



Gaza's Education Crisis

A System-Wide Collapse Threatening an Entire Generation



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AN ENTIRE GENERATION OUT OF SCHOOL

The war that began on October 7, 2023 did not just interrupt schooling in Gaza, it dismantled the education system that more than 750,000 learners, from preschool through university, once relied on.¹ Nearly all schools have been damaged or destroyed, and for over two years, students of all ages have had little to no access to formal learning.² A child who was seven when this began is now nine or ten, and has spent a third of the life that they can remember waiting for school to resume.

This report is based on Anera's Gaza Education Sector Needs Assessment³, which draws on interviews and focus group discussions with teachers, parents, students, education officials and community members across Gaza, alongside secondary data from UNRWA, UNICEF, the Education Cluster, the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics and other humanitarian and education partners.

What emerges is a story of systemic collapse in education, one that has stripped away not just classrooms, but the routines, relationships and sense of future that schooling once provided. The war's psychological toll is equally profound. Children have endured repeated familial displacement, loss and violence, while teachers are coping with their own trauma even as they try to support students.

Yet, despite overwhelming challenges, Gaza's communities continue to demonstrate remarkable tenacity. Parents, volunteers and educators have created informal classrooms and learning activities wherever possible, underscoring the determination to keep young people learning and the urgent need for sustained international support. Children cannot recover academically without first having stability, routine and protection. Restoring education in Gaza should therefore begin with three essentials: safe places to learn, teachers who are supported and able to teach, and basic classroom resources.

This report tells the story of what has been lost and lays out what must happen next.

GAZA EDUCATION SYSTEM BEFORE THE WAR

Before the war, Gaza's education system served more than three quarters of a million learners, from preschool through university. Despite years of blockade, recurring conflict and chronic underfunding, school enrollment remained strong across all levels, because families in Gaza place a high value on education.

Education was provided through the Palestinian Ministry of Education's public schools, UNRWA schools serving Palestine refugee children, and a smaller number of private and community-run institutions. Together, they offered early childhood education, primary and secondary schooling, vocational training and higher education.

Gaza parents, taking refuge in a school shelter, work with their children to keep them caught up on their education.



Yet the system was under immense strain. Many schools operated double shifts because of overcrowding, limiting instructional time and putting pressure on teachers and facilities. Investment in classrooms, equipment and learning materials struggled to keep pace with demand, while entry restrictions on construction and maintenance materials made it difficult to expand or improve infrastructure.

In Gaza, higher education has long been a vital engine of opportunity. Before the war began, Gaza's universities and community colleges enrolled nearly 100,000 students, preparing teachers, engineers, healthcare workers and other professionals essential to the territory's future.⁴ But these institutions also faced financial instability, aging infrastructure and limited resources.

The 2014 war damaged schools and universities, many of which became shelters for displaced families. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted learning through prolonged school closures, while limited electricity, internet access and digital devices made remote education inaccessible for many students. Military escalations in 2021 and 2022 again damaged schools and interrupted education.

With each crisis, the system adapted, but 2023 brought a breaking point. The collapse of the educational system followed years of accumulated strain, but more than two years of devastating warfare brought it to a breaking point.

“The schools have been blown up and completely destroyed. What remains is very limited and can only be used for basic training or temporary activities.

— A Palestinian school leader describing the condition of public schools in Gaza



THE EDUCATION SYSTEM COLLAPSES

The war transformed an already fragile education system into one that has all but ceased to function. Nearly every school in Gaza has been damaged, destroyed or repurposed as a shelter for displaced families, while universities and colleges have suspended in-person operations after suffering widespread devastation.⁵ As communities across Gaza have been uprooted, safe places for children and young adults to learn have largely disappeared.

The human cost has been equally profound. Thousands of students and educators have been killed or injured, with 750,000 learners deprived of formal education for more than two consecutive academic years. The interruption has fueled severe learning loss, widespread psychological distress and growing risks that many children and young people will never return to school.

An entire generation now faces learning losses on a scale rarely seen anywhere in the world. Young children who missed the foundations of literacy and numeracy, adolescents preparing for critical academic transitions, and students with disabilities or specialized learning needs have been among those most affected. Without sustained investment in education recovery, the consequences will extend far beyond today's classrooms, shaping Gaza's social and economic future for decades to come.

Damage to Gaza's Schools

A preliminary 2025 Assessment from the Education Cluster reveals widespread destruction.¹⁸

93%

of schools require **major reconstruction**

80%

of **students in Gaza** (some 500,000 pupils) and 16,740 teachers are affected

100%

of schools in the **southern and northern most areas** are damaged or destroyed

33%

of schools run by UNRWA were **directly hit**

EFFECTS OF WAR ON EDUCATION IN GAZA

The Physical Destruction

The scale of physical destruction in Gaza's education sector is devastating. Schools, kindergartens, universities, training centers, libraries and laboratories have all been affected. One hundred percent of Gaza's schools have been closed since the war began.⁶ A November 2025 update reported that 526 of 564 school buildings in Gaza, or 93 percent, would require either full reconstruction or major rehabilitation to become functional.⁷ Their destruction is a rupture in the fabric of community life.



Jabalia Preparatory Boys School, burned out by Israeli airstrikes and fighting in and around Gaza City. The school was quickly turned into a shelter for displaced Palestinian families after the war began.

The destruction of Gaza's education system is not only physical. Beyond damaged classrooms and schools turned into shelters, the war has brought violence, displacement and profound disruption into the daily lives of children. Material shortages compound the crisis. Teachers report a lack of textbooks, notebooks, desks and boards. Children write on their knees or share a single notebook for every subject.

“The student now comes with one notebook and writes all the subjects in it.”⁸

System-Wide Learning Loss

Beyond the buildings themselves, Gaza now faces learning loss at a scale rarely documented globally. For more than two consecutive academic years, most of Gaza's 619,000 school-aged children have had little to no access to formal instruction. The youngest learners have missed crucial building blocks of learning upon which the foundation on which everything after depends. Adolescents face a different risk: the longer they stay away from the classroom, the less likely they are to ever return.

The scale of the learning loss is difficult to accurately quantify. Teachers interviewed for Anera's assessment described enormous variation in what students at the same grade level have experienced. Some children have missed a few months of school. Others have missed years, moved repeatedly or had no access to any learning at all.

And there is no standardized way to diagnose where any individual child stands, or to group learners by what they actually need. Without that basic tool, remedial education risks becoming generic rather than targeted, treating a wildly uneven population of learners as if their gaps were all the same.

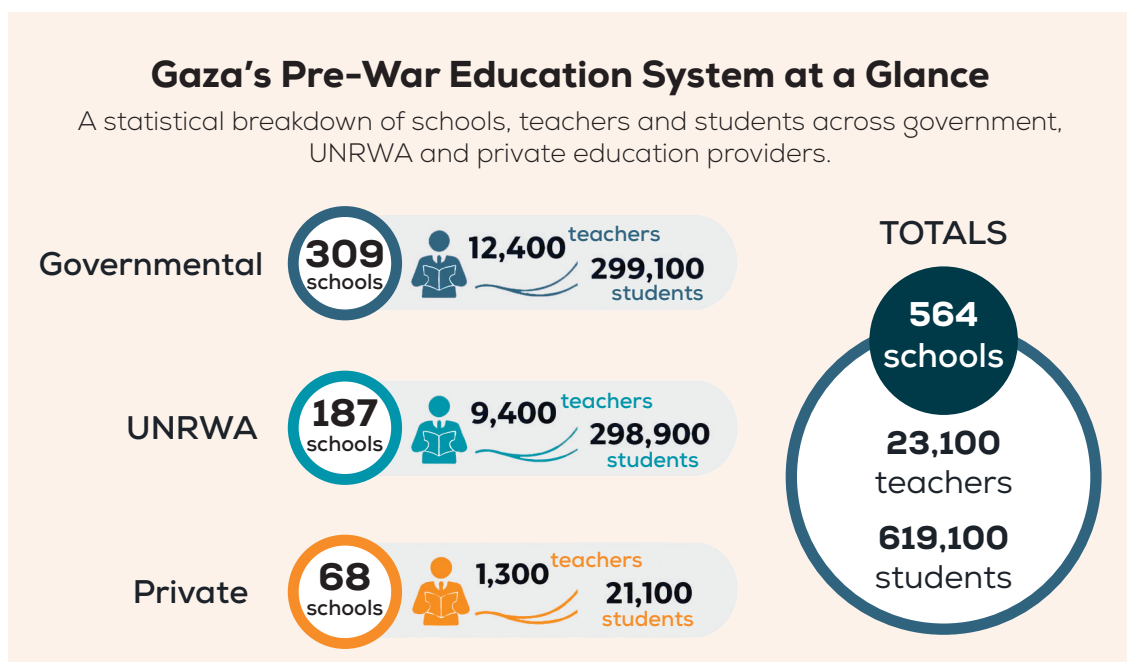
For adolescents, the risk isn't just falling behind academically, it's disengaging from school altogether. The longer disruption continues, the more likely teenagers are to be pulled toward work or household responsibilities instead of a classroom, particularly as families face mounting economic pressure. And when a teenager has already stepped away, there is no single path back. Rigid, one-size-fits-all education systems can make re-entry feel out of reach, making it far less likely they will return at all.

Psychosocial Impact

Across every conversation in Anera's assessment, one theme surfaced again and again: psychosocial wellbeing is not a bonus layered on top of education, it is a precondition for it. The war's damage isn't only visible in collapsed buildings, it lives in a full generation carrying trauma with no clear path to healing.

“The first priority is psychosocial support. If the child is emotionally settled, they will be able to accept learning. Then comes food, because a hungry child cannot concentrate or understand.”⁹

Teachers and parents describe children showing a consistent pattern of harm. Anxiety, withdrawal, aggression, difficulty concentrating, fear of loud sounds and a loss of motivation are the visible signs of trauma that has nowhere to go.



For the youngest children, the harm cuts deep. Schools were never just places of instruction, they were protective and social spaces that gave them routine, peer connection and a pathway to the future. Without those child-friendly spaces and without age-appropriate materials, early learning is reduced to survival or basic instruction, insufficient for children whose cognitive and social-emotional foundations are still forming. The collapse of early childhood services puts hundreds of thousands of young children at risk of lasting developmental delays.¹⁰ As one kindergarten teacher interviewed in Anera's assessment described it:

"A four-year-old child keeps hearing that kindergartens exist, but they are not there. He needs a place where he can go, play, learn and feel relieved. This does not exist at all."¹¹

Without sustained investment in children's psychosocial wellbeing, stakeholders warn that no amount of investment in classrooms or curriculum will be enough. Children cannot learn while carrying trauma they've had no chance to process.

Teachers Without Support

The same trauma reshaping children's ability to learn is also reshaping teachers' ability to teach. Educators in Gaza are simultaneously survivors and first responders. They are expected to support deeply traumatized students while carrying their own grief, displacement and loss. As one teacher interviewed for Anera's assessment put it:

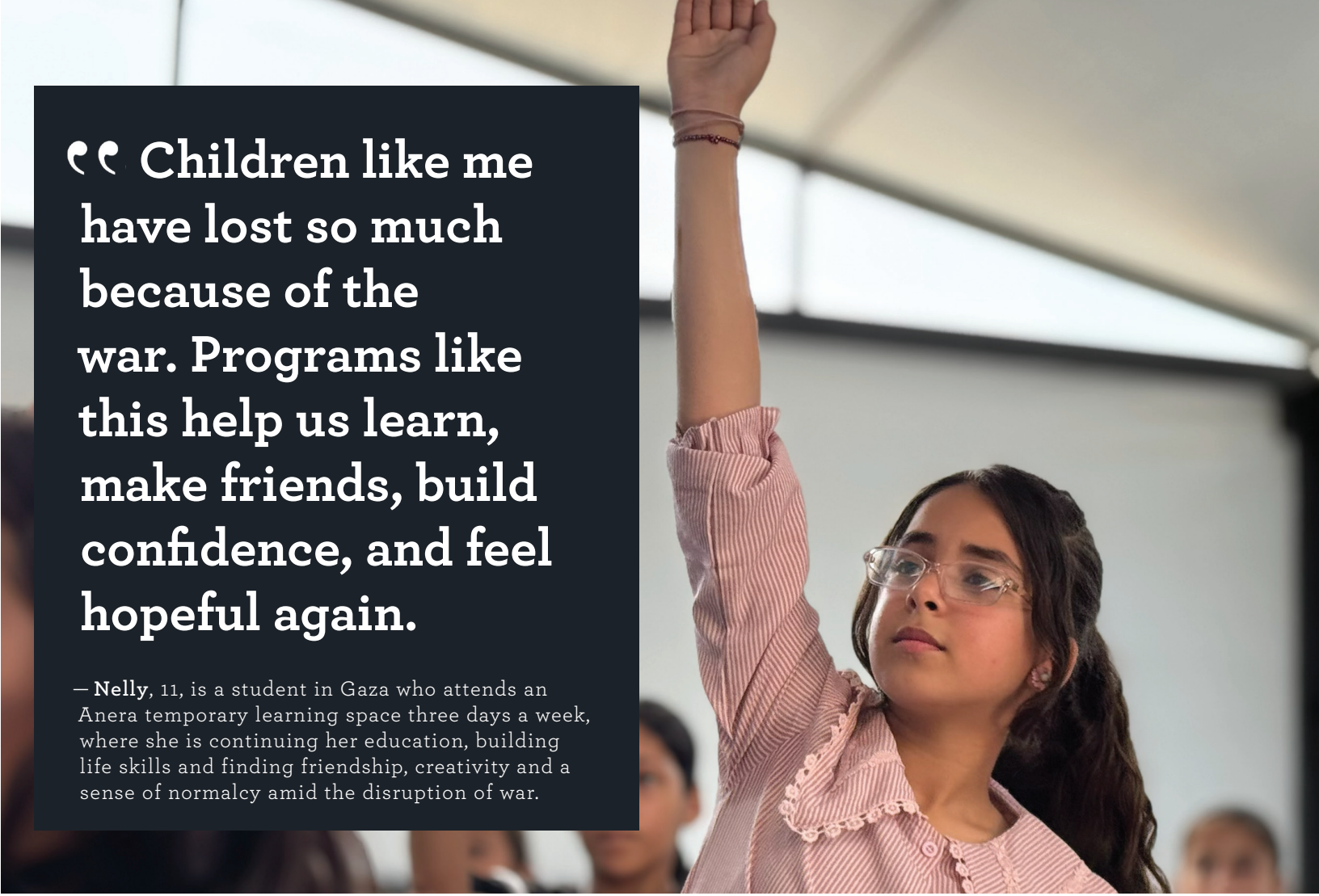
"The teacher carries his own suffering, the suffering of students and the suffering of parents."¹²

Apart from the emotional toll, teachers are also facing an economic crisis. Many are unpaid or paid irregularly, but they are still expected to show up, teach and hold overcrowded classrooms together with almost no materials. An assessment participant described why unsupported teachers cannot sustain this indefinitely:

"You can't give what you don't have."¹³

Investing in teachers is not simply a workforce issue. It is one of the highest-return investments available for Gaza's education recovery. Without predictable compensation, psychosocial support and professional training for teachers, no amount of infrastructure investment will translate into real learning.

Without sustained investment in children's psychosocial wellbeing, stakeholders warn that no amount of investment in classrooms or curriculum will be enough.

A young girl with dark hair and glasses, wearing a pink striped shirt, is raising her right hand in a classroom setting. The background is slightly blurred, showing other students and a bright window.

☺ Children like me
have lost so much
because of the
war. Programs like
this help us learn,
make friends, build
confidence, and feel
hopeful again.

— Nelly, 11, is a student in Gaza who attends an Anera temporary learning space three days a week, where she is continuing her education, building life skills and finding friendship, creativity and a sense of normalcy amid the disruption of war.

Higher Education's Silent Collapse

Gaza's 17 universities and colleges, which once served about 100,000 students and trained the territory's future teachers, doctors and engineers, suffered catastrophic damage that suspended in-person instruction for the past two years. A small number of institutions have since managed a limited, partial return to campus, but the vast majority remain unable to resume anything close to normal operations. Classrooms, laboratories, libraries and research infrastructure that took years to build cannot be replaced quickly. The damage goes far beyond the loss of infrastructure, however, with staff salaries, tuition collection and institutional records all under severe pressure.

"Without targeted support, the sector risks a form of silent collapse. Students may remain nominally enrolled, but institutions may lack the staff, infrastructure and systems required to provide credible education or certification." ¹⁴

Without intervention, an entire generation's path to professional careers – the doctors, engineers and teachers Gaza will need to rebuild – risks disappearing along with the institutions that were meant to train them.



Two of Anera's temporary learning spaces.



Temporary Learning Spaces are Necessary, but Not Enough

Stakeholders participating in Anera's education assessment were direct about what temporary learning spaces and the wider current response can and cannot do. They are keeping some children connected to learning, routine and each other, but they are not, and were never designed to be, a substitute for a formal education system. Most children attending any temporary learning space currently receive only about three hours of instruction, three days a week, because there simply aren't enough spaces to offer more. As one participant summarized bluntly:

"The current interventions are alternatives, not a full education system. They need safe spaces, basic materials and clear coordination to become meaningful."¹⁶

Teachers describe these spaces as more than just uncomfortable. They actively limit what teaching is possible. Noise from adjacent tents, no blackboards or desks and constant exposure to heat and cold all reduce instructional quality, made worse by classrooms holding large groups of children at wildly different learning levels, many carrying visible trauma. Older students face a particular strain. When instruction is reduced to short sessions covering only a handful of subjects, many may begin to question whether attending is worth it at all, a serious concern for adolescents already at risk of disengaging entirely.

The gaps go well beyond space and time. Weatherproofing, child-friendly furniture, basic sanitation, light, ventilation and accessibility for children with disabilities are the foundation that makes learning possible at all. Most temporary learning spaces currently lack these conditions.

Immediate investment is needed just to make existing spaces safer and more functional with flooring, shading, safe entrances, gender-sensitive sanitation, seating, first-aid supplies and basic learning materials. But temporary spaces can't be the endpoint. They have to be linked, from the start, to a real plan for school rehabilitation, reconstruction and reopening.

The Ministry of Education, UNRWA, the Education Cluster, Anera and dozens of other organizations are already doing this work, and doing it well given the constraints, but even with every one of those actors mobilized, a response built on tents, volunteers and improvisation cannot substitute for what has been destroyed. It can only buy time, and only if what comes next is real, funded reconstruction.

Temporary learning spaces can't be the endpoint. They have to be linked, from the start, to a real plan for school rehabilitation, reconstruction and reopening.

Some are Left Further Behind Than Others

Gaza's education crisis has not affected all children equally. Girls, children with disabilities, displaced families and orphaned or separated children face compounding barriers. A recovery that treats every child the same risks leaving these most vulnerable young people further behind.

Children with disabilities are among the most severely affected. The physical barriers can take the form of uneven sandy floors in temporary learning spaces, no ramps or accessible toilets, no assistive devices, and almost no staff trained to support people with disabilities. Families are often left to provide whatever individual support they can on their own. Where inclusion happens, it's largely through informal goodwill: a teacher seating a child with low vision near the board, a peer guiding a blind classmate by the hand, a parent asking for sign language support for a child who is deaf. These small acts of care show commitment and kindness. But inclusion cannot depend on goodwill alone, and right now, that's almost all there is.

Girls and boys face different risks. Families are often reluctant to send adolescent girls to mixed or poorly supervised learning spaces, or to spaces without private sanitation facilities. At the same time, girls are often expected to take on more household responsibilities as families cope with ongoing deprivation. Boys face a different pull: growing pressure to leave school altogether and find work to help support their families. Both patterns pull teenagers away from education at the exact moment disengagement becomes hardest to reverse.

Displacement and poverty intensify every other barrier. Families living in shelters or moving repeatedly face unstable routines, no privacy and no money for even basic supplies. Stakeholders were emphatic on one point: any recovery effort that charges a fee, however small, will immediately exclude the households who need it most. Education has to be free, or it isn't reaching the children who need it.



“A hungry child cannot concentrate or understand.”¹⁹

— A Palestinian teacher describing the conditions students face and the challenges of learning in Gaza.

A child receiving one of Anera's fresh produce parcels.

A SYSTEM STRUGGLING TO RESPOND

Gaza's education response is being coordinated through a patchwork of institutions doing their best under extraordinary constraints. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education provides national leadership where feasible. UNRWA continues to serve Palestinian refugee children, adapting its operations to shelter-based and emergency learning. The Education Cluster, co-led by UNICEF and Save the Children, coordinates the wider humanitarian response, mapping temporary learning spaces and setting minimum standards. Anera, alongside other international non-governmental organizations, contributes through temporary learning spaces, remedial activities, teacher training, psychosocial support and community-based programming.

Anera's work is part of a much larger, sector-wide effort. Since October 2023, Anera, working with local partners, has reached 77,600 children from kindergarten through school age across Gaza with emotional support and safe places to learn. Anera's assessment revealed that 392 temporary learning spaces were operating across Gaza in total, reaching approximately 220,950 learners — real progress under extraordinarily difficult conditions. But that's only about one-third of Gaza's school-aged population, and access is deeply uneven: most temporary learning spaces are concentrated in Khan Younis and Deir Al Balah, while Gaza City and North Gaza remain substantially underserved.

Where learning does continue, it happens in tents, damaged rooms, mosque corners and shaded outdoor spaces. These spaces allow children to gather, but fall far short of what a real classroom provides. In the Deir Al Balah governorate, schools remain occupied by displaced families, and children attending limited learning activities often lack even basic furniture and materials. In the south, learning happens in tents made of plastic sheeting and wood, often in exposed environments, with children sitting on the ground and writing on their bags, their laps or the sand itself. As one Anera assessment participant put it:

"We cannot speak about quality in these temporary learning spaces. We are only trying to save what [learning] can be saved." ¹⁵

Coordinating Education in Crisis

Anera is one of 52 member organizations in the Education Cluster in Palestine, the primary coordination mechanism for education in humanitarian emergencies.

Co-led by UNICEF and Save the Children, the cluster brings together key organizations to coordinate emergency education, identify needs, reduce duplication and ensure children continue to access safe, quality learning opportunities during crises.

Partners include:

UN agencies: UNICEF (co-lead), UNRWA, UNESCO and OCHA

International NGOs: Anera, Catholic Relief Services, Humanity & Inclusion, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Mercy Corps, Norwegian Refugee Council, Plan International, Save the Children (co-lead), Terre des Hommes Lausanne, War Child Holland, World Vision

Palestinian partners: Ministry of Education, Teacher Creativity Center, Tamer Institute for Community Education, Juzoor for Health and Social Development, Ma'an Development Center and Palestine Red Crescent Society



“We’ve lost so much, but this space gives us a purpose. It’s a reminder that even in chaos, we can still learn, still dream.”

– Lama, a teacher in an Anera-supported temporary classroom in Gaza.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF RECOVERY

Rebuilding Gaza's education system will not happen in a single step and it cannot wait for one. Anera's assessment, together with the priorities identified by the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education, points to a phased approach: stabilize first, recover next and rebuild for the long term, with work on all three fronts starting now rather than in sequence.

Immediate priorities (0 to 6 months)

The first phase is about survival, not curriculum. Every recommendation from Anera's education assessment starts in the same place: safety, basic services and supported teachers are the non-negotiable entry points for any education intervention. Concretely, that means:

- » Establishing safe, accessible temporary learning spaces that meet minimum standards for weatherproofing, sanitation, lighting and accessibility for children with disabilities.
- » Delivering basic learning materials and teacher kits at no cost to families.
- » Paying teachers predictably, even where funding only covers a stipend rather than a full salary.
- » Embedding psychosocial support into every learning space from day one, not as an add-on once other needs are met.
- » Reaching displaced families and high-need areas, particularly Gaza City and North Gaza, where current coverage is thinnest.

The Ministry of Education has proposed a \$158 million relief and recovery plan built around these priorities: 3,000 to 3,500 additional learning spaces, salaries or stipends for 2,750 teachers and 5,000 teaching assistants and funding for supplies, meals and psychosocial care. The plan is sound and was shaped with input from Anera and other partners. What it lacks is the funding and coordination to bring it to fruition.¹⁷

Medium-term recovery (6 to 24 months)

Once minimum conditions are in place, the focus shifts to recovering what has been lost:

- » Expanding structured, curriculum-based learning and accelerated pathways for children who have missed years of school.
- » Investing systematically in teacher training, supervision and professional development, not just incentive payments.

- » Beginning the process of rebuilding the basic data systems, such as teacher registries and learner tracking, that are needed for monitoring who is being reached and who is missed.

Higher education needs its own track during this phase: restoring institutional records, rehabilitating laboratories and libraries where possible and providing scholarships and fee support so students who have lost family income are not forced out of universities that have managed to reopen.

Long-term reconstruction (2 to 5+ years)

The final phase is about rebuilding schools and universities to a higher standard than what existed before the war, not simply replacing what was lost. Gaza's pre-war education system was already strained by overcrowding, double shifting and underinvestment. Reconstruction should address those root weaknesses alongside the physical damage, including:

- » Building schools designed for the number of students they will actually serve.
- » Investing in sustainable financing rather than short-term project funding.
- » Strengthening the governance and coordination systems that allow the sector to plan for the future rather than simply respond to the next crisis.

A CALL TO ACTION

Gaza's education system has not merely been disrupted, it has been fundamentally broken. It will not repair itself. What remains standing is not a foundation to build on, but rubble to clear before rebuilding can even begin.

The World Bank, European Union and United Nations estimate Gaza's education-sector recovery needs at approximately \$3.8 billion over five years. It will be a costly mission, but the cost of inaction is far greater.

Without a coordinated, adequately financed response, Gaza risks a lost generation, children and young people permanently denied the education, stability and opportunity that were once central to Gazan life. The evidence also shows that the demand for education has not disappeared. Teachers are still teaching, even often without pay. Parents are still pushing their children toward whatever learning they can find. Communities are still organizing lessons in tents and mosque courtyards.

That commitment is the foundation upon which recovery can be built, if the international community meets it with the sustained investment it demands.

The Building Blocks of Recovery

Recovery will happen in phases, but all three need to begin now.

0–6 Months STABILIZE

- Safe, accessible temporary learning spaces
- Learning materials and teacher kits for every child
- Reliable teacher pay and support
- Psychosocial support in every learning space
- Prioritize displaced families and areas with the greatest need

6–24 Months RECOVER

- Expand structured learning and catch-up programs
- Train and support teachers
- Rebuild education data and tracking system
- Restore universities, labs and libraries where possible
- Provide scholarships and financial support for students

2–5+ Years REBUILD

- Build schools and universities for Gaza's future needs
- Address overcrowding and other longstanding gaps
- Create sustainable, long-term education funding
- Strengthen coordination and planning for future crises

THE GOAL: To rebuild an education system that meets children and young people where they are, after years of learning loss, to help ensure they have the skills they need to build futures for themselves.

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United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)	World Bank	Save the Children
	European Union	Norwegian Refugee Council
	United Nations (including OCHA and UNOSAT)	War Child

NOTE: AI tools were used in editing and crafting some of the narrative language, using Anera's research and the findings from roundtable discussions.

DISCLAIMER: The facts, data and interviews presented in this report were accurate at the original time of writing. Given the rapidly evolving context, some information may have changed since publication, and certain figures or findings may no longer fully reflect current conditions.

Endnotes

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2. Education Cluster, [Verification of Damages to Schools Based on Proximity to Damaged Sites](#) – Gaza, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Update #11 (November 2025)
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12. Ibid., page 44
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14. Ibid., page 52
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17. Ministry of Education and Higher Education, [Education Development Strategy in Palestine 2025-2027](#) (2025)
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19. [Anera Gaza Education Sector Needs Assessment](#), page 43

Helping Children Learn Again

Anera is helping children get back to learning, even when a traditional school is no longer possible.

Temporarily Learning Spaces

Anera has established **118 temporary learning spaces** where **14,883 children** have returned to structured, face-to-face education.

These spaces are in tents, community centers or other available buildings. Anera works with local partners to make them as safe and functional as possible, with water, sanitation, furniture, learning materials and space for children to learn and play.

Anera is also working to expand access in communities where schools have been destroyed or are still being used to shelter displaced families.

Building Basic Learning Skills

Children have missed years of school. Many need help rebuilding foundational skills before they can catch up with their grade-level curriculum.

Anera has provided **260 Hayya Naqra ("Let's Read") literacy kits** to children and learning spaces. The kits include art and writing supplies, flashcards and literacy games and Arabic-language storybooks. Hand-in-hand with the kit distributions are Anera's activities that encourage reading and self-expression.

Supporting Teachers

A strong education system depends on supported teachers, not just buildings and supplies. Teachers are facing many of the same hardships as the children they teach. Many have lost homes, income or loved ones while continuing to work under extremely difficult conditions.

Anera has supported **30 teachers** with training in using engaging, child-centered approaches; educational materials; and other assistance so they can help children learn despite the enormous disruption.

Helping Children Feel Safe

Children cannot learn well when they are overwhelmed by fear, grief or uncertainty.

Anera has provided **2,828 psychosocial support sessions for 62,813 children**, which are integrated into education activities. The sessions give Gaza children opportunities to play, connect with others, express themselves and regain some sense of routine and emotional stability.

Statistics are since January 2026



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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 50 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.