



Children benefitting from informal learning activities in a school-turned-shelter in Al Maghazi refugee camp, in Deir al Balah. Teaching is focused on essential literacy and numeracy skills. Photo by OCHA

Gaza Humanitarian Response Update | 16-29 September 2024

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Period: 16-29 September 2024

The information below is provided every other week by Clusters and select technical working groups operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). For an overview of priority needs and activities by cluster, please see the [Flash Appeal](#).

Health

Response

- During the reporting period, 56 Health Cluster partners were active in Gaza, with 48 operating health service points, reaching about 300,000 people per week.
- As of 29 September, there were 15 emergency medical teams (EMTs) supporting the local health-care workforce, including three in northern Gaza.
- As part of a new national EMT project launched by WHO in northern Gaza, 240 national EMT doctors have been deployed to the Emergency Department of the Al-Shifa Hospital to provide both trauma and non-trauma related health services.
- Preparations are underway for the second round of the polio vaccination campaign, which is scheduled to take place in mid-October and will include the distribution of Vitamin A supplements.
- In the northern governorates, health partners have distributed 2,700 postpartum kits (PPK) to health facilities and shared guidance outlining distribution criteria and use modalities with relevant health workers.
- A blood donation campaign was conducted in the West Bank during the last week of September to collect blood units for patients in Gaza, including those suffering from Thalassemia. A total of 3,000 blood units were collected and were delivered to health facilities in both northern and southern Gaza on 30 September.
- On 29 September, eight patients, including seven children, were evacuated from Gaza for specialized medical care in Romania. They traveled along with 24 companions. Half of the patients have cancer, two have blood disease, one needs a kidney transplant, and one has a severe injury. On six occasions, 229 patients along with 316 companions have been exceptionally evacuated since the closure of Rafah Crossing on 7 May.

Challenges

- Health facilities continue to face severe supply shortages due to obstacles hindering the entry of humanitarian aid and a growing backlog of health supplies and equipment awaiting entry into Gaza. In particular, partners continue to face major security and access constraints in reaching medical facilities in northern Gaza, which is also impeding fuel deliveries and forcing all healthcare facilities in the north to ration fuel supplies and interrupt some services.
- The lack of a systematic mechanism for the medical evacuation of critically ill and injured patients out of Gaza results in an ever-growing waiting list. As of 30 September, it is estimated that 12,000 patients need medical evacuation, as the clinical conditions of many deteriorate.

- Overcrowding in displacement sites, poor water, hygiene and sanitation conditions, and the lack of essential items are contributing to growing reproductive health risks and increasing vulnerability to gender-based violence (GBV) and exploitation.
- There are growing public health concerns for the anticipated deterioration of living conditions during the winter season in displacement sites, particularly in flood-prone areas. In a joint assessment published on 25 September, the Health and WASH Clusters warned that many IDP sites are assessed to be located in or near flooding hotspots and additional locations are vulnerable to flooding at present.



Nutrition



Response

- The Cluster has trained 17 analysts for the upcoming Integrated Phase Classification for acute malnutrition (IPC-AMN) exercise, with the support of the IPC Global Support Unit. The Cluster has also benefited from the support of the SMART Initiative to analyze more than 40,000 Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) screening data collected by Nutrition Cluster partners between mid-August and mid-September, to better understand the malnutrition situation in each governorate.
- In September, 24,281 children were screened for malnutrition. Since mid-January, a total of 318,603 children aged 6-59 months have been screened for malnutrition, including 70,329 in the northern governorates. Of all screened children, 21,638 have been diagnosed with acute malnutrition, including 16,872 with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) and 4,766 with severe acute malnutrition (SAM); of those with SAM, 145 had medical complications. Treatment is provided at four stabilization centres and 102 outpatient programme sites across the Strip.
- In September, 49,647 children under the age of five and 18,339 pregnant or breastfeeding women (PBW) received supplementary feeding, either through lipid-based nutrient supplements (LBNS) or high energy biscuits (HEB). Nutrition partners also provided 35,366 caregivers with counselling for breastfeeding and for adapted complementary feeding of children aged six months and older.



Challenges

- Transport and adequate storage of nutrition supplies is challenging because of the limited entry of humanitarian supplies, limited ability to store products that require refrigeration such as ready-to-use infant formula, and the loss of access to some warehouses due to ongoing hostilities, evacuation orders, access, and logistical constraints.
- Continuous displacement is disrupting distribution, service delivery, and case monitoring, especially among children, and access to nutrition sites. Coordinating nutrition support for newly displaced people arriving at shelters is increasingly complex.



Food Security



Response

- As of the third week of September, about 600,000 cooked meals prepared in more than 150 kitchens were provided daily to families across the Strip. However, this level of meal production is expected to decrease in October due to dwindling supplies. Overall, in September, due to continuous food supply shortages, more than 1.4 million people did not receive their monthly food rations across Gaza and in the central and southern governorates partners are providing only one food parcel per family per month, compared with two parcels per family in the north.
- As of 29 September, 14 bakeries supported by humanitarian partners were operational in the Gaza Strip – one in Khan Younis, seven in Deir al Balah, four in Gaza city and two in Jabalya. Partners are endeavoring to urgently provide more fuel to these facilities. Five bakeries in Rafah remain closed due to ongoing hostilities and access constraints. Critically, the continued functionality of the six bakeries in northern Gaza is contingent on securing yeast or shifting to the production of yeast-free bread.
- Following recent inter-cluster rapid assessments, partners are now mobilizing to reach communities in areas such as eastern Khan Younis that were previously inaccessible by humanitarian actors, to provide food parcels and cooked meals, particularly to the most vulnerable groups.



Challenges

- Humanitarian food supplies are incredibly limited across the Strip. In southern and central Gaza, FSS partners lack sufficient food stocks to meet requirements and have scaled down distribution significantly for the third consecutive month since July, with food supply shortages expected to continue in October. In northern Gaza, cargo movement was temporarily suspended via the Jordan corridor following a security incident at Allenby Bridge on 8 September, affecting partners' supply flows. As of 29 September, at least 100,000 metric tons of food commodities, equivalent to two months of food rations for the whole population, await entry outside the Strip and must be urgently brought in to ensure

continuous food distribution. There are also great concerns for the increasing risk of spoilage and infestation of stranded food supplies.

- The entry of commercial cargo continues to be limited. The Cluster continues to advocate for the delivery of commercial goods at scale across the Strip to complement humanitarian efforts, increase dietary diversity and stimulate the local economy by increasing the affordability and availability of products, as well as improving cash liquidity.
- Recent military operations in Beit Lahiya, in northern Gaza, have led to the additional destruction of more than 50 dunums (five hectares) of agriculture land and agriculture assets, including fields planted with eggplants, oranges, peppers and other vegetables owned by at least ten farmers. The latest satellite imagery collected by UNOSAT in September 2024 shows that approximately 68 per cent (102 square kilometres) of permanent crop fields in Gaza exhibit a significant decline in health and density, compared with the average of the previous seven years.
- While the olive harvest season in Gaza has started, there is sharp decrease in olive production due to mass destruction of olive orchards, with more than one million olive trees uprooted since the escalation of hostilities in October 2023. Only four out of 37 olive presses remain functional throughout the Strip, but challenging access to fuel represents a key obstacle hampering the use of even this remaining equipment.
- The significant increase in firewood prices continues to push an increasing number of people into energy poverty, exacerbated by the limited availability of gas and the ongoing electricity cuts. It is anticipated that the energy crisis will further worsen as the rainy winter season approaches. In the north, the lack of entry of cooking gas has entered its 12th consecutive month. Protracted shortages of energy sources for cooking continue to force displaced families to cook by burning wood from waste, which hinders proper food preparation and nutrition intake, exacerbates health and protection risks, and causes environmental hazards.
- The extremely limited entry of fertilizers and other livestock and crop production inputs is a key obstacle hampering the restoration of local food production in Gaza. A dual-track approach is required to food assistance and emergency livelihood interventions. Agricultural activities, including small-scale gardening that is critical to enhance dietary diversity, remain largely suspended.
- If physical road access, health-care provision, as well as energy, water, sanitation, hygiene, and shelter conditions are further compromised, there is a high risk that the food insecurity and malnutrition situation will worsen beyond the already alarming rates observed.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Response

- Between 21 to 27 September, the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) and Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) reported that the average water supply for safe drinking and domestic purposes was about 116,000 cubic metres per day across the Gaza Strip, or just over a quarter of water supply provided prior to October 2023. This includes 78,600 cubic metres of water produced by municipal and UNRWA water wells.
- Between 21 and 27 September, WASH Cluster partners received a total of 123,164 litres of fuel, or an average of 17,500 litres per day, which represents only 25 per cent of the minimum daily requirement of 70,000 litres to meet critical WASH and public health needs. This delivery marks a four per cent reduction compared to the quantity received between 14 and 21 September.
- The WASH Cluster completed a Rapid Joint WASH Assessment across the Gaza Strip, to assess the severity of WASH needs and the most critical service gaps for displaced people, and to inform response planning.

Challenges

- There is an urgent need for generators, submersible pumps and other critical supplies for water wells and pumping stations as they remain largely unavailable on the local market.
- The lack of access to soap and other basic hygiene items is severely hindering families' ability to protect themselves from communicable diseases, especially in overcrowded shelters, disproportionately affecting children, pregnant women, and those with compromised immune systems. Key products like shampoo, detergent, and dishwashing liquid are no longer available, making it impossible for households to maintain cleanliness, prepare food safely, or wash clothes. Health-care facilities are also struggling to maintain proper sanitation, increasing the risk of infections for patients and staff.
- The flow of water from the main transmission line running from Israel remains at only 80 per cent of capacity, with several critical water facilities damaged and rendered inaccessible in recent weeks. Water supply through the middle and southern connection points must be urgently increased to full capacity.

Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI)

Response

- The Shelter Cluster continues to track the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) whose shelters have been damaged by hostilities or flooded. Recently, two Cluster partners assessed a displacement site west of Al-Rasheed Street, on the Costal Road, to identify households most vulnerable to tidal impacts during the winter season and assess necessary shelter assistance.
- Despite supply shortages, and where possible, the Cluster provides shelter support, including tents, sealing-off kits and non-food items. Between 16 and 29 September, Cluster partners distributed 620 family tents and 3,300 pieces of tarpaulin to households in need in southern Gaza. Tents and a limited quantity of sealing-off kits were also provided to households in northern Gaza.



Challenges

- Shelter Cluster partners continue to face challenges in importing shelter materials, which is deeply concerning as the winter season approaches. The Cluster has been forced to prioritise the bare minimum of shelter items, which would not constitute dignified shelter. This means that, even if these minimum supplies are brought in, affected households will not be adequately protected in the winter.
- A shortage of shelter items could lead to increased health risks, potential fatalities, and even protests. In September, cluster partners received only nine trucks of shelter items via the Fence Road, which is currently the main route for these supplies. Overall, 0.9 million people across Gaza require winterization support.
- Inclement weather will also exacerbate the risk of collapse for damaged buildings in which many families are sheltering. Without access to undertake assessments, capacity to conduct repairs, or anywhere else for families to go, the cluster is not able to practically support those in damaged buildings other than alerting them of the risks through awareness-raising messages.



Site Management Working Group (SMWG)



Response

- During the reporting period, SMWG partners monitored 38 sites hosting approximately 170,875 people in the Khan Younis, Deir al Balah, Gaza and North Gaza governorates. Identified needs and response gaps were shared with partners to guide response efforts.
- SMWG partners have begun rapid assessments of coastal sites considered highly vulnerable to the rising tide, to inform response planning.
- A draft analysis of empty land plots was conducted in Deir al Balah to support local authorities in identifying areas for the potential relocation of people affected by tidal rise and/or flooding, which should only be considered as a last resort. Before any preparatory work commences, the sites need to be cleared from potential unexploded ordnance by UNMAS.



Challenges

- SMWG partners lack sufficient human resources to carry out needed assessments at IDP sites.
- Constant population movements caused by evacuation orders issued by the Israeli military and rapid changes in developments on the ground due to hostilities are hindering the implementation of an effective site management response.



Protection



Response

- The Protection Cluster continues to expand the pool of staff and volunteers serving as Emergency Protection Responders (EPRs), with more than 100 already trained. EPRs have been mobilized in the majority of inter-cluster assessments to support, along with Protection Cluster staff, the conduct of key informant interviews, facilitate focus group discussions at the community level, and refer protection cases as needed to specialized Protection partners or to other clusters.
- While 12 GBV partners were able to distribute 1,900 dignity kits in Deir al Balah and Khan Younis, this is far below the scale of needs, with over 800,000 dignity kits estimated to be required at present. The dramatic spike in prices and the irregular availability of hygiene supplies on the market leave many women and girls with no means to cope with this gap, with dire shortages of blankets, shoes, warm clothes and other winter items expected to soon exacerbate their suffering. The GBV sub-cluster is assessing the potential for cash assistance to address the urgent needs of women and girls, but the unavailability of cash in Gaza continues to be hinder support.
- Jointly with the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Technical Working Group, there are ongoing efforts to strengthen MHPSS services for women and girls at risk of GBV, including those with disabilities, and increase the capacity of GBV frontline workers to provide support and align their service provision with GBV Minimum Standards. Partners are also working with the Shelter Cluster to develop a referral protocol to mitigate the risk of exploitation of vulnerable cases.

- The Child Protection Case Management Working Group, in cooperation with Save the Children, began conducting surveys and key informant interviews with case managers to assess needs and address gaps in the current management of child protection cases. Moreover, jointly with UNRWA, Child Protection partners began data collection to plan for winterization activities; this includes procuring psychosocial support kits and winter clothes through the private sector.
- Mine Action partners continue to use SMS, radio, and social media to disseminate messages on explosive ordnance risk education and conflict preparedness and protection (EORE-CPP). Between 14 and 27 September, partners completed 13 explosive hazard assessments (EHAs) and took part in five inter agency missions.
- UNRWA's protection teams continue to identify and respond to protection risks and the needs of displaced people in Khan Younis and Deir al Balah, including Al Mawasi. They are visiting shelters and IDP sites, providing awareness sessions on EORE, GBV and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), undertaking focus group discussions and key informant interviews with IDPs, monitoring aid distribution, and following up on previously identified vulnerable cases. With the Education Cluster, Protection Monitors also continue to closely monitor learning activities in shelters to ensure that the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of children are prioritised, and any protection issue or concern is timely addressed.



Challenges

- Insecurity, the disruption of aid flows, the breakdown of law and order, and the denial or restriction on entry of critical items by the Israeli authorities continue to hinder the Protection response. These items include sanitary pads, dignity, and menstrual hygiene management kits (MHM) for women and girls, recreational materials for children and assistive devices for persons with disabilities. Minimum standard explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) equipment and EORE materials are also prevented entry by Israeli authorities into Gaza, thereby limiting the capacity of the Mine Action response.
- IDP sites are in dire condition, amid the continued spread of skin diseases and an acute lack of medications. For example, sites visited by UNRWA protection monitors in Al Mawasi are characterized by worn out tents and tarpaulins, lack of mattresses, key NFIs, and insufficient food, water and sanitation. The approaching adverse weather conditions represent a key concern. IDPs are deeply distressed about the lack of assistance and are demanding support.
- The shortage of tents affects the ability to expand group-based psycho-social support and provide safe spaces or temporary accommodation for unaccompanied children. The limited availability of supplies on the local market, including MHM and dignity kits, has disproportionately affected women and girls, who are at risk of GBV, and increased their vulnerability to disease. The PSS needs remain vast, and it is critical that more kits be approved for entry into the Strip.
- While the Child Protection sub-cluster and UNICEF are endeavoring to reunify unaccompanied and separated children with their parent(s) and families, barriers include frequent denial of missions. Currently, at least 60 children have been identified by UNICEF and UNRWA who require reunification with their families.
- Lack of funding and impeded access by Israeli authorities for specialized personnel and equipment for the clearance and disposal of deep-buried bombs (DBB) hamper people's protection from explosive remnants of war (ERW) and the safe and sustainable delivery of humanitarian aid. Mine Action stresses the need to obtain meaningful data from the Israeli authorities regarding the geographical location of ERW and hazardous areas.
- The ongoing power cuts and limited access to communications services, coupled with fuel shortages and damage to key infrastructure, continue to curtail mobility. Insecurity, bombardments and ensuing displacement continue to constrain community outreach and protection activities, including proper case management for GBV and child protection.
- Cash shortages continue to hinder the use of Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) by some recipients, negatively affecting living conditions, increasing the risk of exposure to violence or exploitation for women and girls, and undermining the ability of partners to pay local service providers and staff salaries. Meanwhile, the price of most basic commodities available in local markets has more than quadrupled.



Education



Response

- During the reporting period, 15 new Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS) have been established in Khan Younis and Deir al Balah, benefiting approximately 2,500 students. To date, a total of 215 TLSs serving nearly 34,000 children have been set up across the Strip, in which school-aged children participate in informal learning focused on essential literacy and numeracy skill and receive mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) to help them cope with and recover from traumatic experiences.
- There has also been a notable increase in community-led education initiatives, with over 25 new initiatives reported to the Cluster during the reporting period. This rise reflects the communities' continued demand for and prioritization of education. Cluster partners are actively engaging with these communities to provide support, aiming to expand coverage and enhance the quality of services offered.



Challenges

- The entry of education supplies continues to be restricted, with the latest denial of shipments of prefabricated structures essential for creating temporary learning spaces. As winter approaches, these supplies are crucial for enhancing these spaces; without them, access to education during peak winter will be nearly impossible.

- According to geospatial analysis by the Education Cluster, eight TLSs serving 887 students are directly located within flood-prone areas, another 24 TLSs benefiting nearly 5,800 students are less than 100 metres away from such areas, and an additional 14 TLSs serving almost 3,000 students are within 100 metres from the coastline. These spaces are expected to face flooding and become inaccessible during the rainy season, with restrictions on the entry of winterproof tents hampering the implementation of crucial mitigation measures.
- The continued targeting of schools is further destroying educational infrastructure and instilling fear in parents and children, hindering participation in temporary learning activities. In September alone, 17 instances of airstrikes by the Israeli military on schools were reported, including 10 incidents in the Gaza and North Gaza governorates. These include at least 14 schools that were hosting IDPs, of which seven are operated by UNRWA.
- As of 1 October, according to the Ministry of Education, 10,449 students and 419 educational staff have been killed in Gaza, while over 16,250 students and 2,463 teachers have been injured since the escalation of hostilities on 7 October. The Education Cluster urgently calls for adherence to International Humanitarian Law, which protects schools during conflicts. Ongoing violations threaten emergency education efforts aimed at addressing children's trauma and providing essential learning in the absence of formal education.



Emergency Telecommunications (ETC)



Response

- On 18 September, the first batch of 25 "Track24" satellite-based devices were dispatched to Gaza. Of these, 15 will be used by the World Food Programme (WFP) in its operations and 10 will be handed to other UN agencies to support their mission movements in Gaza. The ETC is currently working to configure these devices.
- On 19 September, the ETC Cluster secured a pre-clearance from the Israeli authorities to import 78 "Track24" devices to Jerusalem, which are intended for use by 11 UN agencies operating in Gaza. The pre-clearance will expedite customs clearance upon arrival at the Tel Aviv airport.
- The ETC Cluster continues to advocate for the need to import more telecommunications equipment into Gaza to set up common communications services. More information on ETC activities can be accessed [here](#).



Challenges

- Due to increased restrictions on the movement of commodities, damaged infrastructure and lack of fuel and spare parts, local Mobile Network Operators and Internet Service Providers in the Gaza Strip continue to experience network outages and are unable to conduct the necessary repairs. Current conditions render it difficult to maintain the functionality of the remaining network and have resulted in the loss of connectivity in Rafah.
- The availability of telecommunications equipment is severely limited, hampering the delivery of ETC services. A significant amount of equipment has been damaged or destroyed, and the import of new equipment is lengthy and challenging. Only 20 satellite phones, 25 Track24 devices, 20 Garmin inReach Messenger devices, 30 VHF digital radios, four VHR repeaters and four solar power solutions have been coordinated for importation into Gaza with Israeli authorities since 7 October 2023.
- Increasing insecurity, displacement, and relocation of staff from Rafah to Deir al Balah have rendered it difficult to deploy shared ETC communications services or provide face-to-face technical support for humanitarian responders.
- The lack of funding has limited the ETC Cluster's capacity to address immediate communications needs for humanitarian responders in Gaza. Thus far, only 45.8 per cent of funding requested by the Cluster (US\$1.8 million) under the updated OPT Flash Appeal has been received.



IASC Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)



Response

- During the last three weeks of September, the PSEA Network conducted seven PSEA Training-of-Trainer (ToT) sessions for aid organizations in central and southern Gaza. To date, 29 participants (18 females and 11 males) have successfully completed the ToT sessions and will now serve as PSEA focal points. In total, 130 staff from 80 different organizations have registered to participate in these sessions.
- During the reporting period, the PSEA Network trained 12 aid workers (8 females and 5 males) involved in the humanitarian response in northern Gaza and delivered one PSEA orientation session to 15 polio vaccinators.
- About 95,000 "No Excuse" cards were distributed to six PSEA network partners that are conducting PSEA awareness-raising sessions with communities.
- In September, the PSEA Network's media campaign (SANAD) saw a moderate increase in audience reach, with 1.6 million people reached through Facebook and over half a million reached through Instagram. Women continue to be the most engaged, constituting over 60 percent of SANAD's followers, with the highest engagement rate by people aged 25-44 years. In terms of geographical distribution, 28 per cent of SANAD's total audience is from Gaza city, 8 per cent from Rafah, and 3 per cent from Deir Al-Balah.



Challenges

- Access restrictions to northern Gaza have caused delays in providing essential services to the most vulnerable individuals, as well as in conducting awareness-raising sessions on PSEA.
-