



## UNICEF EDUCATION

### Education Case Study

#### STATE OF PALESTINE

#### Addressing learning loss through EiE and remedial education for children in Gaza

19 November 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic, together with the escalation in hostilities in the Gaza Strip in May 2021, significantly strained Palestine’s already overstretched education system. As a result, the education of 600,000 children enrolled in public, private, government, and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) managed schools was disrupted. The Education Cluster reported that the impact of the May escalation resulted in 331 damaged education facilities, and that 500,000 people across the State of Palestine were in need of humanitarian education assistance, including 10,000 children with disabilities. Due to the compounding crises, the Education Cluster estimated that around 18,089 children (9,476 girls) are at heightened risk of dropping out of school in the Gaza Strip. To prevent this, UNICEF provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Education (MoE) and collaborated with established local partners to provide remedial education and mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS) to children experiencing stress or trauma. Through flexible donor funding, these measures were rapidly deployed to assist children’s return to learning, and to ensure that they remained in school following the reopening of education facilities in August.

Remedial learning classes were taught in 50 public schools to children in grades 1–4 under the administration of the Palestinian Authority. Schools with a higher concentration of marginalized children that also lacked access to teachers and digital connectivity were selected. Core subjects taught were Arabic and mathematics. These were delivered in two-hour blocks, with recreational activities between classes. Newly graduated teachers were also recruited to support established teachers leading the remedial learning classes. Teacher training for remedial learning – including face-to-face learning and at-home visits – was provided to 300 teachers, 150 of whom had recently graduated from university. Children in grades 1-4 attended in-person classes and were able to engage in face-to-face learning with their teachers for their remedial learning classes. Teachers developed learning materials based on the curriculum developed and

approved by the Ministry of Education. To increase parental engagement and student attendance, parents and caregivers were invited to in-person orientation sessions as well as “question and answer” groups hosted over WhatsApp. This helped reduce the potential for stigma that is sometimes associated with remedial learning programmes, while providing guidance for parents on at-home-learning support for their children. One hundred youth volunteers, under an established UNICEF partnership, also aided in the recreational and after-school activities that children enrolled in the remedial learning programme attended.

## RESULTS

- 5,000 children (2,804 boys and (2,196) girls in grades 1–4 in the education districts of North Gaza, East Gaza, West Gaza, Easy Khan Younis and Rafah completed the remedial learning classes.
- 5,000 students sat pre- and post-tests measuring the expected competency levels of learners in language and mathematics comprehension based on grade levels to show the efficacy of the remedial education programme. For Arabic classes, the average pre-test and post-test scores for students were 36.9 *per cent* and 97.4 *per cent*, respectively; and for mathematics, the average pre-test and post-test scores for students were 37 *per cent* and 95.5 *per cent*, respectively. This represented an increase of more than 60 *per cent* in each subject.
- 4,300 parents (3,115 fathers and 1,185 mothers) participated in orientation as well as ‘Q&A’ sessions about enrolling their children into remedial learning classes. These parents were also supported by teachers conducting at-home visits when students engaged in distance/ home-based learning.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- UNICEF’s provision of flexible education funding and collaboration, with an established in-country partner, allowed for a rapid response including programme design, contracting, and delivery in less than two months.
- The agility and speed of the response was enhanced by the adaptation of existing tools to focus on the specific learning needs of children who experienced learning losses due to multiple crises. However, a key lesson was that tools can be developed earlier and ‘pre-positioned’ to enhance the overall speed and quality of Education in Emergencies response and to increase programmatic coherence and quality when activities are implemented across multiple locations.
- The stigma associated with remedial learning reduces when parents are engaged as active stakeholders. Teaching parents about remedial learning also increases the likelihood that their children will attend and complete remedial learning activities. Importantly, active community participation of this nature also increases accountability to affected populations and to the relevance and quality of results for children.

## NEXT STEPS

To address the learning losses experienced by children in the Gaza Strip, UNICEF, partners and the State of Palestine’s Ministry of Education will scale-up remedial learning classes for children in marginalized areas and provide teaching and learning materials for children and families who lack access to digital platforms. UNICEF with the MoE and partners will also develop a teacher training programme to enhance teachers’ capacities on managing learning loss. This will help teachers to identify regressed knowledge and skills amongst learners and underperforming students, and how to support the learning needs of students with targeted strategies.

**Cost effectiveness:** Since May 2021, the total cost of implementing the remedial learning programme is US\$175,000 (US\$35 per child). Funding for the remedial education programme was made possible by the Government of Poland, Natcom Consolidated Funds (UNILEVER) and Global Thematic Funding.

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