



Rebuilding Gaza

An Overview of Humanitarian & Reconstruction Needs

ANERA
Improving Lives in the Middle East
Since 1968

ANERA Reports
on the ground in the Middle East

Volume 6 | August 2015

ANERA delivers boxes of USAID-funded hygiene kits to a school housing displaced families. August 2014



28% of Gaza's population was displaced at the height of the hostilities.

INTRODUCTION

One year after the last war in Gaza there are few signs of rebuilding. The combined effects of more than eight years of blockade and three wars in seven years are making Gaza unlivable for the Palestinians who call it home.

Bombs destroyed entire districts. Thousands of farmers, fishermen and factory workers lost their jobs, swelling the ranks of the poor and unemployed. Many families can't earn enough to put food on the table. The only Gaza power plant is not running at full capacity, in part because of damage sustained in the war. Gaza is without electricity between 12 and 18 hours a day.

This report gives an overview of the current, pressing humanitarian and reconstruction needs in Gaza. ANERA's ongoing programs there are helping to address some of the immediate and long-term needs of the population. The residents of Gaza cannot rebuild on their own. This is where the international community must help.

OPERATION PROTECTIVE EDGE

For 51 days in the summer of 2014, Gaza experienced what is described as the worst destruction, devastation, and displacement since the start of the Israeli occupation in 1967.¹ The operation killed more than 2,100 Palestinians, most of them civilians. 11,231 people were injured, with 10% of these victims suffering severe injuries resulting in permanent disabilities.² At the height of hostilities, the number of people sheltered in United Nations (UNRWA) buildings or with host families reached 500,000, about 28% of Gaza's population.³ At least 142 Palestinian families lost three or more members in the bombings, and as many as 1,500 children were orphaned.⁴

The war devastated homes, roads, farms, factories, water and sanitation systems and communication networks. More than 450 businesses, mosques, schools, health clinics, and other civilian structures were damaged or destroyed.⁵ The Gaza-based economist Omar Shaban estimates that the war's economic damage is three times that of the 2008-9 conflict.

Military incursions and bombs destroyed entire neighborhoods near the separation wall in the far north and south as well as Gaza City, flattening some high-rise residential buildings in the process. An estimated 18,000 housing units were either destroyed or severely damaged.⁶

Many families were sheltered in UNRWA schools in the nine months following the ceasefire. On June 17, 2015 UNRWA finally closed the two remaining school shelters, after ensuring displaced families could find alternate housing solutions with the help of rental subsidies or repairs of damaged properties.⁷ But some 100,000 people remain displaced and cannot return home until their houses are rebuilt.⁸

Gaza Timeline

Blockade

2007 to present.
Severe restrictions on the movement of goods in and out of Gaza. Imposed by Egypt and Israel after the election of the Hamas government.

"Operation Cast Lead"

December 27, 2008 - January 18, 2009
Aerial and ground offensive

"Operation Pillar of Defense"

November 14 - 22, 2012
Aerial offensive

"Operation Protective Edge"

July 8 - August 26, 2014
Aerial and ground offensive

The war's economic damage is **3 times** that of the 2008-2009 conflict.



“We woke up to realize that our limited stock of medicine had burned. There was nothing left and yet the number of patients had soared. After October 2014, we got an additional 576 cases over and above the 8,000 patients we previously saw each year.”

Dr. Sameer Abu Jayaab in front of the rubble of the outpatient pharmacy at the Society for the Physically Handicapped

Despite severe damage to the Society's building, Dr. Jayaab has been able to restock many medicines thanks to multiple shipments from ANERA.

Education in Gaza after Operation Protective Edge

Half of the 520 universities, schools and preschools in Gaza were damaged in Operation Protective Edge.⁹ The Palestinian Ministry of Education reported that 26 schools were completely destroyed and cannot reopen.¹⁰ The ministry estimates the total cost of destruction in the education sector is \$33.5 million.¹¹

26 schools were completely destroyed

Prior to this last crisis, schools in Gaza were chronically plagued by overcrowding with an average of 37 students per class.¹² Now, schools are even more crowded and some cannot be used until they are cleared of war rubble and remnants. Nine out of ten schools are running a double shift, reducing each student’s education to only four hours a day.¹³



With funding from the Kuwait government, ANERA purchased local materials and rebuilt Amjad Preschool in Beit Hanoun after it was destroyed by bombs.

“Rubble was everywhere and nobody could believe that the pile of wreckage that was the preschool could come alive again.”

Boshra Hamad, principal of Amjad Preschool



Health in Gaza after Operation Protective Edge

Operation Protective Edge damaged or destroyed 18 health facilities.¹⁴ Patients who can no longer access their local health facilities are turning to other hospitals and clinics that are already overburdened with patients. Given the high number of casualties during the war, many patients had to be discharged prematurely or received no care for their condition, increasing the caseload of institutions specializing in complex injuries, complications and disabilities.¹⁵ There were nearly 2,000 referrals issued to the West Bank, Israel, Jerusalem, Egypt and Jordan in May for specialized treatment unavailable in Gaza – the second highest month for referrals recorded by WHO.¹⁶

In addition, the eight-year-old blockade has severely limited the health system’s ability to deliver continuous, high-quality services due to chronic shortages in medicines, medical supplies and equipment. Stocks of critical medicines are at an all-time low. The Ministry of Health’s (MoH) Central Drugstore reports having in stock an average of 26% of essential medicines; 47% of disposable medical supplies are at or near zero stock for MoH facilities.¹⁷

18 health facilities were damaged or reduced to rubble.

Agriculture in Gaza after Operation Protective Edge

Operation Protective Edge severely damaged Gaza’s farmland. The Ministry of Agriculture estimates losses at \$550 million.¹⁸ As in other sectors, the damage is worse closest to the wall separating Gaza from Israel, especially the northern Gaza, Gaza City and the Khan Younis areas. The war decimated 42,000 acres of farmland, as well as greenhouses, irrigation systems, livestock, fodder stocks and fishing boats, affecting the livelihoods of some 40,000 people.¹⁹

Water for irrigation currently is unavailable or inaccessible in two-thirds of Gaza because of the destruction of wells, collection ponds and pipes, or as a result of electricity outages. In nine municipalities, agricultural inputs such as pesticides and fertilizer are not available on the market because of restrictions on imports into Gaza.²⁰

Gaza suffers today from a shortage of fresh produce. The agricultural sector cannot meet local demand for staple fresh vegetables such as tomatoes, potatoes, zucchini, cucumbers and eggplants for the first time in more than 20 years.²¹ According to farmers and farmer organizations in Gaza, the supply of locally produced fruits and vegetables is not likely to improve next harvest, as restoration of destroyed farms is in process and crops take time to mature. This means prices for healthy fruits and vegetables are inflated and impoverished families increasingly turn to cheaper, unhealthier options.²²

The war damaged 42,000 acres of farmland.

Water for irrigation is not available in two-thirds of Gaza.



During the Israeli incursion, Sabra's land was bulldozed, along with other greenhouses in the area around Deir Al Balah. ANERA graded Sabra's land for planting and provided 65 olive tree saplings, like the one pictured, along with an irrigation system.

“When I returned with my adult children and extended family, I was shocked by the magnitude of the destruction. Not a single plant was left.”

Sabra Abu Naseer, mother of three and farmer of 35 years

The Economy of Gaza after Operation Protective Edge

In addition to eight years of blockade of Gaza imports and exports, war damage to the manufacturing and construction sectors has resulted in a rising unemployment rate, pushing Gaza closer to economic collapse. The building sector, a major source of jobs, is virtually at a standstill. Over 350 factories were destroyed during the fighting, including cement and sponge factories and dairies.²³ Gaza's only large bakery, along with other medium-sized businesses which were destroyed, had provided employment to thousands of individuals. Today, most of Gaza’s entrepreneurial class and the people they employed have been reduced to poverty and forced into dependency on charity.²⁴

350 factories were destroyed by the bombings.

According to a recent World Bank Report, in the last quarter of 2014, Gaza’s unemployment rate stood at 43%, higher than any other economy in the world.²⁵

For the past several years most consumer products, cement and other dry goods came through tunnels dug along the border from Egypt. Those tunnels have been destroyed by both Egyptian and Israeli authorities.

Operation Protective Edge and the closure of the tunnels resulted in a loss of \$460 million in Gaza’s economy, lowering the territory’s GDP by 15%.²⁶



This network installation is one of 21 water or sanitation system repair projects ANERA has completed, employing more than 100 workers.

Gaza's unemployment rate is the highest in the world.



“Visiting a relative was not only social. We often opted to visit those who had water available, so we could all take a quick bath. That always made me uncomfortable.”

Rawda Azaam, a resident of Al Mughraqa in the Middle Area of Gaza

With ANERA's help and funding from Islamic Relief USA, Rawda's neighborhood is connected to a new water network. 500 residents now have access to a reliable source of water.



HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO OPERATION PROTECTIVE EDGE

Widespread reconstruction work on Gaza's physical infrastructure, including large buildings and civilian homes, is only just starting. Millions of tons of rubble are still being cleared from all over Gaza, an essential first step in restoring Palestinians' access to basic services, such as water and sanitation infrastructure. However, major reconstruction efforts are minimal.

The pace of rebuilding is slowed by a lack of funding coupled with import restrictions and other political obstacles. The amount of construction material that has entered Gaza since August 2014 is only one-tenth of what Gaza needs to reconstruct homes and businesses.³³ In the housing sector, the priority has been on cash assistance for displaced people to rent homes or make repairs to partially damaged dwellings.

UNRWA is the primary provider of shelter assistance in Gaza. However, UNRWA suffers a \$101 million deficit to its operating budget, due to the lack of fulfillment of donor pledges. This severely hampers its ability to serve the Palestinian refugee families left homeless by the war.

Outside of the housing sector, ANERA is rebuilding schools, repairing damage to water and sanitation systems and restoring agricultural land destroyed during the fighting. This work is ongoing and expanding.

Water and sanitation in Gaza after Operation Protective Edge

Most of Gaza's water is unfit for human consumption – 97% does not meet WHO standards – due to the high levels of chloride and nitrate. Seawater has seeped into the groundwater because of over-extraction from the aquifers, leaving water unfit for drinking, cooking or agricultural use.²⁷

The situation has been exacerbated by war damage. An initial damage assessment from the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility reported that 12% of Gaza's wells were destroyed or damaged in Operation Protective Edge, particularly in the Gaza City, Beit Hanoun, and Deir Al Balah areas.²⁸ The assessment also found that more than 33,000 meters of water and wastewater networks were damaged in Khan Younis and 6,300 meters of networks were damaged in Gaza City.²⁹ Raw sewage flows into open pools, farmland and the Mediterranean Sea. Residents in Rafah and Gaza City have expressed fear of sewage entering damaged water lines.³⁰ Fishermen are also affected since many fish have died or fled the sewage-contaminated waters.³¹

The power needed to run the sewage and water treatment facilities is severely limited both because of fuel shortages and because Gaza's only power plant was bombed and knocked out of commission in July 2014. Despite repairs to the electrical grid, most areas of Gaza get less than twelve hours of electricity a day.³²

33,000 meters of water pipes damaged in Khan Younis alone.

“It makes our hearts ache that some families in this neighborhood lost their businesses in the war of 2014 and are now dependent on food assistance and other supplies.”

Mansour El-Louh, director of the Shabab Heker El-Jamee' Society, ANERA's distribution partner in Deir Al Balah

In June 2015, ANERA distributed Ramadan food parcels to hundreds of families in Deir Al Balah.





ANERA IN GAZA

ANERA's Gaza office is made up of 16 education, health, infrastructure and development professionals.

Water & Sanitation

For decades, water access and sewage management have been at the heart of ANERA's programs across Gaza. Since the end of the fighting, ANERA completed 21 water and sewage system repair projects, providing 89,000 people with access to healthier, hygienic living environments and water for cooking, cleaning and drinking

Restoring Farm Land

ANERA's Gaza land restoration project is reviving the agriculture sector while helping farming families secure an income. The project is assisting 120 families by grading and plowing 350 acres of fields, installing and repairing irrigation systems, and distributing seeds and olive tree saplings.

Rebuilding & Renovating Schools

Since September 2014, ANERA has rehabilitated five Gaza preschools under the early childhood development program. ANERA also completely rebuilt Amjad Preschool in Beit Hanoun, which was destroyed by bombs. In the aftermath of the fighting, ANERA provided psychosocial support to preschoolers in the hardest hit areas of Gaza.

Distributing Medicines & Health Supplies

In times of peace and war, from its warehouse, ANERA distributes millions of dollars worth of donated medicines and supplies to hospitals and clinics. In fiscal year 2015 alone, ANERA delivered 22 in-kind shipments worth over \$13 million. Doctors and pharmacists administer them to patients free of charge. This way, medical centers and families can use their limited resources to address other important needs.

Delivering Emergency Relief

During and immediately after the war, ANERA delivered throughout Gaza nearly \$20 million in urgent humanitarian relief, including bottled and tankered water, fuel for desalination plants, hygiene kits, medicines and food.

Learn more at anera.org/gaza

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Eight years of blockade and three wars in seven years have taken a toll on Gaza's population. Families who are unable to earn a decent living are forced to rely on handouts from aid organizations, something that had been considered shameful in the past. Despair pervades everyday life, as people are unable to recover from the traumas of war and deprivation.

Relief and development organizations, like ANERA, continue to deliver critical aid and infrastructure programs, but significantly more needs to be done and at a much faster pace. A serious, concerted reconstruction effort, supplied with a steady flow of materials and funding, is critical to rebuilding homes, reconnecting water and power networks, restoring farmland, creating jobs and jumpstarting the economy.

Reconstruction work and emergency relief are not enough though. A political solution is ultimately needed to end the suffering that is felt in almost all aspects of life in Gaza.

ENDNOTES

1. OCHA. Gaza Initial Rapid Assessment. ochaopt.org/documents/gaza_mira_report_9september.pdf

2. UNHCR. Right to Life and Security. In Report of the Detailed Findings of the Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict A/HRC/29/CRP.4 (pp. 153-154).

3. OCHA. Occupied Palestinian Territory: Gaza Emergency Situation Report. ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_sitrep_28_08_2014.pdf

4. IMEU. "50 Days of Death & Destruction: Israel's 'Operation Protective Edge'." imeu.org/article/50-days-of-death-destruction-israels-operation-protective-edge

5. Barakat, Sultan, and Omar Shaban. "Back to Gaza: A New Approach to Reconstruction." Brookings Doha Center Policy Briefing, 2015.

6. IMEU. "50 Days of Death & Destruction: Israel's 'Operation Protective Edge'." imeu.org/article/50-days-of-death-destruction-israels-operation-protective-edge

7. UNRWA. Gaza Situation Report 98. unrwa.org/newsroom/emergency-reports/gaza-situation-report-98

8. Ma'an News Agency. "Desperate Gazans Resort to Makeshift Homes Year after War." maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=766338

9. UNDP. "Detailed Infrastructure Damage Assessment Gaza –2014." ps.undp.org/content/dam/papp/docs/Publications/UNDP-papp-research-damageassessment2014.pdf

10. Al Monitor. "Gaza War Leaves Students with Ruined Classrooms." al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/12/gaza-war-israel-shelling-schools.html#.

11. Ibid.

12. UNDP. "Detailed Infrastructure Damage Assessment Gaza –2014." ps.undp.org/content/dam/papp/docs/Publications/UNDP-papp-research-damageassessment2014.pdf

13. Human Rights Watch. "Gaza's Education in Rubble." hrw.org/news/2014/09/12/gaza-s-education-rubble

14. UNITAR. "Impact of the 2014 Conflict in the Gaza Strip." unosat.web.cern.ch/unosat/unitar/publications/UNOSAT_GAZA_REPORT_OCT2014_WEB.pdf

15. OCHA. Gaza Initial Rapid Assessment. ochaopt.org/documents/gaza_mira_report_9september.pdf

16. WHO. Monthly Report May 2015. unispal.un.org/pdfs/WHO_ReferralsMay2015.pdf

17. WHO. "Report of a Field Assessment of Health Conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory." applications.emro.who.int/docs/Cons_Rep_2015_EN_16311.pdf?ua=1

18. OCHA. Gaza Initial Rapid Assessment. ochaopt.org/documents/gaza_mira_report_9september.pdf

19. IMEU. "50 Days of Death & Destruction: Israel's 'Operation Protective Edge'." imeu.org/article/50-days-of-death-destruction-israels-operation-protective-edge

20. OCHA. Gaza Initial Rapid Assessment. ochaopt.org/documents/gaza_mira_report_9september.pdf

21. Food Security Sector. "Report of the Rapid Qualitative Emergency Food Security Assessment Gaza Strip." foodsecuritycluster.net/sites/default/files/EFSA%20Report-Gaza-Nov2014.pdf

22. Frykberg, M. "Gaza's Food Insecurity made even worse by Environmental Damage of Israel's War, Blockade." juancole.com/2015/03/insecurity-environmental-blockade.html

23. PECJAR. "Gaza Strip A Reconstruction & Development Plan." pecdar.ps/new/userfiles/file/PECJAR-Gaza-English-spr.pdf

24. Marx, B. "The Back of the Gazan Economy has been Broken." en.qantara.de/content/rebuilding-gaza-the-back-of-the-gazan-economy-has-been-broken

25. World Bank. "Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee." www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSPContentServer/WDSP/IB/2015/05/27/090224b082eccb31/5_0/Rendered/PDF/Economicmonitoocoliaisoncommittee.pdf

26. Ibid.

27. Mondoweiss. "Report Accuses Israel of Targeting Gaza's Water Facilities." mondoweiss.net/2015/01/accuses-targeting-facilities

28. OCHA. Gaza Initial Rapid Assessment. ochaopt.org/documents/gaza_mira_report_9september.pdf

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Daily Star. "Sewage woes mount for Gaza's fishermen." dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2014/Aug-12/266881-sewage-woes-mount-for-gazas-fishermen.ashx

32. Ma'an News. "Gaza's Sole Power Plant Shuts Down Due to Lack of Fuel." maannews.com/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?id=759746

33. Ma'an News. "Report: 10% of Needed Construction Materials Enter Gaza." maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=765098

ANERA

Improving Lives in the Middle East

Since 1968

ANERA Headquarters
1111 14th Street NW, #400
Washington, DC 20005
+1-202-266-9700
anera@anera.org
www.anera.org

ABOUT ANERA'S ON-THE-GROUND SERIES

The ANERA on-the-ground series is designed to add a humanitarian voice to the story of life in the Middle East. With data from ANERA's professional staff, people who live and work in the communities they serve, and with over 40 years of experience in the region, ANERA has a unique opportunity to build a fuller understanding of what life is like for families struggling to survive within an atmosphere of severe political strife and daily turmoil.