

Ahmed, 10, helps his family retrieve belongings damaged by heavy rainfall at a displacement camp in Nuseirat, central Gaza Strip. © UNICEF-SoP/2026

Gaza Strip and West Bank

Situation Update and Humanitarian Response

UNICEF State of Palestine

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unicef for every child

WINTER IS ANOTHER CRISIS FOR CHILDREN ACROSS PALESTINE

In the Gaza Strip, children are facing a fourth winter in makeshift shelters exposed to the cold, flooding and risk of disease. In the West Bank, displacement, movement restrictions and economic hardship mean vulnerable families are less able to cope with the winter conditions.

Situation Update

Gaza Strip

- The first major rains of November 2026 flooded shelters, damaged sanitation facilities and learning spaces, and interrupted health, nutrition, protection and education services.[1]
- An estimated 950,000 displaced people live in flood-exposed areas, including 400,000 at extremely high risk, as families face a fourth winter in tents and makeshift shelters. Since heavy rains began on 6 November 2026, OCHA has reported over 226,000 people in more than 46,000 households affected and more than 40,000 shelters damaged, including over 9,000 reportedly beyond repair.
- Three children aged four, five and eight and their mother were killed when a sand dune collapsed onto their tent in Deir Al Balah; an infant was also reported to have drowned. On 13 November, a nine-month-old child in Mawasi Khan Younis reportedly died from cardiac arrest caused by hypothermia.[2]
- Floodwater mixed with sewage is increasing public health risks, and an increase in disease outbreaks has been reported. Sewage and waste are also contaminating floodwater, soil and water sources, compounding environmental health risks for families living in flooded shelters.[3] This is made worse by the fact that no wastewater treatment plant is fully operational, while severely limited pumping capacity at the Sheikh Radwan stormwater basin heightens the risk of flooding and sewage contamination.[4]

West Bank, including East Jerusalem

- Displacement, violence, movement restrictions and the deepening fiscal and economic crisis are reducing vulnerable families' capacity to prepare for and withstand winter conditions. Since the start of 2026, more than 5,150 Palestinians have been displaced by demolitions, settler violence and related restrictions, an average of more than 16 people per day; the Jordan Valley accounts for 44 per cent of those displaced. This adds to displacement in previous years: since 7 October 2023, more than 9,400 Palestinians, including over 4,100 children, have been displaced by home demolitions, mainly in East Jerusalem and Area C, and some 34,000 Palestinians, including 12,000 children, remain displaced from Jenin, Tulkarem and Nur Shams refugee camps, which have been under military closure since January 2025.
- Children in displaced households and vulnerable Bedouin, herding and other underserved communities are particularly exposed to cold, rain and flash floods, especially where families live in inadequate shelters or have limited resources to replace winter-damaged belongings.[5] Recent heavy rainfall and flash floods in the northern Jordan Valley, which damaged shelters, household belongings and livestock fodder belonging to 37 Palestinian households across seven Bedouin communities, illustrate how seasonal hazards can compound escalating displacement and livelihood vulnerabilities.[6]

Impact on children and families

Gaza Strip

Winter is arriving against a backdrop of ongoing conflict and violence, which remain the primary threat to children in Gaza and underlie the displacement, shelter damage and service disruption described here. For children in Gaza, winter is not an isolated seasonal hardship. It compounds the effects of

prolonged displacement, damaged infrastructure, malnutrition, disease and repeated disruption of essential services. When a tent floods, children may lose their clothing, bedding, school materials and the limited sense of safety that the shelter provided. Parents must then try to keep infants warm, obtain clean water and find somewhere dry to sleep while coping with severely limited resources. Children with disabilities and children with chronic health conditions require particular support at this time.

A consolidated flood-risk assessment of displacement sites, carried out by UNICEF with OCHA and the Site Management Cluster, found that 1,128 families (an estimated 6,200 people, including approximately 2,900 children) across 17 sites require relocation support because of flood risk, in addition to drainage improvements, sandbags, ground levelling and shelter reinforcement.

Cold and wet conditions are especially dangerous for newborns, infants, malnourished children and children with disabilities or pre-existing health conditions. Exposure increases the risk of hypothermia and respiratory illness, while contaminated floodwater heightens the danger of waterborne disease and skin infections. Last winter, at least 11 children in the Gaza Strip, including infants, were reported to have died from hypothermia. Disease risks were already high before the November rains this year: acute respiratory infections were reported to account for 60 per cent of medical consultations between 18 and 25 October 2026, and OCHA recorded 294 probable viral and 119 probable bacterial meningitis cases between 27 September and 31 October, 77 per cent of the individually documented cases being infants under one.

Winter conditions also interrupt the services children rely on. Rain and flooding damaged 109 learning spaces, which together serve some 66,000 pre-school and school-aged children; damage or blocked access has left at least 5,500 of these children cut off from learning. Fifteen child-friendly and psychosocial-support spaces were damaged, while a safe space serving approximately 200 women and girls collapsed. Damage to tents, roads and facilities also affects access to health care, nutrition treatment, psychosocial support and protection services. Contamination of floodwater, soil and water sources with sewage and waste further exacerbates environmental health risks for children living in flooded shelters and displacement sites.

West Bank, including East Jerusalem

In the West Bank, children who are already vulnerable are most at risk this winter: those in displaced households, in communities affected by demolitions or settler violence, in remote Bedouin and herding communities, and in families facing severe economic hardship. They may lack adequate heating, waterproof shelter, warm clothing or blankets.

Movement restrictions and long-standing economic hardship can make an otherwise manageable winter illness more dangerous by delaying or limiting access to health care. Restrictions disrupt school attendance, make the delivery of humanitarian supplies more difficult and limit families' access to markets, employment and essential services. For families that have lost property, income or livestock assets, replacing winter-damaged belongings can be beyond their financial capacity.

UNICEF'S WINTER RESPONSE IN THE GAZA STRIP, OCTOBER 2026 – MARCH 2027

Working with national authorities and local partners, UNICEF is delivering an integrated and adaptive response to protect vulnerable children, sustain essential services and strengthen family and community resilience. UNICEF requires **US$97.5 million** to reach **540,000 children and their families** with an integrated winter response until March 2027. Assistance includes winter clothing, thermal blankets, emergency shelter reinforcement, family and service-delivery tents, digital cash assistance, flood mitigation, emergency WASH support, and nutrition support, learning-space repairs, child protection support and winter health and safety messaging.

Child Protection and winter supplies

- Winter clothing has reached over **110,000 children**, more than **15,000 thermal blankets** have been provided, and **170,000 children's clothing kits** have been dispatched to partners, with distributions continuing across the Gaza Strip.
- Child-protection teams delivered winter safety messages on fire prevention, safe heating and cooking, and child supervision to **2,500 children and caregivers** in Khan Younis through MHPSS, parenting and outreach activities.
- Families affected by the Deir Al Balah incident, in which three children and their mother were killed, were referred for case management and psychosocial support.
- Flooding temporarily suspended services at an estimated **12–15 child-friendly spaces**. Partners are repairing facilities and requesting additional tents, sandbags and waterproofing support to restore safe services.
- More winter clothing kits and winter jackets are expected to arrive and will be distributed across the Gaza Strip.

Water, sanitation and flood mitigation

- UNICEF-supported machinery operations reached **129 displacement sites** and **21,145 families**, approximately **126,870 people** including approximately **54,000 children**, through floodwater removal, drainage works, ground levelling and access improvements.
- UNICEF and partners cleared sewer lines, manholes and stormwater basins at **173 locations**, serving an estimated **68,800 families**, approximately **412,800 people**, including approximately **194,000 children**.
- The first **43,000 sandbags** under UNICEF's flood-mitigation plan have been received. UNICEF is coordinating installation through three partners at priority flood-prone sites, including learning spaces and WASH facilities, with monitoring of final use. The plan is to provide approximately **208,000 sandbags** at around **530 vulnerable locations**.
- Israeli authorities have indicated approval of most of UNICEF's high-priority winter list submitted on 22 November, including **11 dewatering and sewage pumps**, **72 generators**, **54,210 litres of engine oil**, spare parts for the Gaza South Desalination Plant and three water trucks. Entry is pending formal approval in the system.

Emergency shelter and household support

- UNICEF has provided a total of **10,530 tarpaulins** for vulnerable shelters and facilities, reaching an estimated **5,265 families**, or approximately **31,590 people** including **14,848 children**.
- UNICEF supplied **5,000 tarpaulins and 500 hygiene kits** to the inter-agency Joint Distribution Mechanism for verified emergency needs.
- UNICEF is providing an additional **2,000 tarpaulins and 250 hygiene kits** to affected families through child-protection and emergency-response mechanisms.
- Further shelter needs are being prioritised with shelter and site-management partners. UNICEF is following up on approved family tents and any additional tarpaulins.

Health and Nutrition

- In coordination with the Ministry of Health, UNICEF has assessed winterization needs at **three primary health-care centres (Al-Hurriya, Blood Bank and Al-Iqlimi)**, with further needs identified at Al-Iqlimi. Protective canopies and service windows are planned to protect patients and medical supplies and to keep primary health care and maternal, newborn and child health services running. Procurement has started, and installation is being expedited ahead of further anticipated rainfall. Rapid works at Al-Helou Hospital have been completed, and tarpaulins are planned for the field extension at Al-Shifa Medical Complex.
- Newborn winter-clothing distributions have started through **nine UNICEF-supported maternity hospitals**, helping protect newborns from cold exposure and hypothermia. This support also helps alleviate the financial and emotional burden on mothers, particularly those facing limited access to essential newborn supplies.
- Essential nutrition supplies have been positioned in flood-affected and flood-prone areas. UNICEF and coordination partners are assessing sites where malnourished and other vulnerable children face elevated hypothermia risks and are supporting preventive measures and heating arrangements at treatment sites.
- UNICEF has distributed **65 new incubators** to **10 Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) sites** to ensure that acutely vulnerable newborns have access to NICU and Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) services.

Education

- To date, UNICEF has repaired **57 flood affected classrooms, seven administration rooms and seven storage rooms**, compared with **658 classrooms** reported damaged by education partners across 148 of 211 learning centres as of 11 November (reporting scopes differ). Works included structural repairs, replacement of tarpaulin coverings, repairs to windows and doors, and rehabilitation of fences and gates.
- UNICEF continues to assess, repair and weatherproof affected learning spaces so that children can return to safer learning environments after flooding.

Social Protection

- Digital cash transfers were made since 16 November to **467 flood-affected families**, approximately **2,100 people**, including children.

Social and Behaviour Change and community engagement

- UNICEF's winter response includes messaging on the recognition and prevention of hypothermia, respiratory illness, unsafe heating practices, fire and burn risks, and other preventable winter-related threats. Around **150 social mobilizers** have been deployed. Over the past couple of weeks, hygiene promoters reached approximately **128,000 people**, and social mobilizers a further **25,732 people** with winterization and hypothermia-prevention messages. Social media and mass media channels have also been used to disseminate hypothermia-prevention messages. Field teams continue to collect community feedback, assess emerging needs and monitor conditions on the ground, including through assessments of High Performance Tents (HPTs).

STORY: WINTER IS HERE, AND THE ROOF IS A TARPAULIN

Winter has arrived in Gaza. When Reem spoke to UNICEF before, she was already worried about what it would bring. She and her family live in a damaged part of her extended family's building in Gaza City, where tarpaulins are all they have above them. "My home was destroyed during the war. I am living among the rubble now," she says.

In the family's living space, daily life continues as best it can. Reem helps Shahid, 13, with her schoolwork while Mohammed, 12, and Mahmoud, 9, study beside them, using an upturned basin as a desk. Deema, seven months old, lies on a mattress nearby. Each month she is taken to a UNICEF-supported Ministry of Health clinic, where she receives ready-to-use therapeutic food to treat severe acute malnutrition. Outside, in the alley, Reem hangs the family's laundry while holding Deema. "My hands hurt, and I cannot manage everything," she says. "I need help."



Reem helps Shahid, 13, with her schoolwork while Mohammed, 12, and Mahmoud, 9, study beside them and Deema, 7 months, lies on a mattress, in a damaged building in Gaza City where the family now lives. *© UNICEF-SoP/2026/Skills*

"My little daughter needs nappies and milk every week. Where am I supposed to get the money to buy them?" Reem asks.

The family receives cash assistance from UNICEF. With only tarpaulins overhead, the rain and falling temperatures now increase the risks of hypothermia and illness for children like Deema. Winter should bring memories of warmth, not another danger from which parents must protect their children. *Read more here.*

WHAT UNICEF IS CALLING FOR

UNICEF welcomes indications that priority winter items, including dewatering pumps, generators, engine oil and desalination spare parts, have been approved. Approval alone does not protect children: supplies must enter Gaza and reach families.

UNICEF calls on authorities to fulfil their obligations and take urgent action on the following:

- **Protect Palestinian children** from ongoing conflict and violence and uphold their right to life in line with international law, including by ensuring transparent and robust accountability when children are killed or maimed, taking effective action to deter further violence, and ensuring humanitarian access and medical attention to the wounded.
- **Rapid, predictable and sustained entry of winter supplies into the Gaza Strip**, including family tents, tarpaulins, winter clothing, water tanks, water trucks and portable-toilet components that have been approved but have not yet entered, as well as clearance of shelter-reinforcement materials, blankets, sandbags, safe heating equipment and essential health supplies.
- **Approval and entry of remaining machinery and operating supplies**, including engine oil, hoses and maintenance supplies for pumps, generators and emergency machinery, and heavy machinery for flood mitigation, needed to clear floodwater and maintain sewage, drainage and health systems.
- **A shorter gap between approval and entry**, through streamlined screening and customs procedures and added screening capacity, so that approved supplies reach children before the coldest months.
- **Approval and implementation of urgent infrastructure repairs**, particularly the emergency repair package at the Sheikh Radwan stormwater basin, which is urgently needed this winter because the approved temporary pumping solution will not be in place in time to mitigate peak flood risk, and completion of approvals for the Sheikh Ejleen Wastewater Treatment Plant, alongside wider drainage and sewage rehabilitation.

- **Safe and sustained humanitarian access throughout the West Bank**, including to communities affected by displacement, settler violence, movement restrictions, demolitions and seasonal flooding.
- **Early identification and referral of the most vulnerable children and families**, including newborns, children with disabilities, malnourished children, children with chronic health conditions, female-headed households and families living in inadequate shelters.

UNICEF calls on donors to provide support:

- **Flexible and timely funding** towards the US$97.5 million Winterization Plan, enabling supplies to be procured, transported and positioned before conditions deteriorate further.

FUNDING NEEDS

UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal for 2026 requires USD 746.8 million to meet the urgent needs of children and their families in 2026. As of mid-November, 49.8 per cent of the appeal is funded. UNICEF urgently requires an additional USD 375.2 million in 2026 to scale up life-saving assistance.

	Funding Needs	Funding Received*	Funding Gap
All sectors	USD 746.8 million (100%)	USD 371.7 million (49.8%)	USD 375.2 million (50.2%)

*Funding received includes funds received in 2026 and carry forward from 2025. New funding received in 2026 amounts to USD 235.3 million for all sectors.

Winter cannot be prevented. Its consequences for children can. Timely funding, humanitarian access and the rapid delivery of essential supplies can keep children warm, sustain critical services and prevent further avoidable deaths.

For additional information, please refer to UNICEF's reports here. For further inquiries, please contact:

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[1] Humanitarian Situation Report: Heavy Rains in the Gaza Strip, 8 November 2026, https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-report-heavy-rains-gaza-strip-8-november-2026 and Humanitarian Situation Report, 13 November 2026, https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-report-13-november-2026.
[2] Humanitarian Situation Report: Heavy Rains in the Gaza Strip, 8 November 2026, https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-report-heavy-rains-gaza-strip-8-november-2026.
[3] Oxfam, Environmental War Crimes, 16 November 2026, https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/environmental-war-crimes.
[4] Humanitarian Situation Report, 13 November 2026, https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-report-13-november-2026.
[5] OCHA Humanitarian Situation Report, 5 November 2026, https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-report-5-november-2026.
[6] OCHA Humanitarian Situation Report, 5 November 2026, https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-report-5-november-2026.