within the Protection Cluster, UNICEF led the Child Protection Area of Responsibility as well as the TWG on UASC. UNICEF was part of the Inter-Cluster Mental Health and Psychosocial Support TWG. UNICEF also supported the Inter-Agency Network for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and participated in the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Working Group coordinated by OCHA. UNICEF also actively participated in the Regional and National Gender and Humanitarian Working Group, coordinated by UN Women and OCHA, and contributed to gender equality programming as well as preparedness and response.

UNICEF remains dedicated to enhancing cooperation between humanitarian aid and developmental assistance in the State of Palestine. This commitment extends to emphasizing the importance of emergency preparedness, ensuring effective response to unforeseen challenges.

UNICEF State of Palestine Humanitarian Action for Children 2024 Appeal: www.unicef.org/appeals/state-of-palestine
Latest Situation Reports are available on: www.unicef.org/sop/research-and-reports

Who to contact for further information: Lucia Elmi
Special Representative
+972 (0)2 584 0400
lelmi@unicef.org

Laura Bill
Deputy Representative
+972 (0)2 584 0400
lbill@unicef.org

Jonathan Crickx
Chief of Communication
+972 (0)2 584 0419
jcrickx@unicef.org

Annex A - Summary of Programme Results (Gaza Strip and West Bank)⁵

Programme Result (cumulative January – December 2023)

Sector / Indicator	UNICEF			CLUSTER		
	Total Target	Cumulative Result	% Progress	Total Target	Cumulative Result	% Progress
WASH						
# of people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water for drinking and domestic needs ⁶	2,050,000	1,338,000	65%	2,426,544	2,011,583	83%
# of people benefitting from improved access to sanitation and hygiene services	1,350,000	414,361	31%	2,426,544	759,827	31%
# of people reached with critical WASH supplies (including hygiene items)	1,050,000	224,386	21%			
Health						
# of people supported through UNICEF delivered medical supplies ⁷	780,000	513,300	66%			
# of high risks pregnant women who benefited from medical assistance in Gaza	50,000	4,759	10%			
Nutrition⁸						
# of pregnant women receiving preventative iron folate or multiple micronutrients supplementation	166,686	21,000	13%	197,858	21,000	11%
# of children 6-59 months receiving preventative lipid-based supplements, micronutrients supplementation, and high energy biscuits	311,189	12,365	4%	371,859	0	0%
# of children 0-59 months with severe wasting admitted for treatment	6,813	151	2%	6,813	151	2%
Child Protection⁹						
# of children and caregivers affected by conflict related violence received emergency and child protection service including PSS support	596,453 ¹⁰	65,456	11%	710,000	151,659	21%
	255,623 ¹¹	17,431	7%			
# of children receiving explosive weapons-related risk education	504,925	3,882	1%			
# of children reached with winterization items (including blankets)	275,000	94,490	34%			
Education						
# of affected school aged children provided with recreational activities to support their well being	55,000	50,257	91%	529,084	113,399	21%
# of school aged children provided with essential education in emergencies learning materials	315,500	9,403	3% ¹²			
Social Protection						
# of households reached with UNICEF-funded humanitarian cash transfers ¹³	35,000	74,354	212%			

⁵ Targets are based on 2023 HAC revised in November, progress results cover activities in Gaza, West Bank, including East Jerusalem, from January to December 2023.

⁶ As interventions support the same population over time, UNICEF reports the maximum number of people reached each week to avoid double counting, based on the water production and trucking.

⁷ This result is calculated based upon the distribution of Inter-Agency Emergency Health Kits (IEHK) to health facilities and partner reports.

⁸ Nutrition supplies in the Gaza Strip were stored in warehouses and were to be distributed to service delivery sites. Due to the worsening security situation, the distribution and related capacity building was severely challenged.

⁹ Child Protection indicators and targets are linked to quality reach, and it was difficult to implement some activities (e.g. MHPSS level 2 and 3 interventions) during active hostilities.

¹⁰ 596,453 Children

¹¹ 255,623 Caregivers

¹² As most of UNRWA and public schools were used as emergency shelters, no learning activities have taken place after 7 October. Also, UNICEF does not count children benefitted through recreational kits as result under emergency learning materials indicator. The kits are utilized for recreational activities and thus the service delivery is reported under the recreational activity indicator.

¹³ Reach with humanitarian cash transfers is reported based upon households which have received messages to redeem their cash. The response exceeds the target as the programme revised the initial strategy and has only delivered one round of transfers

Annex B - Funding Status

1 January - 31 December 2023						
Sector	Requirements (USD)	Funds available			Funding gap	
		Humanitarian resources received	Other resources used for the escalation	Resources available from 2022 (Carry-over)	US\$	%
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	53,388,850	32,176,213	93,972	629,647	20,489,018	38%
Health	30,002,940	15,919,917	930,625	234,764	12,917,633	43%
Nutrition	11,897,862	11,196,778	0	0	701,084	6%
Child Protection	7,488,270	12,728,186	0	462,963	0	0%
Education	12,469,331	4,966,664	52,000	1,142,966	6,307,701	51%
Social Protection & Cash Transfer	33,862,858	17,994,645	0	727,084	15,141,129	45%
Cross-Sectoral (PSEA, AAP)	1,544,143	1,397,847	0	50,146	96,150	6%
Cluster Coordination	3,760,027	3,380,120	220,000	29,000	130,907	3%
Total	154,414,281	99,760,370	1,296,597	3,276,570	55,783,622	36%

*The total funding for the year is based upon the funding requirement for the HAC revised in November 2023, and this does not account for the potential overlap in funding requirements from 1 January to 7 October, and in the period post 7 October.

*All amounts include weighted cross-sectoral costs and cost recovery.

*Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) and Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) were integrated under each programme.

*Child protection received more funding than requested in the HAC, and therefore has a US\$ 0 funding gap. This over-funding for CP is largely due to the increased winterisation response, which was not reflected in the HAC and which was integrated into the HAC revision in January 2024.

*The sum of the funding received, and the gap is greater than the total requirement due to the overfunding of the Child Protection requirement.

as compared to three rounds in the plan. Furthermore, UNICEF has funded the response through loans which are not reflected in the Funding Status table.