



UNICEF delivered water tanks to shelters, making access to water for displaced families safer and closer, reducing long, exhausting walks.
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Gaza Strip

Situation Update and Humanitarian Response

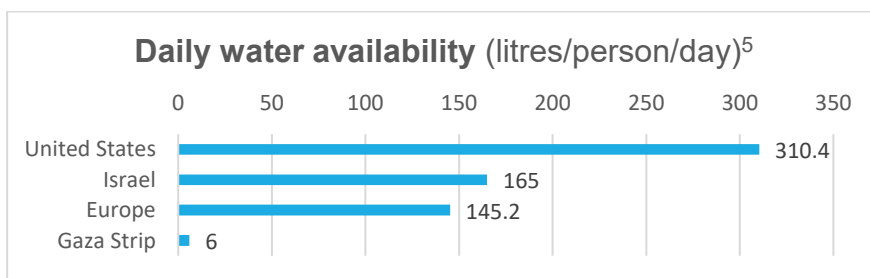
UNICEF State of Palestine
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for every child

WHEN WATER IS A DAILY STRUGGLE, DISEASE SPREADS FASTER

Ahead of summer months: update on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in the Gaza Strip

- **For 1.1 million children in Gaza, water remains a daily uncertainty.** UNICEF and partners continue to sustain emergency WASH services through a combination of trucked water, desalination, wells and limited network supply. Drinking water distributions are reaching up to **1.5 million people**, depending on access and operational conditions.¹ Despite efforts, most families remain **water insecure (82 per cent)**, and up to **70 per cent** are unable to collect the minimum of **6 litres per person per day** for drinking and cooking.²
- **A critical water-trucking route remains inaccessible:** Humanitarian actors have suspended all water-trucking operations at the Al Mansoura filling point since the **incident on 17 April**, in which **two UNICEF-contracted truck drivers were killed**. UNICEF and partners are now trucking water from desalination plants at a **significant additional cost of about USD 40,000 per day** to cover the **2 million litres per day** previously collected from Al Mansoura. The filling station is critical for daily access to drinking water of **285,000 people**.
- **Core water systems remain under severe strain due to restrictions on energy, chemicals, spare parts:** Seawater desalination output was **20,000 m³/day** in March but has since decreased to **16,000 m³/day** due to shortages of chemicals and spare parts. Shortages of engine oil, lubricating oil, and other essential consumables also disrupt water production and related services.³
- **Solid waste, sanitation and environmental health pressures are alarming:** Children and families face deteriorating hygiene conditions, as growing quantities of waste accumulate in and around displacement sites, shelters, and overcrowded communities while disposal sites remain inaccessible.¹ Under normal conditions, waste would be transferred to managed disposal sites, but in the current context disposal capacity is extremely limited, temporary sites are full or nearly full, and access to landfill options remains constrained. Environmental health risks are severe, with rodents and pest infestations threatening further spread of disease.⁴



The chart shows significant disparity in water availability between the Gaza Strip and other contexts. While water use in the United States, Israel and Europe ranges between 145 and 310 litres per person per day, availability in Gaza averages around 6 litres per person per day.

¹ WASH Cluster, Gaza Response Snapshot January - March 2026, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EwUMWbaBff7lcthVHGV-DB_kyq0lCU9j/view.

² WASH Cluster, Light Touch Monitoring, Gaza, March 2026, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IEoQq6_wVAScUqMlvOyWWmETAf11NskW/view.

³ WASH Cluster, Overview of Desalinated Drinking Water Production in Gaza - April 2026

⁴ OCHA oPt, Humanitarian Situation Report, 10 April 2026, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-report-10-april-2026>.

⁵ The Gaza Strip figure refers to average drinking-water production/availability, whereas the United States, Europe, and Israel figures refer to domestic or household water use at home. Sources (accessed on 22 May 2026): U.S. figure from [US EPA, Statistics and Facts](#): 82 gallons/person/day at home, converted to ~310.4 litres/person/day. Europe figure from [WISE Freshwater, Water resources of Europe](#): 53 m³/person/year household consumption, converted to ~145.2 litres/person/day. Israel figure from [Government of Israel, The domestic sector](#): ~165 litres/person/day. Gaza figure from [OCHA, Humanitarian Situation Report, 27 March 2026](#): 4.5-6 litres/person/day on average by late March 2026, while significant challenges remain for families far from water services.

Impact on Children and Families

When water is insufficient, caregivers are forced to ration hygiene, bathing, laundry and cleaning affecting infants and young children. For families, this turns water shortage into a daily trade-off between drinking, hygiene and disease prevention.

Environmental health risks remain high and are increasing: solid waste generation reached **5,000 m³/day** by March 2026, leaving waste to accumulate in and around shelters and residential areas and increasing risks related to pests, rodents and other disease vectors. Combined with overcrowded living conditions, limited sanitation services, stagnant wastewater and disruption of regular pest control activities, these conditions pose serious public health risks. Rodents and other disease vectors are frequently observed in **80 per cent** of displacement sites, and skin diseases are widespread in **48 per cent**.

Sanitation constraints shape dignity and safety every day: overcrowding, access and cleanliness remain major issues, with very high sharing rates for latrines and showers. Children, particularly younger children and girls, face increased exposure to unsanitary environments and heightened protection risks. Limited access to safe sanitation may also increase exposure to harassment, abuse, exploitation and other forms of gender-based violence, especially where facilities are distant or unsafe.

This strain is compounded by the fragility of the systems that provide water: desalination and pumping require fuel, electricity, treatment chemicals and spare parts. When these inputs are restricted or delayed, water production can drop sharply. For families, this translates into longer waits, fewer deliveries, and a growing reliance on coping mechanisms rather than stable services.

UNICEF'S WASH RESPONSE IN THE GAZA STRIP, 1 JANUARY – 14 MAY 2026

In a context where families do not have enough water to drink, cook, wash, and prevent disease spreading, UNICEF and partners are working to sustain emergency WASH services across accessible areas of the Gaza Strip. The response prioritises safe water access, critical hygiene supplies and sanitation support to reduce public health risks, especially as summer approaches.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- **Bringing water closer to families:** UNICEF is delivering and installing water tanks in shelters, helping families access water more easily and reducing repeated collection trips.
- **Safe water access at scale:** UNICEF supported around **1 million people** to access a sufficient quantity and quality of water for drinking and domestic needs.
- **Keeping systems running:** UNICEF supported water access through a mix of water trucking, desalination support, well repairs and pipeline maintenance, alongside operational inputs needed to keep services functioning amid highly constrained conditions.
- **Preventing sudden service collapse:** UNICEF supplied fuel to operate water production, trucking and sewage pumping systems, and carried out urgent actions to restore the functionality of key assets, including repairs that restored electricity supply to major facilities.
- **Sanitation support that protects dignity and health:** UNICEF supported nearly **509,000 people** to access sanitation services in overcrowded conditions where privacy, cleanliness and safe waste disposal remain difficult to maintain.
- **Wastewater and network functionality:** UNICEF supported works to restore wastewater treatment functionality and emergency maintenance of wastewater networks.
- **Critical hygiene items:** UNICEF reached over **603,300 people** with critical WASH supplies (NFIs), helping families maintain minimum hygiene practices.
- **Small innovations for cleaner shelter environments:** UNICEF implemented a pilot household-level waste segregation initiative in four shelters in Deir Al Balah and Al Zawayda, achieving around **15–20 per cent** reduction in overall waste volume in those shelters.

UNICEF WASH response figures	People accessing water	People accessing sanitation services	People reached with critical WASH supplies
Girls	251,619	120,126	159,933
Boys	260,937	117,454	139,548
Women	244,845	136,460	158,066
Men	242,599	134,812	145,765
Total	1,000,000	508,852	603,312



Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)

- **Community participation and information provision:** UNICEF continues to strengthen accountability by providing accessible information, encouraging participation and maintaining confidential feedback options to help adapt programming.
- **UNICEF hotline: answered over 85,000 calls** from the Gaza Strip. Regarding WASH, unmet hygiene needs and irregular or insufficient water supply, particularly in displacement settings, were repeatedly raised. This feedback is analyzed and shared to adapt WASH programmes.

STORY: MOTHER OF EIGHT, RELIEF WHEN WATER IS CLOSER

Latifa al-Farra carries a jerrican of clean water into the tent where she lives with her eight children. Before a water tank was installed nearby, she walked long distances daily even when unwell – **returning exhausted** just to bring enough water for drinking and washing dishes. Now, the tank has reduced that burden, giving her a little more strength for the other needs her family faces.

Across Gaza, UNICEF and partners are installing water tanks near displacement sites and trucking water to fill them from private desalination plants or domestic wells. **For families, this is not a question of convenience – it upholds dignity, saves time, and provides a buffer against disease outbreaks.** Read more [here](#).



Latifa al-Farra, mother of eight, in front of her make-shift shelter in the central Gaza Strip.
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WHAT UNICEF IS CALLING FOR

UNICEF calls on authorities to fulfil their obligations to:

- **Facilitate safe, sustained and predictable humanitarian access** for WASH operations to run consistently and safely.
- Support **access** to critical water supply points – including the **Al Mansoura filling station** in Gaza City – so lifesaving water-trucking operations can resume and safe drinking water access can be sustained.
- **Enable the entry/approval of core humanitarian items** required to stabilise water and sanitation services, including pumps, pipes/fittings compatible with existing systems, and other essential items.
- **Allow reliable entry of WASH consumables and spare parts** that keep systems running: **generator parts/consumables (including lubricating/engine oils)** and **water treatment chemicals**, as well as desalination maintenance inputs (e.g. membranes) to prevent sudden service disruptions.
- **Protect WASH infrastructure and enable timely repairs**, incl. safe access for emergency maintenance teams, to reduce health risks for children.
- **Facilitate safe access to waste disposal options and wastewater management sites** to reduce accumulation around shelters and residential areas and limit pest-related health risks.

UNICEF calls on donors to support continued humanitarian action by:

- **Providing predictable, flexible financing** to sustain and **scale a life-saving WASH** response and absorb emergency cost increases caused by disruptions to critical water access points. **Ahead of summer, urgent support is needed** for sanitation, wastewater and solid-waste interventions to reduce public-health risks for children.

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, 36 per cent of the appeal is funded. UNICEF urgently requires an additional US\$ 451.8 million in 2026 to scale up life-saving assistance.

	Funding Needs	Funding Received*	Funding Gap
All sectors	USD 707.8 million (100%)	USD 256 million (36%)	USD 451.8 million (64%)

*Funding received includes funds received in 2026 and carry forward from 2025. New funding received in 2026 amounts to USD 18.7 million for WASH and USD 119.7 million across all sectors.

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

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