

State of Palestine Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1 Escalation of Hostilities

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Children checking the aftermath of the latest hostilities in their neighborhood.

Reporting Date: 09 May - 15 May 2023

Highlights

- After five days of intense escalation of hostilities in and around the Gaza Strip, a ceasefire was reached on 13 May.
- The escalation has led to the death of six Palestinian children, including four girls and two boys, while another 64 are reported injured.
- UNICEF continues to work closely with partners on the ground to provide immediate support. UNICEF has released prepositioned medical supplies, including drugs, of a value of around US\$100,000 to the Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip. UNICEF also provided fuel to the local water authorities to ensure the continuation of WASH services for more than 700,000 people.
- More than 814 children (428 girls, 386 boys) received remote counseling on Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) through a well-trained staff, in addition to 503 caregivers, of which 410 are women.
- The UNICEF State of Palestine Humanitarian Appeal for Children (HAC) for 2023 (issued in December 2022) is 79 per cent underfunded. In close coordination with OCHA and partners, UNICEF emphasizes the funding gaps in its current HAC and HRP projects, prioritizing the urgent needs of affected children in child protection, MHPSS, remedial education, summer activities, WASH, and health. Additional flexible funding is urgently required to address these needs and replenish stock for key emergency supplies. The provision of resources will scale up the response to address exacerbated and unmet needs from previous escalations and increased vulnerabilities.



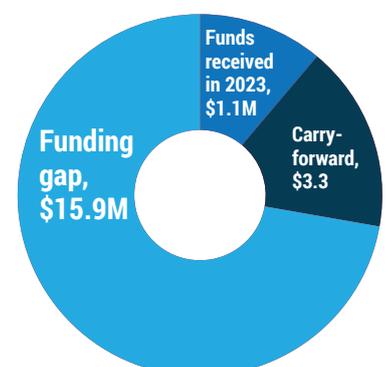
1.1 Million
children in need of
humanitarian assistance



2.1 Million
People in need
(OCHA Jan 2023)

UNICEF Appeal 2023

US\$ 20.3 million



UNICEF's Response and Funding Status

Sector	Requirements (USD)	Funds available			Funding gap	
		Humanitarian resources received in 2023	Other resources used in 2023	Resources available from 2022 (Carry-over)	\$	%
HEALTH & NUTRITION	1,970,000	245,000	0	234,764	1,490,236	76%
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	6,300,000	157,981	0	629,647	5,561,960	88%
Child Protection, GBVIE & PESA	4,057,240	657,382	0	462,963	2,936,895	72%
EDUCATION	3,800,000	0	0	1,142,966	2,657,034	70%
Cross-Sectoral (SBC, RCCE and AAP)	100,000	14,376	0	50,146	38,961	39%
Cluster coordination	1,040,000	50,000	0	29,000	961,000	92%
Social Protection & Cash Transfers	3,061,080	0	0	727,084	2,333,996	76%
Total	20,328,320	1,124,739	0	3,276,570	15,980,082	79%

**Funding available includes carry-over and funds received in the current year.*

Funding Overview and Partnerships

UNICEF in the State of Palestine Humanitarian Appeal for Children (HAC) for 2023, issued in Dec 2022, is US\$ 20.3M. The main objective of the appeal is to scale up the provision of life-saving services for women and children in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. UNICEF expresses its sincere gratitude to all public and private donors for the contributions received so far. However, the 2023 HAC still has a funding gap of 79 per cent. In close coordination with OCHA and partners, UNICEF emphasizes the funding gaps in its current HAC and HRP projects, prioritizing the urgent needs of affected children in child protection, MHPSS, remedial education, summer activities, WASH, and health. Additional funding flexibility is urgently required to address these needs and replenish stock for key emergency supplies. Without sufficient funding, thousands of people will not have access to adequate water and sanitation, and thousands of children will not receive the psychosocial support they need and education services to overcome the learning loss.

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

After five days of intense escalation of hostilities in and around the Gaza Strip, a ceasefire was reached on 13 May. This escalation has once again affected children and communities already deeply scared by at least 3 major escalations in the last 24 months. This period of violence led to casualties and extensive damage, further worsening the already dire situation for children and their families. The escalation has led to the death of six Palestinian children, including four girls and two boys, while another 64 are reported injured.

The Gaza Strip already faced persistent mental health challenges among many children and caregivers, as well as shortages of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services and limited access for children. The last escalation has further exacerbated the existing MHPSS needs, raising significant concerns about the re-traumatization of existing cases and the overall trauma and psychosocial distress experienced by the population. It is anticipated that areas heavily affected during the conflict will experience even higher levels of severity in terms of mental health challenges.

According to the 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), more than 532,909 children in the Gaza Strip require MHPSS and child protection services. Data from MHPSS assessments conducted after the escalations in May 2021 and August 2022, as part of the MHPSS Working Group's efforts, revealed that slightly over half (54.6 per cent) of the surveyed children exhibited below-average levels of well-being, with 45.8 per cent displaying average levels. Furthermore, approximately 36 per cent of the surveyed children reported experiencing moderate to severe levels of anxiety. In general, children in the North governorate displayed higher levels of stress and anxiety compared to children in other governorates, likely due to the area's increased exposure to escalations and conflict. Moreover, girls demonstrated more noticeable signs of distress and anxiety than their male counterparts.

The recent escalation has had a growing impact on the educational losses suffered by children. Throughout the escalation, all schools in Gaza remained closed for a period of four days, affecting a minimum of 600,000 school-aged children. Initial reports indicate that, as of 15 May, at least 22 schools and 20 kindergartens (KG) facilities sustained minor damages. This adds to the existing poor and limited school infrastructure as a result of the lack of space, which further impacts the learning outcomes of children. The Education Cluster, co-led by UNICEF, is conducting assessments to verify the extent of damage that might have occurred to those schools to inform the rehabilitation plan for affected schools.

It's reported that 93 housing units in the Gaza Strip were destroyed, and 2,934 sustained significant damages, including 103 destroyed, 140 that were severely damaged, and becoming uninhabitable. Overall, a total of 397 families (2,176 individuals) have been affected, of which 236 families are displaced, comprising 1,244 people.¹

At least three health facilities were damaged. This included two hospitals (Indonesian and Al-Aqsa Hospitals) and one Primary health care (Masqat PHC in Khan Younis). The closure of the two crossings for the Gaza Strip prevented the exit and entry of hundreds of people, including patients in need of medical attention outside of the Gaza Strip. The escalation has further weakened the existing public health system facing multiple longstanding challenges, particularly protracted shortages of health commodities, as well as the ability to sustain the delivery of essential health care to the population of the Gaza Strip, including the MNCH services, which becomes extremely difficult given recurrent rounds of violence and the surge of hostilities.

The escalation has further impacted the availability of water and sanitation services for the population in the Gaza Strip. Three water wells located in Gaza City, Beit Hanon, and Khan Younis, as well as various water and sewer pipelines, suffered minor damages. This includes damages to the buildings, electromechanical systems, and pipes of these facilities.

Moreover, the scarcity of power supply resulting from the depletion of fuel for the operation of the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) has disrupted the normal functioning of water and sanitation facilities. This includes water wells, sewer pumping stations, and desalination plants, leading to a significant impact on the provision of water and sanitation services for the people residing in Gaza.

Despite the escalation, UNICEF continues to maintain a strong presence in the Gaza Strip through its 34 staff, national and international, and network of partners.

¹ Shelter Cluster update as of 14 May 2023. The 1,244 Palestinians were internally displaced, either because they lived in one of the 2,943 housing units that were damaged or because they identified safer areas to stay in

In the West Bank, tension has continued, and military operations have continued in Nablus and Jenin during the reporting period, resulting in casualties and injuries.

Since the beginning of the year, 26 Palestinian children (7 in the Gaza Strip and 19 in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem) and four Israeli children were killed in conflict-related violence.²

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Health

UNICEF has released prepositioned medical supplies, including drugs, of a value of around US\$100,000 to the Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip to support the health system better respond to the emerging situation. The delivered supplies include two drug items benefiting 300 people for one month, and two consumable items for 12,000 people for one month period.

UNICEF is also in the process of procuring additional essential drugs and consumables as part of its system strengthening and emergency preparedness response. A process that was started in Aug 2022 and pending additional clearances and approvals.

Nevertheless, needs remain high. The Ministry of Health has submitted a request to UNICEF for medical disposables and drugs that are needed to sustain essential MCH services in the Ministry facilities. The request is of a total estimated cost of US\$500,000 (US\$350,000 for drugs and US\$150,000 for medical disposables). UNICEF is closely coordinating with the Ministry of Health and the Health Cluster to mobilize those additional resources and contributions to address additional needs.

WASH

As per the operating procedures, the WASH Cluster – led by UNICEF - activated the emergency coordination update system with PWA, CMWU, and the WASH area focal points to follow up on the WASH needs during and after the escalation.

As part of its prepositioning stock, UNICEF, in coordination with the local water authorities, has secured 18,000 litres of fuel at the middle-area desalination plant that could be used in case of electricity supply disruption. Another 50,000 litres of fuel were procured and delivered as prepositioning stock to support the emergency operation of 120 critical water and sanitation facilities serving around 700,000 people to maintain the minimum WASH services in the Gaza Strip.

A stock of WASH spare parts initially prepositioned in the Gaza Strip are made accessible for the local water authorities to enable the immediate rehabilitation of damaged water facilities and network to sustain access to water for more than 125,000 people.

Needs for water treatment chemicals is a priority as the stock in the Gaza Strip is depleting. UNICEF is closely coordinating with the authorities and the WASH Cluster to mobilize additional resources to address this crucial need.

Education

Discussions with the Ministry of Education are ongoing to provide summer activities to keep children engaged and provide mental health and psychosocial support. UNICEF's response will focus on 1) the provision of essential education in emergencies teaching and learning materials to the affected children, 2) Supporting learning and recreational programs during the summer break to keep the children engaged, mitigate learning loss through fun learning activities, and support

² OCHA Protection of Civilians data as of 31 March 2022.

their well-being and 3) provide remedial education and catch-up classes to children to enhance the acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy skills and mitigate the children risk of dropping out of school.

UNICEF has prepositioned essential education in emergency stationery kits in the Gaza Strip, adequate for 34,000 children, ready for distribution as per the verified needs. These supplies will help the most vulnerable children to continue learning and access educational opportunities for immediate response.

Flexible funding is required to ensure scaling up of MHPSS through summer activities to reach affected children. Additional resources would be required to support the immediate rehabilitation of damaged education facilities.

Child Protection

During the escalation, none of the twelve family centers supported by UNICEF were operational due to security and safety concerns. However, the center's counselors and case managers have shifted to remote service delivery through social media platforms, where they have provided psychological first aid services to a total of 814 children (428 girls, 386 boys). Remote guidance and counseling on Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) continue through a well-trained staff using hotline calls. So far, 503 caregivers, of which 410 are women benefited.

The centers are receiving children and are currently providing psychological first aid and awareness raising on Explosive Remnants of War, putting into practice the recently received ERW risk education with UNMS.

Child protection partners operating in Gaza Strip are rapidly assessing the impact of the current escalation on the protection of children, including the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development, to ensure all child protection needs are identified, as well as gaps and priorities.

UNICEF currently has 600 psychosocial kits prepositioned in its warehouse in the Gaza Strip. Once the needs and priorities of affected families are identified, they will be distributed to affected families in a way that engages children with their caregivers and helps relieve their stress.

UNICEF will continue to strengthen mechanisms for monitoring grave violations against children to inform UNICEF advocacy and programmes.

Dissemination of awareness-raising messages, including on ERW and protection of children, was initiated by CP AoR members during airstrikes through media channels such as radios and social media.

There is a need to expand outreach activities, including mobile teams, ensuring structured and specialized Child Protection, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services, including reaching at least 900 people³ (about 50% children) directly impacted by the escalation, including loss and injuries of family members as well as people impacted by the damages to their house who need psychological first aid, as well as structured MHPSS services.

At least 200 children who lost a family member or were directly injured during the escalation will need individual case management support. UNICEF will also prioritize the provision of self-care and supervision for counselors and case managers as they are also affected by the escalation.

³This is preliminary data based on OCHA Flash Update No 4, released on 15 May 2023

Social Policy and Humanitarian Cash Transfers

UNICEF is working with the Gaza Cash Working Group to identify families with children whose houses have been destroyed or damaged due to the escalation and who may require multi-purpose cash assistance. This assistance is planned alongside Child Protection partners to support the most vulnerable children in these households who also require mental health and psychosocial support.

Social Behaviour (SBC), Community Engagement, Prevention of Sexual Abuse & Accountability

As part of its Social Behaviour Change (SBC) expertise, UNICEF continued to lead the Risk Communication and Community Engagement national task, including access to services.

UNICEF heavily invested in advancing AAP and PSEA portfolios and addressing potential risks related to UNICEF's operations and misconduct of personnel involved in the delivery of UNICEF's programme. In close cooperation with relevant stakeholders and implementing partners, AAP systems were further institutionalized to improve access of communities and children to appropriate feedback platforms, integrating their views in decision-making and programme design processes. To ensure appropriate and effective responses, UNICEF worked with relevant stakeholders and implementing partners to operationalize accountability frameworks through community engagement, transparent information sharing, and feedback components. UNICEF is using three feedback channels; the Inter-Agency hotline, an NGO hotline for cases related to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and a UNICEF email address. The CO has developed a standard operating procedure for the CO CFM mechanism, issued data handling procedures in place, and established processes to manage sensitive cases involving complaints related to SEA or gender-based violence. UNICEF continues to play a leading role in establishing the interagency PSEAH Network, mirroring internal efforts exerted to prevent the risk of SEAH.

Humanitarian Leadership, Coordination and Strategy

UNICEF is part of the UN and Humanitarian Country Teams and regularly coordinates its actions with other organizations and local stakeholders. Within this partnership, UNICEF leads the WASH Cluster, and with Save the Children co-leads the Education cluster. Within the Protection Cluster, UNICEF leads the Child Protection Area of Responsibility and the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Working Group. In close collaboration with the World Health Organization, UNICEF co-leads the Nutrition Working Group under the Health Cluster in the Gaza Strip and at the national level. UNICEF and partners will continue to foster synergies between humanitarian and development assistance in the State of Palestine while emphasizing emergency preparedness. Based on the existing Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and Humanitarian Appeal for Children (HAC), UNICEF is closely working with OCHA and partners to prioritize needs exacerbated by the recent escalation and the associated financial requirement to address these needs.

Human Interest Stories and External Media

- *On May 13: Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell on escalation of hostilities in Israel and the State of Palestine*
- *On May 12: 6 children were killed in the Gaza Strip in the past 72 hours*
- *On 9 May: Four children were killed in the Gaza Strip*
- *On 9 May: Tweet on the demolition of a primary school in the West Bank*

Who to contact for further information:

Lucia Elmi
Special Representative
UNICEF State of Palestine
Tel: +972 (0)2 584 0400
Email: lelmi@unicef.org

Laura Bill
Deputy Special Representative
UNICEF State of Palestine
Tel: +972 (0)2 584 0400
Email: lbill@unicef.org

Jonathan Crickx
Chief of Communication
UNICEF State of Palestine
Tel: +972(0)2 584 0400
Email: jcrickx@unicef.org