

Palestinian Education *Still* Under Attack:

Restoration, Recovery, Rights and Responsibilities in
and through Education

January 2026



Gaza, 2025 © UNRWA photo

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and through Education

ISBN: 978-1-914521-16-4

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Suggested citation

Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, Centre for Lebanese Studies in partnership with UNRWA (January 2026). *Palestinian Education Still Under Attack: Restoration, Recovery, Rights and Responsibilities in and through Education*. Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge.

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Acknowledgements and disclaimers

This report has been written by a team of researchers associated with the Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge and Centre for Lebanese Studies, in partnership with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The report is written by Professor Pauline Rose, Professor Yusuf Sayed, Sally Beiruti, Dr Laraib Niaz, Professor Maha Shuayb and Dr Asma Zubairi. Sohail Ahmad, Bilal Barakat and Mohammad Hammoud supported quantitative analysis in the report. Oriene Castera, Alicia Gracia-Montufar-Miro-Quesada, Tuhina Sharma, Diya Seth and Navin Vithana supported literature searches and qualitative analysis. Sandra Baxter supported the editing of the report and Meghri Shammassian prepared the design. The authors are grateful to all those teachers and counsellors in Gaza, as well as those from a range of local and international organisations and agencies working in Gaza and West Bank, including East Jerusalem, who have participated in interviews and provided information for the report. To ensure safety and confidentiality, we have removed all personal and organisational identifiers from the report. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not represent that of their institutions, UNRWA, their partners or funders.

The authors acknowledge the role of all the partners contributing to the report. The report benefited from inputs and direct interviews with key partners and stakeholders, including UNRWA staff, Education Cannot Wait (ECW), European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Palestinian Authority (PA) Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility, UNESCO, UNICEF, War Child (Netherlands), Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children, Norwegian Refugee Council and the World Bank. The authors recognise that other partners are also contributing to the right to education in Gaza and West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Their voices are important, and in future research, their views will be further reflected upon. The terminology used in this report reflects United Nations definitions and terms. The figures in this report are those that have been obtained from June to October 2025, when the report was being prepared.

The authors dedicate this report to all of those who are contributing to supporting children and young people in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The authors also dedicate this report to the children, young people, teachers and counsellors of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, who daily demonstrate their spirit, determination, and courage to assert the right to equitable and quality education in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.



Kalandia Camp, West Bank, 2025 © UNRWA photo

A note on the focus of the report

This study continues the focus of our previous report (Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, Centre for Lebanese Studies & UNRWA, 2024), centring the realities of education for children, youth, teachers and counsellors in Palestine. The study's methodology included interviews, literature review and documentary analysis, focused solely on the impact of the war in Gaza and the escalation of violence in the West Bank on education. It is not intended to document violations by all parties or perpetrators of international humanitarian law or human rights violations. The study's approach foregrounds the voice of Palestinians and the international community involved in providing education to understand the effects of attacks on education for Palestinians. This report has extended the focus from Gaza to also include the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as this region has also been impacted.

The literature on education in conflict contexts understands attacks on education to include the physical destruction of education infrastructure, killing and injury of children, youth and education staff, impeding access to education resources, such as learning and teaching materials. This understanding includes both direct and indirect attacks, and focuses on effects and consequences, and does not seek to attribute intentionality (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2025). This understanding of attacks is commonly related to the terms 'scholasticide' or 'educide' (Alousi, 2022; Dominguez, 2024; OHCHR, 2024a), which define attacks as erasure of knowledge and identity in and through education, undermining international conventions on the right to education.

Protecting education from attack is vital and a legal obligation for preventing harm to children, young people and teachers. General Assembly Resolution 64/290 urges United Nations (UN) Member States 'to implement strategies and policies to ensure and support the realization of the right to education as an integral element of humanitarian assistance and humanitarian response' (UN General Assembly, 2010). UN Security Council Resolution 2601 (2021) further 'calls on all parties to safeguard, protect, respect, and promote the right to education, including in armed conflict, and reaffirms its contribution to the achievement of peace and security, and emphasizes the invaluable role that education has for individuals and society including as life-saving safe spaces and acknowledges that providing and protecting as well as facilitating the continuation of education in armed conflict should remain a key priority for the international community', and 'urges [UN] Member States to develop effective measures to prevent and address attacks and threats of attacks against schools and education facilities, and, as appropriate.' Attacks on schools are also one of the six grave violations against children identified and condemned by the UN Security Council.¹

¹ See the UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict 'The Six Grave Violations' (2013). In his 2024 annual report on children and armed conflict, the UN Secretary-General listed Israeli armed and security forces, as well as Palestinian armed groups, as parties that commit grave violations against children, including, in Israel's case, the grave violation of attacks on schools and hospitals (UN General Assembly Security Council, 2024).



Prologue

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) remains fragile at the time of finalising the report. Figures of children, young people and their families being killed, injured and arrested used in the report are those available at the time of writing, up until 3 October 2025. These figures have continued to rise, notwithstanding the ceasefire in Gaza that was declared on 10 October 2025. Since 3 October, up until 30 November 2025, the Ministry of Health reported that since the ceasefire, more than 340 Palestinians have been killed, more than 880 injured and more than 590 bodies have been retrieved from under the rubble (UNRWA, 2025I).

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, attacks on Palestinian communities continue unabated, adversely impacting on education. On 26 November 2025, Israeli forces launched a large-scale operation in Tubas governorate. The operation has to date included the use of advanced weaponry and war-like tactics, with Israeli forces entering El Far'a Camp early on 28 November. A new demolition order was also issued by Israeli forces against Jenin Camp on 25 November. This marks the latest in a series of demolitions rendering parts of the de-populated camp uninhabitable (UNRWA, 2025I).

There is an urgent need for the upholding of international humanitarian law and for a permanent ceasefire without violations, and an end to occupation, to lay the conditions for durable and just peace in Gaza. There is an urgent need to stop all attacks, including on education by Israeli forces and settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Without this, the lives and futures of children and young people in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, will continue to be fragile, insecure and vulnerable.

To realise the rights of Palestinian children and young people, it is vital that the future of Palestine, including with respect to the reconstruction of education, is determined by Palestinians themselves. Since writing the report, the UN Security Council has voted in favour of a US-drafted resolution that endorses US President Donald Trump's 20-point plan for Gaza (UN Resolution 2803). This plan makes very little provision for education, and is imposed on Palestinians without their consultation and participation. As our report highlights, all plans must centre the views and voices of Palestinians in determining reconstruction for a future post-war State of Palestine. These plans must affirm the right to education for all Palestinians and must ensure that education is a key priority. The views of teachers, communities and children are also key to determining the future of education. Restoring rights and affirming dignity are crucial to upholding Palestinian identity and hope in and through education, as set out in this report.



Introduction: The right to education in Palestine

*"There is no 'post' because the trauma is repetitive and ongoing and continuous."
(International organisation staff)*

Education has long been a source of pride and remains crucial to the identity of Palestinian families. In the face of repeated crises, the long-standing commitment of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), and their partners has been pivotal in defending the right to education and ensuring that Palestinian children and youth can continue to realise their right to learn, aspire and thrive. Since October 2023, education in the Gaza Strip, and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has faced devastating attacks by Israeli security forces and settlers. These assaults have undermined the right to education for more than 1.5 million children aged 6 to 15 years. This reportⁱ documents the impact of these violations on children's ability to access and enjoy their right to education. It calls on all the parties and the international community to meet their obligations to protecting the right to education as part of humanitarian efforts to support Palestinians. Education is a fundamental right just as much in times of peace as in times of war, as set out in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. Protecting and ensuring access to education during conflict is also enshrined in international humanitarian law, with provisions on the right to education, including the protection of students, education staff and educational facilities, resources and infrastructure.

Since 7 October 2023, the war on Gaza and the escalation of militarised operations by Israeli forces, as well as settler attacks in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have gravely undermined Palestinians' right to education. In total, the schooling of more than 740,000 students has been severely disrupted, and the lives and livelihoods of more than 27,000 teachers have been impacted (OCHA oPt, 2025a).

In Gaza, as of 1 October 2025, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported figures from the Ministry of Health that identify that attacks have killed over 18,069 students and 780 teachers (OCHA oPt, 2025a). Many more are unaccounted

for (OCHA oPt, 2025b). Although a temporary ceasefire from 19 January to 18 March 2025 provided some respite, attacks have since escalated, leaving all children in Gaza out of formal schooling. Since that temporary ceasefire, hunger and starvation, together with the collapsing health services, and unsafe water, are compounding risks of learning loss and trauma for children and teachers.

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, between 7 October 2023 and 30 September 2025, the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education reported that 110 students and 5 teachers have been killed. In addition, at least 390 students and more than 190 teachers have been arrested (MoEHE, 2025). The disruption of schooling has worsened since October 2024, when the Israeli parliament passed laws banning UNRWA from operating in East Jerusalem (UNRWA, 2025a).ⁱⁱ The situation has been particularly acute in the camps of Jenin, Tulkarm, Nur Shams and El Far'a camps since January 2025 as a result of the intensification of Israeli attacks. This has displaced many refugees and impacted the learning of Palestinian children and young people.

Together, this *“destruction of the education system and denial of educational opportunities, including schooling,”* represent what a UN Commission (UN Human Rights Council 2025a, p.46) describes as a deliberate attempt by Israeli authorities to destroy *“the education system in Gaza, which would cripple the Palestinians' ability to preserve their identity as a people”*. Following two years of attacks, in September 2025, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, which was established by the UN Human Rights Council, concluded that Israel has committed genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (UN Human Rights Council, 2025a). In education, this is reflected in what many have described as scholasticide, the systematic, wilful and deliberate targeting of educational facilities and infrastructure, denying Palestinian children and youth their right to education (UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner [OHCHR], 2024a). The ICJ Advisory Opinion of 22 October 2025 stated that Israel has an obligation ‘to protect the human right to education in the Occupied Palestinian Territory’ (para.157). It further emphasised that Israel has an obligation ‘not to impede the operations of United Nations entities’, underscoring the obligations to provide services to Palestinians, including by UNRWA (International Court of Justice, 2025).

The extent of the damage and disruption to Palestine’s education system underscores the urgent need to protect and restore the right to education and the need for an urgent, permanent and just ceasefire and the ending of Israeli military operations and settler attacks on education. The impact of the current war on education is exacerbated by more than 18 years of blockade and recurrent attacks (OCHA oPt, 2022a). This has been compounded by Israel’s occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, for more than 57 years, which the International Court of Justice has deemed unlawful (International Court of Justice, 2024). While the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is distinct from Gaza, education there has also faced sustained ongoing attacks and disruptions over decades. Schools in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have been damaged, teachers and students have been killed, injured, detained and arrested. Daily commutes to school are fraught with risks due to checkpoints, roadblocks and unprovoked settler violence.

What is required now more than ever, is to affirm Palestinian statehood and support Palestinians in the efforts to rebuild their society and education system. Fulfilling the obligation of the international community to the right to education requires expending all efforts for achieving a permanent ceasefire and just peace. The international community needs to support Palestinian

efforts of rebuilding education systems by providing the necessary resources to fully meet educational needs. This is key to building a prosperous society and achieving the Sustainable Development Goal commitment to equitable, inclusive and quality education.

Supporting Palestinians in exercising their rights enshrined in international law, affirming pride in their identity, and enabling them to contribute meaningfully to their society and the global community is an urgent task and an obligation for the international community to keep alive hope and belief in a just society and future. Anything less risks making all actors complicit in eroding faith in the transformative power of education to build a better, safer, more just and more peaceful world. Restoring and recovering education, reaffirming the right to education, and taking collective responsibility by all actors are the modest yet crucial contributions that this report calls upon so that Palestinian children and youth are supported as part of broader efforts to recognise and advance the establishment of a Palestinian state.



Kalandia Camp, West Bank, 2025 © UNRWA photo



Gaza, 2025 © UNRWA photo

Methods

Data for this report drew on both documentary and interview data. Documentary information included data from Education Management Information System (EMIS) from the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education and UNRWA; reports from UN agencies and other international organisations, such as the OCHA, UNICEF, UNRWA and the World Bank. These reports provide information on the scale and effects of war on students, teachers, counsellors, learning, child protection and education infrastructure.

Primary data included 35 individual and group interviews in August 2024 and 23 interviews in August 2025 with Palestinian teachers and counsellors; as well as education, social protection, planning, technical and leadership staff, particularly those working in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, from a range of organisations, including the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, UN and other international agencies and NGOs. Interviewees shared insights on the impact of the war on Gaza on education, the effects of Israeli security operations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the actions their organisations were undertaking to mitigate the impact in the education sector. They also highlighted the education and related needs of children, young people, teachers, counsellors and communities in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, discussed education funding, and put forward proposals for immediate and future action by all actors.

Interviews were carried out online and lasted between 30 to 60 minutes each. Interviews were conducted in English or Arabic (depending on the preference of those interviewed) and later transcribed. The analysis of both primary and secondary data was carried out through thematic coding. Pre-existing themes, such as impact on infrastructure, learning loss, broader effects on students, funding and investment, and the impact on teachers, were used as a framework to analyse the data in a structured way, with additional codes identified through the analysis.

The study received ethical clearance from the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, and research permission was granted from UNRWA. All participants were provided with consent forms outlining the purpose of the interview, noting that all information would be confidential to the study team. They were informed that any information included in the report would be anonymous to protect their privacy. As such, the report does not directly attribute quotations to the institutions or individuals interviewed, recognising that identifying institutional affiliations could affect anonymity. Interviewees could stop the interview or not answer questions if they did not feel comfortable. The consent process was reiterated at the beginning of each of the interviews and was secured before the interview started.



Southern Gaza, July 2024 © UNRWA photo

Part 1: Education under attack in Gaza

This part of the report focuses on the multiple ways in which attacks on education affect the lives of children and teachers in Gaza. It begins by considering the widespread damage to school infrastructure and the heightened vulnerabilities faced by children, including the compounded risks of disability, trauma and displacement. It then examines the threats to education progress, looking at how education has resumed under severe constraints and the extent of learning loss experienced. Finally, the section explores the impact on teachers and counsellors, who carry the dual burden of supporting students, while navigating their own exposure to loss and insecurity. Together, these strands highlight how Gaza's education system has been profoundly destabilised, with consequences for both immediate learning and longer-term resilience.



Destruction of physical environment

***"We know that the people in Gaza value education, one of the highest literacy rates in the world ... but there are now no universities, and most schools are destroyed."
(International organisation staff)***

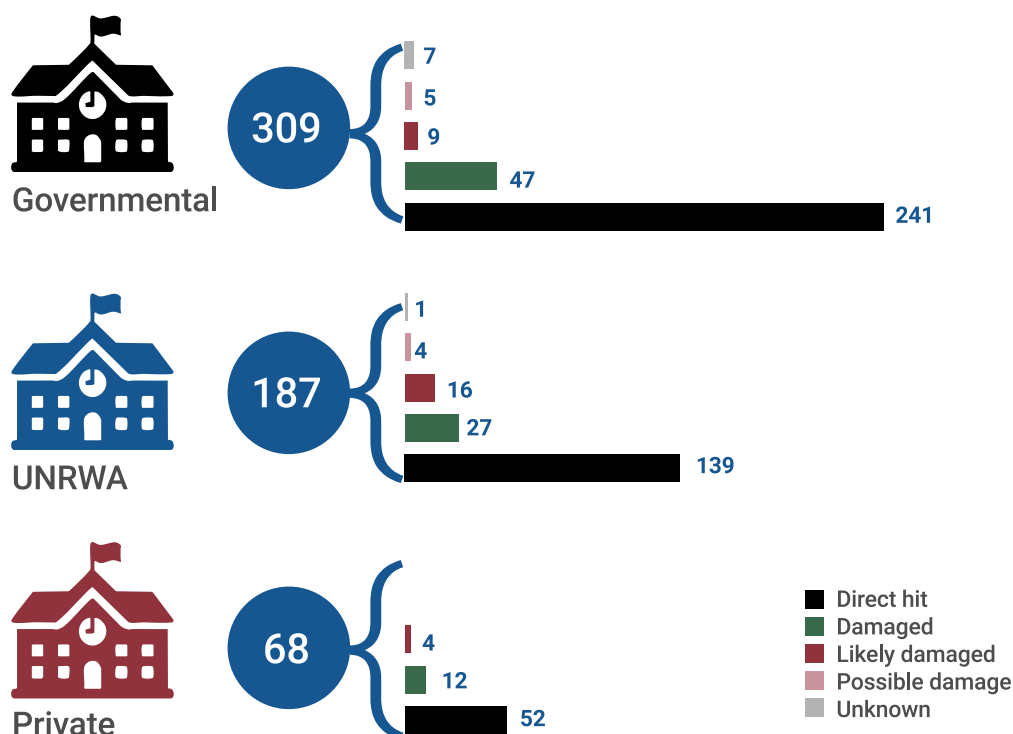
This section focuses on the escalating effects of attacks on education in Gaza, on the widespread damage to school infrastructure and the absence of teaching and learning resources.

Damage and destruction of school infrastructure

Before the current war, Gaza's physical education infrastructure was already under considerable strain. Previous escalations in hostilities had resulted in damage to Gaza's educational infrastructure, and reconstruction had been difficult due to the blockade imposed on Gaza since 2007. Due to overcrowding, most UNRWA schools operated double shifts. There were already a limited number of schools that provided access and support for learners with disabilities, resulting in high illiteracy rates among people with disabilities – 71 percent, compared to the 98 percent literacy rate for people in Gaza overall, with 43 percent out of school (Al-Marsad, 2024; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

An assessment, based on satellite images by the Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster in July 2025, showed that 91.8 percent of all school buildings needed to be fully reconstructed or required major rehabilitation to be functional (OCHA oPt, 2025c). In total, 432 of the 564 school buildings have been directly hit (see Figure 1 for a breakdown by type of school). North Gaza and Rafah have been the most severely affected, with all their school buildings either directly hit or damaged. This is followed by Khan Younis, where 98.4 percent of school buildings have been directly hit or damaged, and Gaza City where 93.3 percent of buildings have been directly hit.

Figure 1: Destruction of school buildings from October 2023 to October 2025



Source: OCHA oPt, 2025a.

In the context of large-scale military operations, homes being destroyed and displacement orders, families have had to use school buildings as shelters. People displaced due to the war have sought shelter in UNRWA facilities, including school buildings (UNRWA, 2025b). In December 2023 for instance, 1.9 million displaced people were sheltered in or in the vicinity of UNRWA installations (UN General Assembly, 2024).

UN independent experts have raised the possibility that the outcome of the destruction of Gaza's educational infrastructure, including school buildings, libraries, schools, universities, as well as the impact of the war on teachers' and students' lives, prevents immediate learning opportunities, destroys knowledge for the future and seeks to erase Palestinian identity (OHCHR, 2024a). There is no such thing as a 'safe space,' with school buildings often being attacked and at best, providing only temporary refuge. The attacks on school buildings have continued to intensify the physical and mental effects on Gazans, contrary to international humanitarian law and protocols, which declare education spaces as safe and protective environments.

Ongoing bombing and repeated displacement orders have led to the destruction of makeshift educational infrastructure. In response to prolonged school closures, many students have been attending temporary learning spaces run by the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education, UNRWA and local partners over the past two years (OCHA oPt, 2025d). Interviewees expressed frustration around setting up learning spaces that are later destroyed or abandoned due to evacuation orders:

"Unfortunately every day we have a new evacuation order. We open a new temporary learning space, then we are forced to close them or pause working." (International organisation staff)

During the ceasefire from January to March 2025, many displaced families who had fled to the south of the Gaza Strip began moving back to their homes in the north of the Strip.

Because education services had previously been shifted to the south to accommodate the displaced population, this sudden return created a new challenge. Education actors had to adjust quickly and find ways to provide schooling again in the north, even though much of the infrastructure there had been damaged or destroyed. Education facilities must be cleared by United Nations Mine Action teams before they can be used for schooling, due to the high presence of unexploded ordnance. During the January to March 2025 ceasefire, clearance teams faced intense pressure to make as many buildings safe as possible within a limited timeframe and high demands (World Bank, European Union & United Nations, 2025).

"With the end of the [January to March 2025] ceasefire, we were back to square one. There are blackouts, no internet ... But this time everyone is extremely tired ... there is no resilience, no supplies, no clothes, no one prepared." (International organisation staff)

The destruction of Gaza's education infrastructure has forced teachers and students to rely almost entirely on unstable internet connections as the most reliable means of continuing learning. In addition to the continued displacement of the population, and attacks to education facilities, the critical fuel scarcity is undermining the operation of temporary learning spaces and other facilities by disrupting electricity, internet connectivity, and the transportation of teachers and supplies (OCHA oPt, 2025e).

Even with hope of a permanent and sustained ceasefire in the future, many displaced persons are likely to continue to seek refuge in school facilities due to the destruction of their homes and other civilian infrastructure. As such, the return of these buildings to educational use is likely to be further delayed. As interviewees noted, reconstruction of schools must consider that schools have been used as shelters for the past two years. Sheltering in schools which have been attacked and damaged, seeing people injured and killed in front of them, and living in fear of attack has made these schools no longer a safe space in children's minds. As an interviewee noted:

"School is no longer a safe space that children understood it to be because it was a place that they took shelter and took refuge in ... spaces that were being damaged, destroyed, bombed, targeted. None of this aligns with our typical understanding of what an emergency education response looks like either." (International organisation staff)

Rebuilding of infrastructure for the safe reopening of schools in Gaza will require an estimated 41-47 million tonnes of rubble to be removed (WB, EU & UN, 2025). It will also be necessary to clear unexploded ordnance to ensure children's safety on their route to school. Given the scale of the rubble and unexploded ordnance, it is likely to take several years until schools are fully rebuilt.

Severe lack of teaching and learning resources

Since October 2023, essential educational supplies have been restricted from entering Gaza. The scarcity of supplies worsened amid the total siege imposed after the temporary ceasefire ended in March 2025. Educational and recreational materials have been banned from entering Gaza, as they are not classified as humanitarian goods by Israeli authorities (ACAPS, 2024a). In addition, each new order to evacuate forces children and teachers to abandon the limited school materials they have managed to secure. As a result, textbooks,

stationery and teaching aids are frequently lost or destroyed (OCHA oPt, 2025f).

Learning supplies in local markets are extremely scarce, with prices soaring beyond affordability. One interviewee noted that a single piece of paper could cost US\$3. Shortages of teaching and learning materials are impeding the safe and dignified delivery of education, as one interviewee noted in August 2025:

"Our students are one year into non-formal education without pens or notebooks or any paper in their hands. This cannot continue. People need food and water for sure, but kids also want to play, they want to have psychosocial support tools, they need some kind of stationery. They want to have dignity." (International organisation staff)

Interviewees further emphasised that not only is stationery inaccessible to students and teachers, but printing has also become prohibitively difficult and costly. For example, when UNRWA printed self-learning materials for first grade students, it had to pay nearly ten times the usual cost. As an interviewee noted:

"We used the last ink and the last paper in Gaza to print self-learning materials for the first graders." (International organisation staff)





Gaza, 2025 © UNRWA photo

Worsening vulnerabilities of children and young people

*"There is a tonne of emptiness and deep sorrow that you can see in children."
(International organisation staff)*

The war on Gaza has significantly impacted the physical and mental health of students, with multifaceted consequences extending far beyond loss of learning. This has further exacerbated the vulnerabilities that over one million children in Gaza already faced due to the 18-year blockade. Every child in Gaza has suffered the impacts of war, with most experiencing more than one war during their lifetime, and the current conflict has only deepened this reality. Its consequences include, but are not limited to, hunger, starvation or even famine, psychosocial impacts such as trauma, stress and anxiety, and war-induced disabilities, with distinct effects on girls and boys.

Worsening food insecurity

"For the first time, our partners report that children are not attending learning activities because they are hungry. The ones that are attending are weak, starving and don't have the energy levels." (International organisation staff)

The convergence of hunger and starvation, malnutrition and rising non-trauma mortality has resulted in the confirmation of famine in the Gaza Governorate (IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, 2025a). By July 2025, 20 percent of children under five in Gaza City were acutely malnourished, triple the June rate (WHO, 2025). As of 1 October 2025, 151 children have died of starvation (OCHA oPt, 2025g). If conditions continue, 132,000 children under five are projected to be acutely malnourished by June 2026, including 41,000 severe cases at heightened risk of death (IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, 2025a). As one interviewee explained:

"People are living under hell. They were basically eating a bowl of gruel. We do not have a functioning system to monitor the deaths ... We are seeing situations of malnourished kids, with some even dying, in the clinic in Gaza. It is something that we have never seen before." (International organisation staff)

Food quality has also deteriorated. Markets report severe shortages of meat, fresh produce and vegetables, forcing displaced families to rely on nutrient-poor, packaged foods, amid soaring prices and devastated agriculture since the outbreak of war in 2023 (Dardona, Amame & Boussaa, 2025). This is resulting in parents becoming increasingly desperate, as noted by one interviewee:

"Why should I take care of education for my kids if I am sure they will die from famine?" (International organisation staff)

The physical toll on children is now starkly visible: extreme thinness, sunken eyes, pale skin, hair loss and swollen bellies from oedema, signs of profound protein deficiency and imminent risk of death (UNICEF, 2025a). Malnutrition is affecting not only children with pre-existing health conditions, but also those previously healthy:

"In the beginning of July 2025, the screening of 6-59-month-old children showed they were massively malnourished. Children with underlying diseases (cardiac, neurological, etc.) were worse off ... As time went by, the children with no underlying conditions became malnourished as well ... because they lost access to services." (International organisation staff)

With 85 percent of parents reporting that their children go entire days without food, the risk is not only immediate survival but also a generational crisis of learning and development (Jalbout, 2025). Many children collapse or are unable to stay awake due to hunger (British Red Cross, 2025). One interviewee spoke about how parents were even stopping their children from playing to avoid them needing more food:

"Parents are explaining how If their child plays for 10 minutes, he becomes exhausted and has to rest. Mothers try not to let their children play too much, knowing that physical activity increases their hunger ... and with no food, this creates additional challenges for their learning and participation in education." (International organisation staff)

When schools reopen, children are therefore likely to come back already weakened by hunger. In addition, as malnutrition in the early years stunts cognitive and socioemotional

development, young children are facing impaired cognitive, linguistic and socioemotional development that will undermine their capacity to learn and thrive (Jalbout, 2025). As mothers are increasingly unable to breastfeed because they are starving (Nichols & Brunnstrom, 2025), infant development is further hampered, compounding the risks to children's future learning (Jalbout, 2025).

The struggle for survival has overtaken learning, with students spending their days queuing for food. The UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) has reported that nearly 1,889 people have been killed and over 4,000 have been injured trying to access food near the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation and other aid sites (OHCHR, 2025a). This includes children, though the exact numbers are uncertain. As noted by an interviewee:

"Our people, they are always putting education as their top priority, but now? Our students' main job is to secure food to help their parents and their family. So unfortunately, some of our students and even our staff are going to those [Gaza Humanitarian Foundation] aid traps and we lost some of them because they don't have any other option. They want to secure food and this is one of the sources for food." (International organisation staff)

Searing heat in summer and biting cold in winter has further exacerbated dehydration, waterborne illness, respiratory infections and hypothermia among children, further undermining their ability to concentrate, participate in education regularly and learn effectively (UNRWA, 2025c).

School feeding would normally provide a vital safety net. Before October 2023, the World Food Programme's school feeding initiatives provided daily meals. However, the blockade and severe supply constraints have forced the closure of UN-supported bakeries and community kitchens, which have been key suppliers of school meals, leaving thousands of children without their most dependable source of nutrition, and undermining their ability to learn (WFP, 2025a; WFP, 2025b).

Increasing trauma

***"It is not just the physical spaces; it's the fact that these tiny brains are not equipped to be able to learn anymore because of the trauma and suffering that they've endured for almost two years."* (International organisation staff)**

Even before the current war, children in Gaza were experiencing chronic and continuous trauma, as highlighted in a World Health Organization publication describing their lives as marked by "perpetual cycles of traumatic stress" caused by ongoing violence and deprivation (Abuelaish et al., 2025). Trauma experienced by children in Gaza is likely to drastically affect their learning capabilities and overall mental health, further complicating their educational recovery process. In January 2025, UNICEF reported that nearly all of Gaza's 1.1 million children needed mental health and psychological support for anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts (UNICEF, 2025b). War Child (2024) has shown that 87 percent of children in Gaza are experiencing high levels of emotional distress since the current war, manifesting in behaviours such as bedwetting (79 percent) and reactive mutism (59 percent).

The current war has exacerbated the long-term effects of the 18-year blockade, with the needs for mental health and psychosocial support services outstripping the resources available (UNICEF, 2023). Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children (2025) reported that 95.8

percent of children across Gaza were experiencing difficulties in expressing their feelings, with 92.1 percent of children with disabilities reporting that they suffer from continuous crying and panic attacks.

Children are faced with substantial psychological distress, given that they have all experienced extreme violence and lost friends and family members due to the war. As a result, children's day-to-day focus is on survival, curtailing their hopes and dreams for the future, including in relation to education:

"Many of our students have restricted their dreams, they say our dream is ... to live for another day." (International organisation staff)

The distress faced by children is exacerbated by the demeaning living conditions as a result of the war. As one interviewee stated:

"The rashes and skin conditions and lice affect dignity. It also affects love for life, the children wonder: what kind of life am I living?" (International organisation staff)

A child interviewed further reported that:

"Every night we fear it will be our last one. Every sound of an explosion makes us scream and run, looking for a place to hide, but there is no safe place. We have nightmares even when we are awake, and fear has become a part of our day, and we don't know when this will end." (Student)

A needs assessment which interviewed over 500 children, parents and caregivers in Gaza from families where at least one child was injured, unaccompanied or had a disability, found that 96 percent of children worried that their death is imminent (War Child, 2024). This was reinforced by an interviewee:

"There is a really, really significant impact on children. Many already had post-traumatic stress disorder, many of the children have seen deaths in their families, and now we can assume every child in Gaza is affected by different types of mental health and psychological distress because of the constant bombardment, forced displacement, etc. The conditions for children to engage in learning and cognitive development are just not there." (International organisation staff)

Focus group discussions undertaken with children in Gaza found that:

"Children have become afraid of everything: of leaving the house, of planes passing overhead, of loud noises, of the night because it is dark and there is no electricity, and of the thought that the next bomb might kill them." (Student)

Several global studies have examined the negative impact of trauma on students' learning and behaviour and its association with poor cognitive performance (Adubasim & Ugwu, 2019; Meister, 2019; Frieze, 2015).

Children described feeling like *"the living dead,"* not experiencing any kind of joy and losing their sense of identity, hope, humanity, dreams and their belief in a future (OHCHR, 2025b, unpublished internal report). These children further expressed how they were just waiting for death.

Worsening education conditions due to increased war-induced disabilities

"Children with disabilities, we feel extremely bad about it because there is nothing we can do. When you review the INEE [Inter Agency Network for Education in Emergencies] standards for disabilities, it is not realistic for us." (International organisation staff)

Before the current war, approximately 13 percent of children aged 5-17 experienced at least one functional disability in oPt (UNICEF, 2022). Even at that time, only 25 percent of children with disabilities reported that school buildings were adapted to meet their needs. In addition, 76.4 percent of children with disabilities could not use public transport to commute to school (Al-Marsad, 2023). This lack of accessibility was reflected in education outcomes, with 71 percent of persons with disabilities illiterate, and 43 percent of children with disabilities aged 3-17 not enrolled in school (Al-Marsad, 2024).

Since the escalation of the war, the number of children with lifelong disabilities has multiplied. On average, 15 children each day are left with a life-altering disability, whether physical, hearing or visual (Save the Children, 2025a). Ten children per day lose one or both legs and more than 21,000 children have been injured, with around 5,230 in urgent need of rehabilitation. Gaza is home to the highest number of child amputees per capita worldwide, estimated as of September 2025 at 4,000 since the start of the war (International Rescue Committee, 2025a). Yet Gaza's only limb reconstruction and rehabilitation centre has been non-functional since late 2023 (Humanity & Inclusion, 2024). These injuries affect children's ability to access temporary learning spaces or participate in any form of education. As noted by an interviewee:

"In Gaza there is a massive shortage of wheelchairs, the ones remaining have been taken by the community who use it to transport water, etc. Shortages will affect everyone with disabilities ... We need to focus on the most vulnerable and have support for innovative solutions for these thousands of new amputee children ... who will find it even more difficult to access learning." (International organisation staff)

UNICEF has estimated that around 10,000 children in Gaza live with hearing loss, roughly half of them severe cases, yet only 148 hearing aids that entered during the March 2025 ceasefire were delivered to children in need (UNICEF, 2025c). For these children, hearing aids are not just medical devices but essential tools for communication and learning. One interviewee highlighted that children are now more likely to be impacted with hearing loss due to the constant sounds of drones and bombs:

"An estimated 55,000 children are at risk of having hearing loss if no immediate intervention is provided for them. Therefore, the current situation is dire. Many hearing aids have been destroyed and maintenance not valid, many are not allowed in and even hearing devices are also not allowed to enter Gaza in 7 months." (Local organisation staff)

The situation of children with disabilities has worsened since the end of the January to March 2025 ceasefire. Children with disabilities are particularly disadvantaged in the struggle to access scarce food supplies, which also undermines their ability to attend school or concentrate on learning, as an interviewee commented:

"Some people and children with disabilities cannot access food and water and cannot save themselves without other people's help, so not all shelters are inclusive ... they are especially vulnerable and starving." (Local organisation staff)

Severe restrictions on the entry of essential supplies have further affected the possibilities for education of children with disabilities in Gaza. OCHA confirms that no assistive devices have been allowed in since 2 March 2025, leaving children without wheelchairs, crutches and hearing aids (OCHA oPt, 2025h). This has directly obstructed opportunities for learning for those who depend on such devices and adapted educational materials in temporary classrooms. In addition, only 45 of 112 rehabilitation facilities are partially functional, severely constrained by shortages of fuel, electricity and supplies, with no functioning limb reconstruction centre (Humanity & Inclusion, 2024). Without urgent measures to restore accessibility, provide assistive technologies and support disability-inclusive education initiatives, an entire generation of children with disabilities risks being excluded from education.

Distinct effects on girls and boys

Global evidence highlights how poor menstrual health and access to hygiene facilities serve as a barrier for girls' education and wellbeing during conflicts – restricting their access to quality education (Patel et al., 2022). Over 690,000 menstruating women and adolescent girls in Gaza are facing severe lack of supplies for menstrual hygiene and water. In overcrowded shelters, women and girls are left without privacy, safe sanitation or reliable access to water, endangering both their dignity and safety (UNFPA, 2025). Each month, an estimated 10 million sanitary pads are required in Gaza, but more than 75 percent of this demand goes unfulfilled (UN WOMEN, 2024). Since the siege started in March 2025, essential hygiene and protection items, such as sanitary pads, dignity kits and soap, have been prevented from entering Gaza. Even where they are available, the cost of the remaining pads has increased by five times compared with before the war. Severe shortages of clean clothing and undergarments, especially among displaced communities, makes it even harder to manage menstrual hygiene, and has led to heightened discomfort, insecurity and a loss of dignity.

The inability to menstruate in safety increases psychological distress for young girls (UN WOMEN, 2024). With limited access to private sanitation facilities, clean water and hygiene supplies, girls and women are often forced to share toilets and other spaces with men and boys, which impedes their privacy and adversely impacts their confidence to attend available open learning spaces. UNFPA (2025) reports that some girls even chose to reduce their food and water intake to minimise the need to use unsafe and overcrowded toilets. The lack of clean water prevents safe washing or reuse of sanitary materials, which in turn raises the risk of infection. One report notes that 95.3 percent of girls identified that they cannot use the toilets safely during displacement (Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children, 2024a). Girls face limited privacy and security in the shelters due to inadequate space and protection mechanisms (UN Women, 2024).

The increased economic hardship and fears for safety due to the war could also put girls at higher risk of early marriage, further impeding their education opportunities. In 2024, 71 percent of youth interviewed reported rising pressure on girls to marry early, while over half of married youth had wed before the age of 18 since the escalation of the conflict (Abu Hamad et al., 2024). An interviewee further noted how:

“The rate of early marriage among girls has increased due to losing their homes and families. Later, they lost their husbands and became pregnant teenagers who suffer from various vulnerabilities.” (International organisation staff)

War and displacement also often heighten the risk of harassment and gender-based violence for girls. UNHCR (2024) estimates that in displacement settings, these risks are up to 20 percent higher than for non-displaced women and girls, with gender-based violence frequently employed as a tactic of war. In March 2025, the UN Commission of Inquiry found that Israeli forces have systematically used sexual, reproductive and other forms of gender-based violence since October 2023, including rape, harassment and abuse in detention. The Commission concluded that these acts were not isolated but formed part of a systematic pattern of sexual and gender-based violence used to humiliate, dominate and oppress Palestinians (UN Human Rights Council, 2025b).

In times of conflict, the rates of child labour often increase, particularly affecting boys (International Rescue Committee, 2025b). Children engage in survival activities that expose them to serious protection risks. For example, they may be engaged in activities such as collecting waste to sell as scrap metal, leaving themselves more at risk of exposure to landmines and other unexploded devices (Save the Children, 2022). During the current war, according to Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children (2024b), children have spent an average of 12 percent of their time working or selling.

Boys often go to aid distribution sites to collect food for their families. According to OHCHR records, since the establishment of the militarised distribution system in the Gaza Strip on 27 May, up to 18 August, at least 1,889 people – mostly young men and boys – were killed while seeking food in Gaza (OCHA oPt, 2025h).

This work for survival is limiting their education opportunities now and increasing significantly the risk of dropout or never returning. As an interviewee said:

"Boys and young men are working or engaging in activities they shouldn't be. Education is far from their minds. If I go out early in the morning ... you see a lot of young boys, in particular, moving water, food ... trying to help their families survive ... We are going to miss out on a lot of young boys and young men getting back into school for some time as they try to make sure they're helping their family meet their basic needs every day." (International organisation staff)

Multiple interviewees reported an increase in aggression, particularly among boys, especially due to insufficient supplies and lack of humanitarian assistance, bullying, lack of guidance/principles taught in schools and most importantly, neglect. There will thus be challenges for reintegration of these children into an already fragile education system.

Heightened risks for orphaned and unaccompanied children

Global evidence on unaccompanied children in other contexts has shown how children who have lost family members and/or have been separated from their families are more vulnerable to threats such as child labour, and risks of abuse and neglect, as well as risks of child marriage (UNICEF, 2021). According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, by April 2025, over 39,000 children have lost at least one parent (PCBS, 2025a). Challenges that these children face can exacerbate obstacles to their attending temporary learning spaces and are likely to curtail their opportunities to return to school once they reopen.

The Child Protection Area of Responsibilityⁱⁱⁱ identifies unaccompanied and separated children, as well as those without parental care, as some of the most at-risk groups in Gaza, who are facing increased dangers of neglect, exploitation, abuse, emotional distress and

social isolation. Separation from parents or primary caregivers, often caused by death, detention, evacuation or forced displacement, has severe impacts on children's mental health and development. Conflict-related factors, such as the loss of family members, repeated displacement and medical evacuations, drive many of these separations. In some cases, newborn babies separated at birth during hospital evacuations are now under the care of adults who may be injured, disabled or unable to provide adequate support (OCHA oPt, 2025i).

"We know the case of one family where the father had to travel outside of Gaza for his child's medical treatment while the other children had to be left inside unaccompanied." (International organisation staff)

A survey conducted by the International Rescue Committee in April 2024 found that 41 percent of families in Gaza had been caring for children who were not their own since October 2023. This is a rate more than eight times higher than typical emergency estimates of between 3-5 percent in other contexts (International Rescue Committee, 2024), and is likely to have risen even further. While children with family networks might be taken care of by extended family, not all children have this support, with older siblings often needing to undertake adult responsibilities well beyond their age, such as caring for younger siblings and looking for essential resources and services. Child-headed households in Gaza face heightened risk of not accessing education, as children must shoulder economic burdens without adult supervision. As an interviewee noted:

"In Palestinian culture, the family-based care network is strong, hence those with extended family still have some support while children without a family network face increasing protection risks and risks of injury alone." (International organisation staff)

Unaccompanied or separated children may be forced into labour for reasons of economic necessity and survival, preventing them from pursuing education. Many children who have lost family members, or who have been separated during displacement, may be forced to support themselves and their siblings. Interviewees described how some of these children wait for hours in queues to fetch water, while others struggle to survive by selling small items, collecting goods from the streets, or even scavenging through garbage, as one noted:

"We have been hearing that students, our children, are trying to take action that would help them survive, such as selling water, goods and food... searching garbage for items to sell. We are seeing labour at a lower age than we used to see before, such as four years old." (International organisation staff)

The breakdown of civil systems and ongoing insecurity have left many unaccompanied or separated children without care, family reunification, or legal identity, as birth registration processes have been disrupted (OCHA oPt, 2025i). It is estimated that around 10,000 newborn babies have not been registered between October 2023 and August 2025 and it is possible that some of these children would be unaccompanied. This lack of documentation threatens children's access to basic services such as education, healthcare and humanitarian aid, while leaving them more vulnerable to exploitation as they fall outside the protection of the law (OCHA oPt, 2025i).



Gaza, 2025 © UNRWA photo

Continuation of education amidst attacks

"The school continues, but without the building." (International organisation staff)

Despite the immense challenges, efforts to continue education have been undertaken in Gaza since the start of the current war, including through temporary learning spaces and distance learning programmes.

Temporary learning spaces

Since the start of the war, temporary learning spaces were quickly established in shelters and tents. These have been set up by a range of organisations across 52 Education Cluster partners, including local and international bodies (OCHA oPt, 2025j). Initially, the temporary learning spaces were predominantly informal and centred around recreational activities, as well as providing mental health and psychosocial support to children.

From August 2024, temporary learning spaces became more formally organised. UNRWA, for instance, integrated these spaces with mental health and psychosocial support as part of its Back to Learning programme (UNRWA, 2024a). UNRWA, along with other organisations, began to distribute group recreational kits and self-learning materials to children between the ages of 5 and 15 that focused on core subjects and competencies (UNRWA, 2024b). This programme provided children with a space to continue to learn basic literacy and numeracy, play and spend time with friends (UNRWA, 2024c). The mental health and psychosocial support services include psychological first aid, recreational activities, explosive ordnance risk and fatigue management sessions (UNRWA, 2024c). Activities took place in 80 temporary learning spaces run by 944 UNRWA teachers with the support

of 169 school counsellors and 460 assistance counsellors (UNRWA, 2024c). As of October 2025, more than 56,000 children (55 percent girls) had benefited from UNRWA's Back to Learning programme, and approximately 520,000 children participated in psychosocial support sessions and activities (UNRWA, 2025d).

Other partners also provided learning and mental health and psychosocial support through temporary learning spaces. For example, UNICEF and partners supported 12,400 learners through 39 temporary learning spaces (Ferguson & Su, 2024). In addition, the Norwegian Refugee Council established 24, and Anera 33 temporary learning spaces (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2025; Anera, 2024).

Programmes such as this aimed to provide children with a feeling of normalcy and routine. Evidence from other contexts indicates that access to any learning environment, whether formal, informal or non-formal, significantly reduces the risk of dropout and enhances learning outcomes for children (Shuayb et al., 2023). Temporary learning spaces provided an opportunity for the identification and referral of child protection cases to existing services. Education staff involved in the temporary learning space activities were trained in child protection and referral pathways were designed in coordination with protection and social services teams. However, given the circumstances of ongoing attacks and displacement orders, not all shelters were always able to function as intended. The temporary learning spaces could not reach all children. In addition, given that families have had to use classrooms as shelters, where education activities are taking place during the day, this has had significant implications for their own lack of space and privacy. As an interviewee noted:

"You start to find spaces for education, maybe in shelters closing half a corridor where they do lessons. Families might agree to leave a room during the day just so children can learn or study in the room. These small things were identified." (International organisation staff)

"The relationship ... between the children and the school has now been shaken. Schools are used as shelters, and unsafe shelters because they are not protected from bombardment." (International organisation staff)

The temporary ceasefire between 19 January and 18 March 2025 enabled education provision to increase rapidly in scope and scale, despite the huge devastation and destruction of most education infrastructure. In total, 570 temporary learning spaces were established during the ceasefire, serving 249,000 learners (UNICEF, 2025d). As an interviewee noted:

"We were all amazed by how much we were able to scale up the education operations [during the March 2025 ceasefire]. It was amazing and surprising." (International organisation staff)

In addition, an interviewee noted that UNRWA and the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education were able to reopen a number of schools with support from international partners:

"As soon as the ceasefire happened they scaled up the capacity of the Ministry of Education to open schools and temporary learning spaces. In the beginning it was a little difficult because people relocated, but they scaled up and were able to provide assistance." (International organisation staff)

However, since the ceasefire ended on 18 March 2025, the situation deteriorated drastically. Movement restrictions, total siege of the Gaza Strip, bombardment, militarised operations and evacuation orders have reduced temporary learning spaces. After the ceasefire ended, numbers fell sharply: by August 2025, only 287 temporary learning spaces remained operational, reaching just 107,508 learners with the support of 3,421 teachers (OCHA oPt, 2025d). In addition, children's attendance in the temporary learning spaces has been impacted by the demeaning living conditions, negatively affecting their ability to learn (International Rescue Committee, 2024). As one interviewee noted:

"Children are reluctant to attend informal learning sessions, since the war has meant that they do not have clothes, shoes or water and soap to wash their faces which makes them feel inadequate." (International organisation staff)

Education actors describe the sector as "paralysed": schools remain closed, and children are being pulled away from learning to prioritise survival, particularly in the face of worsening food insecurity and acute malnutrition that surged after the Israeli authorities imposed a siege on the Gaza Strip, blocking the entry of all humanitarian and commercial supplies in March 2025. As one interviewee noted:

"During the ceasefire, due to a combination of people going back home to the north, and additional schools becoming accessible in buffer areas from which Israel had withdrawn, we had much more physical space in which to provide in-person learning for kids, and we also had supplies coming in ... and more children in learning ... Then, the numbers dwindled continually since the ceasefire broke down." (International organisation staff)

The January to March 2025 ceasefire period provided proof of concept that the education system in Gaza, including UNRWA, the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education, teachers and community organisations, can rebound and scale up rapidly when conditions allow. It also showed the enduring value that the local population placed on education, even in such catastrophic conditions, the collapse afterward underscores the fragility of these gains.

Distance learning programmes

"Distance learning is not perfect, but we want the kids to feel they are part of the system and part of education." (International organisation staff)

In addition to the temporary learning spaces, UNRWA and the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education also began working on separate distance learning programmes as an option for providing learning. This has offered learners in all grades access to learning materials for the core subjects, including Arabic, English, mathematics and science, while also incorporating psychosocial support and safety guidance from the UN Mine Action Service to help children avoid explosive remnants from the war and hazardous waste. Topics considered most relevant to Gaza's current situation, such as diseases, pollution and alternative energy sources, have been prioritised.

UNRWA's distance learning programme has included the provision of materials which learners can access asynchronously with minimal engagement with teachers. The materials were designed for students to study on their own or with minimal support. Given limited internet connectivity, WhatsApp has been used as the platform to engage with

students where possible. Using EMIS data, each school was re-created as a WhatsApp community with closed groups for every class, typically administered by school principals, deputies and school supervisors. Interviewees shared that WhatsApp communities have been very closely monitored to ensure that interactions remained in line with humanitarian principles and with strict guidelines governing communication between teachers and students. Participation was particularly strong, with more than 296,028 students enrolled in the second distance learning cycle and nearly 90 percent of learners participating in the final online exams. In addition, 82 percent of students participated in at least one of the five short online assessments, indicating sustained engagement throughout the period (UNRWA, 2025c).

UNRWA's distance learning programme for Gaza is structured around three cycles: the first aims to compensate the 2023/2024 school year, the second compensates the 2024/2025 school year; and the third is a catch-up cycle for students who missed the previous cycles. To date, two compressed school years have been offered, reaching nearly 290,000 students with the support of thousands of teachers (UNRWA, 2025e).

Distance learning also continued during the ceasefire, with children engaged in accelerated cycles of Arabic, English, mathematics and science via UNRWA's 'Keep Learning' platform, supplemented by WhatsApp groups and bi-weekly quizzes. Engagement rates were strong during the ceasefire with interviewees highlighting how children were able to complete quizzes.

According to internal UNRWA data, from Grades 1 to 8, 215,880 UNRWA students were promoted. Of these, 202,523 were supported by taking exams through UNRWA distance learning, and 13,357 were supported through the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education system (UNRWA internal update, 31 March).

According to interviewees, the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education distance learning programme has used the World Islamic Sciences and Education University (WISE) platform, developed by education experts in Jordan. The platform has provided pre-recorded educational content, including video explanations and worksheets for students. In addition, teachers and students interact through live virtual sessions. An interviewee noted:

"I have hope because despite all of that, we have virtual schools in Gaza. Whenever and wherever, there is internet, parents and their children go to attend our virtual schools." (Government official)

Education staff and officials noted many challenges in accessing distance learning opportunities including difficult living conditions, displacement and some families beginning to deprioritise education in the face of extreme poverty and hunger. Further, repeated cuts in telecommunications have presented a challenge. Moreover, for younger children, distance learning is less effective compared to older students.

Resumption of Tawjihi examination

One significant achievement, despite the end of the temporary ceasefire, has been the resumption of the Tawjihi examination for students completing secondary school. As a government official noted, Tawjihi is: *"the turning point in the life of Palestinian youth" and "an entry into adulthood."*

In 2024, for the first time since the Nakba in 1948, 12th graders in Gaza did not sit for Tawjihi. As a result of the war, three cohorts of students needed to sit for the Tawjihi examinations in 2025: 1,800 students who had failed one or two subjects in the July 2023 examination period, approximately 35,000 students who were supposed to sit for the exam in the summer of 2024, and 41,618 students who were supposed to sit for the exam during the summer of 2025 (OCHA oPt, 2025j).

Of the first cohort, 1,719 students sat for the examination using the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education's online platform, and 1,613 passed (OCHA, 2025k). While there are no data to confirm why the remaining students from this cohort did not take the examination, an interviewee speculated:

"I'm sure a good number of those children have been killed, have been injured, or have no access to any sort of Internet or messages and didn't know about the exam." (International organisation staff)

The experience from the first cohort was drawn upon to inform the expansion to the remaining students. On 6 September 2025, 28,200 students who missed the 2023/24 Tawjihi exams sat for them (UNDP Arabic, 2025). One interviewee, reflecting on the success of the Tawjihi exams, stated: *"It's a miracle"*. Another interviewee reflected on the determination of families in Gaza to prioritise education despite the crisis, noting in particular the importance they placed on their children sitting for the Tawjihi exams:

"With all that's happening right now, the families were still pushing for Tawjihi exams for their children in Gaza. And the Minister took that seriously and we worked with them ... [hopefully] they secure their Tawjihi and start universities." (International organisation staff)

While the administration of the Tawjihi examination offered a rare point of continuity after the ceasefire ended, the wider reality of education in Gaza remains far less hopeful.



Back to learning in southern Gaza, March 2025 © UNRWA photo

Learning loss and recovery

“Even in the best-case scenario of the war stopping now and us putting children in catch up programmes, we are reaching the point of, if this does not stop, there will be no way out. We will have a lost generation.” (International organisation staff)

Learning for children and young people in Gaza has been profoundly affected by the current war. This is particularly likely to impact vulnerable groups of children, including children with disabilities, children engaging in income-generating activities, unaccompanied children and girls who have married early, for whom learning recovery will be a greater challenge. Prior to the war on Gaza, the overall student enrolment rate at the compulsory basic level (Grades 1 to 10) was 95.2 percent, closely aligning with the national enrolment rate of 96 percent in Palestinian schools (Ministry of Education, 2022). In this section, we estimate the effects of the war, as well as recurrent hostilities and COVID-19, on learning, factoring into the calculation the overlapping effects of these crises. We build into the calculation of learning loss the additional learning recovery needed as a result of the adverse effects of hunger and trauma on the learning of children. Given the impossibility of collecting data in the current context, the estimates are based on the probable effects on children’s and young people’s learning competencies.

In total, from 2019 to September 2025, children and young people have lost more than three school years. This includes one year of school closures related to COVID-19 (UNICEF, 2021), and two years during the current war. It is important to highlight that other conflict escalations happened during the timeframe of the report but are not being included in the calculations. This includes the escalation of hostilities in May 2021.

During COVID-19 school closures, as well as during the second year of the current war on Gaza, students could access distance learning, but under challenging conditions due to inadequate online education infrastructure, lack of devices and appropriate basic education materials, as well as overcrowded houses and other factors. This resulted in significant

learning losses (UNRWA, 2022). Other extremely challenging conditions include school closures, displacement, trauma, hunger and starvation, as well as war-induced disabilities, which have resulted in significant learning loss for children. The impact of these is also likely to impede learning recovery, as severely malnourished children and young people who are traumatised and/or have experienced war-induced disabilities will face serious challenges in returning to school even once schools reopen (when they are able to do so).

By considering various scenarios, we explore the amount of learning lost for children and young people. This analysis is grounded in four key assumptions. Firstly, we assume that students remained in formal schooling and were promoted to the next grade level after COVID-19 school closures. Secondly, we assume that learning occurred without interruptions in the academic years 2021/2022 and 2022/2023. Thirdly, we assume that, even though efforts are being made to continue education during the war, including through temporary learning spaces and distance learning, given the severe disruption due to killing, displacement, trauma and widespread hunger, learning is likely to have been severely limited. Finally, the variation in outcomes between scenarios is based on anticipated efforts to accelerate learning during and after COVID-19, as well as on the differential effects of school closures on different groups of students, which is also likely to vary by types of schools.

Table 1 outlines three scenarios for learning loss calculated as an outcome of school closure, trauma and hunger. In scenario one, if schools were to have fully reopened in September 2025, there would already be five years of learning loss. The scenario implies that cumulatively, learners would have missed out on three years of schooling as a result of COVID-19 (one year) and war (two years) and that their recovery would be further impeded by a further two years considering the trauma (one year) and hunger (one year) that many would have experienced. Drawing on relevant studies, it is assumed that for each year of trauma, learning recovery will require an additional half a year.^{iv}

It is assumed that for each year of starvation and famine, which was officially declared in the Gaza Governorate in August 2025,^v it will take an additional one year for students' learning to recover, recognising that the effects of malnutrition will have longer term effects.^{vi} This implies that students in the elementary phase would only be able to achieve very basic literacy and numeracy at most. It is important to note that the children and young people have encountered hunger in different modalities since the beginning of the war on Gaza.

In the second scenario, if school reopening is delayed for an additional year until 2026, learners would experience a total estimate of seven and a half years of learning loss. This includes one year lost due to COVID-19 and three years lost because of the ongoing war. A further three and a half years would be required for learning recovery, taking into account the trauma and hunger that many learners would have experienced. This implies that students in the elementary phase of schooling would achieve little or no literacy and numeracy.

In the third scenario, which is conceived to be the worst-case scenario, an entire generation of learning would be lost. This is the scenario that many of the interviewees described as creating a generation of children without meaningful access to education, and for whom the dream and aspiration to learn has all but disappeared. The implication of this third learning loss scenario is expressed clearly in the words of an interviewee:

"My concern is that we fear for our children. The anger, not the hate, that they have is dangerous ... not just for the Israelis, but for the whole world. If someone feels that the whole world has let them down and they are alone ... My child who is 12 years olds says "they all betrayed us" ... Imagine the impact on generations to come. We can overcome the learning loss through summer schools and lengthening school days but this ... When I graduated during the first intifada there was a year with just 40 days [of learning], but the whole world around us was with the Palestinians [then]. Now, there is anger, and they feel hopeless. This is dangerous for the region and the existence in Palestine." (Government official)

Table 1: Projected scenarios of learning loss

Projected date of resumption of learning	Learning loss			Total learning loss
	School closures due to war and COVID-19	Trauma	Hunger	
Assumption	Learning loss due to COVID-19 was 1 year Each year of school closures due to war is equivalent to 1 year of learning loss	For each year of war, trauma will cause an additional 0.5 of learning loss	Starting in 2024, each year of hunger will result in an additional 1 year of learning loss	
Scenario 1: Classes resume in September 2025	3 years of learning loss	1 year of learning loss because of trauma (0.5 for each year of war)	1 year of learning loss because of hunger	5 years of learning loss (students would have lost competencies equivalent to 5 years of schooling)
Scenario 2: Classes resume in September 2026	4 years of learning loss	1.5 year of learning loss due to trauma (0.5 for each year of war)	2 years of learning loss because of hunger	7.5 years of learning loss (students would have lost competencies equivalent to 7.5 years of schooling)
Scenario 3: Classes resume in September 2027	10 years of learning loss, equivalent to almost an entire school cycle (5 years school closure, 2 years trauma, 3 years hunger)			

Source: Sayed & Ahmad, 2025.

The three scenarios outlined in Table 1 estimate the unprecedented learning loss amongst the children in Gaza due to the cumulative effects of COVID-19, the ongoing war and long-term consequences of trauma and hunger that are likely to hold back learning recovery. During the war, children are not only missing formal education, but they are also experiencing diminished capacity to learn due to trauma, malnutrition and instability.

To further illustrate the devastating impact of the scenarios, for a Grade 12 student registered to complete Tawjihi in 2025, their chance of graduating is likely to be delayed between three to four years unless they return to school immediately with additional support for lost learning. This risks education loss for a generation of children and young people and undermines the achievement of the education Sustainable Development Goal. Even though some students were able to take the Tawjihi exam in 2025, their chances of enrolling in higher education remain constrained due to the

destruction of universities and vocational education infrastructure, as well as the killing and injury of staff.

These estimates serve as a stark warning that delaying recovery plans could lead to similar or even more long-term educational, social and economic implications for Gaza. Therefore, immediate and sustained investment in education is essential to prevent further setbacks to children's education that could significantly increase the vulnerabilities and risks they are facing.

It is important to note that the scenarios of learning loss presented in this report do not account for a partial resumption of education services. While such a measure may appear to offer interim relief, there is a need for long-term education restoration. Partial access risks deepening inequalities, exacerbating psychosocial distress, and undermining the integrity of the education system. Moreover, it would significantly extend recovery timelines, placing entire generations at risk of never completing basic education. Without a comprehensive and inclusive approach to educational recovery, the long-term impact on learning outcomes, social cohesion and psychosocial wellbeing will be far more severe and enduring.



UNRWA learning activities in southern Gaza, August 2024 © UNRWA photo

Teachers and counsellors on the frontline

"Teachers in Gaza are held in high regard. They are very respected in their communities and so we know that teachers are also part of this rebuilding of Gaza as a community pillar and as somebody who the community unites around to be able to rebuild and reestablish some semblance of normalcy in Gaza." (International organisation staff)

Palestinian teachers, like learners, communities and families, have valued education as a priority and play significant roles in providing meaningful and quality education for all Palestinians as a right, even in times of crisis. The war has not only undermined this commitment and sought to destroy teaching as a profession, but it has also revealed a steadfastness amongst teachers and counsellors, as this section reveals. The sheer perseverance and efforts of teachers and counsellors in the most dire of war contexts, speak to teaching as a form of resilience and resistance to the attacks on education and reflects an unwavering commitment to Palestinian rights and identity.

Teachers and counsellors under attack: A profession in crisis

"We know that they [many teachers] have lost children themselves. They have been displaced. Many of these women - you know, we have a large female workforce of teachers in Gaza - many of them have lost husbands and so are the sole breadwinners. ... we know from our work with teachers that they want to be teaching." (International organisation staff)

The war on Gaza has had significant impacts on teachers from immediate loss of life to untold trauma. Since the war began, over 23,000 teachers, together with more than 658,000 students, have lacked not only educational access but also physical safety for extended periods (OCHA oPt, 2025a; Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, 2024a).

Teachers and counsellors have not been spared from the consequences of the war. Almost all have faced displacement, the loss of family members, and psychological trauma. In addition, an increasing number have experienced war-induced disability (OHCHR, 2025c; Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, Centre for Lebanese Studies & UNRWA, 2024). As of 1 October 2025, more than 3,211 teachers have been severely injured, and more than 780 teachers have been killed (OCHA oPt, 2025l). The number of teachers and other education staff killed continues to rise.

The PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education also reports that, as of 30 September 2025, at least 236 university teachers have been killed and 1,456 have been injured (MoEHE, 2025). The destruction of universities and the killing of university staff have an impact on the schooling system as it affects the ability to train new teachers, who are required, given the killing and injury of existing teachers.

Moreover, teachers who have not been killed or injured continue to face severe material deprivation, as many in the population more generally. Many have lost their livelihoods, homes and access to basic necessities such as food, water, electricity, sanitation and medical care (Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, Centre for Lebanese Studies & UNRWA, 2024). In addition, many have struggled with securing regular salaries. Even teachers who are paid are unable to access their full salaries as banks are closed. Prolonged gaps in salary payments and continued instability have eroded their capacity to teach, disrupted family life and inflicted long-term damage on both professional effectiveness and personal wellbeing (Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, Centre for Lebanese Studies & UNRWA, 2024). As an education official interviewee noted:

"The teachers receive their salaries, but it is in their bank accounts. No bank in Gaza is open. So, they can't receive their money in cash. If they want the salary in cash, they are going to people working in money exchange ... they pay 52 percent of their salary ... So, if a teacher receives US\$1k in their account, they can receive US\$480 in cash. The price of flour last week reached around US\$30 per kg. The average family size here is 6-7. Their salary can only secure flour, that is all. That is the story of teachers and educators in Gaza. But for [other] staff, it is much worse. It is catastrophic for people without salaries." (International organisation staff)

The sheer direct physical and psychosocial impacts on teachers have made it difficult for them to provide meaningful access to learning and to see education as a pathway to just peace. An interviewee noted:

"The situation has deteriorated much more since last year. We are [seeing] a total destruction of the education system and infrastructure in Gaza. There is an intent not to allow any kind of education activity to happen inside Gaza." (International organisation staff)

In addition to the impact on teachers' safety and wellbeing, the war has intensified their responsibilities. As many interviewees pointed out, teachers have new responsibilities, increasing their workload. As an interviewee stated:

"Many teachers have double jobs. They are managing the shelters and helping internally displaced people and distributing the food and non-food items when they are available and they are providing education. Other teachers are working in the temporary learning spaces in the non-formal education and the remote learning. If we compare since before 7 October, 75 percent of staff remain. 25 percent are retired or killed, or their contracts have expired. This 75 percent are doing double jobs. The situation is very difficult." (International organisation staff)

The work that teachers carry out includes supporting traumatised learners, as well as their families, in frontline recovery efforts, including assisting with retrieving bodies from attack sites (WB, EU & UN, 2025; ACAPS, 2024a).

The compounding impact of psychological distress, non-payment of salaries and additional responsibilities has resulted in a demoralised profession:

"Every day we're losing spaces, we're losing children, we're losing teachers. I mean, this response, since the beginning of the war, has been up and down, and I think we're at the lowest right now." (International organisation staff)

Teachers' work is hampered by Israeli military restrictions on the entry and supply of necessary teaching and learning resources, including textbooks, stationery and assistive devices for students with disabilities, as well as materials required for psychosocial support. As discussed earlier in the report, these are either blocked at the border or unavailable due to destruction and economic collapse (UNICEF, 2024; ACAPS, 2024a; OHCHR, 2025c). Interviewees noted:

"None of the teachers or students have any kind of stationery or textbooks or hard copy of materials. Printing is very expensive. The price to print a few papers is more than 20 times the normal price. People used all the paper and textbooks and libraries to cook their food, so they don't have any resources." (International organisation staff)

Difficulties in delivering basic education are further compounded by the reality that teachers are working in debilitating conditions in which they lack essential services, such as internet and telecommunications. Teachers risk their lives while attempting to access internet to teach, as noted by an interviewee:

"Now, the teachers are going to some coffee shops with internet and try to send and engage with their students in this. The internet shops are very dangerous and many times they get targeted ... There are many cases where some of our teachers or our students were killed in those internet shops." (International organisation staff)

In addition, teachers are frequently targeted due to disinformation. When UNRWA came under increased attack, the staff bore the brunt of most aggressive accusations, being labelled 'terrorists' or 'terrorist sympathisers', without any evidence (UNRWA, 2025f). An interviewee noted that they are portrayed as 'evil' and 'subhuman', which demonises and undermines the dignity of teachers. Despite such unfounded attacks, they continue to show up for their students and serve their communities to the best of their abilities:

"The staff continue. They have the world against them. Institutions are not always that supportive because of the financial bottom-line and managing resources. The staff continue wanting to do the right thing for their people while they are being portrayed as evil, subhuman." (International organisation staff)

Continuing teaching during the war

“They continue delivering despite everything. They continue working in shelters in Gaza. There is determination, I must say, in the community to continue and delivering education despite all the challenges.” (International organisation staff)

Despite the various barriers that teachers face, they remain committed to their profession. One interviewee shared that the teachers in Gaza are “very work oriented” and “teachers want to be teaching” so they could be relied on to support education as it resumed. Continuing to teach and supporting learning during the war is for many teachers a matter of solidarity, commitment, service and pride. They are held in high regard and are seen as a community pillar. Additionally, teaching can also be a way to cope with the displacement and hunger, to “distract themselves.” (International organisation staff)

As discussed earlier in the report, UNRWA and the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education are supporting students via distance learning. Teachers have been playing a crucial role in supporting learners using distance learning materials, where possible. Distance learning illustrates the resilience and commitment of teachers to provide education. However, like temporary learning spaces, it has been impeded by several challenges, including families having to balance the need for education with other priorities, such as health and food, even more so in times of hunger. Many teachers in UNRWA’s (2025g) survey shared positive views about distance learning, such as the majority of teachers agreeing that “the current distance learning activities are well designed and meet students’ needs.” However, challenges such as the lack of availability of digital devices for learning and the need for many students to spend their days searching for food and water has made learning difficult.

In addition to teachers, counsellors’ commitment is evident in their continued support to the psychosocial and wellbeing needs of their learners. As an interviewee noted, teachers, together with counsellors, are taking on the role of supporting children psychologically:

“Psychosocial support is ongoing by our counsellors and assistant counsellors since day one [of this war]. The agency [UNRWA] has dedicated funding to this. Inside and outside the shelters.” (International organisation staff)

Centring the needs of teachers and counsellors

“They [teachers] have big needs, especially in the recent times, especially regarding food and water needs. If you have no food or water, no mental health is left.” (International organisation staff)

Teaching is a demanding profession even in stable contexts, and is even more stressful and complex in contexts of war. Centring teachers’ needs and their wellbeing during the current war is crucial to their empowerment. Such needs include their mental health and psychosocial needs. A rapid needs assessment published in February 2025 found that “surviving students and teachers are experiencing psychosocial trauma of varying levels of severity” (WB, EU & UN, 2025). Gaza has seen a reported significant increase in mental health and psychosocial needs, such as prevalent anxiety, depression and trauma. Adults and children alike express that they would rather die than live and experience more violence, deprivation and displacement. Women teachers are likely to be more impacted as they have additional responsibilities to meet their families’ needs for survival.

The stress faced by frontline workers who provide mental health and psychosocial support

is exacerbated by overwork (ACAPS, 2024b). Education staff need a break for their own wellbeing. As noted by an interviewee:

"None of our education staff including myself have taken leave for 1 day since 7 October 2023. Some of our teachers are working day and night because we are operating shelters 24/7. Our staff needs some kind of break." (International organisation staff)

The oPt 2025 Flash Appeal highlights "enhanc[ing] mental health and psychosocial support for children, teachers, and parents, as well as the whole community" as a priority need in Gaza (OCHA oPt, 2024a). Providing psychosocial support for teachers enables them to cope with their trauma as well as support traumatised learners and families.

Teachers, along with the rest of the population, are also going hungry due to the 'entirely man-made famine' (IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, 2025b, p.2). Interviewees noted that teachers are struggling to teach while they are hungry:

"Staff [teachers and counsellors] were eating one tomato a day and really horrific stories of what people were reduced to." (International organisation staff)

Another noted:

"Our staff are extremely hungry; they eat one meal a day (lentils and canned food). It increased fainting at work, many have lost weight considerably and 1/3 staff have no stock of food at home." (International organisation staff)

In this context, teachers also face difficulties working when they are worried about not having food for their children at home. Interviewees also pointed out how difficult it is for teachers to support learning for students who are starving and malnourished. Furthermore, irregular or no payment of teacher salaries, as noted above, impacts teacher morale and has resulted in worsening debt (Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, Centre for Lebanese Studies & UNRWA, 2024).

Teachers expressed the need for professional development opportunities to cope with the realities of the war, including more support on how to provide effective and meaningful online and remote learning, and provide support for traumatised children, as well as support that centres their own wellbeing and mental health needs. An interviewee noted:

"Looking at their psychological wellbeing because we understand that for them to be able to deliver the services, they need to have some semblance of mental health and wellbeing as well." (International organisation staff)

The professional development of teachers has also been impeded by the war, due to its impact on basic infrastructure, including internet and electricity. In addition, border closures mean that those providing training from outside Gaza are no longer able to enter, as the following interviewee pointed out:

"The question is how do we deliver [a programme] that used to be 9 weeks face-to-face, when we can't get anyone to Gaza and we can't ask people to do face-to-face fairly. How do you repackage that? This goes for every organisation. Especially when there isn't always internet and electricity." (International organisation staff)

Teachers and counsellors who were interviewed, stressed that what they most need, even to provide the most basic form of education, is the upholding of international humanitarian law. It is not surprising that many of the teachers feel disappointed by the lack of international

support as they grapple with living and surviving in a war zone, while also trying to support their students through these challenging circumstances (ACAPS, 2024a).

An uncertain future for teachers and counsellors

“Our staff are part of the internally displaced community. Some of them have moved 10 times ... We have news of staff losing some of their relatives or children, in addition to losing homes. So they have nothing. Some of them have tents if they have money to buy tents. If any human being has those huge needs ... it is very difficult to ask them to support others because they need to support their individual needs.” (International organisation staff)

Teachers and counsellors have to confront the very real experiences of students and the realities of experiencing the war on Gaza. They repeatedly underscored in interviews the immense difficulty of teaching global values such as human rights and conflict resolution amid widespread physical destruction, hunger, mass killings and attempts to prevent any and every form of meaningful education taking place. One interviewee cited the UN Security Council's indecision for two years on securing a meaningful and durable ceasefire as an example. Interviewees also expressed frustration in the lack of support, not just from the UN and the international world at large, but also the immediate neighbours of Palestine.

“I know that it is our job to have hope despite the full environment and atmosphere of frustration. The problem is not in the system or the UN or the human rights values, the problem is the ones who violate those values. Let us start from this. When we have the opportunity to meet with our students, it will take time, but I hope we can get back on track.” (International organisation staff)

The work of teachers and counsellors is challenging, not only now but also for future recovery. In the earlier part of the report, we estimated five to seven and a half years of learning loss. Beyond ensuring that all children resume schooling, there will be a need for remedial education and additional tutoring to enable learning recovery. Remedial education is the support provided by teachers and teaching assistants to learners returning to classrooms to compensate for the learning loss because of school closures, trauma and hunger. This is in effect additional catch-up classes to make up for the learning loss as outlined in the estimates above. The proper operation of remedial education will need trained teachers, teacher assistants and counsellors. This will require empowering teachers and counsellors as well as recruiting additional staff (teaching assistants).

Table 2 summarises our estimates of teacher requirements.^{vii} Calculations are based on providing all students in groups of 40 with additional tutoring, taking account of the total years of learning loss (for example, five years lost if schools had reopened in 2025, seven and a half years if reopening is delayed to 2026). The group of 40 students per session is based on the existing average class size in schools in Gaza which is 41.2 (UNRWA, 2022). We assume that the teaching assistants will be hired full-time (i.e., working for 40 hours per week). We also assume that the current teaching force will simultaneously contribute to remedial education for one hour per week. The assumption of this model is that teaching assistants are additional part-time staff who are recruited for remedial education and therefore costed. It is possible that those involved in the reconstruction may choose to use the existing teaching force for remedial education. If teaching assistants are not recruited, then remedial education will have to be added to the workload of the existing teachers.

Two learning recovery scenarios are presented. The first scenario represents a three-year recovery plan, in which the remedial learning efforts are spread across three school years. The second scenario is a one-year intensive recovery plan, meaning that remedial learning interventions are implemented within a single school year.

Table 2: Projected required teaching assistants for remedial education in Gaza

Scenario	Years of learning loss ^{viii}	Learning recovery period	Total number of teaching assistants needed for learning recovery
Schools reopen 2025, 3-years' recovery	5	3 years	1,371
Schools reopen 2025, 1-year accelerated	5	1 year	4,113
Schools reopen 2026, 3-years' recovery	7.5	3 years	2,056
Schools reopen 2026, 1-year accelerated	7.5	1 year	6,169

Source: Sayed & Ahmad, 2025.

The demand for teaching assistants for remedial learning rises steeply as the recovery horizon shortens. For a 2025 school reopening, a three-year recovery programme would require approximately 1,371 remedial teachers per year. Compressing the recovery to a one-year accelerated programme would demand at least 4,113 teaching assistants. The same pattern holds if schools reopen in 2026, with annual demand ranging from about 2,056 remedial teacher assistants under a three-year plan to around 6,169 teacher assistants under a one-year accelerated plan.

But it is not just additional teaching assistants who will be needed for remedial learning. Teachers who have been killed or injured and therefore unable to return to teaching will also need to be replaced, as presented in Table 3. We estimate teacher recovery under two scenarios. First, we assume that 30 percent of the total injured and traumatised teachers would not return to the schools after the war. Second, we estimate that none of the injured teachers would return to teaching and would be replaced by a new teaching force.

Table 3: Number of teachers to be replaced in Gaza

Scenario	Total teachers before war	Teachers killed	Teachers injured/traumatised	Teachers unable to return	Demand for replacement teachers
If 30 percent of injured teachers do not return to schools	23,000	780	3,211	963	1,743
If none of the injured teachers return to schools	23,000	780	3,211	3,211	3,991

Source: Sayed & Ahmad, 2025.

Depending on whether injured teachers return to classrooms, between 1,743 and 3,991 new teachers will need to be recruited simply to restore the pre-war teaching force. When added to remedial requirements, this represents a very large expansion of the teacher workforce.

Overall, the results illustrate that even under the most gradual recovery scenario, the system will need to recruit and train more than 1,000 teaching assistants for remedial education per year, in addition to replacing teachers who were killed. Faster recovery horizons or delayed reopening to 2026 raise these requirements dramatically, highlighting the urgency of planning, financing and mobilising large-scale teacher preparation initiatives.

Our analysis of post-war learning recovery also includes calculations related to teachers (see Sayed & Ahmad, 2025, for greater details of the calculations). The first calculation estimates the training costs of replacing teachers who were killed or severely injured under two scenarios. The first scenario assumes that 30 percent (963) of the 3,211 injured or traumatised teachers do not return to teaching. In this case, the total demand for replacement teachers is estimated at 1,743, resulting in a total projected cost of US\$9.76 million. In the second, more severe, scenario, where none of the 3,211 injured or traumatised teachers are able to resume teaching, the total replacement demand increases to 3,991 teachers, at a total estimated cost of US\$22.35 million.

The second calculation estimates the cost of teacher salaries. The annual salary cost required to restore the pre-war teaching workforce of 23,000 teachers is estimated at approximately US\$361.56 million. To support post-war learning recovery, teachers would need to deliver remedial education for an additional hour per week, which would incur an estimated annual cost of US\$9.04 million.^{ix} The expenditure for continuous professional development, calculated at 10 percent of the total annual salary, amounts to US\$36.156 million.^x When these costs are combined with the estimated teacher costs required to replace 30 percent of injured or traumatised teachers, the total expenditure rises to approximately US\$416.52 million. In the more extreme scenario, where all injured teachers are unable to return to service, the combined cost increases further to US\$429.105 million. This is assuming that it will be possible to recruit all the teachers needed locally.

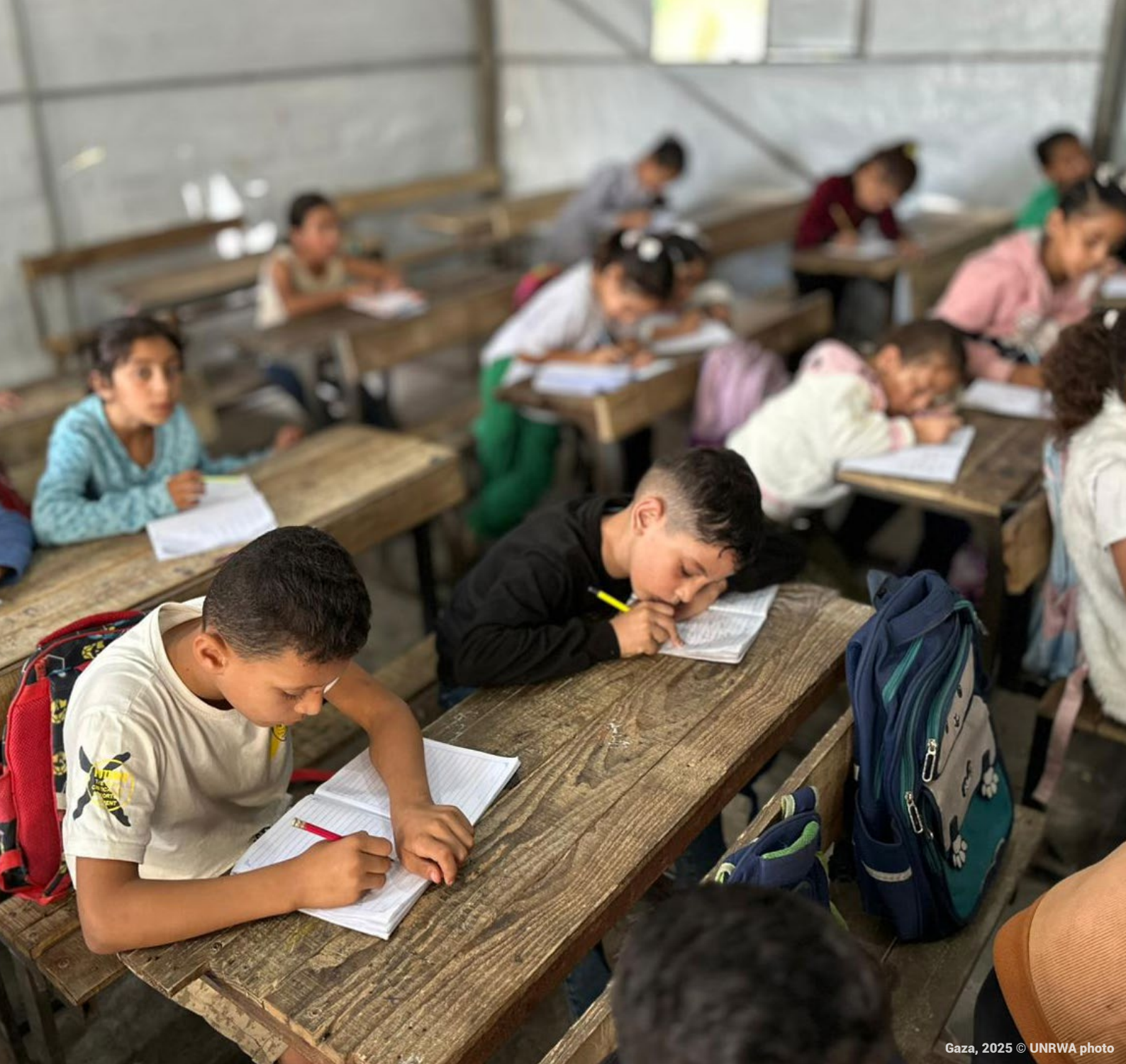
The third calculation relates to the costs of remedial education support. In the first scenario, schools are assumed to have reopened in 2025, following five years of learning loss, with a three-year recovery period. Under these conditions, the projected demand would be 1,371 teaching assistants, resulting in a total salary cost of approximately US\$32.32 million over the recovery period of three years. This amounts to US\$10.77 million for each of the three years. The second scenario models an accelerated one-year recovery following the same learning loss (five years). This accelerated approach increases short-term demand substantially, requiring 4,113 teaching assistants to complete remedial programmes within one year. Despite the larger workforce, the total annual salary cost remains US\$32.32 million, as the expenditure is concentrated within a single year rather than spread across multiple years.

Scenarios that assume that school reopening is delayed until 2026, correspond to seven and a half years of cumulative learning loss. Under a three-year recovery model, the projected requirement rises to 2,056 teaching assistants, with a total salary cost of around US\$48.48 million. Under the one-year accelerated model, the demand further increases to 6,169 teaching assistants, again maintaining the same total cost of US\$48.48 million due to the shorter timeframe.

Based on these calculations, the overall total estimated cost to support the learning of students in Gaza impacted by the war is between US\$448.84 million and US\$477.59 million, depending on the scale of teacher replacement, the years of learning loss, and the recruitment of teaching assistants to support learning recovery for each of the two learning scenarios.

While the above figures are broad estimates and projections based on the available data at the time of writing, the trends illustrate the reality that the war on Gaza will result in the need for large numbers of teachers to be recruited and consequently will add to the cost of recovery. Most of the current costs for reconstruction tend to underplay the need for additional teacher recruitment for both replacing those injured or killed as well as the additional numbers needed to provide for meaningful remedial education to compensate for the dire learning loss experienced by learners. In short, without massive and immediate investment in teacher recruitment and training, including recruitment of teaching assistants to support remedial education, Gaza faces an unrecoverable collapse in human capital. Teachers and counsellors are also crucial to any efforts at meaningful and just recovery. And they must be recognised as crucial humanitarian workers and afforded the same rights as those providing humanitarian support in Gaza.

Teachers emphasise the urgent need for 'a psychological, physical, social and financial recovery'. They highlight the importance of schools being fully staffed and of providing those employees, as well as parents, with psychological support, so they can help students effectively. Teachers also long for the recovery of their homes and stability, something they stress can only be achieved through a permanent ceasefire and just peace. Interviewees also spoke of a fragile glimmer of hope but point to a deepening sense of despair, frustration and disillusionment with the world's failure to support them amid a horrific and brutal war. They warned that with each passing day, the reality deepens: not only will an entire generation of learners be deprived of education, but thousands of both learners and teachers risk losing all faith in the international community and in public commitments to peace.



Gaza, 2025 © UNRWA photo

Conclusion

"I have worked in education for [many] years. We learn hope from the children here in Gaza. They always have hope. I want to see hope returning to the children's spirits. I am sure that buildings and tools can be rebuilt, but the belief and values and deep frustration and the impact on the next generation will be very, very severe."
(International organisation staff)

Our analysis of the impact of the war on Gaza has highlighted the intensification of the attacks on the education system. It flags the real concern that we may be at a threshold of witnessing a generation that would have lost all meaningful learning and faith in education as a path to just hope and peace. This report tellingly reminds the international community of its failure to act decisively in protecting the right of young children to education and safety in Gaza.



Part 2: Education under attack in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem

This part of the report examines the effects of increasingly militarised operations of the Israeli forces, as well as the increasing attacks by settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, on children's learning trajectories, highlighting both the scale of learning loss and the obstacles to recovery. The adverse effects are not experienced evenly: children with disabilities, those already marginalised and those living in areas most exposed to these operations face compounded disadvantages that deepen existing inequities. Exposure to violence, displacement and instability have also left children coping with trauma, further hindering their capacity to learn. Teachers and counsellors are at the frontline of responding to these challenges, yet they are themselves under immense strain, balancing their roles as educators with the urgent need to provide psychosocial support to students in conditions of heightened uncertainty.



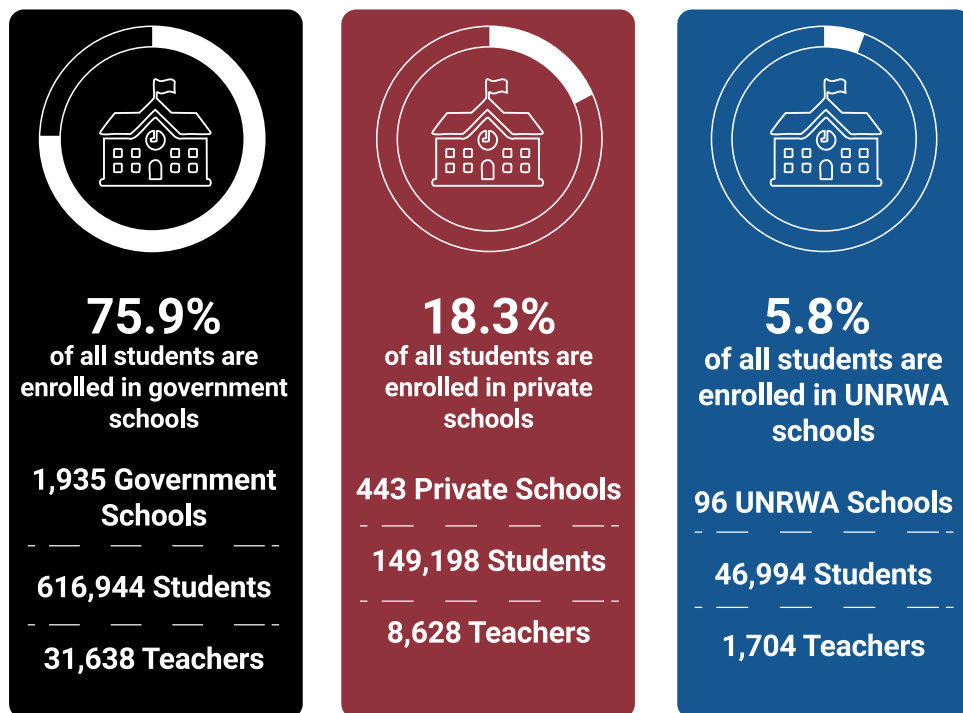
Attacks on schools

"After the war started in Gaza, there was less attention to West Bank even though attacks on schools continued. Air strikes, a lot of operations, settler violence, school demolitions, especially in the camps. Education is severely impacted." (International organisation staff)

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Palestinian children and young people have been pursuing their education in the face of violence and harassment from Israeli forces and settlers, as well as home and school demolitions, movement restrictions and checkpoints, among other occupation-enforced challenges (UN Human Rights Council, 2025c). They have struggled with the right to education across a school system run by the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education, UNRWA and private schools.^{xi} Many of the existing obstacles intensified after 7 October 2023 (Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, 2025a). These challenges restrict access to parts of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, either completely or partially, making it impossible or more time-consuming, costly and dangerous for students and teachers to attend schools. For children with disabilities, the impact is even greater. Mobility restrictions, inaccessible transport and infrastructure, and the absence of appropriate support services compound the difficulties they already face in travelling safely to school.

In the academic year 2024/2025, there were a total of 2,474 schools in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, serving around 813,138 students and employing approximately 52,087 teachers (Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, 2025a). Figure 2 provides a breakdown of these by school type.

Figure 2: Breakdown of schools, students and teachers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem



Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2025b.

Between 7 October 2023 and 30 September 2025, the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education reported 110 students killed and 781 injured, alongside 5 teachers killed and 23 injured (MoEHE, 2025). In addition, the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education (2025) reports that 393 students and more than 198 teachers have been arrested since October 2023. This reflects what the UN Human Rights Office has described as ‘arbitrary due to lack of legal grounds for detention and/or violation of due process guarantees’ (OHCHR, 2024b, p.7).

During the school year 2024/2025, the Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster reported 2,040 education-related incidents, including armed settlers entering schools, weapon firing, detention of students and staff, and harassment or delays on the way to school. This affected 541 schools, 84,749 students and 4,711 teachers. 75 schools were damaged or vandalised, and 78 schools were under demolition orders. Increasing severity and frequency of settler violence has further exacerbated this volatile environment (Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, 2025b). Schools facing demolition orders are the ones that are under threat because Israel refuses to give them approval for their buildings as they are not part of the Israeli-approved ‘Master Plans’ (Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, 2025b).^{xii} This leaves them highly vulnerable to legal and political pressures aimed at displacing communities and undermining education (Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, 2025a). An interviewee highlighted how the attacks on schools, teachers and students were prevalent even before 7 October, but have risen even further since then:

“Highly militarised Israeli operations have been happening since 7 October. Things like airstrikes and tanks, we started to see them in the West Bank for the first time since the [second] intifada.” (International organisation staff)

In the school year 2024/2025, 85.4 percent of education incidents involved delays at checkpoints and military presence around schools, which have undermined the ability of students, teachers and staff to reach schools, often accompanied by intimidation or denial of access. These disruptions have affected the access to school of an estimated 63,654 students and 3,418 teachers, fundamentally undermining the right to education along with compounding trauma and stress among children (Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, 2025b). As indicated by interviewees:

"In the West Bank, 7 October started, a few days after that, more than 700 iron gates and checkpoints were installed between and in front of each town, village, camp. The banning of movement made it difficult for teachers and students to reach school." (Government official)

"Children are facing a lot of harassment, especially regarding increased movement restrictions. As they try to reach schools, on the way to and back, there is harassment at checkpoints." (International organisation staff)

Other types of incidents further highlight the threats to education. During the school year 2024/2025, there were 90 cases of firing of weapons directly targeting schools, as well as tear gas, stun grenades, live ammunition and rubber-coated bullets, and 37 additional incidents of weapon use near schools. Of these, 68 occurred in the first half of 2025 alone, the highest figure recorded for any such period since 2019. 72 cases of entry by Israeli forces into schools were documented, with three schools used as military bases, representing a violation of international protections of education facilities. Settler violence also escalated sharply: 70 direct attacks on schools and a further 29 incidents involving settlers at school sites were recorded, affecting more than 5,700 students and 339 teachers. In 10 of these cases, schools sustained physical damage, such as vandalised property or broken gates, intensifying the fear and trauma faced by students and staff (OCHA oPt, 2025m).

In October 2024, the Israeli Knesset adopted two laws – one that banned UNRWA's operations within Israel, while another prohibited Israeli officials from any contact or communication with the agency. Together, these laws significantly impede UNRWA's ability to operate in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, given that Israel considers East Jerusalem as part of its territory. These laws entered into force in January 2025.

Following the laws' entry into force, Israel refused to renew visas for UNRWA's international staff and implemented a 'no-contact' policy (UNRWA, 2025g). According to UN news sources, pressure was most acute in East Jerusalem: municipal and Israeli security officials repeatedly entered UNRWA premises, and in April and May 2025, Israeli forces forcibly delivered and enforced closure orders against six UNRWA schools, including three in Shu'fat refugee camp. These closures, carried out while hundreds of students and teachers were in class, brought the school year to an abrupt end and left some 800 Palestine Refugee children,^{xiii} some as young as six years old, without access to schools. The children then had to finish their school year remotely (UNRWA, 2025h). The laws enacted by Israel constitute a unilateral cessation of UNRWA's operations and ban Israeli authorities from any communication with the agency, in direct tension with Israel's obligations under international law. More significantly, as the letter from UN independent experts notes, the mandate of UNRWA was established by the UN General Assembly and may only be terminated by the General Assembly, not by a single Member State (OHCHR, 2025d).

In January 2025, Israeli forces intensified their attacks in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, displacing tens of thousands of people from Jenin, Tulkarm and Nur Shams camps, in which Israeli forces have established military posts (OCHA oPt, 2025m). Due to these military attacks, most camp residents were forcibly displaced, and UNRWA and other services were suspended, affecting thousands of students, teachers and counsellors. Limited space and shortages of supplies meant that not all displaced children could access schooling, whether in alternative schools or remotely. Many displaced children have been out of school, while those using distance learning struggle with costly, unreliable internet and lack of devices (OCHA oPt, 2025m).

These attacks violate children's right to education, which is conditional on the security situation, in a context where many children endure violent arrests, coercive interrogations, abuse in detention, and denial of essential services, including schooling (Save the Children, 2023).



Kalandia Camp, West Bank, 2025 © UNRWA photo



Kalandia Camp, West Bank, 2025 © UNRWA photo

Worsening children and young people's vulnerabilities

"When you sit with the students, instead of talking to you about math and science, they start talking to you about how they saw their friend or neighbour shot." (Government official)

The escalation of Israeli security operations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has had profound repercussions on students' health and safety, intensifying both physical and psychological harm. Palestinian children in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have historically suffered from persistent violence, including school raids, harassment and attacks by Israeli forces and settlers. These recurring incidents, documented over many years, have created a climate of fear that undermines children's safety, wellbeing and ability to learn (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2020). Additionally, the war on Gaza is deeply affecting all children and families in the oPt, including in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Beyond the immediate disruption to education, these developments have deepened long-standing vulnerabilities that pre-dated 7 October 2023. Children face heightened trauma, children with disabilities experience mounting barriers to protection and inclusion, while girls encounter greater risks to their safety, and boys are increasingly subjected to violence and detention. As an interviewee noted:

"The entire Palestinian community at this point is considered vulnerable ... Everybody is affected, and everyone needs support when it comes to education." (International organisation staff)

Increasing trauma and deteriorating wellbeing of children

"Children are saying there was an operation around us overnight and I was afraid ... I did not sleep overnight so I did not come to school." (International organisation staff)

Children in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have been experiencing deteriorating mental health and wellbeing for many years (Save the Children, 2025b; War Child, 2025). A cross-sectional study of 1,148 children in early 2024 across the north and middle West

Bank reported that 70 percent of them displayed moderate to very severe symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, including traumatic flashbacks, intrusive memories and nightmares, which affected their learning, emotional relationships and everyday activities (Aqtam et al., 2025). As a 14-year-old boy expressed:

"My friend was killed by the occupation forces, and I feel devastated about it even after months have passed since the event." (Student)

The proximity of children to military checkpoints and settlements has also been linked with heightened stress, depression and feelings of insecurity, particularly during daily commutes (World Vision International, 2025). Reports from OHCHR (2025e) underscore how armed raids in schools, such as the storming of UNRWA schools in Shu'fat refugee camp, have not only disrupted education but left children, some as young as six, traumatised by violent encounters. Interviewees highlighted how overnight raids, a common feature of Israeli forces operations, often lead to the detention of children "even when they are at home," leaving them traumatised and absent from school the following day. One 14-year old child expressed how:

"We, the children in the school, are exposed to the worst things from repeated raids into the school and arrest of some of our classmates without any reasons, and we need protection first before other rights, and we also have the right to learn." (Student)

Save the Children (2025b) further warns that more children were displaced in the first half of 2025 than in any comparable period on record, compounding distress and eroding psychosocial resilience. Interviewees stressed how the psychosocial needs of children are increasing but the capacity to provide that support is extremely limited:

"Psychosocial support and counselling are in place by Ministry of Education and UNRWA. We do have one school counsellor per school; some do, some don't; some share the school counsellors; not all schools are covered, even if they are covered, a school has 200 students, but one counsellor is not sufficient to provide services to teachers." (International organisation staff)

Another interviewee noted how the effects of trauma are different for displaced children in camps and for those who are not:

"If you are in the camp you suffer from the direct security situation, but if you are not there you suffer differently from what you see on social media and news about the camps. These children are unable to sleep calmly. The mental health situation and status is very bad." (International organisation staff)

During focus group discussions facilitated by UNRWA in 2025, Palestine Refugee children recounted the fear of sudden night raids, the storming of homes and schools by Israeli forces, and even instances of being shot at, which leave them afraid to play outside or walk freely. This climate of violence is compounded by the recurring trauma of witnessing their peers injured or killed, and seeing homes around them demolished. The children spoke of overwhelming psychological distress, fear, anxiety, depression and hopelessness, while also being explicitly denied any access to psychosocial support. Children described how daily life is strained by the lack of safe spaces, frequent water and electricity cuts, and the constant threat of detention, including being held in isolation at checkpoints. What was once ordinary (school trips, food in shops or safety at home), has become out of reach, leaving them with a deep sense of fear, loss and deprivation.

Worsening education conditions for students with disabilities

Even before October 2023, children with disabilities were among the most excluded from education. In the West Bank, 27.7 percent of children aged 6-9 with disabilities had never been enrolled in school, and among 10-15-year-olds, 36.6 percent of girls and 26.3 percent of boys with disabilities were out of school (Humanity & Inclusion, 2022). These barriers, already rooted in inaccessible infrastructure, stigma and lack of specialised support, have deepened with intensified violence, military raids and movement restrictions.

Since October 2023, repeated incursions and demolitions have left children with disabilities with even fewer safe spaces, while the destruction of roads and checkpoints has further impeded their access to schools, rehabilitation centres and assistive devices (Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, 2024b). Families report that children with disabilities experience heightened psychological distress, both from the trauma of attacks and from the perception of being a burden in a context where resources are scarce (War Child, 2025). Interviewees noted that operations leave children with disabilities particularly vulnerable:

"On children with disabilities, the destruction is heavy, especially in the north and people are displaced, but even before they were displaced, the destruction of roads was a lot. It was hard enough for people without disabilities, imagine being in a wheelchair. You basically had to climb up and down after the operations were done." (International organisation staff)

The combined effect of conflict, displacement and systemic neglect means that children with disabilities are not only more exposed to direct harm but also more likely to be excluded from education, psychosocial support and pathways to recovery:

"All our reports say that children with disabilities in the West Bank are the most affected as it is difficult to get them to temporary learning centres or more distant schools than they usually attend, and if evictions happen, it will be difficult. They might have to access schools not adapted to them." (International organisation staff)

Distinct effects on girls and boys

Insights from our interviews highlighted the significantly different ways in which boys and girls are impacted by the increasing militarised operations by the Israeli forces in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in ways that affect their education. Data from 2022 indicate that secondary school attendance was substantially higher among 16-17-year-old girls (94 percent) than boys (78 percent), with boys more often dropping out due to lack of interest or the need to work and support their families (OCHA oPt, 2022b).

More recent humanitarian assessments in 2024, report that over half of Palestinian students, boys and girls alike, reported harassment or delays on their way to school. These disruptions disproportionately affect girls, who face heightened safety risks during commutes in insecure environments (OCHA oPt, 2025n). An interviewee stressed how, with increasing settler violence, parents are less likely to send their girls to schools:

"Parents are less willing to send their girl children to school because girls are obviously more likely to be harassed by settlers and by the military as well. You know, we see, we've heard stories from our field, particularly in Hebron, where there have been groups of girls walking to school and they are particularly targeted." (International organisation staff)

A teacher similarly expressed concern that ongoing attacks, closures and demolitions affected how girls at her school can no longer view their schools as a safe space.

For girls, safety concerns often revolve around movement and access to school. One interviewee highlighted that:

"Children are facing a lot of harassment, especially regarding increased movement restrictions. Trying to reach schools, on the way to and back, there is harassment at checkpoints." (International organisation staff)

In Hebron, the presence of a new settler outpost has created an atmosphere of fear around a girls' school, as indicated by an interviewee:

"The settler started with a small tent, then caravans, and now he has surveillance cameras around the school on the only route to the school. Families have already started to pull their girls out of those schools and are asking for registration for their girls in other schools. The settlement is expanding next to the school, so families are afraid." (International organisation staff)

Interviewees highlighted that with rising displacement, especially in villages and cities across the northern West Bank, including East Jerusalem, children, and particularly girls, are facing increasing resource scarcity. For example, during militarised operations when roads are destroyed and access to water is cut off, girls encounter heightened difficulties in reaching school, as these conditions exacerbate existing barriers to mobility and safety.

"Girls are ashamed to come to school if they don't have water at home because they can't wash themselves." (International organisation staff)

Men and boys are also impacted, often in different ways from women and girls. Adolescent boys face heightened risks of arrest and detention. In June 2025, 359 Palestinian boys were held in Israeli prisons under the jurisdiction of the Israel Prison Service. Of these, 41 percent were detained under administrative detention without charge or trial (Defense for Children International Palestine, 2025a). The organisation reports consistent accounts of physical abuse, strip searches, beatings, verbal threats and prolonged isolation during arrest and interrogation, often conducted without the presence of legal counsel or family members (Defense for Children International Palestine, 2025b). These findings align with those of Save the Children and OHCHR, both of which have documented a sharp escalation in the ill-treatment and abuse of Palestinian children, particularly boys, in detention since October 2023 (Save the Children, 2024; OHCHR, 2024c). OHCHR (2024c) highlights patterns of arbitrary and incommunicado detention, exposure to extreme temperatures, and visible signs of physical and psychological trauma upon release. The detention of boys is corroborated by an interviewee:

"Children get detained, even at home when there are raids ... we know more boys are in detention than girls. Boys around the age of 11 or so up to the age of 16 get more attention on them. I mean, from personal experience, it only takes a very small group of young boys to be standing in a place together in East Jerusalem for that to warrant a drone coming in and then a follow-up of the military not long after that ... Detention is not even the worst-case scenario. They can be killed." (International organisation staff)

Israeli forces operations and airstrikes also pose heightened risks for boys, who are more likely than girls to spend time outdoors playing and socialising. Even when in school, boys are more likely to be targeted, as an interviewee noted:

"Male children are more affected than female children because military operations happen more in boys' schools." (International organisation staff)

This heightened exposure to violence and arrest contributes to significant psychological distress for children. The Child Protection Area of Responsibility Global Protection Cluster (2025) notes how boys aged 7-12 are more likely to be affected by anxiety, depression, withdrawal and post-traumatic stress disorder. OCHA oPt (2025o) reports that boys are more likely than girls to drop out of school and face increased exposure to protection threats, especially in northern governorates such as Jenin and Tulkarm, where child distress levels are high. Alongside the risk of violence, economic pressures push boys into labour earlier to support their families, which not only increases their exposure to exploitation but also contributes to higher dropout from school (PCBS, 2023). For those in school, boys are likely to perform less well. For example, girls achieved 16 score points higher in mathematics and 49 score points higher in reading in 2022 PISA tests^{xiv} (OECD, 2023).

Given the dangers that boys in particular face, parents live with constant fear about how their sons might react under stress. One interviewee explained that:

"If the boys react, which is understandable, the parents are not aware ... and this will bring the family in trouble because then ... Israel comes to destroy the house, which is not acceptable. This is causing parents' stress ... These days, even if a group of four or five boys are standing together, especially in East Jerusalem, they get into trouble by the Israeli forces." (International organisation staff)

These accounts reveal how fear of detention and violence translates into heavy psychological strain on families. For boys in particular, the risk of being drawn into confrontations or armed actors is perceived as not only endangering their own lives but also exposing their families (UNICEF, 2025e). This pervasive sense of insecurity further undermines the stability and wellbeing children need to focus on education and learning.

Deteriorating financial circumstances

Financial insecurity is increasingly forcing children in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, out of school. The International Labour Organization (2024) reports that 29 percent of households in the West Bank have reduced expenditure on education, while 7 percent have resorted to sending their children to work as an economic coping strategy, compared to 1.5 percent in the previous year. These findings highlight how household income shocks are translating into disrupted learning and increased child labour. According to a survey by World Vision, conducted between November 2024 and January 2025, 9 percent of households reported that their children had dropped out of school altogether, mainly due to loss of livelihoods and the deteriorating security situation (World Vision International, 2025). The Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster (2024b) similarly found that rising transportation costs, school closures linked to insecurity, and families' inability to afford school supplies have significantly increased the risk of dropout, particularly among poorer households.

Economic hardship impacts availability of food, which directly affects children's nutrition and learning capacity. In the World Vision International (2025) survey, 70 percent of children said they frequently skipped meals because their families could not afford enough food; nearly half reported missing meals more than ten times or eating smaller portions; and 38 percent said they often felt hungry but did not eat because there was no food at home. Hunger and malnutrition undermine cognitive functioning, attention and academic performance, reducing children's ability to learn effectively.



Learning loss and learning recovery

Students in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have faced unprecedented levels of learning loss as a result of escalating violence, movement restrictions and economic decline. During the 2023/2024 academic year, on average, between 8 and 20 percent of schools in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have been closed due to military operations, settler violence, checkpoints and curfews (Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, 2024b). These figures are a conservative estimate based on available data. The impact in terms of school closures and learning loss in certain areas of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is likely to be much higher. As an interviewee noted:

"I would say, we have a huge amount of learning loss among our students. We cannot separate the students from the situation on the ground. What they are seeing on the TV, hearing from their parents and seeing in their own eyes could affect their ability to focus inside the classroom and gain the knowledge and skills we are trying to provide." (International organisation staff)

Due to intensifying safety concerns, access constraints and economic pressures, including due to the withholding of taxes by the Israeli authorities since October 2023, all public schools across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, administered by the Palestinian Authority as well as UNRWA, have implemented a distance learning system, combining in-person engagement where possible (Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, 2024b). From February 2024 to the end of the school year, face-to-face schooling was reduced to two days a week (Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, 2024b). During the school year 2024/2025, in-person learning increased to four days a week (INEE, 2025). An interviewee reported that the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education used various platforms to overcome what is lost as a result of attacks on education. These include a Palestinian education television channel that supports students in East Jerusalem, an advanced online platform, including recorded lectures and live interactive sessions, and they have in-person teaching where possible.

On 8 May 2025, six UNRWA schools in East Jerusalem were forcibly closed, cutting off education for around 800 children, while in the northern West Bank, at least ten UNRWA-run

schools in Jenin, Tulkarm and Nur Shams refugee camps have also been shut, disrupting the schooling of more than 4,400 students (OCHA oPt, 2025p). From these 10 schools, 40 percent of the students are attending classes run by UNRWA in Palestinian Authority school buildings for three days a week, based on an agreement between UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority (Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, 2025a).

Areas affected by Israeli forces operations experienced a large loss in number of school days. Between 67 and 90 learning days were recorded to be lost over the academic year 2024/2025: 90 days in Jenin, 74 days in Tulkarm and 67 days in Nur Shams refugee camps (UNRWA, 2025j).

During forced school closures, UNRWA launched an emergency education programme in February 2025, which planned to reach 4,400 students who were attending closed schools. By May 2025, 90 percent of these students participated in the programme's activities, which included distance learning strategies, with self-learning materials accessible via the UNRWA Digital Learning Platform, a compressed curriculum, and a range of communication channels. For schools that faced forced closures, UNRWA facilitated in-person learning by providing alternative learning spaces at Palestinian Authority schools three days a week (UNRWA, 2025j).

In total, due to COVID-19 and the current attacks on education, children and young people lost at least two school years. In 2023/24, schools were closed for 108 days due to shortened school weeks, and 14 days due to escalation of attacks. In 2024/25, schools lost 36 days due to a shortened week schedule and 22 days due to the escalation of attacks. This is equivalent to one school year in total over the period October 2023 to September 2025. Adding the impact of trauma due to attacks on education, the learning loss increases to 2.5 years.

By considering various scenarios, we explore the depth of the losses children and young people are facing in their education trajectories. This analysis is grounded in key assumptions, as outlined in relation to the analysis for learning loss in Gaza (Sayed & Ahmad, 2025). However, the learning loss assumptions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are based primarily on loss as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, attacks on education and resulting trauma. In the context of this report and modelling, the resumption of formal schooling refers to the proper and effective functioning of schools in which meaningful teaching and learning can occur, without fears of attacks by Israeli forces and settlers. Resumption of formal schooling refers to schools functioning as safe spaces in which children can learn without fear. We recognise that this does not imply that schooling has not and is not being provided by both the Palestinian Authority and UNRWA in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. But we cannot talk about normal schooling in abnormal conditions of fear, attacks and violence.

In Table 4, three scenarios are outlined for learning loss calculated as an outcome of school closure and trauma due to attacks by Israeli forces, as well as settlers. In scenario one, if formal schools were to have resumed in 2025, there would be an estimated two and a half years of learning loss. The scenario implies that cumulatively, learners would have missed out on one year of schooling as a result of COVID-19, and one year with shortened school weeks and school closures due to escalation of attacks on education. In addition, it is assumed that their recovery would be further impeded by a further half year, taking into account the trauma that many would have experienced.

If resumption of formal schooling is delayed until 2026, learners will experience an estimated four years of learning loss. This comprises of one year due to COVID-19, and two years of the ongoing attacks by Israeli forces and settlers. Recovery will require an additional one year of learning, taking into account the trauma that many would have experienced. Table 4 summarises two scenarios of learning loss and its impact.

Table 4: Projected scenarios of learning loss in West Bank, including East Jerusalem^{xv}

Projected date of resumption of learning	Learning loss		Total learning loss
	School closures due to COVID-19 and attacks on education	Trauma	
Assumptions	<p>Learning loss due to COVID-19 was 1 year</p> <p>Each year of school closures due to attacks on education is equivalent to 1 year of learning loss</p>	For each year of attacks, trauma will cause an additional 0.5 year of learning loss	
Scenario 1: Classes resume in September 2025	2 years of learning loss	0.5 years of learning loss because of trauma	2.5 years of learning loss (students would have lost competencies equivalent to 2.5 years of schooling)
Scenario 2: Classes resume in September 2026	3 years of learning loss	1 year of learning loss because of trauma	4 years of learning loss (students would have lost competencies equivalent to 4 years of schooling)
Scenario 3: Classes resume in 2027	5.5 years of learning loss (4 years school closure, 1.5 years trauma)		

Source: Sayed & Ahmad, 2025.

If the schools had reopened in 2025, the learning loss would have been equivalent to around two and a half years in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which includes two years of loss due to COVID-19 and attacks on education by Israeli forces and settlers, as well as half a year because of trauma. If schools only reopen in 2026, learning loss increases to four years. The uncertainty around the continuity of schooling remains severe:

"If we are forced to start next year with the same conditions, it will be very tough because many children will not be able to attend. We don't know what will happen in East Jerusalem or north West Bank." (International organisation staff)



Teachers and teaching on the frontline

"There is no safety in Palestine. This [applies] to teachers and students." (Teacher)

School demolitions, school closures, attacks on schools, barriers to school, access through checkpoints, teacher displacement, challenges facing UNRWA's delivery of education and a generalised climate of fear and repression have taken its toll on teachers' wellbeing and ability to teach. In this section, West Bank and East Jerusalem teachers describe living with uncertainty, fear and anxiety and express a continuous sense of dread in the face of these attacks.

Teachers and counsellors under attack

"In Jerusalem, they also arrest and kill students and teachers." (Teacher)

The attacks on schools and infrastructure are adversely impacting teacher wellbeing and mental health. Teachers *"are fearful for their future."* The situation is compounded in contexts where teachers have to continue teaching while the schools are being raided. A teacher from Jenin shared the difficulties that teachers face as they must remain composed and control their emotions when their schools are attacked, despite the immense fear that the raids on the schools cause among both students and teachers.

Teaching under the current conditions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has had a serious impact on the mental health and wellbeing of teachers and counsellors. One teacher who taught at an East Jerusalem UNRWA school, which was forcibly closed by the Israeli authorities in May 2025, said she still feels in shock, months after the schools were closed. She shared that, given just 15 minutes to evacuate her school, she had to:

"... let go of all my memories ... and close the door on a part of my heart ... The school closures really affected us because I truly loved it and loved its students. This summer vacation was very difficult for me. I have not fully internalised it as I wait for the school year to start. It will be very hard on us." (Teacher)

A teacher said that the decision to close the school shattered the teachers' dreams and expectations. Another East Jerusalem teacher shared that, until the last moment, the teachers had hope that the forced closure would be halted and found to be illegal and that the teachers and students felt a lack of safety and trust. She continued:

"We are still in shock. How did our school – which has existed for years and was the first school in the village – many people graduated from it from a long time ago – get forcibly shut down and no one is allowed inside. What will happen to the building, what will happen to us as teachers, and what will happen to the students? I did not expect that, after 25 years, this is how my teaching journey will end. We hoped this school would stay here in Jerusalem in the name of the refugees." (Teacher)

Teachers expressed concern about these ongoing attacks, closures and demolitions on the wellbeing of their students. According to a teacher, one direct effect has been their desire to move to other cities, which they consider to be safer. The likely consequence of this is that some schools will face difficulties in securing staff.

Closures and destruction of education facilities have forced many Palestinian teachers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, to leave their homes and relocate, impacting their wellbeing, livelihoods and safety. An education official reported that when they met with teachers in East Jerusalem, they expressed their distress regarding the uncertainty, following the school closures and their displacement. The teachers shared that they have lost their homes and have to start over in a rented home.

For teachers, a distressing aspect of the attacks and the ability to teach is the increasing barriers they face in accessing schools. As of 5 June 2025, at least 790 obstacles – including gates, checkpoints, barriers and mounds – prevent access to hundreds of communities and villages in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (OCHA oPt, 2024b). Many of these obstacles were put in place or enhanced after 7 October 2023. These barriers force teachers to navigate military checkpoints every day, resulting in denial of passage, or delays (Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, 2024b). The travel delays also result in an increase in cost. One interviewee noted that teachers *"cannot go to their schools because they have no money for transportation."* In addition, teachers report cars being confiscated. Another interviewee reported that teachers might have to wait between 30 minutes to 5 hours at checkpoints on their way to and from school. The interviewee shared that education staff have even had to sleep at the checkpoint in their cars because the checkpoint closed. The reality of life under occupation in East Jerusalem is further captured by interviewees:

"Immediately after the war on Gaza started, I lost 20 percent of teachers because of road closures." (International organisation staff)

"In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the situation is complex; there is no free movement. There are many checkpoints between cities and villages and areas. We are living in a huge prison." (Teacher)

To overcome the issue of increased travel time because of obstacles, teachers have been reallocated to be at a school closer to where they live, wherever possible. However, an interviewee emphasised that this can impact the sense of community that the teachers and students have developed over many years:

"If the children and teachers are comfortable in a school for years, they may not be satisfied with being moved, and the children will not be satisfied with us changing their teachers. This was the beginning of the challenges, emotional challenges." (International organisation staff)

Schools are also facing a shortage in teachers. Teachers report that permissions to enter Jerusalem for West Bank identification holders to teach are being revoked by Israeli authorities. An interviewee explained that teachers used to come and teach in East

Jerusalem from other parts of Palestine. Since 7 October 2023, the interviewee reported, those teachers have not been allowed inside Jerusalem to teach. According to interviewees, schools are working to hire teachers with Jerusalem IDs^{xvi}, but there is a shortage. A teacher also reported that vacancies remain open for a while until they can be filled.

The safety concerns of teachers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have reached a point where it is necessary for UNRWA and the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education to provide some transportation for children and teachers to ensure their safety in reaching schools (UNRWA, 2024d; teacher focus group).

All teachers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, report being adversely impacted by the ongoing attacks and destabilisation by the Israeli authorities, even those in areas without active Israeli military operations. A teacher in Hebron shared that there were mental health impacts to hearing the bombing in Gaza from their location *“with their own ears”* as well as seeing the news from Tulkarm, Jenin, Nablus and elsewhere. There is an overwhelming sense of permanent insecurity, attacks and violence as interviewees captured:

“There are many students and teachers killed by the Israeli soldiers and settlers. Hundreds of our teachers and students were arrested [and are] in the prisons.”
(Teacher)

“Nobody is safe in Palestine. Every one of us is facing danger all the time. When we move between areas in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, in Palestine in general, we face danger from Israeli settlers and soldiers. It is very easy to kill you. They have no reason to kill any Palestinian, children, old man or woman, or youth. There is no safety in Palestine. This is related to teachers and students.” (Teacher)

Families and learners who are displaced from schools in areas under attack, particularly in Jenin, Tulkarm and Nur Shams camps, have to join other schools to continue their education. This results in these schools having to accept large numbers of additional students, placing teachers under immense strain, and being underprepared to support them (OHCHR, 2025f).

Teachers report facing many challenges where they have to switch between remote and in-person teaching because of increased violence. They report little training or materials to prepare for the switch (Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, 2024b). Focus group discussions with teachers identified that students have various technical issues with remote learning, as the teachers cannot help their students join online platforms. Teachers also noted, that when teaching in person, they provide all necessary materials for any in-class activities so that students are not required to bring their own. However, with distance learning, it has been challenging to organise interactive activities since they cannot supply students with the needed materials. Focus group discussions and interviews showed that families do not have enough devices to support distance learning for all their children, making it difficult to teach. One teacher reported:

“I had a student who was the top of his class who I would miss in classes because his family did not have enough devices ... distance learning does not compensate for in-person learning ... We were unable to offer the material in 100 percent the same way it would have been offered in-person.” (Teacher)

Israel withholding tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority has also impacted the education system (see Section on finance). This, together with the collapse of the economy more generally, has exacerbated the financial crisis, affecting teacher pay. According to a report by the World Bank, European Union and United Nations (2025): *“most teachers, faculty members,*

and support staff have been receiving between 50 and 80 percent of their wages for almost three years; this has worsened since the onset of the conflict". A teacher shared the following:

"The Israeli government puts pressure on the Palestinian Authority in many policies. One of those is the economic conditions. One thing is that they collect the taxes for the Palestinian Authority through the Oslo Agreement, because the Palestinian Authority has no control over borders, so everything that comes to Palestine has to pay taxes that the Israeli government collects and gives to the Palestinian Authority. This is the main source of [funding for] salaries for employees." (Teacher)

The lack of regular and full payment of teacher salaries has impacted their morale and working conditions. According to an interviewee:

"You can imagine a Palestinian family received 35 percent of their salary, around 1,000-1,500 shekels [US\$310-US\$465] on Eid. Eid has its own expenses. But people this Eid did not even do the visits [to their families and loved ones] ... Sometimes I have to face and talk with the teachers who are unable to buy bread." (Government official)

The Palestinian Authority is under pressure from teacher unions regarding the pay of teachers and other employees (World Bank Group, 2025a; Education International, 2025). Interviewees noted:

"Teachers are committed when they do not have a salary. The commitment is there, but it's not fair to them there should be proper compensation." (International organisation staff)

"I can't ask teachers to go to schools if they are not able to buy a piece of bread for their children. This is my highest concern currently." (Government official)

Continuing to teach under attack

"Obviously, the [teaching] profession doesn't look the same for teachers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as it did two years ago." (International organisation staff)

Notwithstanding the ongoing closures and attacks and the fact that most teachers have not been paid fully and regularly, teachers continue to deliver education. An education official noted:

"In the last school year, teachers were committed to a point that was not seen in the last 10 years before." (Government official)

During a focus group discussion, teachers corroborated their sense of commitment to continuing to provide services to their students despite the ongoing difficulties:

"Our students are our children. Whatever God gives us [as teachers] in terms of ability and energy, we will give them." (Teacher)

"We should not forget the teachers, the forgotten [workers] who are persisting, a portion of them are also in the displacement camps and have lost their homes, are renting, are financially struggling. The teacher is expected to have a good outlook in front of students even though they are in the same situation." (Teacher)

School leaders and teachers have played a crucial role in welcoming displaced students to their schools, identifying learning needs and implementing catch-up classes. A headteacher of a boys' school in a village neighbouring Jenin camp was quoted as saying:

"The village ... has opened its doors to many displaced families from Jenin camp ... Today, around 20 children from the camp are enrolled in our school, most of whom had been out of school for nearly 3 months. The learning gaps are severe, and the needs are overwhelming." (Headteacher)

Teachers also provide crucial emotional support for children facing displacement, insecurity and instability, through various approaches. A teacher said:

"Given the violence and trauma faced by families and children in Jenin, it was essential not only to support students academically, but also emotionally." (Teacher)

Counsellors at UNRWA schools have been providing immense support to displaced students and other students in difficult situations. An education official shared that counsellors contacted families directly and asked the children about their needs. They would then provide the needed stationery, bags, clothes or hygiene kits. Counsellors have also worked to try to identify where students were displaced to, so that teachers and counsellors can continue to provide them with services.

A counsellor in an affected area of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, noted that teachers were trained on how to provide psychosocial support and psychological first aid to students. Teachers indicated that they used to try to alleviate their students' anxieties regarding the overnight raids in their neighbourhoods or homes, and regarding the news they were hearing, by doing activities for wellbeing, but it was not enough because the incidents continued.

Teachers' work increased in scope in the context of attacks, along with the need to provide psychosocial support and care:

"As a teacher, you have to be everything. You have to be a mother, a teacher, a guidance counsellor. You worry about your own children. You sometimes get scared and worry about the children in front of you more than your own children. You sometimes have to let go of what you are feeling in order to provide services. Sometimes the pressure is too much, I am also human. Some of us got sick ... Everyone gets weak sometimes. Things happen that really affect you." (Teacher)

Despite the deprivations and adverse conditions, teachers have continued to teach and be responsive, flexible and adaptive in their approaches to teaching in dire conditions.

Centring teachers needs

There are several needs that are crucial to enabling and empowering teachers to cope with the context of displacement, violent attacks and school closures. The first and foremost is safety and the protection of education as a safe space free from settler attacks and military or security operations, and protection for teachers as they commute to and from school (OCHA oPt, 2024a).

Ensuring teachers' basic working conditions are met is essential, including salary, safe transport to work and basic and minimum teaching and learning resources and infrastructure. As an education official noted:

"This is the most important message that we can send to the international community. Take your responsibility to support the Palestinian teachers and protect the right to education for our students and children, and support education in Palestine, starting by making the salaries for teachers regular and available." (Teacher)

In addition, teachers need support for their own wellbeing, including their mental health. Several interviewees highlighted the need for mental health and psychosocial services for teachers:

"This approach [providing support to traumatised learners] depends on the teachers. We have 1,700 teachers in our system, and they are all serving educationally and psychosocially. Who is left without attention? The teachers." (International organisation staff)

"Our teachers need mental health support. I think this social and emotional learning is one of the basis of life skills, it is one of the main components that we can enhance so that they can treat their personal problems and their students who are facing other problems in this situation ... because of this we are working on this issue and subject and we will continue supporting them on this." (Teacher)

A survey and focus group discussion with Palestinian teachers also recommended that schools in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, should establish confidential psychosocial referral pathways specifically for teachers, in addition to the ones provided for students (Henderson, 2025).

Teachers need professional development training to support traumatised learners. This includes training on how to address specific psychosocial challenges of displaced students, teacher capacities on child rights, child protection and safety. Children with disabilities especially experience barriers to access and success in education, so teachers need to receive targeted training focused on diverse learning needs (Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, 2024b). To some extent this is being provided, although more could be done, as an education official shared:

"The training programme is concerned with enhancing the socioemotional skills of teachers and to enhance their skills and competencies in designing integrated socioemotional learning with the curriculum ... It's totally online training and they take the concepts and the skills, and apply it in their schools with the students, and we arrange discussion meetings about their application and discuss the impact of these activities on their students, mental health, wellbeing, etc." (Teacher)

The ongoing use of remote and hybrid learning requires continuous professional development to help teachers use these approaches effectively. Their success depends largely on teachers' ability to plan and deliver remote and hybrid learning, for which they have not been prepared in their prior professional training. It also hinges on students' capacity to engage with asynchronous distance learning modalities. For this mode to be used effectively, there needs to be ongoing support for teachers to engage with students to use this form of learning. Teachers in a focus group shared that they were not convinced that they had delivered the content online the same way they would have in-person and to the same quality.

Further, the utilisation of remote, hybrid and asynchronous learning relies on the availability of technology and ability to pay for it. As Nassar (2024, p.228) notes:

"They want to keep teachers up to date with technology and what is going on around the world. Okay, we learn these techniques, but we are unable to apply them in our classrooms because we are not equipped, we don't have all the supplies."

Working in conditions which they are underprepared for, teachers spoke about their needs for supporting learners effectively. This included psychosocial support for teachers themselves, as well as professional development for the new realities of teaching and learning, and for them to provide psychosocial support for traumatised learners; the provision of basic materials to support teachers.

An uncertain future

Schools in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in particular in the three northern West Bank camps – Jenin, Tulkarm and Nur Shams – face an uncertain future in the context of attacks and displacement by Israeli forces and settlers intensifying and increasing in frequency. These attacks are deeply worrying and, as many interviewees pointed out, are transforming the very nature of education, with schools no longer serving as protective spaces. Interviewees noted that schools now stock supplies, such as snacks and blankets for students, as well as protective gear for staff, including helmets and bullet-proof vests, so they can keep students sheltering in schools for longer hours when necessary. The immediate and long-term educational and wellbeing effects of living in a violent context – marked by regular attacks from Israeli forces and settlers – are immense. This underscores the urgent need to ensure the safety of schools, teachers, learners and communities. Interviewees, including teachers, stressed that international law and the rights of both teachers and students must be upheld. Without any cessation of attacks and conditions of just peace, hopes of education recovery and reconstruction are not possible, notwithstanding the continued valiant efforts of teachers, counsellors and educational officials to provide education.

As discussed, the learning loss in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is estimated to be around two and a half to four years, depending on how long attacks affecting education continue. Beyond starting schooling for all children, there will be a need for remedial education, which requires preparing existing teachers as well as recruiting additional staff. Table 5 summarises estimations of teacher requirements for remedial education under various scenarios of school reopening and recovery time periods (see Sayed & Ahmad, 2025, for more information about the estimations).^{xvii} The estimates include staffing requirements, assuming that teaching assistants for remedial education will be hired full time (i.e., working for 40 hours per week). Assumptions include that the current teaching force will simultaneously contribute to remedial education.

Table 5: Projected teacher requirements for remedial education in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem^{xviii}

Scenario ^{xix}	Years of learning loss	Learning recovery period	Total number of teaching assistants needed for learning recovery
Schools reopen 2025, 3-years' recovery	2.5	3 years	815
Schools reopen 2025, 1-year accelerated	2.5	1 year	2,444
Schools reopen 2026, 3-years' recovery	4	3 years	1,303
Schools reopen 2026, 1-year accelerated	4	1 year	3,910

Source: Sayed & Ahmad, 2025.

The demand for remedial teachers rises steeply as the recovery horizon shortens. For a scenario where schools would have reopened in September 2025, a three-year recovery programme requires approximately 815 remedial teachers per year for three years, but compressing the recovery to a one-year accelerated programme requires over 2,444 teachers. The same pattern holds if schools reopen in 2026, with annual demand ranging from an estimated 1,303 remedial teachers under a three-year plan to 3,910 teachers under a one-year accelerated plan.

However, it is not just that additional teachers will be needed for remedial learning to address learning loss. Teachers who have been killed or injured, and therefore unable to return to teaching, will also need to be replaced (Table 6). The two scenarios estimate the numbers required for teachers to be replaced to previous levels. The first assumption is that 30 percent of the total injured teachers would return to the schools in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The second estimates that all the injured teachers would not return to teaching and would need to be replaced.

Table 6: Number of teachers to be replaced in West Bank, including East Jerusalem

Scenario	Total teachers in October 2023	Teachers killed	Teachers injured	Teachers unable to return	Demand for replacement teachers
If 30 percent of injured teachers do not return to schools	52,087	5	23	7	12
If none of injured teachers return to schools	52,087	5	23	23	28

Source: Sayed & Ahmad, 2025.

Depending on whether injured teachers return to classrooms, between 12 and 28 new teachers will be required simply to restore the pre-7 October 2023 teaching force.

Our analysis of post-war learning recovery includes two calculations related to teachers (see Sayed & Ahmad, 2025, for further details of the calculations). The first calculation estimates the costs of training teachers to replace those who were killed or severely injured under two learning recovery scenarios. In the first scenario – assuming that 30 percent of injured or traumatised teachers do not return to service, the total demand for replacement teachers is estimated at 12, resulting in a total projected cost of US\$66,640. In the second, more severe scenario, where none of the injured or traumatised teachers are unable to resume teaching, the total replacement demand increases to 28 teachers, at a total estimated cost of US\$156,800.

The second calculation relates to the cost of teacher salaries. The annual salary cost required to restore the pre-war teaching workforce of 52,087 teachers is estimated at approximately US\$818.8 million. To support learning recovery, teachers would need to deliver remedial education for an additional hour per week, which would incur an estimated annual cost of US\$20.47 million.^{xx} The expenditure for continuous professional development, calculated at 10 percent of the total annual salary, amounts to US\$81.88 million.^{xxi} When these costs are combined with the estimated teacher costs required to replace 30 percent of injured or traumatised teachers, the total expenditure rises to approximately US\$921.16 million. In the more severe scenario, where none of the injured teachers are able to return to service,

the total cost increases further to US\$921.31 million.

The third calculation estimates the cost of providing additional teaching assistance for remedial education to compensate for the learning lost. This cost is projected to be approximately US\$19.21 million to employ teaching assistants for recovery of two and a half years, and US\$30.73 million to employ teaching assistants for four years of learning loss. This cost of employing teaching assistants remains the same in both cases. However, the number of teaching assistants varies for the two scenarios of learning loss.

The total estimated cost to support the learning of West Bank students is between US\$940.36 million and US\$952 million, depending on the scale of teacher replacement, the years of learning loss, and the recruitment of teaching assistants to support learning recovery for each of the two learning scenarios.

Militarised attacks by the Israeli forces, as well as settler violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have destabilised education and the work of teachers. The analysis of this section suggests the recovery and reconstruction of education and teaching will require significant financial and human resources, capacity development and commitment. Teachers talk of an uncertain future in which, with each passing day, children, parents, communities and teachers lose hope in the future of the education system. Yet teachers talk of hope, of their commitment to supporting learning now and in the future, and to their steadfastness. Education in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, like the rest of Palestine, is at a difficult juncture – of hope and resilience on the one hand, and despair on the other.



Kalandia Camp, West Bank, 2025 © UNRWA photo



UNRWA summer camp, Al Qalqilya School, West Bank, 2025 © UNRWA photo

Conclusion

"A [child] in my class was killed in an attack on the school. We saw that the students are majorly impacted. We worked with the students in the class of the child killed, then in his close circle in school, and then [his closest friends]. The ones most impacted are the ones close to him. We [the counsellors] worked with teachers to see how children were responding." (Teacher)

This analysis of the escalation of attacks on education in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, underlines the importance of immediate action to ensure the safety of students and education staff in schools and on their way to schools. Schools that were once considered to be safe spaces for children are now either inaccessible or under threat of attack or demolition. Children's right to safe and accessible learning must be protected.



Gaza, 2025 © UNRWA photo

Part 3: International financing

The collapse of the economy in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, means that the education system is dependent on international funding. This is also likely to be the case for its recovery and reconstruction. However, as this part of the report highlights, international financing is extremely low and declining.

The dedication of teachers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, reflects their commitment to education for Palestinian children. Teacher steadfastness, resilience and the support for education as the right and core to Palestinian identity signify their efforts to resisting erasure. The most basic and vital need teachers spoke about for restoring the right to education in Palestine is the immediate and permanent cessation of attacks, detentions and arrests. Without that, a just peace and hope of education recovery is not possible, notwithstanding the continued valiant efforts of teachers, counsellors and educational officials to provide education. The right to education, among other rights, including the right to return, is fundamental to dignity, independence and justice for all Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.



Gaza, 2025 © UNRWA photo

Insufficient international financing for education

"Education is the first to be impacted and the last to be restored." (International organisation staff)

It is not "business as usual"

Sovereign, independent states with control over their financing and governance typically draw on domestic resources to fund their social sector needs. This aligns with the vision of the State of Palestine's National Program for Development and Reform (2025a), which *"reflects the unified determination of Palestinian institutions to uphold dignity, expand opportunity, and build a sustainable future for all segments of society"* (p.1). However, under current conditions, this approach is not feasible in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

The collapse of the economy and widespread unemployment due to the war means that there are likely to be extremely limited domestic resources available in Gaza for the foreseeable future. This is in a context of economic crisis due to the blockade and previous wars that have weakened essential services, leaving the population highly dependent on aid (State of Palestine, 2025b).^{xxii} According to a World Bank Group report (2025b, p.1): *'Gaza is experiencing near-total economic paralysis'*. It estimates that GDP has contracted by 83 percent on an annual basis. In addition, in 2024, inflation rose substantially during the war by over 230 percent due to extreme supply shortages. As an interviewee noted for Gaza:

"I am sure what is available in funding is not enough for meeting the huge needs because all communities are destroyed, and we are back to zero. ... Everything is expensive. A kilo of tomatoes was US\$1.5 before, but now is US\$40 - no one can buy it The situation is completely dire." (Local organisation staff)

The 2025 World Bank report identifies that the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is facing a deep recession, experiencing a 17 percent contraction in GDP annually. It notes that this is due to intensified movement restrictions, loss of access to the Israeli labour market and heightened fiscal instability (World Bank Group, 2025b).

In both Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the collapse of the economy is severely affecting the ability to pay teacher salaries, as discussed earlier in the report. Given the catastrophic economic situation as a result of the war, the education system in Gaza is likely to depend on international funding for the foreseeable future. A key priority for the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is for Israel to release tax revenues to enable domestic financing of education and other sectors. However, even if these tax revenues were released, with rising resource needs in the face of militarised operations and settler violence, international financing is increasingly required. Yet, as this section highlights, international financing is far from forthcoming and, if anything, is declining.

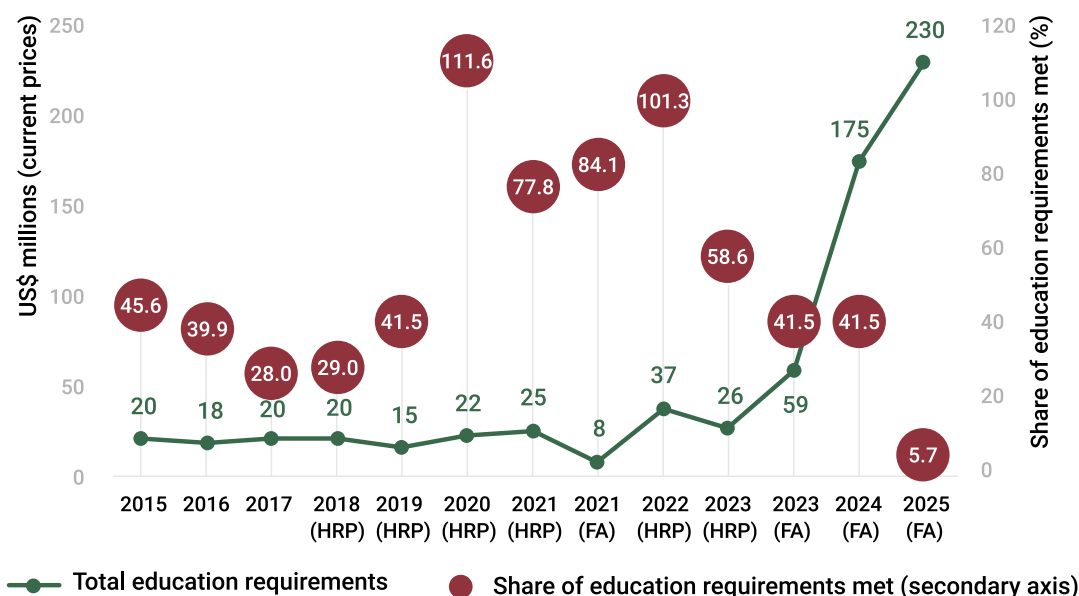
Needs have increased exponentially, but external funding is declining

"Education is deprioritised [in humanitarian aid] because how can you take a child to education when the child is hungry or thirsty or sick. But at the same time, we see from the ground that parents are asking for their children to enrol in education."
(International organisation staff)

UN OCHA has launched a humanitarian appeal to support the oPt every year since 2003. While education has always featured as part of the response plan, it typically represents an extremely small amount of the total funds requested.

In the current phase of the war on Gaza, the appeals launched to support the education sector in the oPt is unprecedented. The Global Education Cluster requested US\$230.3 million in 2025. This is almost six times higher than the amount in 2022, when needs were already substantial, but only amounted to US\$37 million (Figure 3). The vast majority of these requests – around US\$208 million – were for Gaza, with US\$22.3 million for the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (UNICEF, 2025f).

Figure 3: The funding needs of the education sector are unprecedented, but only a small proportion are met



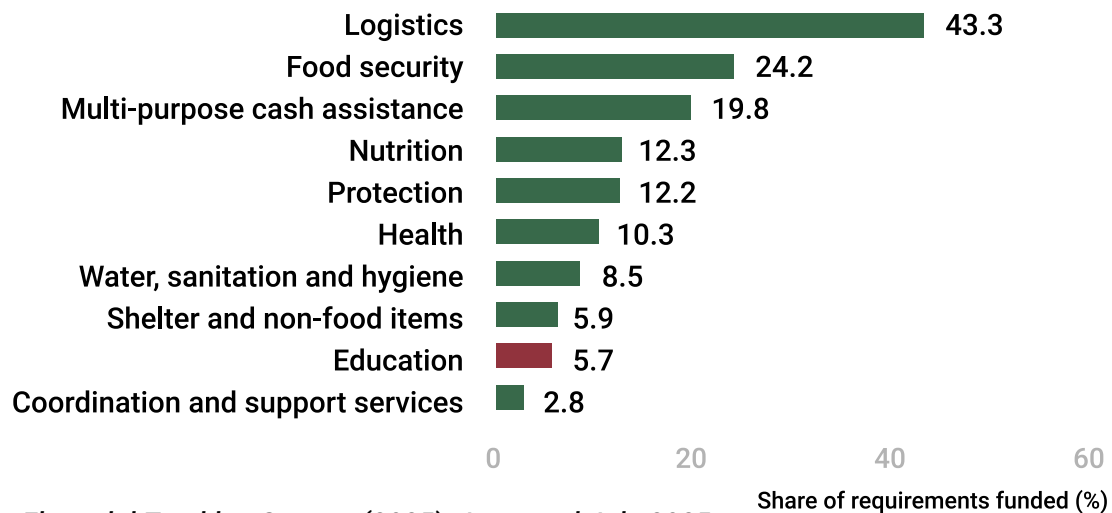
Source: Financial Tracking System (2025). Accessed July 2025.

Note: A Human Response Plan (HRP) is a comprehensive, strategic plan developed for countries or regions facing protracted or severe humanitarian crises, while a Flash Appeal (FA) is a rapid response used in the immediate aftermath of a sudden-onset emergency (like a natural disaster or sudden conflict escalation). In 2023, the appeal was initially an HRP for the period from January to September 2023. However, with the intensification of Israeli attacks on Gaza, the period October to December 2023 fell under the definition of a Flash Appeal. Similarly, the appeals in 2024 and 2025 are classed as a Flash Appeal.

As of July 2025, less than 19.1 percent of the total amount requested for the Flash Appeal for the oPt has been funded (US\$778.7 million out of US\$4.1 billion). While most sectors have been poorly funded, education is particularly affected. Of the already relatively modest funds requested, just 5.7 percent of its requests have been funded (Figure 4). This is even worse than last year: at the same point mid-way through 2024, 32 percent of the Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster's requests had been met (Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, Centre for Lebanese Studies & UNRWA, 2024).

It is not just education that is suffering from a lack of funding relative to its requirements. As this report has highlighted, the vast majority of the population in Gaza is facing, or at risk of facing, starvation. Without food and nutrition, children do not have the energy to play, let alone study. Yet, external funding for food and nutrition is also severely lacking. As of July 2025, just 24 percent of the food aid requirements and 12.3 percent of nutrition aid requirements for the 2025 oPt appeal had been funded (Figure 4). Beyond funding, as highlighted in the Gaza section, it is essential to ensure the entry of food into Gaza to prevent further acute malnutrition and starvation among children.

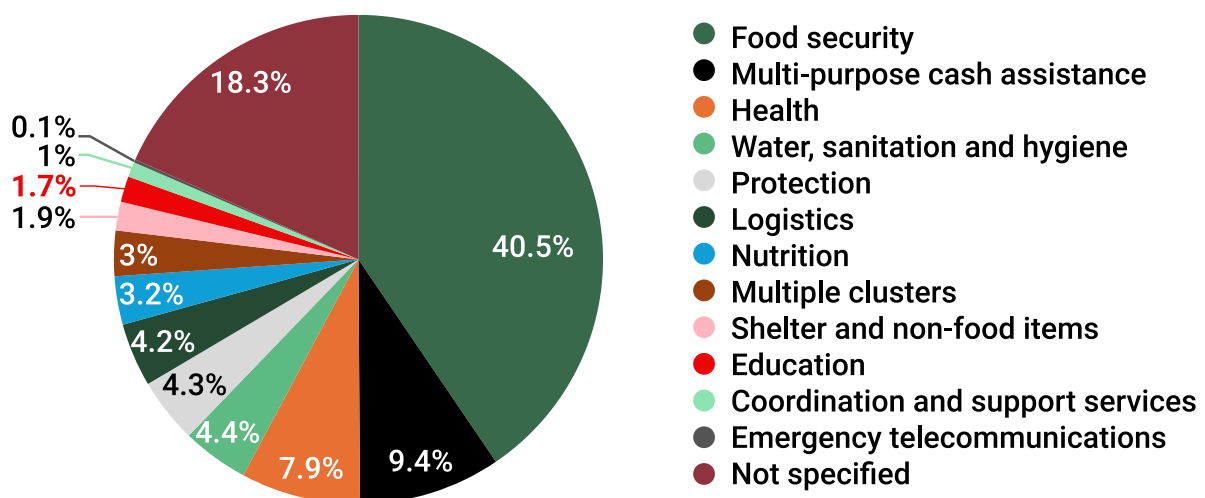
Figure 4: Only 5.7 percent of the education sectors requirements have been met



Source: Financial Tracking System (2025). Accessed July 2025.

The lower proportion of education sector requirements that are funded translates into the sector receiving just 1.7 percent of the total funds provided for the 2025 Flash Appeal (Figure 5). This is the lowest proportion since records began. For 2025, this means the amount available is just US\$13.2 million, equivalent to just US\$9 per school-aged child across Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.^{xxiii} Education, simply put, is not seen as lifesaving in the humanitarian response.

Figure 5: The education sector only receives 1.7 percent of funding to the 2025 Flash Appeal



Source: Financial Tracking System (2025). Accessed July 2025.

Implications of reduced funding to UNRWA

“Without the infrastructure, without the capacity, without the teachers, and without the political will to support UNRWA, which is the biggest service provider of education, it’s difficult to understand what education is going to look like going forward.” (International organisation staff)

Given that UNRWA is the largest service provider of education and health services in Gaza alongside the government, it has typically been the largest recipient of funds to the humanitarian response in the oPt, in addition to funds it receives from voluntary contributions from Member States. For example, before the onset of the current war, UNRWA received 55 percent of all funds pledged to the education sector in the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan. However, this has fallen dramatically in a context where a need for UNRWA’s services is even more in demand. The share of funds it received for education in response to the 2024 Appeal fell to 28 percent. As of July 2025, the proportion had fallen even further, with just 11 percent of the pledged funds identified for UNRWA (Figure 6).

The sharp decline in the amount of education requirements being met, together with the reduction in the allocation to UNRWA, means that the overall amount of funds for UNRWA has declined drastically, with only around US\$2 million pledged in 2025. As a respondent noted: *“Donors are short-sighted, and just think about the short-term. They don’t think about if UNRWA doesn’t do it then who will.”* This ‘short-sightedness’ is apparent given other organisations may not have the absorptive capacity to deliver education services on the scale needed, and also often face short funding cycles. As noted in an interview with one of these organisations:

“If we had to take funding from a large donor and they say you’ve got six months to implement it, we’re just passing that burden on to our local partner. So we’re very, very cautious to make sure that we’re only taking the amount of money that we can spend.” (International organisation staff)

This is further emphasised by the International Court of Justice’s advisory opinion of 22 October, which stated: *“In the current circumstances, it is not possible to replicate the capacity of the UN, acting through UNRWA, to ensure that the population of Gaza is adequately provided for. UNRWA cannot be replaced on short notice and without a proper transition plan.”* (International Court of Justice, 2025, p. 43)

UNRWA is funded by voluntary contributions and project funds. UNRWA needs regular, predictable, and sustained funding to fulfil the right to education for Palestinian children and young people. Yet the opposite is happening, with some donors using financial support to UNRWA as a political tool, cutting off funding often on highly contested grounds. As an interviewee from an international organisation noted:

“It is fundamentally unfair for the global community to expect a UN agency to take on ‘public services’. Education is not a project; it is a right and obligation. We are tasked to act in lieu of a state, but we do not have the resources to do it. [We need] certainty of funding through a multi-year budget.” (International organisation staff)

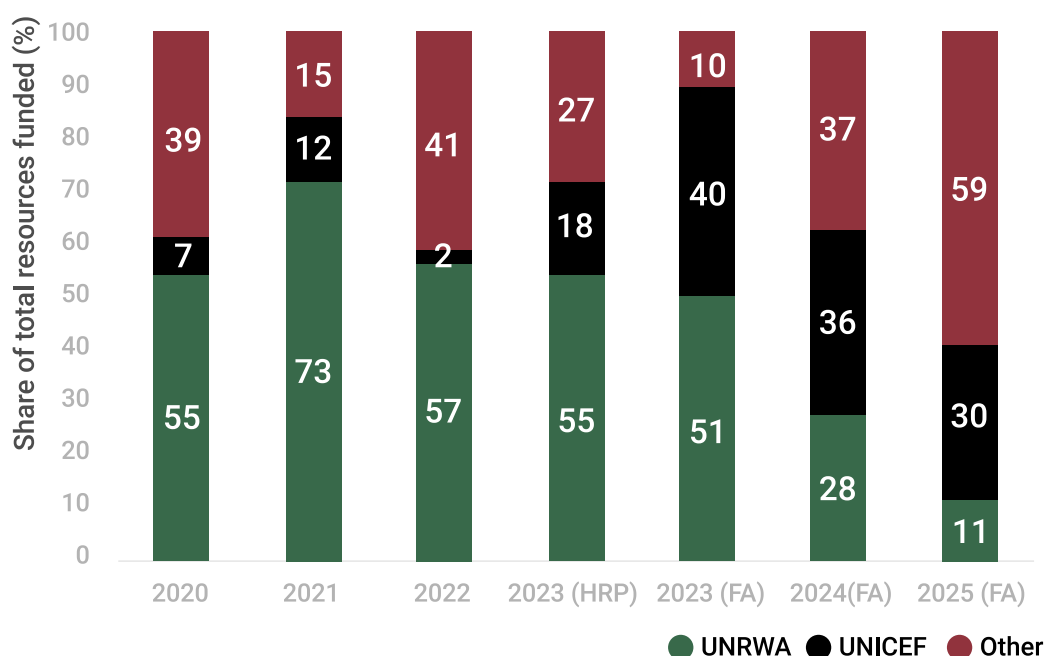
Despite the challenges of reduced funding, UNRWA has continued to provide education as well as mental health and psychosocial support in Gaza as well as the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as earlier parts of this report have highlighted. However, the reduction in funding to UNRWA could result in greater reliance on smaller organisations, which commonly face difficulties associated with fragmented and volatile funding forcing them to choose where to prioritise their activity in the context of extreme need. These

organisations also do not have the capacity to cover UNRWA services on the scale needed. For some organisations, this has meant focusing on Gaza at the expense of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, even though needs there are also rising. As a respondent from one of these organisations noted:

“Right now we have closed almost all of our operations in the West Bank. This is due to all funding being channelled to Gaza ... The West Bank is impacted by the situation in Gaza because ... it's competing with the situation in Gaza.” (International organisation staff)

While the share allocated to UNRWA has declined, UNICEF's share has increased since 2023, comprising around one third of funds pledged. However, the amount pledged in volume terms to UNICEF has also declined. International non-governmental organisations, such as Humanity & Inclusion and Save the Children, have been allocated a larger proportion of funds in 2025.

Figure 6: The share of humanitarian aid to UNRWA has drastically fallen



Source: Financial Tracking System (2025). Accessed July 2025.

Note: In 2025, amongst contributions to the 'Other category', contributions to Humanity & Inclusion made up 26 percent of the total pledged for the education sector (compared to 2 percent in 2024). Funds to Save the Children made up 19 percent of the total resources pledged to the education sector in 2025 (compared to 3 percent in 2024).

The largest donors are neglecting the educational needs of Palestinian children

As of July 2025, only one of the top ten global humanitarian aid donors – European Commission^{xxiv} – pledged any financial support towards the 2025 oPt Humanitarian Appeal requests for education (Figure 7).^{xxv} It pledged US\$4.6 million for the sector. Japan's contribution of US\$4 million supports multiple sectors, of which one is education, making it difficult to know what was for education specifically. Of the remaining eight top ten humanitarian aid donors, seven pledged resources towards the Appeal, but nothing to education. Netherlands pledged no aid to the oPt Humanitarian Appeal.

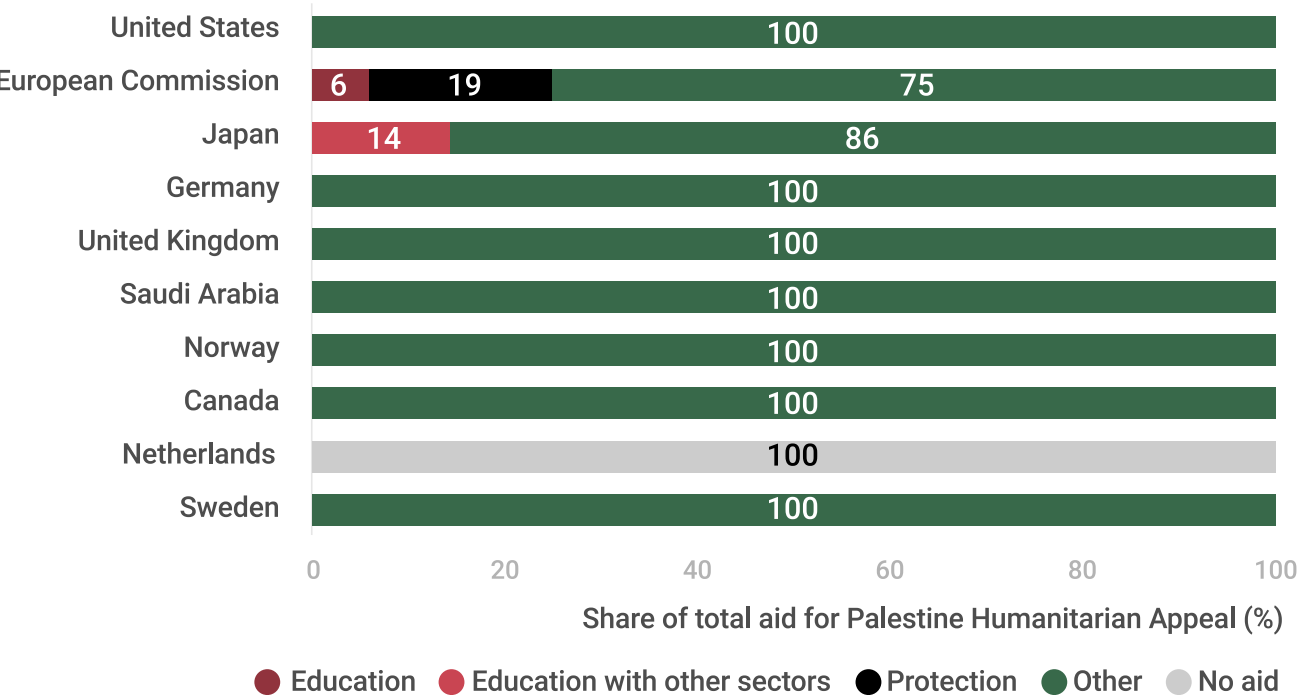
The United States made the largest pledge to the 2025 Flash Appeal for the oPt in volume terms, but none of this was allocated to education. For past humanitarian appeals for the Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, the funding allocated by the United States was entirely through UNRWA, but this funding has been suspended.^{xxvi}

The United Kingdom allocated around US\$130 million in aid to the oPt in 2024, of which 80 percent was intended to be spent on addressing humanitarian needs, including for health, education or protection services for Palestinian refugees. Of this, US\$46 million was for UNRWA, with other beneficiaries including UNICEF, the World Food Programme and Red Cross/Red Crescent (House of Commons Library, 2025).^{xxvii} However, allocations to education specifically are not identified.

While Germany does not appear to be contributing to education through the Flash Appeal, it has announced the second phase of its programme for technical and vocational education and training in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, from 2024-2027 through its development agency (GIZ, 2024).

As of July 2025, only the European Commission had pledged anything towards protection services. In comparison, eight of the top ten humanitarian donors pledged support to protection in the oPt humanitarian appeal from October 2023 to the end of 2024.^{xxviii}

Figure 7: In 2025, only one of the top ten global humanitarian donors allocated aid to education in the oPt



Source: Financial Tracking System (2025). Accessed July 2025.

Notes: (1) Figure 7 includes the top ten donors to global humanitarian appeals ordered according to the size of total contributions to global humanitarian appeals in 2025, starting with the largest. (2) 'Education with other sectors' refers to aid to multiple sectors, for which it is not possible to identify the amount to education specifically.

Global funds have identified resources for Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, but remain limited

"Now as the situation unfolds in Gaza, I would imagine more support will need to be explored because what donors have committed is not enough. ... We need to see what to do for the future, but with this unclarity on a ceasefire and no clear idea about how things will unfold, it's very difficult to get the donors to agree or to commit to anything concrete or substantial. Everybody is waiting, which is also very sad because the needs are great, but the political will behind these commitments is lagging behind."
(International organisation staff)

Beyond humanitarian aid through the Flash Appeal, other external funding to education remains limited. The two main global funds for education – Education Cannot Wait and the Global Partnership for Education – have mobilised some funding for Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. However, the overall funds available remain extremely limited, considering the needs.

Education Cannot Wait already had a programme for Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and was able to respond with agility in disbursing money after the onset of the current war. It disbursed US\$12 million in funds through its First Emergency Response window (Education Cannot Wait, 2023). These funds are intended to help support the mental health and psychosocial services and protective learning opportunities for crisis-affected children, including through support to UNRWA, as well as support to UNICEF as Education Cluster lead. It also includes US\$2 million announced at the beginning of August 2024 to the Norwegian Refugee Council (Education Cannot Wait, 2024).

The Global Partnership for Education Board approved the establishment of a dedicated sub-account in June 2020, which was set up exclusively for the purposes of facilitating activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza (Global Partnership for Education, 2021). This aimed to raise US\$15 million in funding through a multiplier grant. This has so far attracted some from donors and foundations. For example, initial support of US\$1.2 million was received from Ireland, and Norway allocated around US\$3 million in December 2023 (Global Partnership for Education, 2023). Spain also announced a contribution of around US\$5.3 million to the fund in 2024-2025. In addition, Germany and the United Kingdom, together with a private foundation, pledged funds. However, as needs continue to rise, a further US\$10 million is sought (Global Partnership for Education, 2024). While funding has started to reach Gaza, there are still concerns about the speed of disbursement.

The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) has committed a total of around US\$16 million to education in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, around 54 percent of which is allocated to Gaza. This is based on its general pledge that 10 percent of its funds should be allocated to education. The expectation is that there will be coordination between ECHO's education in emergency activities and the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education, UNRWA, Education Cannot Wait, donors, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster to optimise synergies and avoid overlap (ECHO, 2024).

The World Bank has pledged a US\$20 million grant for education in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with the aim of addressing the immediate needs to recover learning losses (World Bank Group, 2025b). However, it is unable to operate in Gaza until there is a lasting ceasefire.

UNESCO has set up a special account intended to support the reconstruction of Gaza. This includes a total project budget for education of around US\$1 million between May 2024 and December 2026 (UNESCO, n.d).

All of these funds from the different global sources, available for multiple years and over different time periods,^{xxix} still only amount to around US\$64 million in total. This is just a fraction of the conservative request of US\$230.3 million by the Global Education Cluster for immediate needs. It is an even smaller fraction of the amount required for recovery and reconstruction, as identified below.

Arab donors have traditionally supported education in Gaza and the oPt more generally. However, concerns were raised in interviews that they have not been forthcoming during the current war, although efforts are being made to reach out to them for financial support. Like other aid donors, they seem to be waiting to see what happens next. As one respondent stated:

"There is a lot of rhetorical outrage ... which extends to neighbouring Arab countries. ... it is not just the West that isn't standing up and doing anything." (International organisation staff)

Qatar appears to be an exception, with the Education Above All Foundation committing support (Education Above All Foundation, 2024). They have also provided funding to UNDP to enable the Tawjihi examinations to take place in 2025 (UNDP, 2025).

Future financing for the recovery and reconstruction of the education sector in Gaza

"I don't see much sense in discussing the reconstruction of Gaza. If the war ends, of course we will do this. I wonder why people talk about reconstruction when the people are destroyed." (International organisation staff)

In the current context of widespread killing, destruction of schools and other infrastructure, and hunger, feelings of hopelessness abound. From the interviews, it was apparent that there is little energy to think about reconstruction of education in Gaza in a situation where the hope of a durable and just ceasefire, along with ensuring the right and realisation of Palestinian statehood, seems increasingly remote. At the same time, donor fatigue for supporting education is setting in. Even if the global community funds the US\$230.3 million requested by the Global Education Cluster through the 2025 Flash Appeal, this will only cover the basic humanitarian needs, not the costs of recovery or reconstruction. Even where donors are willing to provide funds, the effects of the ongoing war and import restrictions are making it almost impossible for money to be spent effectively, whether for education materials, food or materials for rebuilding infrastructure that has been damaged and destroyed.

At the same time, planning for recovery and reconstruction, and ensuring funds are available for this, is vital for ensuring hope and opportunities are realised for a generation of children and young people. Education is identified as one of the priority areas for recovery and reconstruction in the State of Palestine's Gaza Recovery and Reconstruction Plan (2025b).^{xxx} According to its estimates, a total of US\$3.8 billion will be needed. This works out at approximately US\$1,155 per school-aged child (Table 7). The greater

amount in the first three years covers “setting up temporary learning facilities, reclaiming education facilities that have been repurposed as shelters for displaced persons when possible, providing psychosocial support, and addressing severe learning losses”. Key priorities identified include “restoring access to education for all students, accommodating the large number of students with special needs and disabilities, mitigating the long-term impacts of malnutrition and toxic stress in early childhood on cognitive development, and restoring capacity for holistic services that support the wellbeing of educators and learners.” The medium- to long-term recovery strategies “focus on rebuilding destroyed facilities, enhancing digital infrastructure, and strengthening the sector’s resilience.” (State of Palestine, 2025b).

Table 7: Estimated costs of recovery and reconstruction of education system (US\$)

Type	Recovery (first 3 years)	Reconstruction (following 2 years)	Total cost (5 years)
Overall cost	2,600,000,000	1,200,000,000	3,800,000,000
Average cost per year	866,666,667	600,000,000	760,000,000
Cost per student	1,317	912	1,155

Source: Calculated from Gaza Recovery and Reconstruction Plan (State of Palestine, 2025b)

The estimate of US\$1,115 per student is against the backdrop of approximately US\$9 per school-aged child being funded through humanitarian aid currently. It is also around 55 percent higher than UNRWA’s cost per child of US\$718, which is relatively modest given the relatively high pupil-teacher ratio.

Furthermore, the estimates are recognised to be extremely conservative. As the previous sections have set out, funds will be needed to replace teachers and counsellors who have been killed, displaced or left Gaza. All teachers and counsellors need extensive training in dealing with the psychosocial and physical needs of the children left traumatised and disabled by the current war, as well as in new pedagogical approaches in the context of the widespread learning loss. In principle, the calculations include funds for this, as well as for the need to reach cohorts of children who have missed out on schooling. But it is likely that far more is needed. In addition, given severe malnutrition, school feeding will be necessary. Based on a comparison across a range of contexts, a recent study estimates that school feeding costs around US\$64 per child on average (Watkins et al., 2024). Given huge price rises due to severe food shortages, this is likely to be a modest amount. In addition, schools cannot be rebuilt until rubble is removed and mines cleared, requiring both time and additional resources. Moreover, rehabilitating school facilities, as well as providing assistive technology for thousands of students with disabilities, and replacing and training teachers, will all need to be costed.

Education cannot operate without long-term housing solutions, access to health, WASH and nutrition. The Recovery and Reconstruction Plan estimates a total of US\$53.2 billion needed over five years, including for these sectors, further highlighting the urgent need for funds to be mobilised. In addition, the estimates are based on data that are now a year old, and so do not take account of the additional loss of instructional time, further destruction of infrastructure, and starvation.

Even these extremely conservative estimates are unlikely to be met in the current context. At present, Qatar is the only large donor that appears to be stepping forward to fund recovery and reconstruction of education. As one respondent noted, the situation for education looks bleak as a result of a triple curse: *“financial cuts and financial fatigue [of donors], and financial control [by Israel].”* (International organisation staff)



Kalandia Camp, West Bank, 2025 © UNRWA photo



Gaza, 2025 © UNRWA photo

Part 4: Recommendations

"The Palestinian community takes education as their full and most important priority. Palestinians ... do not sell their land. The land is associated with the dignity of the Palestinian family. The only justification in history for a household to sell the land is to educate their children ... If we lose the education system here, we lose everything. They are driving us to that point." (Government official)

This report documents the devastating impact of Israel's ongoing war on the education system in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which has shattered the future of children and young people and undermined the lives of teachers and their ability to deliver education. If nothing changes now, the impact of the war on education in the Gaza Strip, and attacks on education in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is likely to be devastating for the future of all Palestinians, and probably significantly contribute to broader instability in the region. There is a pervasive sense of despair that now prevails among educators and families, with many losing faith in the possibility of sustained international support or a permanent and just ceasefire. Yet, the temporary ceasefire in January to March 2025 provided a small glimmer of hope showing that educational recovery is possible, proving that with even minimal stability, the system can mobilise quickly, reach large numbers of children, and combine academic learning with psychosocial support.

In Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, safeguarding the right to education and rebuilding the education system cannot be achieved without an end to daily bombings and raids, hunger, military occupation, blockade, movement restrictions, prolonged displacement, and the killing and injuring of civilians. In Gaza in particular, after two years of war (preceded by a long history of occupation and blockades for more than 18 years, as well as multiple conflicts and war), children, young people and their communities now need a permanent ceasefire. They urgently need access to safe educational spaces, learning activities and nutrition both as a protective mechanism for their wellbeing and as a means of maintaining normalcy, regular adult supervision, hope and confidence in the future. For this to be effective, they need teachers and counsellors who are empowered and supported.

The report offers a series of realistic actions to embed education activities as part of humanitarian and development responses now in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. All these recommendations need to be supported by meaningful and effective international actions to ensure that Israel complies with its obligation under international humanitarian law. Vitally, Palestinian perspectives need to be centred in all decisions and planning related to restoring, recovery and reconstruction of education.

In making the recommendations below, it is important to recognise that the most immediate, pressing and urgent action is to establish a permanent ceasefire leading to durable, and just peace. In addition, all attacks on education by Israeli forces and settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, need to be stopped. This immediate action is a priority – without it there is very little that can be done that is meaningful and impactful. All that can be provided for, important as it may be, is limited learning support using available resources, including distance and remote learning.



UNRWA summer camp, Al Amari school, West Bank, 2025 © UNRWA photo



i. Actions for rebuilding safe, inclusive and resilient education systems

“There is a need to start building the education system because the war affected the system as a whole immensely. Policies and systems need to be worked on. This is important for the long term.” (International organisation staff)

The key priority is to support the recovery, reconstruction and development of the Palestinian education system through:

- Providing safe learning spaces, protecting students and teachers from Israeli forces, in line with international humanitarian law.
- Building schools to replace those that have been destroyed and damaged, starting as soon as possible with semi-permanent structures that can be constructed quickly, while planning for fully functioning permanent education infrastructure as soon as possible.
- Reopening schools as soon as possible and treating education as an emergency service alongside food, health and shelter.
- Adopting a multisectoral approach to education provision that incorporates psychosocial learning and trauma counselling and fosters a wider enabling learning environment, including school feeding, health schemes and WASH facilities.
- Fostering the protective function of education: ensuring school personnel are equipped to identify and address child protection concerns, establishing referral systems, coordinating with child protection service providers.
- Rebuilding other civilian infrastructure to support education, including housing, health facilities, and other facilities such as running water, medicines, electricity and internet.
- In Gaza, lifting the siege and ensuring immediate safe access to food as well as basic learning provisions, including stationery, textbooks, school bags, desks and uniforms, assistive devices for those who have been injured or have specific needs.

- In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, allowing those who have been forcibly displaced as a result of Israeli forces operations, demolitions and settlers attacks to return, as well as enabling UNRWA to provide education in East Jerusalem.

ii. Actions for empowering students and supporting their learning

“Every child has the right to have rights. What makes the children of the world different from the children of Palestine? Just as you ensure rights for children around the world, ensure the rights of our children too – like education ... living in freedom and safety.”
(Student)

The key priority is to restore meaningful and quality education for all Palestinian children and youth through:

- Developing new and flexible modalities for teaching and learning, including remedial and accelerated education, to meet the needs of children and young people who have missed out on education or are at risk of not returning, with particular consideration for the differing impacts on girls and boys.
- Integrating inclusive and participatory pedagogies that are sensitive to the experiences of learners affected by conflict, fostering safety, belonging and emotional recovery, while supporting their academic and social reintegration.
- Ensuring that all children and young people, at a minimum, attain foundational learning and that eligible students can take their *Tawjihi* exams on time.
- Providing supportive learning programmes that recognise the multiple vulnerabilities children face because of the current war, including malnutrition and trauma, and offering psychosocial support through recreational activities and counselling.
- Re-establishing a functional child protection system to ensure effective referral of children needing specialist support across education, child protection, case management, health and nutrition services.
- Supporting the needs of children and young people with disabilities, particularly those newly acquired because of the attacks, by ensuring accessible learning environments and infrastructure.
- In Gaza, recognising current learning through distance programmes and in temporary learning spaces, ensuring their accreditation to enable children and young people to return to face-to-face schooling, with special attention to those most vulnerable.
- In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, ending all child detentions, including administrative detentions of learners, and ensuring their safe return home and to education.
- Integrating mental health and psychosocial support in school activities in a

systematic manner to enhance children's learning capacity.

- Equipping learners and teachers with the skills for conflict resolution.

iii. Actions for enabling and empowering teachers and counsellors

"I want to mention that our teachers are heroes ... They work on a daily basis on emergencies and they monitor the situation and they are heroes who keep our children safe without noticing their own wellbeing." (International organisation staff)

One way of understanding the effect of the war on Gaza and in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is to understand the human capability and capacity that has been lost. Education as an intensive human activity relies on qualified, motivated and experienced teachers, counsellors and education officials to deliver equitable and quality learning. Since the beginning of the war on Gaza, there has been an attempt at the total destruction of the only systems that were providing education for Palestinians. This has been an attack of not just infrastructure but more importantly, human capability and capacity. Rebuilding education in Gaza and in the West Bank, including Est Jerusalem, as well as in the other occupied territories of Palestine would rely on the long-term knowledge, skills and expertise developed over many years in delivering education. This human capacity cannot be easily brought in or parachuted in, nor can it be easily built. It is to an extent still present and any effort at reconstruction must build upon and support the human capacity and capability that has developed over many decades in providing education for Palestinians.

The key priority is to ensure Palestinian teachers and counsellors, as frontline staff, are involved in all decisions about the reconstruction of education and that they are empowered and their wellbeing needs are met through:

- Increasing the number of teachers and counsellors based on an assessment of needs to replace those killed, injured, detained or displaced, while responding to the heightened educational and psychosocial needs of children and young people.
- Ensuring adequate numbers of teachers and teaching assistants to provide effective remedial education to learners who have been traumatised and suffered malnutrition and famine.
- Ensuring teachers' salaries are paid in full and in a timely manner.
- Supporting the reconstruction of the university sector as universities are key institutions in training the teachers needed for recovery. This should include expanding the capacities of all universities and teacher training providers to meet the demands for additional teachers and teaching assistants for supporting learning recovery, as well as providing the skilled personnel for societal development.
- Providing continuous professional development for new and existing teachers and counsellors to equip them to support a diverse, traumatised and vulnerable student

population, including through remedial learning and foundational support.

- Ensuring teachers and counsellors receive the resources and materials needed to engage learners effectively, including the use of appropriate technologies and digital infrastructure to facilitate remote learning where necessary.
- Supporting teachers' and counsellors' wellbeing and basic needs, including shelter, safety, food and livelihood support, alongside psychosocial and counselling services for themselves and their families.
- Ensuring that teachers, counsellors and learners with disabilities have access to the support and the assistive devices they require.
- Continuing to support the nutritional needs and overall wellbeing of teachers and counsellors, including those injured or living with disabilities, to ensure they can safely resume their roles.
- In Gaza, ensuring that the attacks on education resulting in killing of teachers and counsellors is stopped, and they are free to resume their work without fear or undermining of their professional status.
- In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, ensuring that teachers and counsellors are able to work freely without fear of attack or detention.

iv. Actions for meaningful and effective international commitment and financing

"... we [international agencies] invest many of our resources in teaching children human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance. Students are asking our teachers everywhere about the reality of those human rights. [They feel that] they are killed just for being Gazans." (International organisation staff)

The key priority is to ensure that the international community upholds its commitments to international humanitarian law and fully and fairly funds Palestinian education in accordance with the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals:

- Ensuring that all actors are held to account for breaching international humanitarian law.
- Ensuring that the international community expends all efforts to stop the attacks on schools and other education facilities – and to stop the killing and maiming, injury, other forms of violence, and detention of children, young people, teachers, counsellors and humanitarian workers.
- Recognising education and child protection as part of the humanitarian and development response alongside other priorities, such as health, nutrition and shelter.
- Ensuring Israel complies with the provisions of the Paris Protocols as part of the

Oslo Accords regarding the release of Palestinian tax revenues, enabling the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education to fund its education system, including paying teachers' salaries in full and in a timely and consistent manner, including arrears.

- Increasing education funding immediately, including from a wider range of donors regionally and internationally. At a minimum, international donors should meet the Flash Appeal targets for education and child protection for immediate needs. Larger, predictable, sustained and long-term funding is required for recovery and reconstruction of the education system.
- Enhancing coordination between international agencies and international NGOs to ensure that support for education and protection is connected and aligned with the needs of the Palestinian population.
- Recognising UNRWA as a key provider of education and services for refugees, and ensure it is equipped with the necessary staff, infrastructure and systems to continue to play a key role in education, aligned to the oPt authorities' priorities. Ensure continued funding for UNRWA until a just solution is found for Palestinian refugees.
- Upholding the international obligation not to recognise the legality of Israel's occupation, including the application of Israeli laws in East Jerusalem, and support the revocation of related Knesset legislation.
- Recognising the authority of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and empowering it to fulfil its educational responsibilities and obligations.

v. Actions for asserting Palestinian rights and voice

"The most important message to the international community is that this is the time to end the occupation. Everything after that will be solved. The problem is 75 years old because of the occupation. End the occupation to give Palestinians their rights. This is the only message we have to send all over the world." (Teacher)

The key priority is for all education reconstruction efforts to be led by the Palestinian community, ensuring it is their voices and rights that are the basis for the restoration and rebuilding of education through:

- Formally recognising the State of Palestine as a legitimate and inalienable right of the Palestinian people, and ensuring the State of Palestine is leading all reconstruction efforts.
- Engaging children, young people, teachers, counsellors, caregivers and their communities, as well as local civil society, in any planning now and in the future.
- Restoring the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's systems through renewed policy, planning and financing mechanisms that enable sustainable and inclusive education provision.

Realising this call for action requires political will, financial commitment, just peace and concrete actions by all international actors and stakeholders, led by the State of Palestine, to deliver the right to equitable and quality education as agreed in the Sustainable Development Goals. Anything less in the context of the ongoing attacks on Palestinian education risks killing hope for the future generations of young people in this region. Our collective future depends on how we support all Palestinians now, with urgency.

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Endnotes

- i The report focuses on education in Gaza and West Bank. As the war on Gaza enters its **third** year, this report updates the September 2024 study, *Palestinian Education Under Attack in Gaza: Restoration, Recovery, Rights and Responsibilities in and through Education*, which focused primarily on attacks on schools in Gaza, expanding the scope to include the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, Centre for Lebanese Studies & UNRWA, 2024).
- ii These laws have led to the forcible closure of six UNRWA schools in May 2025, depriving nearly 800 children of access to education. The laws also ban contact between Israeli authorities and UNRWA in the rest of the oPt, impacting the Agency's work more broadly (UNRWA, 2025k).
- iii Child Protection Area of Responsibility is a global coordination mechanism under the Global Protection Cluster, co-led by UNICEF, which provides leadership and support for child protection responses in humanitarian contexts.
- iv Several studies have documented the negative impact of war-related trauma on student learning and its association with poor cognitive performance, which could further complicate the recovery process (Salah & Saxena, 2025; Ito et al., 2024). Salah and Saxena (2024) reported that pupils who had exposure to conflict demonstrated lower learning outcomes. The more years students experience conflict, the worse they perform. Ito et al. (2024) examined the impact of conflict in Sri Lanka and in the worst-case scenario of a household experiencing two conflict-related events when a child is school-aged, the probability that the child completes upper secondary or higher education decreases by 97.2 percentage points, lowering educational attainment by 3.49 years (29.4 percent of the sample mean). While it is not possible to ascertain from these available studies the exact impact of learning loss due to trauma, we estimate that it is likely to be equivalent to approximately 0.5 year loss for every year of war.
- v As of 15 August 2025, Famine (IPC Phase 5) with reasonable evidence is confirmed in the Gaza Governorate. After 22 months of relentless conflict, over half a million people in the Gaza Strip are facing catastrophic conditions characterised by hunger, starvation, destitution and death. Another 1.07 million people (54 percent) are in Emergency (IPC Phase 4), and 396,000 people (20 percent) are in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) (IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, 2025a).
- vi Canbolat, Rutkowski, & Rutkowski (2025) reported that food insecurity significantly impacts students' academic performance in mathematics. This was equivalent to 2 years of learning loss globally. Country-level comparisons revealed that students in Palestine facing food insecurity have experienced a large decline (up to 10 points) in academic achievement. We have made a conservative assumption that the loss due to a year of famine results in one year of learning loss. We acknowledge this is an underestimate, given there was a stranglehold on the supply of food since 2023.
- vii See Sayed and Ahmad (2025) for estimates of remedial education in Gaza under various scenarios of school reopening and recovery time periods.
- viii We estimated two scenarios based on the assumption that learning recovery could be consolidated in an accelerated manner in one year or over three years. The three years recovery window seems pedagogically more sound, particularly taking account of the need to address longer term impact of trauma and malnutrition that the students are likely to continue to face.
- ix This is based on the assumption that teachers will need to be paid additionally for the remedial education work they undertake.

- x This is based on the assumption that teachers should be spending at least 10 percent of their working time on continuous professional development and hence the calculation has been based on 10 percent of the salary.
- xi This report only considers education for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. We refer to private schools where relevant data are available. The main focus is on schools operated by the PA Ministry of Education and Higher Education and UNRWA. Palestinians who are receiving segregated education in Israel are also impacted by attacks on their education. However, this is beyond the scope of this report.
- xii 'Master Plans' are official zoning and land-use schemes approved by the Israeli Civil Administration that specify where Palestinians are legally permitted to build. In the West Bank's Area C, around 60 percent of the territory, under full Israeli civil and security control, Palestinians must obtain such approval for any construction. Because few Master Plans are endorsed, most Palestinian communities in Area C remain unplanned, and any building there is deemed unauthorised and at risk of demolition.
- xiii UNRWA uses Palestine Refugees to distinguish those registered with UNRWA and receiving its services from refugees more generally.
- xiv The PISA report refers to both West Bank and Gaza under the oPt.
- xv See the basis for assumptions in this analysis as set out in the Gaza section of the report (Sayed & Ahmad, 2025).
- xvi All Palestinians who are citizens of Israel are forced to have an ID to prove their right to be there, according to the Identity Card Carrying and Displaying Act of 1982.
- xvii Calculations are based on providing all students (in groups of 40) with additional tutoring, with the total years depending on the period of learning loss (for example, 2.5 years if schools were to reopen in 2025, 4 years if reopening is delayed to 2026).
- xviii See assumptions in the Gaza section of the report, and fuller information in Sayed & Ahmad (2025).
- xix We present two scenarios based on the assumption that learning recovery could be consolidated in an accelerated manner in one year or done over three years.
- xx This is based on the assumption that teachers will need to be paid additionally for the remedial education work they undertake.
- xxi This is based on the assumption that teachers should be spending at least 10 percent of their working time on continuous professional development and hence the calculation has been based on 10 percent of the salary.
- xxii The 2025 State of Palestine Gaza Recovery and Reconstruction Plan notes that 'Israel's periodic withholding of Palestinian tax revenues—approximately US\$127 million per month—exacerbated financial instability. By January 2025, the Ministry of Finance reported that over US\$1 billion in tax funds had been withheld, further crippling public sector operations' (p.115).
- xxiii Assuming a similar breakdown of the amount requested is allocated to the amount pledged, this would be equivalent to around US\$18 per school-aged child in Gaza, and US\$1.6 per school-aged child in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.
- xxiv This is from ECHO, who commit to spending 10 percent of their funding on education.
- xxv Other smaller funders who have contributed to the US\$13.2 million include: Belgium (US\$2.2 million); Creative Associative International (US\$0.5 million); Occupied Palestinian Territory Humanitarian Fund (US\$3.5 million); Save the Children (US\$2.0 million); Swiss Solidarity (US\$0.3 million).

- xxvi The United States suspended funding to UNRWA between 2018-2021 under President Donald Trump and during those years it did not allocate any aid to the Education Cluster through the Appeal.
- xxvii In July 2024, the UK government pledged £21 million to UNRWA for 2024/25 to undertake “lifesaving work in Gaza and the provision of basic services in the region.” It specifies this will focus on emergency food, shelter and “other support” without specifying funds specifically to support education.
- xxviii These included the United States, European Commission, Germany, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Norway, Canada and Sweden.
- xxix The time periods are not always apparent in the documents available to be able to make more accurate calculations per year.
- xxx This draws on estimates from the Gaza and West Bank Interim Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment, prepared by the World Bank, European Union and United Nations in February 2025.

