

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT IN GAZA: FACTS AND FIGURES

February 2026 update

This report was prepared by the European Training Foundation (ETF).

The contents of the report are the sole responsibility of the ETF and do not necessarily reflect the views of the EU institutions.

© European Training Foundation, 2026

Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

PREFACE

This document provides an updated overview, as of February 2026, of the impact of the war in Gaza on education, training, employment, and the livelihoods of Gaza's population. It builds on the European Training Foundation brief published in November 2024 and updated in May 2025, which compiled data from United Nations agencies, international organisations, and non-governmental organisations.

The update examines the extent of internal displacement, damage to education infrastructure, disruption of schooling, and effects on labour market functioning and economic activity. It also considers implications for human capital development and outlines factors relevant to educational and economic recovery, including reconstruction requirements.

For more information contact Fabio Nascimbeni, ETF Country Liaison for Palestine¹, fabio.nascimbeni@etf.europa.eu.

¹ This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT	5
<hr/>	
2. DISPLACEMENT AND SHELTER	6
Scale of destruction and displacement	6
Current displacement situation (early 2026)	6
Living conditions in displacement sites	6
Early relocation and clearance efforts	7
<hr/>	
3. EDUCATION SYSTEM: DAMAGE AND DISRUPTION	8
Destruction of educational infrastructure	8
The toll of conflict on students and educators	8
Learning loss and long-term educational impact	8
Emergency and temporary education responses (2025–2026)	9
Reconstruction needs and systemic constraints	9
<hr/>	
4. ESTIMATED ECONOMIC AND LABOUR MARKET DAMAGE	10
Macroeconomic developments by 2026	10
Damage to productive assets and infrastructure	10
Income and labour market trends	10
Inflation, financial system, and market conditions	11
Signs of economic activity in 2026	11
Prospects and structural barriers to recovery	11
<hr/>	
5. FUNDING NEEDS AND GAPS	12
The 2025 Flash Appeal and initial gaps in funding	12
Sectoral consequences of limited funding	12
The 2026 Flash Appeal	12
UNRWA's financial position	13
Reconstruction financing	13
Implications	13
<hr/>	
REFERENCES	15

1. Introduction and context

This report provides updated data (as of February 2026) on the impact of the war in Gaza on education, employment, and the livelihoods of Gaza's population. It builds on the ETF brief released in November 2024 and updated in May 2025, and presents the most recent figures on displacement, damage to education infrastructure, impacts on students and teachers, access to education, economic losses, emergency funding needs, and broader education and labour market developments.

For the purposes of this report, and within the ETF framework, human capital refers to the skills, competences, knowledge, and attitudes that enable individuals to access employment, realise their potential, and contribute to prosperous, innovative, and inclusive societies.

The data draw on multiple authoritative sources, including situation updates from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the near east (UNRWA), reports from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNICEF situation reports, World Bank damage assessments, and documentation from NGOs such as Save the Children and the Education Cluster. The reporting period covers developments from late 2024 through February 2026. Historical baselines and comparative data are used to assess the magnitude of change over time.

The table below compares the situation reported in November 2024 with the most recent data as of February 2026. The comparison indicates that while the scale of destruction remains severe, some indicators show modest shifts. The number of internally displaced persons, the share of students without access to schooling, and the level of education-related emergency funding have shown limited improvement. These changes suggest that humanitarian interventions and stabilisation measures are beginning to mitigate some of the impact, although structural damage and disruption remain extensive.

Table 1. Impact of the Gaza war on education in numbers: 2024 - 2026 snapshot

Indicator	November 2024	Source No.	May 2025	Source No.	February 2026	Source No.
Population internally displaced	~1.9 million	1	~1.9 million	1	~1.7 million	6
Students with no access to school	~658,000	2	~660,000	1	~439,000 (66% of school-age children)	7
School buildings damaged or destroyed (%)	87%	3	95%	4	97%	8
Estimated economic damage to education infrastructure	US\$341 million	2	~US\$870 million	5	~US\$870 million short-term; ~US\$ 3.8 billion mid-term (five years)	5; 9
Gaza unemployment rate	~45% (pre-war baseline)	2	~80%	5	~78% (end of 2025)	10
Emergency education funding need (appeal)	-	-	US\$230	6	US\$197.7 million; ~3.3% funded	11

Sources: 1. UNRWA, Situation Report #170 on the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, 2025. 2. World Bank, Gaza interim damage assessment, 2024. 3. Save the Children, Education under attack in Gaza, n.d. 4. United Nations Children's Fund, State of Palestine – Humanitarian Situation Report No. 37, 2025. 5. World Bank, Impacts of the conflict in the Middle East on the Palestinian Economy, 2025. 6. Humanitarian Action, Education - Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2025. 6. UNSC Briefing (UN OCHA) from 26 November 2025: [OCHA official's Security Council briefing on the Middle East](#) 7. OCHA, Humanitarian Situation Update #347; 10. Palestinian [Central Bureau of Statistics](#); 9. World Bank, European Union, United Nations, 2025. Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment. 11. OCHA Flash Appeal [December 2025](#)

2. Displacement and shelter

Scale of destruction and displacement

The Gaza Strip has experienced one of the largest internal displacement crises in recent history. During the war, up to 90% of Gaza's 2.1 million residents were uprooted from their homes at the height of the conflict (WAFA, 2025). In absolute terms, this amounts to a displacement of approximately 1.9 million people, which means near-total disruption of civilian life (UNICEF, 2025).

Although a ceasefire took effect in Oct 2025 and reduced large-scale fighting, UN reports continued attacks and casualties, and most Gazans have not been able to return to safe housing (OCHA, 2025b). Damage to residential infrastructure is vast. More than 160,000 housing units were completely destroyed and about 276,000 were damaged severely or partially, which accounts for over 92% of all homes in Gaza (WAFA, 2025).

As a result, an estimated 1.5 million people require emergency shelter assistance and essential household items (OCHA, 2025b). The Gaza government estimates recorded by public media are that 90% of all sectors, including housing and public infrastructure, have been "wiped out" by the war (Al-Asi, 2026). Gaza is therefore confronting a housing crisis of extraordinary magnitude.

Current displacement situation (early 2026)

As of early 2026, OCHA estimates 1.3 million Palestinians living at 970 displacement sites, many in overcrowded emergency shelters and improvised camps. UNRWA reports that about 75,000 people are housed in 83 of their collective shelters, which are primarily repurposed school buildings and tent encampments (UNRWA, 2026).

Many families were forced to flee multiple times during the war. Some now live in camps close to the ruins of their former neighbourhoods. Although at the time of this update the number of internally displaced persons has declined from the peak recorded in 2024–25, the current figures are still extremely high. Thousands of families have no habitable homes, and some areas of origin remain unsafe.

The ceasefire may have ended large-scale active fighting, but displacement has not ended. Large parts of northern Gaza and border areas are inaccessible because of unexploded ordnance and Israeli "buffer zone" access restrictions (UNRWA, 2026). In other locations, families remain in rubble-strewn areas because they lack alternatives.

Living conditions in displacement sites

The conditions in displacement sites are severe. Many people shelter in tents, schools, or damaged buildings that provide minimal protection. The winter of 2025–2026 has intensified hardship. Relief agencies report that at least 11 children have died from hypothermia in displacement camps due to inadequate shelter and exposure to cold temperatures (WHO, 2026, as cited in OCHA, 2026a). Heavy rainfall and poor drainage frequently flood camps, damaging belongings and increasing health risks (OCHA, 2026a).

Humanitarian site management is limited by shortages of equipment and supplies. As of late January 2026, partners were able to service only between 381 and 387 of a total of 970 displacement sites (OCHA, 2026a). Many locations therefore lack regular maintenance or assistance. Overcrowding is acute. Extended families often share a single tent or classroom. Privacy is almost non-existent. Access to clean water, sanitation, and electricity is unreliable or absent in many sites (UNICEF, 2025). Health concerns are growing as respiratory infections and skin diseases are reported to be spreading among displaced children (UNRWA, 2026).

Early relocation and clearance efforts

Since mid-2025, limited steps have been taken to improve shelter conditions. After fighting subsided in late 2025, UN agencies and local authorities began relocating families from flood-prone and hazardous rubble areas. A few thousand people were moved to safer temporary accommodation in areas such as East Hamad city and Al Matahen (Khan Younis shoreline relocations) (OCHA, 2026a).

Engineering teams, supported internationally, have started explosive ordnance removal and debris clearance in selected zones as a preliminary stage of reconstruction. Progress is slow. Gaza contains tens of millions of tons of rubble that must be removed (World Bank, 2025a), and restrictions on the entry of heavy machinery and construction materials hinder large-scale clearance and rebuilding.

The gap between shelter needs and functioning housing remains vast. In June 2025, active conflict was driving new displacement. By February 2026, the crisis has shifted into a prolonged phase in which many families have lived in temporary conditions for more than a year. The end of bombardment has prevented further mass displacement, yet reconstruction has barely begun.

Humanitarian agencies warn that without substantial housing repair and rebuilding, tens of thousands of Gazans will stay in emergency shelters and remain highly vulnerable to weather exposure, disease, and future shocks (OCHA, 2025b; UNRWA, 2026).

3. Education system: damage and disruption

Destruction of educational infrastructure

The education system of Gaza has been devastated by the war, which led to one of the most severe school attendance disruptions globally. Since October 2023, formal schooling has largely stopped. By late 2025, all schools in Gaza, serving approximately 625,000 children, had been closed for nearly two years (Save the Children, 2025²). At the height of hostilities, school attendance was impossible. Many school buildings were destroyed or repurposed as shelters, transport routes were unsafe, and students and teachers were preoccupied with basic survival.

Damage to infrastructure has been extensive. By mid-2025, an estimated 538 education facilities, or about 95% of all schools, had sustained damage or destruction (UNICEF, 2025). By early 2026, around 90% of school buildings were reported damaged to some degree (UNICEF, 2026). In many cases, campuses lie in ruins; in others, structural damage renders them unsafe. Even after active fighting stopped, most schools could not reopen without major rehabilitation or full reconstruction.

The toll of conflict on students and educators

The impact on students and education staff has been severe. According to OCHA, by October 2025, approximately 18,000 school-aged children and 780 education personnel had been killed, with many more injured (University of Cambridge, 2026). Those losts include teachers, principals, and counsellors essential for restoring educational services.

Many surviving educators have lost homes or family members, and trauma within the teaching workforce is widespread (University of Cambridge, 2026). Save the Children calculated that the number of children killed corresponds to roughly “485 classrooms” of students (Save the Children, 2025). Psychological distress among children is extensive. Exposure to bombardment, displacement, and loss has resulted in high levels of anxiety and trauma. One report described children feeling “like the living dead” in the absence of normal routines and schooling (University of Cambridge, 2026). As a consequence, most teachers carry a dual burden: coping with personal loss while supporting traumatized students, often without salaries or formal psychosocial training.

Learning loss and long-term educational impact

Instructional time has been severely reduced. When COVID-19 closures are combined with conflict-related shutdowns and declining quality of instruction, researchers estimate that students in Gaza have lost the equivalent of about five years of schooling since 2020 (University of Cambridge, 2026).

Even when some learning has been provided remotely or in temporary settings, the effectiveness is limited by factors such as lack of electricity, internet, and the trauma/hunger affecting the ability of children to concentrate. Projections suggest that if structured schooling cannot resume before 2027, many young people could fall up to ten years behind expected learning levels (University of Cambridge, 2026). According to OECD’s PISA, many 15-year-olds in Palestine already possess competencies typical of much younger children (ETF, 2026).

This foreshadows a potential “lost generation” in terms of human capital. The long-term implications include reduced literacy, weaker skills acquisition, and diminished economic prospects for an entire cohort.

² Estimates may diverge. UNICEF and UN briefings frequently use ~658,000 or some 700,000 school-aged children.

Rebuilding schools is therefore only part of the task. Gaza's Ministry of Education and its partners now face the difficult dual task of rebuilding schools physically and helping students recover academically and emotionally from years of disrupted learning.

Emergency and temporary education responses (2025–2026)

Since the October 2025 ceasefire, limited efforts have aimed to restore learning opportunities. In September–October 2025, during a temporary pause in fighting, some schools reopened briefly and administered Tawjihi examinations, which one teacher described as “a miracle” (University of Cambridge, 2026). However, renewed hostilities soon halted these efforts.

After fighting ended, attention shifted to emergency solutions. By January 2026, UNICEF and the Education Cluster launched a “Back to Learning” initiative designed to reach hundreds of thousands of children through temporary learning spaces and psychosocial programmes (UNICEF, 2026). More than 100 Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS) — tents, makeshift classrooms, or adapted community buildings — were established. By January 2026, approximately 136,000 children were enrolled in these spaces. Expansion plans target 335,000 children (UNICEF, 2026).

UNRWA also shifted its approach, delivering education through displacement shelters and remote or hybrid formats. By early 2026, roughly half of Gaza's estimated 700,000 school-age children were participating in some form of UNRWA-supported learning (UNICEF, 2026).

Despite these efforts, about 60% of children still lacked access to in-person instruction at the beginning of 2026 (UNICEF, 2026). Temporary measures, including tent-based classrooms, learning kits, and radio instruction, provide limited educational continuity but do not replace structured schooling. Large class sizes, shortages of materials, and the absence of standard curricula and examinations limit quality even further.

Reconstruction needs and systemic constraints

Reconstruction of the education sector will require substantial financial and logistical resources. A joint assessment by the World Bank, the United Nations, and the European Union in early 2025 estimated approximately USD 870 million in damage to education facilities (ETF, 2025). This exceeds eight times the pre-war annual education budget of Gaza (ETF, 2025).

Nearly every school, technical institute, and university building requires major repair or rebuilding. Across Gaza, 40–50 million tons of rubble have accumulated (World Bank, 2025a), which would need removal before school reconstruction can begin at scale (ETF, 2025).

Debris clearance must be accompanied by the restoration of electricity, water, and sanitation networks to school sites (ETF, 2025; OCHA, 2026a). The education crisis is therefore closely linked to broader infrastructure recovery. Many students lack stable housing, health services operate at limited capacity, and malnutrition affects the physical and cognitive development of children (UNICEF, 2025).

By February 2026, the cessation of active fighting has enabled limited educational activity. However, structured and comprehensive schooling has not yet resumed. The system remains in emergency recovery mode. Community initiatives, such as informal study groups and volunteer teaching in temporary spaces, show strong grassroot commitment to education. Yet full restoration of education services will require stability, large-scale investment, and long-term planning.

Nevertheless, compared with mid-2025, the situation has shifted from complete shutdown to partial and fragile access. Fundamental challenges, such as destroyed infrastructure, displacement, and trauma, remain unresolved. Without major reconstruction efforts and stable conditions, the educational disruption will continue to affect disproportionately large numbers of children (University of Cambridge, 2026; OCHA, 2025c).

4. Estimated economic and labour market damage

Macroeconomic developments by 2026

The war has pushed the economy of Gaza into near-total breakdown. By economic indicators, the contraction ranks among the most severe recorded in recent decades. In 2024, which is the first full year of the war, the GDP of Gaza is estimated to have fallen by 83% compared with the previous year, as bombardment and blockade halted most productive activity (World Bank, 2025a). Cumulative economic contraction reported as of February 2025 reached approximately 87%, reducing what had been a \$2.5–3.0 billion economy to a small fraction of its former size (Al-Asi, 2026). By the end of 2025, annual GDP was projected at about \$360 million (Al-Asi, 2026). For a population exceeding two million, this corresponds to a per capita GDP of roughly \$160, which is among the lowest globally.

Per capita income has fallen back to levels last recorded in the late 1990s or early 2000s, reversing more than two decades of development progress (UNCTAD, 2025, as cited in Al-Asi, 2026). The combined Palestinian economy has declined to output levels comparable to around 2010 (Al-Asi, 2026). The World Bank (2025a) warns that even under favourable conditions, per capita GDP may not return to pre-war levels before the late 2030s. The economic setback therefore extends across a generation.

Damage to productive assets and infrastructure

The contraction stems from widespread destruction of infrastructure and productive assets, large-scale human capital loss, prolonged suspension of industrial and commercial activity, and ongoing restrictions on goods and exports.

A rapid assessment in late 2024 estimated physical damage across sectors at roughly \$30 billion (World Bank, 2025a). Housing accounted for about \$16 billion of that total. Commerce, industry, and manufacturing incurred direct losses exceeding \$5–6 billion, as factories, workshops, markets, and retail premises were destroyed (World Bank, 2025a). Core economic infrastructure, such as electricity networks, fuel storage, water systems, roads, and telecommunications, also sustained major damage (OCHA, 2025b; ETF, 2025). Agriculture was severely affected. Farmland was damaged or inaccessible, livestock losses were substantial, and fishing activities halted due to naval restrictions and destruction of boats. Service sectors such as information technology and outsourcing collapsed when power supplies failed and office premises were damaged.

Income and labour market trends

The conflict intensified pre-existing economic vulnerabilities. Before the war, unemployment stood at roughly 45%, and poverty affected more than half the population (PCBS, 2023). By late 2024, unemployment in Gaza had risen to approximately 80% (World Bank, 2025b; Al-Asi, 2026).³ Construction, tourism, manufacturing, and education saw widespread job losses. As of October 2025, about 550,000 Palestinians across the occupied Palestinian territory were unemployed, the majority located in Gaza (PCBS, 2025, as cited in Al-Asi, 2026).

Poverty levels have escalated dramatically. By late 2024, nearly all households were estimated to be below the poverty line, dependent on humanitarian assistance for food, water, and fuel (World Bank, 2025b; ETF, 2025). Purchasing power deteriorated sharply as well. Even when goods reached local markets, many families lacked the income to buy them. Food prices rose by 300–400% compared with pre-war levels during certain periods (World Bank, 2025a; Al-Asi, 2026).

³ It should be noted that major sources differ: credible reporting includes about 80%, but [the World Bank September 2025 update](#) (citing PCBS survey data for Q4-2024) gives about 69% by end of 2024.

Inflation, financial system, and market conditions

Inflation surged during the conflict. At the height of the siege, year-on-year inflation exceeded 200%, and prices of some staple commodities increased dramatically (World Bank, 2025b). As humanitarian goods began entering Gaza again at certain intervals, price increases slowed during 2025. However, many households still struggled to secure sufficient food.

The financial sector experienced severe disruption. Approximately 98% of bank branches closed (World Bank, 2025b). Cash shortages became acute. Digital payment systems expanded out of necessity, but liquidity remained extremely limited. Government revenues collapsed, and many public employees went unpaid.

The private sector, previously accounting for more than half of employment, suffered extensive losses (Al-Asi, 2026). Thousands of small and medium enterprises were destroyed or forced to close. Exports largely ceased because of border restrictions and the destruction of production capacity (Al Jazeera, 2023; OCHA, 2025a). Total economic damage has been estimated at approximately US\$29.9 billion in physical destruction and US\$19.1 billion in economic and social losses, with recovery and reconstruction needs amounting to about US\$53.2 billion over the coming decade (World Bank, European Union & United Nations, 2025). Subsequent UN reporting has suggested that the broader recovery bill could exceed US\$70 billion (Al-Asi, 2026).

Signs of economic activity in 2026

By early 2026, limited economic activity had resumed in certain areas, largely linked to humanitarian assistance and basic services. Some local markets reopened where security conditions allowed, selling goods entering through relief convoys. A small number of workshops and farms restarted minimal operations, often supported by aid programmes.

Recovery remains fragile, however. Israel tightly regulates the movement of people and goods into Gaza. The Rafah crossing reopened for limited pedestrian movement and no goods/humanitarian supplies, while aid cargo is tracked through Kerem Shalom/Zikim. The capacity is insufficient for large-scale reconstruction or normal trade (Al-Asi, 2026). Emigration of skilled workers during the war has further weakened recovery prospects (World Bank, 2025b).

Prospects and structural barriers to recovery

Comparing mid-2025 with early 2026, the economic environment remains deeply depressed. In June 2025, output was contracting sharply amid active conflict. By February 2026, further destruction has ceased, and humanitarian flows have eased extreme shortages. Inflation has moderated relative to 2024 peaks (World Bank, 2025b).

However, unemployment and poverty levels remain close to those recorded at the end of 2024. There are few signs of broad-based economic revival. The World Bank (2025a) projects that GDP recovery will be gradual even under stable conditions.

Sustained recovery depends on large-scale reconstruction, easing of movement restrictions, and significant investment to rebuild businesses. However, these prerequisites are not yet in place.

Temporary employment schemes, such as cash-for-work debris removal, provide short-term income but do not generate durable economic growth (Al-Asi, 2026). Gaza's productive capacity has been drastically reduced, household incomes are depleted, and labour demand is minimal. Without structural reforms and reconstruction, economic activity will remain heavily reliant on external assistance rather than self-sustaining livelihoods (UNCTAD, 2024; World Bank, 2025a).

5. Funding needs and gaps

The 2025 Flash Appeal and initial gaps in funding

Humanitarian operations in Gaza have been affected by substantial funding shortages, even as needs in the territory reached record levels. In late 2024, the United Nations and its partners launched a Flash Appeal for 2025 requesting USD 4 billion to respond to urgent needs in the occupied Palestinian territory, primarily Gaza (UNICEF, 2025). The appeal targeted assistance for around 3 million people and represented one of the largest humanitarian requests ever issued for this context.

The scale of requested funding reflected the breadth of destruction. As discussed earlier, millions required food, water, shelter, medical services, and basic infrastructure repairs. Donor contributions, however, did not match the requested amounts. By mid-2025, most sectors reported large funding gaps. UNICEF, which had requested \$716 million within the broader plan, reported a 68% shortfall, or about \$491 million, in its Gaza crisis programmes by mid-2025 (UNICEF, 2025).

Education and Protection were among the least funded sectors. By mid-2025, only about 5–10% of requested Education funding had been received (University of Cambridge, 2026). The request was for roughly \$230 million for emergency education in 2025; by July, about \$13 million (5.7%) had been provided, equivalent to approximately \$9 per child in need (University of Cambridge, 2026).

Estimates suggested that restoring and fully supporting a child's education after the war would require around \$1,150 per student (University of Cambridge, 2026). Comparable funding shortages affected Health and WASH programmes, limiting the supply of clean water, sanitation facilities, and medical materials (UNICEF, 2025).

Sectoral consequences of limited funding

By late 2025, agencies prioritised immediate life-saving assistance. Activities related to education, livelihoods, and longer-term recovery received far less support. Even within emergency food and medical assistance, funding covered only part of identified needs. The World Food Programme reduced rations and was unable to reach all food-insecure households, in part because of funding and access limitations (WFP, 2025, as cited in Al-Asi, 2026). By October 2025, UN officials reported that the Gaza Flash Appeal had received well below half of the requested financing (UN News, 2025).

Although some governments increased contributions, other funding flows declined amid multiple international crises and donor fatigue (The New Humanitarian, 2025). Gaza's appeal was therefore affected by a broader global funding shortfall.

The 2026 Flash Appeal

In December 2025, the United Nations and partners issued a new Flash Appeal for 2026, requesting \$4.06 billion for humanitarian operations in Gaza and the West Bank (OCHA, 2025a). The lower total compared with 2025 reflected a focus on immediate life-saving activities and revised emergency projections. Even so, the 2026 request ranks among the largest globally. It aims to assist 3 million Palestinians and covers food assistance, shelter, health services, water and sanitation, protection, and early recovery (OCHA, 2025a).

As of February 2026, only a small share of the requested funds had been disbursed (OCHA, 2026b). Agencies reported operating with limited financial reserves. UN officials described difficult allocation decisions across essential programmes (Al Jazeera, 2025).

UNRWA's financial position

UNRWA's situation is indicative of the broader funding challenge. The agency has provided education, healthcare, and relief services for Palestine refugees in Gaza and carried out a central humanitarian function during the war.

In 2025, UNRWA's operational costs were approximately \$880 million, while contributions reached about \$570 million, leaving a gap exceeding \$300 million (Daily Sabah, 2026). As a result, the agency reduced services and furloughed staff. In early 2026, UNRWA separated 571 staff members in Gaza as a cost-saving measure and warned of a severe financial crisis (Daily Sabah, 2026).

For the first quarter of 2026, UNRWA projected a funding shortfall of around \$200 million if additional contributions were not secured (Daily Sabah, 2026). Under the 2026 Flash Appeal, the agency seeks roughly \$1.26 billion for emergency operations (UNRWA, 2025). Funding uncertainty has been compounded by political decisions in several donor countries during 2024–2025 (Daily Sabah, 2026).

Reconstruction financing

By early 2026, attention had shifted toward medium-term reconstruction, which will require tens of billions of dollars beyond humanitarian relief. However, pledges and disbursements remain uncertain. Political and security considerations influence donor commitments to large-scale rebuilding efforts.

Globally, by August 2025 humanitarian appeals were only 17% funded,⁴ and 2026 appeals were revised downward in response to fiscal constraints (The New Humanitarian, 2025). The funding needs of Gaza therefore needs to compete with other major crises worldwide.

Implications

Gaps in funding have direct operational consequences. In water and sanitation, limited financing delays procurement of desalination and wastewater treatment equipment. In healthcare, shortages of medicines, surgical materials, and generator fuel affect service delivery (WHO, 2025). Protection programming lacks resources for mental health and child protection services. Education funding remains far below required levels. Early recovery initiatives such as debris removal progress slowly without sufficient financing. In practical terms, many agencies are able to deliver basic subsistence assistance but lack the resources to support broader recovery.

As of February 2026, Gaza still experiences large-scale displacement, educational disruption, economic contraction, and significant unmet needs linked to funding shortages. The cessation of large-scale hostilities has enabled limited stabilization. However, humanitarian indicators show only modest improvement compared with mid-2025. Closing the funding gap is essential for recovery and reconstruction. Without increased financial support and a stable framework for rebuilding, the crisis is likely to extend through 2026, with long-term consequences for the population of Gaza.

Maintaining educational continuity, even at minimal levels, also serves as critical protection: without structured educational activities, children face heightened risks of exploitation, child labour, early marriage, and other protection-related dangers. Thus, addressing the education funding gap is both a humanitarian necessity and a protective priority. Research shows that rebuilding education, training and employment support systems in conflict-affected areas requires a comprehensive strategy that integrates immediate humanitarian support assistance with long-term reconstruction efforts. In the case of Gaza, the scale and specificity of the conflict are arguably unprecedented. In line with the Education in Emergencies (EiE) frameworks (INEE, 2024), while the current crisis in Gaza is marked by profound loss and devastation, efforts to rebuild in the future may aim to strengthen the resilience and inclusiveness of education and training systems.

⁴ See also https://www.reuters.com/world/un-cuts-aid-appeal-after-donors-slash-budgets-2025-06-16/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

This would involve not only restoring skills development activities integrating immediate humanitarian needs with EiE principles (access and inclusion, safety and well-being, coordination and collaboration, quality learning, equity and gender, community engagement) (INEE, 2024) but also reconstructing the broader skills development system to promote long-term peace and development. This includes rebuilding educational infrastructure, reforming curricula to support conflict-sensitive education, and integrating vocational training to provide pathways to meaningful livelihoods, recognising that education can contribute to both immediate relief and long-term development, addressing the complex needs of learners in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

References

Al-Asi, O. (2026, January 4). *Poverty, unemployment skyrocket in the Gaza Strip after Israel's war*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/1/4/poverty-unemployment-skyrocket-in-the-gaza-strip-after-israels-war>

Daily Sabah. (2026, January 7). *UNRWA cuts 571 Gaza staff as 'dire' funding crisis deepens*. Daily Sabah (Istanbul). <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/mid-east/unrwa-cuts-571-gaza-staff-as-dire-funding-crisis-deepens>

European Training Foundation (ETF). (2025, June). *The impact of the Gaza crisis on human capital*. ETF, Turin.

European Training Foundation (ETF) (2026). *Developments in Education, Skills, and Employment: Palestine*. ETF, Turin.

INEE (2004) Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises, and Early Reconstruction. Paris. Available at:
<https://journals.library.columbia.edu/index.php/cice/article/view/11421>

Save the Children. (2025, November). *Children's education in the occupied Palestinian territory is under attack* (Press Release/Story). Save the Children International.
<https://www.savethechildren.net/stories/education-occupied-palestinian-territory-under-attack>

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2025, June 26). *State of Palestine: Humanitarian Situation Report No. 39 (1–31 May 2025)*. UNICEF State of Palestine. <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/state-of-palestine/situation-reports>

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2026, January 27). Press Briefing: "Back to Learning" for Hundreds of Thousands of Children in Gaza." *UN Geneva Press Briefing Transcript*.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2025a, December 8). *Occupied Palestinian Territory: Flash Appeal 2026 at a Glance*. OCHA oPt.
<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/flash-appeal-2026-glance>

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2025b, January 20). *OCHA says 92% of Gaza homes "destroyed or damaged" due to Israeli aggression* (Press statement, reported by WAFA News). WAFA News Agency. <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/153675>

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2026a, January 30). *Gaza Humanitarian Response Situation Report No. 65 (23–29 January 2026)*. OCHA.
<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/gaza-humanitarian-response-situation-report-no-65>

United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). (2026, January 27). *UNRWA Situation Report #207 – Gaza Strip* (internal report, via MECC summary). UNRWA.

World Bank. (2025a, February 18). *New report assesses damages, losses and needs in Gaza and the West Bank* [Press release]. The World Bank Group

World Bank, European Union, & United Nations. (2025). *Gaza and West Bank interim rapid damage and needs assessment (IRDNA): February 2025*. World Bank Group.

World Bank. (2025b, April). *Impacts of the Conflict in the Middle East on the Palestinian Economy* (Economic Monitoring Report). World Bank, Washington, DC.

University of Cambridge. (2026, January 8). *After more than two years of war, Palestinian children are hungry, denied education and "like the living dead" – report*. University of Cambridge News.

WAFA (Palestine News Agency). (2025, January 20). *OCHA says 92% of Gaza homes 'destroyed due to Israeli aggression'*. WAFA News – Politics. <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/>