



For children in the Gaza Strip, school supplies have been out of reach for over two years. With UNICEF's School-in-a-Carton kits, children finally have essential supplies like pencils, rulers, and geometry sets which helps make learning possible again. © UNICEF-SoP/2026/Crickx

## Gaza Strip

### Situation Update and Humanitarian Response

UNICEF State of Palestine

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for every child

## BACK TO LEARNING, BACK TO LIFE: UNICEF PROVIDES LEARNING AND HEALING FOR GAZA'S CHILDREN

### Education Situation Update

- **A generation out of school:** About 700,000 children (ages 4-17) have missed formal in-person schooling for almost three school years in a row. Nearly all children have not had a formal school day since October 2023.
- **Where can children learn safely?** Hardly anywhere. Nearly 98 per cent of school buildings are damaged; over 93 per cent require major rehabilitation or full reconstruction; around 81 per cent were directly hit. Schools that once served almost half a million students are now unsafe or gone.<sup>1</sup>
- **Non-formal learning is limited:** Only a minority can attend temporary in-person spaces. Around 420,000 children (3 in 5) have no face-to-face learning at all.
- **Why learning is still blocked:** For more than two years, even basic supplies like pencils and notebooks were unavailable, in addition to the scarcity of teachers and available space to establish learning centres. School-in-a-Carton Kits began arriving only in mid-January 2026. And before new learning spaces can open, rubble must be cleared and explosive hazards assessed to ensure there is a safe space for children to learn.
- **The journey to school is dangerous:** Approximately 60 million tons of debris block streets and hide explosive ordnance, making travel to any child-friendly space unsafe.<sup>2</sup>

### Impact on Children and Families

With **two lost academic years and a third unfolding** (2023/24 → 2024/25 → 2025/26), the **education crisis** in the Gaza Strip is devastating. Most children have **no safe routine and limited quiet space** to learn. UNICEF estimates that **nearly all children** – approximately one million children – need **mental health and psychosocial support** (MHPSS), while protracted school closures have left adolescents anxious about futures they can no longer plan and study for.

For older adolescents, prolonged disruption has also stalled critical transitions: Beyond missed school days, the crisis is driving severe learning loss: without regular instruction and practice, **children's foundational literacy and numeracy skills are eroding**, making it harder to re-enter schooling and progress at age-appropriate levels.

All families lack basic necessities – stationery, quiet space, and electricity to support study after dusk – and older adolescents face a **heightened risk of permanent dropout**. Families under extreme economic pressure **send their children to work** to survive; **early marriage** interrupts education; others struggle after **repeated trauma or injury**. Even a modest permanent dropout rate would translate into **tens of thousands** of young people losing their education pathway. **Learning continuity and mental health recovery are essential**. In a context where children have endured repeated trauma and disruption, **education is not optional; it is lifesaving**.

A new cohort has reached school entry age during the crisis, with approximately **56,000 children**. These children are currently enrolled or under enrolment in Learning Centres. The children entering Grade 1 **have never experienced** a structured classroom routine – deepening inequities and increasing the need for school readiness and foundational learning support. Of the 71,000 students registered for the **Tawjihi (final secondary) examinations**, 49,000 were able to sit the exams in 2025, while UNICEF supported 500 West Bank-based teachers through incentive payments to deliver online instruction to 39,000 of these students in Gaza in preparation.

<sup>1</sup> [Verification of damages to schools based on proximity to damaged sites - Gaza](#), Update # 11, 14 November 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Gaza Debris Management, UN News, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/10/1166141>, 20 October 2025.

## UNICEF'S BACK-TO-LEARNING RESPONSE IN THE GAZA STRIP SINCE JANUARY 2026

In a place where classrooms became shelters and schooldays turned into waiting, UNICEF and partners are restoring a child's most protective routine: **learning**. UNICEF assesses that all school-age children have **experienced learning loss** in this context, which has not yet been fully quantified. This blueprint, launched in January 2026, sets out a **transitional non-formal education** network – **Learning Centres (LCs)** and **community spaces** – to restore in-person teaching, learning and healing across all accessible areas of the Gaza Strip. The response is anchored in expanding access, including rubble removal and unexploded ordnance clearance and shift/rotation models, and in **improving quality and inclusion** through a **competency-based Accelerated Learning Programme** (KG2 school-readiness; Grades 2-9). The model integrates **mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)**, **disability inclusion**, and **basic health, nutrition and recreation** as one package. Backed by **clear governance**, **e-services to support transparency**, and **predictable multi-year financing**, it turns tents and cleared plots into safe, structured days.

### Provision of Learning Interventions



- **Children reached:** 255,000 children – **about 76 per cent** so far, of the number of school-age children (336,000) that UNICEF plans to reach with LCs.
- **Repair and construction:** A total of 172 LC facilities are currently functioning at optimum levels. In total, UNICEF currently runs **172 LC** in the Gaza Strip. In addition, UNICEF constructed administration rooms and storage rooms in 46 LCs – a total of 29,264 children (17,558 girls and 11,706 boys) will benefit from them.
- **Education workforce incentives:** To sustain learning while formal payrolls are disrupted, UNICEF provides monthly incentives (not salaries) to more than 5,782 volunteer education workforce – teachers, facilitators, counsellors and essential support staff.



### Provision of Psychosocial Support

- **Play and Heal sessions:** Implemented across community spaces and TLCs, these sessions help children regulate emotions, feel safe, and connect with peers. Early feedback from facilitators and caregivers shows improved emotional expression, reduced withdrawal and distress, and stronger engagement in learning and group activities. So far, 14,835 children have participated in these structured group sessions.
- **Parenting Group Sessions:** Targeted parenting group sessions complement the PSS activities, helping caregivers manage stress, respond to children's distress, and promote safe, nurturing home environments. Caregivers report better communication with children and less use of harmful coping or discipline practices. So far, 7,695 caregivers have been reached.
- **Recreation:** After more than two years of restrictions, UNICEF has been allowed to bring **recreational psychosocial kits** to the Gaza Strip to support children's learning, wellbeing, and resilience. Since Thursday, 15 January, 5,226 recreational kits have entered the Strip, supporting more than 374,000 children.
- **MHPSS:** 1,000 family MHPSS-inclusive kits for children with disabilities have arrived. These are being distributed to children with disabilities and injuries, with limited mobility, to help families address the psychosocial needs of children who may face barriers to accessing community-based services.
- **Community-based Child Protection awareness raising:** Awareness-raising sessions on child protection risks were delivered through community-based platforms, reaching 32,526 individuals, including 23,396 children, strengthening prevention, identification, and safe referral of protection concerns.
- **Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) for children and caregivers:** EORE provided to children and caregivers through structured sessions, strengthening risk recognition and adoption of safer behaviours. Caregivers report improved ability to guide children on safe routes and avoidance behaviours; 33,793 individuals reached.



### Provision of WASH Interventions

- **WASH at Temporary Learning Spaces:** Latrines and handwashing stations with soap have been installed, operated, and maintained, along with safe drinking water and water for hygiene and cleaning. These essential services help sustain the dignity of students and teachers, reduce disease risks, and enable safe participation across all UNICEF-supported TLS's, with operation and maintenance supported through cleaners.



### Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

- **PSEA continued to be mainstreamed** through schools through the Safe and Strong reaching 512 (337 boys, 175 girls) children in 08 schools. It focused on building children's awareness of their rights, personal safety, and how to seek help through safe and accessible PPSEA reporting channels, while fostering a protective and supportive school environment. These were led by 52 PSEA trained education personnel including teachers and counsellors.
- **PSEA embedded at learning sites:** Zero tolerance policy reiterated; PSEA clauses integrated into **Codes of Conduct** for teachers and facilitators; staff inductions cover PSEA roles, reporting pathways and **safe referral**, with **child-friendly information** displayed at sites and integrated into caregiver/child sessions.
- **Inter-agency safeguarding architecture:** UNICEF chairs the **Inter-Agency PSEA Network** in the State of Palestine, supporting a **joint community-based complaint mechanism** endorsed by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) / Humanitarian Country Team (HCT).

## FUNDING NEEDS

UNICEF’s [Humanitarian Action for Children \(HAC\) appeal for 2026](#) requires US\$ 707.8 million to meet the urgent needs of children and their families in 2026. As of now, 31 per cent of the appeal is funded. UNICEF urgently requires an additional US\$ 485.4 million to scale up life-saving assistance.

	Funding Needs	Funding Received	Carry forward from 2025	Funding Gap
Education: Back-to-Learning	USD 86.0 million 100%	USD 1.2 million 1.4%	USD 24.2 million 28%	USD 60.5 million 70%
All Sectors	USD 707.8 million 100%	USD 86.1 million 12%	USD 136.3 million 19%	USD 485.4 million 69%

## STORY: FROM WAITING TO WRITING – A PENCIL, A PAGE, A PATH BACK. HOW A SIMPLE KIT REOPENED MASA’S AND GHAZAL’S SCHOOL DAY.



Rain drums on the roof of the learning centre as Masa opens a new **School-in-a-Carton** kit. For months, she tried to study without basics – borrowing a stump of a pencil, sharing a single notebook with her cousins. **“Stationery is hard to find in Gaza, and when it’s available, it’s very expensive,”** she says, laying out a ruler, geometry set, and colouring pens. The supplies feel small in the hand, but they do big work: they bring routine back into a day that used to be all waiting. Before the kits arrived, lessons were irregular and short; winter storms soaked the floor of the family’s tent, and evenings went dark too early to revise. Now Masa sits with classmates at a **UNICEF-supported** space where a teacher starts the day with a simple question and a page number. **“I love coming to school to learn and to be with my friends,”** Masa adds. **“I feel relieved because I won’t have to buy notebooks at such high prices.”**



Her neighbour Ghazal, 12, holds up her first full notebook in months. **“I felt so happy when I returned to studying and met new friends,”** she smiles. **“When I grow up, I want to be an English teacher.”** For girls like Masa and Ghazal, a pencil line on clean paper is more than a line – it’s a path back to confidence, friendship and focus. From waiting to writing, that pencil and page are a path back to learning – and back to life. Learning continuity and mental-health recovery are essential. In a context where children have endured repeated trauma and disruption, **education is not optional; it is lifesaving.**

## WHAT UNICEF IS CALLING FOR

- **Protect education facilities and personnel from attack** and ensure **safe access for students and teachers**, prevent **military use of education facilities**, uphold deconfliction and International Humanitarian Law, and operationalise the **Safe Schools Declaration** across all areas so children and teachers can reach learning safely.
- **Sustain the education workforce:** Secure **predictable multi-year financing**, so the public administration and partners, as well as community-led initiatives, can **fairly remunerate teachers and essential education staff**, including **bridging incentive mechanisms where payrolls are disrupted**, alongside measures that protect staff wellbeing and retention.
- **Authorisation for rubble/UXO clearance and unrestricted entry of related equipment**, to allow opening of new **Temporary Learning Spaces with integrated MHPSS** – with rapid connectivity to water and energy to keep centres functional.
- **Finance rapid repairs** for moderately damaged schools, full reconstruction to inclusive standards where required and entry of construction materials urgently to facilitate the rehabilitation and reconstruction of schools and educational facilities.
- **Unrestricted entry of education supplies into the Gaza Strip** – including MHPSS supplies, assistive devices, tents/prefabs, WASH-in-schools items, solar/energy and connectivity components – along with restored warehouse and logistics capacity for reliable storage and last-mile distribution.

For additional information, please refer to UNICEF’s reports [here](#). For further inquiries, please contact:

**Jonathan Veitch**  
Representative  
UNICEF State of Palestine  
jveitch@unicef.org

**Ettie Higgins**  
Deputy Representative  
UNICEF State of Palestine  
ehiggins@unicef.org

**Tom White**  
Emergency Manager  
UNICEF State of Palestine  
twhite@unicef.org

