

Winter storms sweep through Gaza's camps, where nearly every family had been displaced stripped of their homes, belongings, and sense of safety. © UNICEF-SoP/2025/Nateel

Gaza Strip

Winterization Situation Update and Humanitarian Response[1]

UNICEF State of Palestine

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for every child

SHIVERING THROUGH RAIN, WIND, AND COLD NIGHTS IN FRAGILE SHELTERS – A WINTER NO CHILD SHOULD FACE

Situation Update

- **Children in Gaza are exposed to harsh winter conditions**, including cold temperatures, heavy rainfall, strong winds **of 30-40 km/h (19-25 mph), and contaminated floodwaters.** Night-time temperatures drop to **around 8-11°C (46-52 °F)**, leaving thousands unprotected in inadequate shelter.
- Repeated **winter storms** – including major flooding on 30 December 2025 and 9 January 2026 – have **destroyed or damaged** thousands of makeshift tents and shelters, forcing families and children to endure cold, wet, and unsafe living conditions.
- Displacement remains widespread, with **nearly 1 million people lacking adequate shelter** and many families living in tents or structurally compromised buildings at risk of collapse, increasing children's exposure to cold and weather-related hazards.
- **At least seven children have reportedly died from hypothermia** this winter, including a **two-month-old baby** and a **one-year-old child**, underscoring the deadly impact of exposure to cold conditions without adequate shelter.

Impact on Children and Families

After more than two years of conflict and repeated displacement, children and their families in the Gaza Strip are surviving in **deeply precarious conditions**. Many have been displaced multiple times and now live under makeshift tents, or inside heavily damaged buildings that offer **no insulation, no heating, and no protection from the elements**. Nights are cold, damp and punishing, and families are left to brace against wind, rain and flooding with only the thinnest barriers between them and the weather.

The **widespread destruction of homes and essential infrastructure** has eroded families' ability to cope. Malnutrition – especially among infants and young children – has left many physically weakened, with compromised immune systems that make them acutely vulnerable to disease. In these conditions, **cold temperatures sharply increase the risks of hypothermia, respiratory infections, and waterborne illnesses**, particularly where children sleep on wet ground or in shelters soaked through by winter storms.

This hardship is compounded by the **collapse of vital services across the Gaza Strip**, leaving some **900,000 children** increasingly exposed. Water and sanitation networks have been repeatedly damaged, limiting access to safe drinking water, while overstretched or destroyed health facilities cannot meet the growing medical needs. For families already exhausted by displacement, the winter months have turned daily survival into an even more urgent struggle.

UNICEF RESPONSE – 3 Months Ceasefire

Following the ceasefire of 10 October 2025, which coincided with the onset of winter, UNICEF has **integrated winterization across all interventions**, so that children can remain safe, warm, and able to access essential services despite harsh seasonal conditions. UNICEF mobilized **one of its largest winter stockpiles for Gaza**, aiming to reach **all children under 10 years** with blankets and winter kits, while **newborns in every maternity hospital** were prioritized for immediate distribution. Distributions have focused on **the most vulnerable children**, including those with injuries, infants, and children suffering from malnutrition, while also reaching previously unserved populations. By 31 December 2025, UNICEF had achieved the following results:

Delivery of Life-Saving Winter Supplies

- **957,731 thermal blankets** distributed to help families cope with cold temperatures and damp conditions.
- **291,896 winter clothing kits**, including insulated footwear for children, delivered to improve warmth and protection.
- **56,452 mattresses** provided to ensure safer, cleaner, and warmer sleeping conditions for displaced households.
- **392,711 tarpaulins** supplied to reinforce and weatherproof makeshift shelters, with **22,300 more in transit** and an additional **238,160 under procurement**.
- Nearly **1,000 shelter and household toolkits** delivered to support basic shelter repairs and meet essential household needs.
- Over **1,000 high-performance tents** deployed to withstand severe winter weather and sustain critical services, including health and nutrition points, temporary learning spaces, and child-friendly spaces – with **thousands more in the pipeline**.
- **13,412 family tents** distributed to the most vulnerable families provide safer, more private shelter, with another **7,500** currently being procured.
- **40 trained community health educators** have been deployed across **13 hospital maternity units** and **20 mobile vaccination teams**, reaching **60,064 caregivers** with practical guidance and skills to **reduce the risk of hypothermia among newborns**, helping families keep their infants warm and safe in freezing, rain-soaked conditions.
- UNICEF partners are using high-performance tents to **maintain temporary medical points**, **expand safe spaces**, and **support continuous service delivery** for children and families in areas of severe destruction.

Humanitarian Cash through digital transfers

- Humanitarian cash, reached **284,600 people**, including **150,000 children**, across **48,500 families** – with most families receiving support **at least twice.**
- Prioritised were **those who are most vulnerable**, including children with severe or moderate malnutrition, pregnant and breastfeeding women, children with disabilities or injuries, and children at risk of abuse, neglect, or with serious medical conditions.
- In addition, **incentive payments were provided to 8,700 front-line community workers**, including those supporting water and sanitation services, temporary learning spaces, health and nutrition services, child protection activities, and behaviour-change outreach.

Preventing Waterborne Disease and Winter-Related Health Risks among Children

- UNICEF has reinforced **WASH and flood-preparedness measures** to reduce exposure to contaminated floodwaters and waterborne diseases.
- Emergency water supply is being sustained through **56 water trucks** and **14 relocated desalination plants**, together producing **83 million litres of safe water per day**, reaching cumulatively **1.6 million people**, including **600,000 children**.
- Sanitation support includes **emergency latrines** and **urgent sewage system repairs**, reducing flood and contamination risks across overcrowded displacement sites.
- Supported **primary solid waste collection** in **17 municipalities** in the south, with a daily average of **930 m³** collected at household level, and **740 m³** transported to temporary dumping sites.

Operational Constraints and Ongoing Challenges

- Restrictions on the entry of **"dual-use" items** – including generators, batteries, and construction materials – are **slowing the restoration of essential services**, prolonging unsafe shelter conditions.
- Despite significant progress, **needs across Gaza remain immense**, and winter conditions continue to worsen vulnerabilities.

FUNDING NEEDS

UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal for 2026 requires US$ 673.8 million to meet the urgent needs of children and their families in 2026. As of now, only 1 per cent of the appeal is funded. UNICEF urgently requires an additional US$ 665.4 million to scale up life-saving assistance.

Funding Needs	Funding Received	Funding Gap excluding carry-forward from 2025
USD 673.8 million (100%)	USD 8.4 million (1%)	USD 665.4 million (99%)

A MOTHER'S STRUGGLE TO KEEP HER CHILDREN WARM IN GAZA'S WINTER – STORY FROM A WINTER-HIT CAMP



In a flooded displacement camp in Deir al-Balah, Doaa crouches inside her soaked tent, pulling a damp blanket around her youngest, her daughter Besain (4 years old). Outside, the wind lashes the camp with icy rain, rattling the tarpaulin roof that no longer keeps the water out. Inside, everything is wet — the clothes, the bedding, the floor. Her sons, **Hamza (10)**, **Malek (9)**, and **Qasem (8)** huddle together in the corner, trying to stay warm in clothes that have not dried for days.



"The rain flooded our tent," Doaa says, her voice tight with exhaustion. *"My children's clothes are soaked completely. All our mattresses and blankets are wet, and the children cannot sleep in this cold. "Water is everywhere outside,"* she explains. *"The children can't sleep, and I have no dry place to cook. My children are always sick – coughing, exhausted, and shivering,"* she adds.

As one of the few organizations able to maintain steady supply delivery, UNICEF brought winter items into the Gaza Strip for families like Doaa's – warm jackets, insulated footwear, and other essentials to replace the wet layers clinging to the children's skin.



UNICEF has been on the ground throughout the conflict, distributing **tarpaulins, family tents, winter clothing, and essential supplies.** Yet the scale of displacement and the severity of the winter storms mean many families remain exposed to harsh winter conditions. The needs are immense, but for that night, Doaa's children slept in dry clothes – for the first time since the winter rains, they were not shivering through the cold.

While we cannot change the weather, the support of generous donors helps protect children from its impacts.

WHAT UNICEF IS CALLING FOR

- All parties must fully uphold their obligations as set out in the **ceasefire** agreement.
- Displaced people must be allowed to **move freely** and voluntarily return to their homes as soon as possible.
- Unfettered movement of **humanitarian aid into Gaza** (Humanitarian aid and commercial trucks at scale, improved and faster clearance procedures, all possible supply routes must be open, including Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and the West Bank, regular and unfettered access through all entry points to the Gaza Strip, parties and ceasefire mediators must prioritize supplies based on the population needs, supplies denied or restricted must be allowed in).
- **Medical emergency evacuations** with caregivers and firm guarantees that both patients and caregivers will be allowed to return to Gaza. The medical corridor to the West Bank including East Jerusalem should be restored. We also urge Member States to accept more children for medical treatment.
- **National and international humanitarian staff** must have regular and unfettered access through several entry points to and from the Gaza Strip. Freedom of movement for humanitarian staff within the Gaza Strip is also a critical requirement of the provision of aid in a ceasefire context.
- The specialist supplies and staff needed to carry out **UXO detection and removal** must be permitted entry to the Gaza Strip and must not be impeded in their operations, including coordination.

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

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[1] This Humanitarian Update is a new UNICEF SoP reporting product created to provide more timely, shorter, and thematically focused insights into the situation on the ground and UNICEF's response. Issued on a fortnightly basis, it complements - but does not replace - the traditional Situation Report (SitRep). While the SitRep will offer a comprehensive overview across all sectors on a quarterly basis, the Humanitarian Update provides more concise, topic-driven insights that highlight specific trends, including seasonal impacts, and related operational results. Together, both products provide a fuller picture of the humanitarian situation and UNICEF's response.