



Aya, 9, waits in line after a long walk to get drinking water in Al-Bureij Camp, in the Gaza Strip, October 2025. "It's exhausting," she says. "I wish the sweet water truck could come to our house."

unicef 
for every child

Humanitarian Action for Children

State of Palestine: Gaza Strip and West Bank

HIGHLIGHTS¹

- In the State of Palestine, the conflict in the Gaza Strip and rising violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have triggered mass fatalities, displacement and extreme protection risks for children. At least 3.6 million people require assistance.
- Gaza Strip: Infrastructure damage and limited humanitarian access have created critical needs for WASH and healthcare services, with waterborne diseases and polio threatening public health. Around 101,000 children remain at risk of malnutrition.² More than 1 million children require psychosocial support, and 765,000 children need access to education.
- West Bank: Violence and economic hardship impact more than 800,000 people, who require healthcare and WASH support. Around 140,000 children across the West Bank, including in refugee camps, face barriers to accessing education.
- UNICEF urgently seeks \$707.8 million to address the escalating needs of children and families in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to provide life-saving support in WASH, health, nutrition, education, child protection, social protection and cash transfers and to support work restoring and strengthening systems.

KEY PLANNED TARGETS



600,000

children and women accessing primary health care service in UNICEF supported facilities



591,800

children and caregivers provided with landmine or other explosive weapons prevention



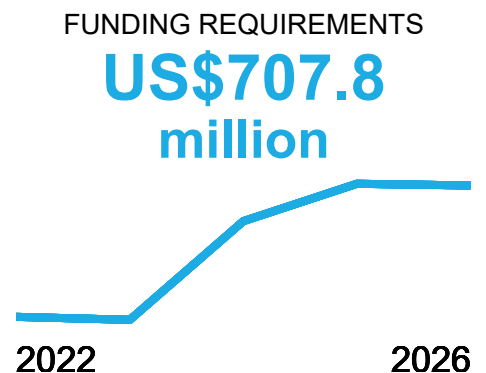
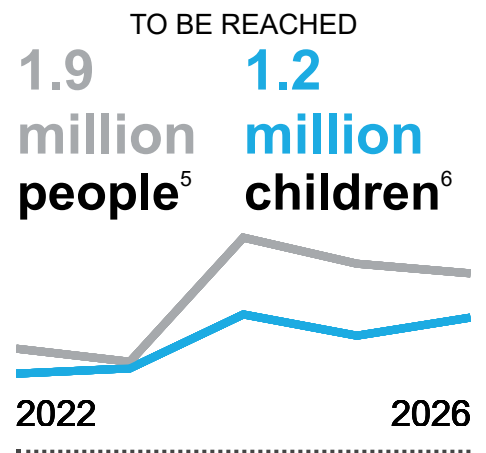
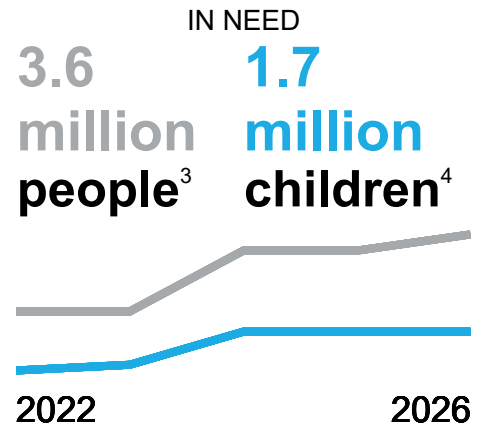
436,000

children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning



800,000

people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water for drinking and domestic needs



HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

The conflict that escalated on 7 October 2023 has caused devastating humanitarian consequences for children across the State of Palestine and Israel. In the Gaza Strip, at least 21,289 children have been reported killed as of 3 February 2026.⁷ 44,500 children have been injured, including more than 11,000 children with life-changing injuries.⁸ Protection risks, grave violations and mental health and psychosocial needs of children are at extreme levels and ever-increasing. At least 1.3 million people – most of the Gaza Strip's population – are displaced; many of whom have been displaced multiple times.⁹

Following the October ceasefire, aid delivery has noticeably increased, and the impact is clear. Famine that occurred in one governorate was reversed¹⁰ and the availability of goods in the markets has increased. Nevertheless, significant challenges remain, including access issues limiting humanitarian operations; violence that, though reduced, persists, with at least 138 children reported killed¹¹ in the Gaza Strip since the ceasefire, highlighting ongoing protection risks; and restrictions on critical items for water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions – such as pipes and spare parts – are delaying early recovery efforts.

The extensive damage to water, sanitation and waste management infrastructure, the lack of critical resources to operate and maintain the remaining infrastructure and the resulting poor hygiene conditions are leaving almost the entire population of the Gaza Strip prone to public health risks.¹² The destruction of health facilities, coupled with overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, has led to outbreaks of diarrhoea, hepatitis A, acute respiratory infections and circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (CvDPV2), 25 years after it was eliminated.¹³ According to the recent health functionality assessment, no hospital is fully functional while 50 per cent (18/36) of hospitals are partially functional. Among primary healthcare centres, about 1.5 per cent (3/200) are fully functional and 46.5 per cent (93/200) are partially functional.¹⁴

High levels of malnutrition continue to threaten the well-being and survival of children in the Gaza Strip. Combined with limited access to health, nutrition and WASH services, 320,000 children under age 5 are at risk of malnutrition, including 101,000 who require treatment for wasting. In addition, approximately 37,000 pregnant and lactating women urgently need nutrition support, while 121,000 children aged 5–17 years are also in need of essential nutritional assistance.¹⁵

Systematic attacks on schools – many serving as shelters for internally displaced people – have severely hampered the resumption of learning, leaving over 637,000 children out of school and potentially setting back their education by five years,¹⁶ with 97.5 per cent of schools damaged or destroyed.¹⁷ UNICEF launched a Gaza-wide Back to Learning campaign and managed to bring Recreational Kits and Educational Kits to the Gaza Strip in January 2026 for the first time in over two years. These supplies, plus Early Childhood Development Kits and Education Kits, will support children's learning, wellbeing, and resilience.

The destruction of roads and infrastructure and an unpredictable security situation, coupled with highly constrained humanitarian access, is disrupting supply chains and delaying distribution of essential items. Entry of critical supplies is hampered by the mandatory use of congested entry points, with frequent denial of alternative routes for humanitarian trucks. Persistent delays in customs clearance exacerbate delivery timelines.

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, escalating violence, settler attacks, militarized law enforcement operations and movement restrictions have crippled essential services. Around 800,000 people require water and sanitation services¹⁸ and 830,000 require healthcare,¹⁹ including pregnant women and newborns. Protection concerns, attacks on education and teacher salary cuts have deepened the education crisis, affecting at least 84,000 students.²⁰ Violence and grave violations against children, displacement and economic hardship have intensified protection needs for children, particularly for mental health and psychosocial support.

In Israel, approximately 1,200 people were killed on 7 October 2023 and in its immediate aftermath, including 37 children.²¹ Out of 255 people taken hostage, including 36 children, 253 have been released or returned.²² Of the 36 children, 34 were released alive in November 2023 and the remains of two were returned in February 2025. The psychological impact of the conflict on Israeli children cannot be overlooked.

SECTOR NEEDS



2.9 million
people in need of
health assistance



1.1 million
people in need of
nutrition assistance²³



3.1 million
children and
caregivers in need of
protection²⁴



903,480
children in need of
education support²⁵



3 million
people lack access to
safe water²⁶

STORY FROM THE FIELD



When the war started, Samar was 15 years old.

Those days feel long gone. "My father had passed away before the war," Samar says. "My mother was our caretaker, and on 4 December 2023, I lost her too, and her fate is still unknown to this day. Since then, I became responsible for my siblings. I am no longer a child. I lost my childhood. My little brothers and sisters now call me 'Mama'."

To support Samar and her siblings, UNICEF has provided emergency cash assistance – enabling them to buy food and essential items for survival.

[Read more about this story here](#)

"I lost my childhood. My little brothers and sisters now call me 'Mama.'" Samar, 17 (third from left), cares for all her younger siblings in the midst of war and mass displacement.

UNICEF prioritizes urgent needs in WASH, health, nutrition, education, child protection and social protection while strengthening systems and preparedness. Life-saving services and behaviour change interventions target vulnerable groups with attention to disability, age and gender.³¹

Across the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, UNICEF repairs, operates and maintains WASH infrastructure engaging in activities including solid waste management, infection prevention, hygiene promotion, pre-positioning of WASH supplies and improving WASH facilities in health and educational settings.

UNICEF will advance primary healthcare by deploying mobile clinics and operationalizing primary healthcare centres to improve their accessibility and efficiency. Capacity building for community health workers is supported to strengthen community resilience. In parallel, UNICEF is reinforcing immunization efforts to protect children against vaccine-preventable diseases; secondary care with a focus on maternal and neonatal health; and rehabilitation for children with impairments, including amputees. The overarching objective is to build resilient health systems through the humanitarian nexus approach, ensuring that emergency response investments contribute to long-term healthcare system strengthening.

In the Gaza Strip, UNICEF prioritizes prevention, early detection and treatment of wasting through provision of complementary food, energy and micronutrient supplements, infant and young child feeding counselling and social and behaviour change. In the West Bank, support includes strengthening community health and nutrition capacities and pre-positioning supplies.

Education efforts in the Gaza Strip prioritize the resumption of learning by establishing learning centres with minimum learning entitlements. Teachers and students benefit from essential materials, and are supported through social and emotional learning activities, while UNICEF adapts alternative mechanisms so that students have access to educational materials to learn effectively. Through the Back to Learning programme, UNICEF with partners is scaling up its response to restore access to non formal education for hundreds of thousands of children deprived of schooling for nearly three consecutive years.

In the West Bank, UNICEF supports catch-up education programmes, digital learning and disaster risk reduction initiatives to mitigate learning loss. Adolescent girls receive a combination of protection, education and hygiene support.

Child protection interventions are tailored to the unique impact of conflict and grave violations, focusing on supporting affected families and at-risk children, including children without parental care, while improving case management and access to legal assistance. UNICEF continues to adapt emergency child protection, community-based protection and mental health and psychosocial support services, including in learning centres in the Gaza Strip, using creative mobile and remote modalities to reach scale.

Multi-purpose cash assistance helps vulnerable households meet basic needs. There are top-ups for families with pregnant and breastfeeding women, female-headed households and children with specific requirements. Additional front-line workers will receive incentive payments, ensuring service continuity.

UNICEF focuses on protecting populations from sexual exploitation and abuse and strengthening survivor assistance by enhancing grassroots initiatives – and also by expanding feedback mechanisms for concerns about UNICEF programmes. Women-led and girl-centred groups and volunteers provide inputs to ensure accountability to affected populations.

UNICEF remains active within the United Nations Country Team and the Humanitarian Country Team and will work to strengthen cluster coordination³² as leader of the WASH and nutrition clusters, as co-leader of the Education Cluster, and through the coordination of child protection matters within the Protection Cluster.^{33,34}

Progress against the latest programme targets is available in the humanitarian situation reports: <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/state-of-palestine/situation-reports>

This appeal is aligned with the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, which are based on global standards and norms for humanitarian action.



Health (including public health emergencies)

- 600,000 children and women accessing primary health care service in UNICEF supported facilities
- 51,000 children 0-11 months receiving pentavalent 3 vaccine
- 11,000 small and sick newborns with access to inpatient Level 2 special newborn care



Nutrition

- 405,664 children 6-59 months screened for wasting
- 32,672 children 6-59 with SAM admitted for treatment
- 73,393 children 6-59 months with MAM admitted for treatment
- 25,348 children 6-11 months receiving Ready-to-Use Complementary Food (RUCF)
- 25,000 primary caregivers of children 0-23 months receiving infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counselling



Child protection

- 384,767 children / caregivers accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support.
- 11,660 children who have received individual case management
- 591,800 children and caregivers provided with landmine or other explosive weapons prevention
- 895,840 children and caregivers reached by MHPSS messages and awareness activities on child protection risks



Education

- 436,000 children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning
- 436,000 children receiving individual learning materials
- 200,000 affected school children are provided with gender-responsive recreational activities



Water, sanitation and hygiene

- 800,000 people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water for drinking and domestic needs
- 860,000 people reached with critical WASH supplies (NFIs)
- 250,000 people accessing appropriate sanitation services



Social protection

- 198,000 people reached with humanitarian cash transfers through UNICEF response³⁵
- 21,000 households with adults and children with disabilities reached by humanitarian cash transfers UNICEF response



Cross-sectoral (AAP, SBC, and PSEA)

- 93,904 people sharing their concerns and asking questions through established feedback mechanisms
- 950,000 people reached through messaging and engagement actions on prevention and access to services
- 1,000,000 people with safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel who provide assistance to affected populations

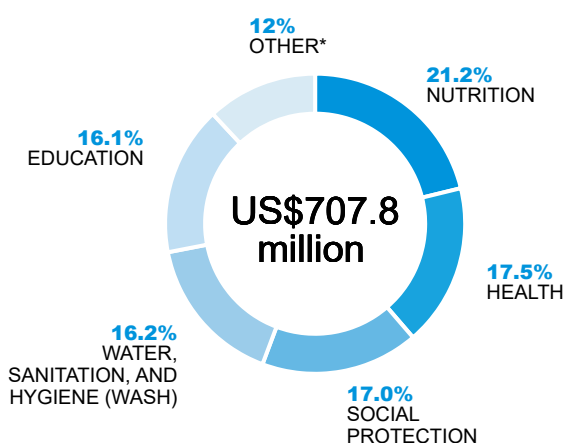
FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2026

UNICEF urgently seeks \$707.8 million to address the catastrophic needs of 1.9 million people, including 1.2 million children, in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

This essential funding is required to support our response to the protracted crisis and, crucially, support the continued scale-up and system restoration required following the recently established cessation of hostilities.

This appeal is aligned with the inter-agency Flash Appeal for 2026. The requirement of \$707.8 million reflects a necessary prioritization of the UNICEF response. While the total ask has decreased slightly, funding requirements for key sectors, including child protection and education, have increased significantly. This is due to the urgent need to address the escalating protection crisis through enhanced programming for children, including mental health and psychosocial support, case management and efforts to prevent violence against children. Similarly, the increase in education funding requirements reflects the significant demand for learning opportunities among affected children, driving the scale-up of activities such as the opening of Learning Spaces, minor rehabilitation of schools, and delivery of comprehensive support packages that include Socio-Emotional Learning, Play to Heal, and Accelerated Learning Programmes. Reductions in targets and requirements for WASH and social protection reflect improved access in certain areas and a focused targeting of key vulnerabilities and priorities – particularly among the most at-risk populations and communities – rather than a reduction in overall need. Funding will also support the continued expansion of life-saving nutrition and health services, manage the consequences of the previous famine³⁶ and ongoing malnutrition crisis, restore immunization coverage, and provide vital maternal and child health services.

UNICEF is continuing to scale up its emergency response across the State of Palestine and looking towards a future of recovery. Flexible funding remains vital to allow swift adaptation to evolving needs and transition to early recovery efforts. Without the support of UNICEF resource partners, children and families will face irreversible harm, jeopardizing the chance to heal the trauma of war. Increased funding is urgently needed to protect children, expand humanitarian operations and foster resilience for children in the State of Palestine.³⁷



*This includes costs from other sectors/interventions : Child protection (9.9%), Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) (<1%), Cluster coordination (<1%), Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) (<1%), Accountability to Affected Populations / Community Feedback Mechanism (AAP / CFM) (<1%).

Appeal sector	Revised 2026 HAC requirement (US\$)
Nutrition	150,000,000
Education	114,000,000
Social protection	120,510,000
Cluster coordination	5,220,000
Health	123,800,000
Child protection	70,000,000
Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)	115,000,000
Accountability to Affected Populations / Community Feedback Mechanism (AAP / CFM)	500,000
Social and Behaviour Change (SBC)	6,000,000
Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)	2,800,000
Total	707,830,000

Appeal sector	Original 2026 HAC requirement (US\$)	Revised 2026 HAC requirement (US\$)	Funds available (US\$)	Funding gap (US\$)	Funding gap (%)
Nutrition	150,000,000	150,000,000	12,635,415	137,364,585	91.6%
Education	80,000,000	114,000,000 ³⁸	24,253,508	89,746,492	78.7%
Social protection	120,510,000	120,510,000	17,663,510	102,846,490	85.3%
Cluster coordination	5,220,000	5,220,000	874,077	4,345,923	83.3%
Health	123,800,000	123,800,000	16,311,513	107,488,487	86.8%
Child protection	70,000,000	70,000,000	13,306,658	56,693,342	81.0%
Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)	115,000,000	115,000,000	48,643,400	66,356,600	57.7%
Accountability to Affected Populations / Community Feedback Mechanism (AAP / CFM)	500,000	500,000	268,469	231,531	46.3%
Social and Behaviour Change (SBC)	6,000,000	6,000,000	886,693	5,113,307	85.2%
Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)	2,800,000	2,800,000	1,500,623	1,299,377	46.4%
Total	673,830,000	707,830,000	136,343,866	571,486,134	80.7%

This 2026 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal is part of the broader inter-agency planning cycle for the year.

Who to contact for further information:

Jonathan Veitch
Special Representative, State of Palestine
T +972 2 584 0400
jveitch@unicef.org

Lucia Elmi
Director, Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS)
T +12123267448
lelmi@unicef.org

Mandeep O'Brien
Director, Public Partnerships Division (PPD)
T +1 212 326 7118
mobrien@unicef.org

ENDNOTES

1. References to the State of Palestine, or to specific geographic areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) within this appeal, do not imply any alternative recognition or determination as to the status of the OPT and its integral parts. The OPT encompasses the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.
2. An estimated 101,000 children aged 6–59 months are projected to suffer from wasting through December 2026, including 31,000 with severe wasting. An additional 37,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women require urgent nutrition support. Source: Integrated Food Security Phase Calculation (IPC), 19 December 2025, available at https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Oct2025_Apr2026_Special_Brief.pdf.
3. Of the total number of people in need, 2,100,000 are in the Gaza Strip (entire population) and 1,520,000 are in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Flash Appeal: Occupied Palestinian Territory, December 2025, available at <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/flash-appeal-occupied-palestinian-territory-2026>.
4. The total number of children in need is based on the highest number of children in need number across the thematic areas, which is the child protection number. In the Gaza Strip, 1,081,521 children (all children in the Gaza Strip) are in need of protection services, and 608,266 children are in need of protection in the West Bank. Therefore, the total number of children in need is 1,689,787.
5. The total number of people to be reached is calculated based on the programme activity with the highest target number, which is the number of people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water for drinking and domestic needs in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, through both emergency water supply and the operation, maintenance and provision of water supply infrastructures. This encompasses 1.4 million people in the Gaza Strip and 500,000 in the West Bank.
6. The total number of children to be reached is calculated based on the highest unique target number across the thematic areas, which is the area of child protection. In the Gaza Strip, 1,022,000 children are to be reached with protection services, and 192,200 children are to be reached in the West Bank.
7. As reported by the Palestinian Ministry of Health, covering 7 October 2023 to 3 February 2026.
8. World Health Organization, Estimating Trauma Rehabilitation Needs in Gaza: September 2025 update, WHO, 2 October 2025, available at www.who.int/publications/m/item/estimating-trauma-rehabilitation-needs-in-gaza--september-2025-update/.
9. United Nations estimate.
10. Famine (IPC Phase 5) was confirmed for one of the five governorates of the Gaza Strip – the Gaza Governorate (Gaza City area) – between 1 July and 30 September 2025. Following the ceasefire that came into effect on 10 October 2025, the IPC’s 19 December 2025 Special Brief reported that no areas of the Gaza Strip were then classified in Famine. Sources: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), Gaza Strip: Famine confirmed in Gaza Governorate, projected to expand (Special Snapshot), 22 Aug 2025 available at https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPpt2025_Special_Snapshot.pdf and IPC, Gaza Strip Acute Food Insecurity Analysis: Special Brief (Oct 2025–Apr 2026), 19 Dec 2025; available at https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Oct2025_Apr2026_Special_Brief.pdf.
11. As of 20 February 2026.
12. Gaza Rapid WASH Assessment, household survey for access to WASH services, WASH Cluster, September 2024.
13. Availability and provision of safe water has been significantly impacted due to fuel shortages, lack of spare parts, insecurity and inaccessibility of WASH facilities. More than 75 per cent of households reported declining access to water in June 2025, with per capita water availability below half the minimum humanitarian standard of 15 litres per person per day. More than 85 per cent of water and sanitation facilities and assets have been completely or partially out of service. Rates of waterborne diseases have surged, with diarrhoea cases doubling to 59,000 in the first quarter of 2025, with 53 per cent of cases among children under age 5. Since the start of 2025, 254,000 respiratory infections and 728 meningitis cases have been recorded, 92 per cent of them viral.
14. Health Cluster dashboard, <https://response.reliefweb.int/palestine/health>, and Health Resources and Services Availability Monitoring System (HeRAMS) assessments.
15. Nutrition Cluster estimate.
16. Education Cluster estimate.
17. Health Cluster, Verification of damage to schools based on proximity to damaged sites – Gaza, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Update # 11, Nov. 2025, 11 November 2025, available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/verification-damages-schools-based-proximity-damaged-sites-gaza-occupied-palestinian-territory-update-11-nov-2025>.
18. WASH Cluster estimate.
19. Health Cluster.
20. Education Cluster, Education-Related Incidents in WB – Academic year 2024–2025 (Sept. 2024–June 2025), 4 August 2025, available at https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/education-related-incidents-opt-academic-year-2024-2025-sept-2024-june-2025?_gl=1*32v4vu*_ga*MjM4MTQyOTU3LjE3MzA0NmZM1MzA.*_ga_E60ZNX2F68*czE3NjQxNjcwNjkkbzE1NSRnMSR0MTc2NDE2NzA3MCRqNTkkbDAkADA.
21. This includes fatalities on 7 October 2023 and the immediate aftermath, including foreign nationals.
22. As of 30 November 2025.
23. In the Gaza Strip, 750,390 children and 151,000 adults are in need of nutrition support. In the West Bank, 132,725 children and 63,427 adults are in need of nutrition assistance. The estimated number of children aged 6–59 months with severe wasting/moderate wasting has increased in the Gaza Strip for 2026 of the deterioration in the overall acute malnutrition situation. The estimated number of children aged 6–59 months with severe wasting/moderate wasting has decreased in the West Bank in 2026, because the projected number of people considered to be in humanitarian need in the West Bank has decreased as a result of further prioritization of people in need, linked to the humanitarian reset.
24. The number of children and caregivers in need of protection assistance increased from 1.8 million in 2025 to 3,094,283 in 2026 is due to a change in methodology and scope of targeting. In 2025, the figure was based on available data and estimated response capacity, with all children considered in need but only 30 per cent of caregivers targeted for assistance. For 2026, all children and all caregivers are included, resulting in updated figures of 1,081,521 children and 1,002,227 caregivers in the Gaza Strip and 608,266 children and 402,269 caregivers in the West Bank. Additionally, the 2026 projection incorporates realistic winterization costs previously excluded in 2024 and 2025 Humanitarian Action for Children plans – targeting 500,000 vulnerable children in the Gaza Strip. The child protection target and budget for 2026 were calculated with a 10 per cent increase compared with 2025 to accommodate these expanded needs.
25. The reduction in the estimated number of children in need of education support from 1.5 million in 2025 to 0.9 million in 2026 reflects a methodological refinement in the calculation of needs. In 2025, figures included all school-aged children affected in their learning across the Gaza Strip (≈658,000) and the West Bank (≈808,000). For 2026, the approach was adjusted to focus on children lacking access to formal education, resulting in updated figures of 764,978 for the Gaza Strip and 138,502 for the West Bank. The education target for 2026 remains 300,000 children, with an estimated cost of \$240 per child.

26. In the Gaza Strip, the entire population (2,140,618 people) lacks access to safe water. In the West Bank, 871,053 people lack access to safe water. UNICEF's 2026 WASH targets for the West Bank were thoroughly reviewed within UNICEF, the WASH Cluster and partners, resulting in figures considered realistic for implementation and adjustable upward if needed. A target of 500,000 in Gaza reflects only direct emergency water-trucking beneficiaries and excludes borehole or infrastructure repairs, with UNICEF's figures intentionally set below overall Cluster targets due to contributions from multiple actors. Early recovery and reconstruction targets are not yet included, pending detailed assessments.
27. UNICEF is committed to empowering local responders in humanitarian crises in a variety of ways. The Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action make investing in strengthening the capacities of local actors in the humanitarian response a mandatory benchmark for UNICEF action. A more localized response will improve humanitarian action and is fundamental to achieving better accountability to affected populations.
28. UNICEF recognizes the gendered impact of the humanitarian situation for girls, adolescent girls and young women specifically, and includes critical menstrual health and hygiene supplies, strengthened safe spaces for women and girls where they can access life-saving multilayered and multi-sectoral support in coordination with community-based initiatives, with gender-based violence risk mitigation integrated throughout the response strategy.
29. This appeal is aligned with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, which are based on global standards and norms for humanitarian action.
30. UNICEF recognizes the heightened vulnerabilities of children with disabilities in humanitarian contexts. To address these challenges, UNICEF will implement a twin track approach: systematically including these children in all programme interventions while simultaneously addressing their specific needs through the provision of assistive devices and rehabilitation services.
31. UNICEF's strategy might shift depending on whether the ceasefire that came into effect on 10 October 2025 holds.
32. The Cluster Coordination approach is a vital part of UNICEF's humanitarian mandate because it enables the organization to lead and coordinate effective responses in sectors critical to the survival and well-being of children and vulnerable populations. As the global lead agency for clusters such as WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), Nutrition, and Education (co-led with Save the Children), as well as for the coordination of child protection matters within the Protection Cluster, UNICEF plays a central role in organizing and harmonizing the efforts of humanitarian actors. This leadership ensures that services are delivered efficiently, gaps are identified and addressed, and duplication of efforts is avoided. Cluster coordination aligns closely with UNICEF's core mission to protect children's rights and ensure their access to essential services, especially in emergencies. It strengthens collaboration among agencies, promotes standardized approaches, and facilitates the sharing of reliable data, all of which are crucial for prioritizing the needs of children in crisis settings. Moreover, through coordinated planning and joint assessments, UNICEF enhances accountability and ensures that humanitarian interventions are evidence-based and responsive to actual needs. In addition to operational benefits, cluster leadership positions UNICEF to ensure that child-focused issues remain visible and prioritized within broader humanitarian coordination platforms. This integrated approach not only improves the quality and impact of emergency responses but also reinforces UNICEF's commitment to equity, inclusion, and the protection of the most vulnerable. In line with the Humanitarian Reset, UNICEF will support the transition to a streamlined cluster architecture in 2026, ensuring continuity of child protection priorities within the consolidated Protection Cluster framework.
33. In the State of Palestine, UNICEF manages the Core Pipeline for the education, nutrition and WASH clusters. This centrally managed supply mechanism ensures the timely procurement, pre-positioning and delivery of essential supplies for cluster partners (including UNICEF), enabling a coordinated, cost-efficient and predictable response that is prioritized based on humanitarian need.
34. UNICEF participates further in the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR), coordinated by the United Nations Population Fund, and in the Legal Task Force. The Child Protection AoR and the GBV AoR have jointly established a Prevention and Care for Child Survivors Task Force, of which UNICEF is a member. UNICEF also participates in the Explosive Ordnance Risk Education – Conflict Preparedness and Protection Technical Working Group under the Mine Action AoR. UNICEF continues to actively participate in the Health Cluster, including through technical working groups, mainly the Sexual Reproductive Health Working Group, the Health Services Delivery Group, the Rehabilitation Working Group, the Mobile Clinics Working Group and the Inter-Cluster MHPSS Technical Working Group. UNICEF also co-leads the Risk Communications and Community Engagement Technical Working Group, which is organised in collaboration with WHO and OCHA. Additionally, UNICEF supports the Inter-Agency Network for PSEA and participates in the AAP Working Group, which OCHA coordinates. Furthermore, UNICEF actively engages in the regional and national Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group, which is coordinated by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and OCHA, and contributes to gender equality, inclusive programming and preparedness and response. UNICEF continues to participate in key recovery activities, including the Rapid Damage Needs Assessment.
35. The target figure was decreased for 2026 compared with 2025 due to a change in the programmatic approach. UNICEF has shifted to providing more frequent and regular payments to the most vulnerable families, ensuring sustained support and improved flexibility in meeting urgent needs.
36. Famine (IPC Phase 5) was confirmed for one of the five governorates of the Gaza Strip – the Gaza Governorate (Gaza City area) – between 1 July and 30 September 2025. Following the ceasefire that came into effect on 10 October 2025, the IPC's 19 December 2025 Special Brief reported that no areas of the Gaza Strip were then classified in Famine. Sources: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), Gaza Strip: Famine confirmed in Gaza Governorate, projected to expand (Special Snapshot), 22 Aug 2025 available at https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Malnutrition_July_Sept2025_Special_Snapshot.pdf and IPC, Gaza Strip Acute Food Insecurity Analysis: Special Brief (Oct 2025–Apr 2026), 19 Dec 2025; available at https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Oct2025_Apr2026_Special_Brief.pdf.
37. This appeal is part of the broader inter-agency planning cycle for the year.
38. The \$34 million increase for the Education budget compared to the initial 2026 HAC appeal is due to the Back-to-Learning programme that UNICEF and partners launched in the Gaza Strip in January 2026 and aims to restore access to non-formal education for hundreds of thousands of children who have been deprived of schooling for nearly three consecutive years.