

Shelter Cluster Response strategy – Gaza Escalation – October 2023

Strategy Status	Version	Status	Effective date	Next revision
	1.0	Draft	November 2023	December 2023

Background – situation overview

In the month since the atrocities carried out by Hamas on 7 October, Israel has subjected the Gaza Strip to severe and indiscriminate bombardment. As reported by the Ministry of Public Works and Housing in Gaza, 90% of the targets are residential. As of 21st November 2023, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) states that more than 225,000 housing units are damaged, and over 45,000 units destroyed or rendered uninhabitable, which together accounts for more than 50% of the housing stock in Gaza. These numbers are changing on a daily basis and are difficult to quantify due to the ongoing bombardments and lack of access for field assessments to be undertaken. Satellite imagery shows the destruction of entire neighborhoods, including in Beit Hanoun, Beit Lahiya, Shuja'ieh, the area between Gaza city and Ashati camp, and the eastern part of Abasan Al-Kabira. This extensive damage has created unprecedented displacement and shelter-related concerns, exacerbating outstanding humanitarian needs because of prior escalations, pre-existing housing shortages, and widespread prevalence of overcrowded and inadequate housing. In this already difficult context, the housing of more than 1 million people has varying levels of damage, posing significant protection risks.

The cumulative number of IDPs since the start of hostilities in Gaza is estimated at over 1.65 million as of 21st November. This figure includes over 900,000 people staying in 154 UNRWA facilities, about 160,000 in 104 non-UNRWA schools and more than 130,000 sheltering in hospitals, churches, and other public buildings. The remaining IDPs are residing with host families or finding shelter in non-residential buildings, with many relocating to UNRWA facilities seeking food and basic services. The average number of IDPs per shelter in UNRWA facilities has reached almost four times their intended capacity, with many sleeping out in the open in the yard or on surrounding streets, particularly men. The Khan Younis Training Centre is currently the most crowded shelter, hosting 22,100 IDPs, more than ten times its capacity.¹

Evacuation orders from northern Gaza has swelled the population in Deir al Balah, Khan Younis and Rafah from around 1m to over 1.7m people, putting excessive strain on already severely diminished or non-existent resources. Around 15-35% of the housing stock in these areas have also been damaged, and indiscriminate strikes continue. IDPs sheltering in collective centres and host families face severely overcrowded conditions which combined with lack of access to water is contributing to the spread of infectious diseases and creating protection concerns including heightened risk of GBV. Lack of privacy increases stress and undermines dignity as well as fueling increasing desperation and interpersonal tensions, contributing to social breakdown. Those without shelter face different but equally concerning risks due to lack of protection and limited access to services or distributions. The majority of IDPs fled without any household items and find themselves sleeping on unprotected floors, in the open air, and as bombardments continue and options become limited, seeking shelter in cars and other non-residential structures, or building shelters from reclaimed materials. Internally displaced women have often expressed an acute sense of vulnerability in relation to the safety and security needs of their female family members when using bathing or latrine facilities.

¹ oPt daily Flash Update, November 2, 2023

Of immediate concern is the need for protection from exposure for displaced populations, as winter rapidly approaches. Emergency shelter materials are required to create or extend covered living space and seal off damaged properties. Essential NFIs are required to meet basic daily needs such as sleeping, washing and eating and to maintain a level of dignity and privacy, for households sheltering in designated emergency shelters (DES), other collective centres, with host families, or self-built shelter. UNRWA facilities are considered to provide greater protection for IDPs during active hostilities, which will lead to further overcrowding. As displacement continues and these locations are beyond their planned capacity, other schools and public buildings are increasingly being sought, creating the need to try and improve conditions by making them temporarily habitable and reduce risks inside overcrowded collective centres. Additional efforts are being made to decongest centres through the provision of tents, emergency shelter materials, or the provision of sealing-off kits for those who can return.

A major concern will be to find solutions for addressing the needs of the more than 250,000 people who have no home to return to, as their homes have been destroyed. If access to the northern governorates is not restored – or the level of damage and lack of ability to restore community level infrastructure and services makes return unfeasible even where housing itself may be intact – this figure is likely to be much higher. As and when security and access allows, there is a need for a comprehensive damage assessment to inform ongoing response strategy and targeting of assistance, as well as to ascertain the extent to which displaced populations may be able to return to damaged buildings, if provided with shelter assistance. There is also a need to support clearing of debris, taking account of the risk of UXOs and bodies trapped beneath the rubble.

Where possible, emergency repair assistance and early prioritization of dignified shelter assistance through repairs and rehabilitation will be key to reducing prolonged displacement, recurrent winterization needs and already stretched humanitarian resources. In areas where it is feasible, strong coordination and holistic analysis of community level infrastructure damage and rehabilitation needs is required to support return and reintegration of displaced populations.

In the West Bank, around 3,500 Gazans who have been stranded because of the outbreak of hostilities and their inability to return to Gaza, require assistance to access essential NFIs, while communities affected by demolition or those forcibly transferred to other locations require temporary shelter solutions. Emergency shelter assistance and temporary shelter solutions continue to be provided to families affected by strikes, demolitions and settler violence.

Operational Scenarios

Scenarios	Description
Best case scenario	Cessation of active hostilities, ability to carry out full damage assessment, ability to return to damaged properties across whole strip.
Medium case scenario	No or limited access or return to north of Wadi Gaza, further displacement from north to south or emergency distributions only. Improved security situation in south allows assessment and return to damaged homes in southern governorates. Ability for some people to return to damaged properties and start of repairs or transitional assistance with some decongestion of collective centres. Continued support and additional measures to accommodate IDPs from north of Wadi Gaza.

Worst case scenario	No access to the north, continued strikes in the south, increasing displacement and overcrowding in DES, limited ability to make emergency shelter distributions, no ability to carry out damage assessment or emergency repairs, increasingly worse conditions in collective sites with little ability to provide alternatives, potential need for large scale camps.
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As the trajectory of the conflict is uncertain, the Shelter Cluster response will be directed by the above scenarios. The objectives below will be implemented accordingly:

- Worst case scenario – objective 1 only; activity 2.1 where possible
- Medium case scenario – objective 1, plus objective 2 and 3 in accessible areas only;
- Best case scenario – all 3 objectives.

All scenarios require adequate material supply pipelines and at least minimal operational access.

Cluster Objectives

Cluster Objective 1 – Displaced populations are provided with emergency shelter and NFI assistance to mitigate immediate harm

- 1.1 Provision of emergency shelter/NFIs to meet basic needs inside collective centres (UNRWA, PA schools, public buildings)
- 1.2 Provision of emergency shelter/NFIs to meet basic needs outside collective centres (host families, in makeshifts etc.)
- 1.3 Collective centre improvements

Cluster Objective 2 – Affected households remaining in or returning to damaged housing units are protected from harsh weather and protection risks

- 2.1 Provision of winterization assistance to vulnerable households with damaged homes
- 2.2 Provision of conditional cash for repairs (light/moderate/severe)

Cluster Objective 3 – Affected households are supported to find suitable interim shelter solutions

- 3.1 Provision of reintegration assistance and time-limited TSCA to displaced populations
- 3.2 Support of change of use, or finishing-off of incomplete housing units (OWC)
- 3.3 Temporary shelter (caravans, transitional shelter, TBD)
- 3.4 Support to host families to adapt or extend shelters

The objectives will be supported by assessment, data collation, information management and advocacy. Specifications for temporary shelter will be developed and shared when possible.

Key issues/challenges

Assessments: Damage assessments are hindered by ongoing ground invasion and continued intense bombardment. Cluster partners have therefore not been able to conduct any field assessments due to lack of security and safety of movement. The last official field assessment reported by MoPWH was on 23rd of October. Updated damage figures are released by the Government Media Office. Satellite imagery and analysis has been used to verify and update estimated figures. IDP numbers in UNRWA and

non-UNRWA DES are updated regularly based on registration logs. The number of IDPs in urban areas is an estimation from the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD). There is a need to carry out more detailed damage assessments in accordance with safety and access conditions. Given the level of damage, this will require significant and coordinated resources, between UNRWA, UNDP and other cluster partners, with the MOPWH. Further details on damage levels are necessary to determine required levels of assistance, prioritization of vulnerable groups, and an estimated funding envelope for prioritized repairs.

Entry of humanitarian goods: To date the entry of humanitarian items is restricted and the quantity falls massively short of outstanding needs. There is also a complex series of steps involved to import through the Rafah crossing and a number of requirements need to be adhered to ensure goods are able to enter. Partners should submit their planned pipeline to the [Logs Cluster tracker](#). Timely sharing of information with the cluster and close monitoring of procurement, imports, and distributions is needed to coordinate and track response activities, targeting and outstanding needs.

Material access: The situation remains unclear as to what and how particular materials will be allowed to enter, including key building materials including cement and timber. The permissions and monitoring system for these items will heavily influence the available options for temporary assistance and impact the ability to carry out emergency repairs.

Local procurement: Informal reports indicate near zero stock of NFIs and shelter materials in the local market. Until commercial activities and imports are permitted to resume, in-kind distributions through import of items through Rafah is required. The Cluster will closely monitor availability of key items in the market and encourage local procurement as and when the situation becomes possible in order to support the reestablishment of the local economy, while maintaining awareness of impacts on availability and inflation.

Needs identification in urban displacement: Tracking and identifying the IDPs in urban displacement is a key challenge. Collective efforts are required to facilitate CWC (Communication with Community) and address the needs of IDPs in urban displacement through close collaboration with the IDP WG and improved inter-cluster information sharing and coordination.

Local organisations: Many shelter partners are or work with locally-based organisations, who are themselves affected by displacement, lack of access to key items and loss of family members. Sensitivity is important to recognise this position, while also acknowledging the vital role they play in identifying and communicating with targeted populations. The Cluster encourages direct support to and equitable partnerships with local organisations and commits to supporting their capacity and response.

Use of tents: Tents have a complicated history in the Palestine context and should be distributed to specific target populations in order to avoid the creation of camp-like settings. As such, tents are encouraged to be used only in existing UNRWA facilities where there is adequate and identified space, or for urban self-settlement on or near the plot of damaged property. Tents must be provided as a fully integrated package including bedding, kitchen washing sets, cooker, toolkit and lighting.

Cash response: The recommended cash assistance is through PalPay, see below for further details. Cash assistance is conditional for shelter and will be distributed and monitored by implementing partners, including where relevant the use of instalments, and PDM carried out to monitor use and quality of shelter NFIs.

Response Plan

Given the ongoing hostilities and active ground invasion and considering the extensive nature of damage that indicates an extended period of displacement for a significant number of people, the Shelter Cluster will adopt a triple-layered approach:

- Firstly, winterization assistance to displaced and conflict-affected populations facing upcoming seasonal cold weather and people in damaged properties
- Secondly, dignified repairs that will reduce the ongoing humanitarian caseload and development of key advocacy messages on the relationship between humanitarian support and longer-term shelter solutions to leverage strategic provision of assistance
- Thirdly, transitional measures for displaced populations, focusing on finding adequate interim shelter solutions while advocating for dignified shelter solutions

Emergency Response Activities

Target Groups		Estimated Total Caseload	Emergency Activities		Targets/ Assumptions/Notes
			Target #HH	Approved Interventions and Standards	
D i s p l a c e d	HH located in UNRWA DES	800,000	160,000	INT1 – DES kit	(bedding, washing, eating + dignity kit)
			25,000	INT3 – SOK	For sealing-off, creating covered space, partitions
			25,000	INT4 – Tents	Intended to alleviate conditions and encourage decongestion
			250 DES	INT5 – DES improvements	(WASH facilities, screens)
	HH located in other collective centres or public buildings	250,000	20,000	INT2 – HH kit INT3 – SOK	(bedding, kitchen, washing)
	Informally self-settled households (dispersed, host families, self-built)	500,000	60,000	INT2 – HH kit	(bedding, kitchen, washing)
			50,000	INT3 – SOK	For extending, sealing-off, creating self-built shelter
			25,000	INT4 – Tents	Includes HH kit, cooking, lighting, & toolkit
	Gazans displaced to WB	3,500	3,500	INT6 – Cash assistance	
	Forcibly displaced communities in Area C	3,000	500	INT7 – Temporary shelter	
	SUBTOTAL	1,275,000			

N o n	HH with damaged housing	750,000	150,000	INT3 – SOKs	Combined with bedding set for winterization
	SUBTOTAL	750,000			
	TOTAL CASELOAD	2,000,000			

Recovery (post-ceasefire) activities

Target Groups		Estimated Total Caseload	Recovery Activities (up to 9 months – if applicable)		Targets/ Assumptions/Notes
			Target #HH	Approved Interventions and Standards	
D i s p l a c e d	HH located in UNRWA DES	TBD	TBD	INT1 – DES Kit provided as needed INT4 – Tents	Continued decongestion in identified sites – TBD in discussion with UNRWA
	HH located in other collective centres or public buildings	45,000	45,000	INT6 – Reintegration cash assistance INT7 – Temporary shelter (specification TBD)	Target caseloads to be determined on basis of more detailed damage assessment
	Informally self-settled households (dispersed, renting, host families)			INT8 – Short-term TSCA to find temporary shelter solution (to be assessed at end of period to determine outstanding shelter needs)	
	HH with severely damaged/uninhabitable housing on plot			INT9 – Finishing off/upgrading of incomplete housing units	
	SUBTOTAL	45,000			
N o n D i s p l a c e d	HH with lightly damaged housing	100,000	100,000	INT10 – Conditional cash for dignified repair	Dependent on damage assessment and safe access
	HH with moderately damaged housing	65,000	30,000	INT10 – Conditional cash for dignified repair	Prioritization of families hosting additional people
			35,000	INT3 – SOK and winterization	Prioritization based on vulnerability criteria
	Host families?	TBD	TBD	INT2 – HH kit/NFIs as required	
			TBD	INT11 – ESKs to modify dwelling to accommodate additional members	
	SUBTOTAL	>200,000			
TOTAL CASELOAD		>250,000			

Reconstruction needs

According to damage estimates, over 223,000 housing units have sustained damage and over 42,000 are uninhabitable. Given the lack of detailed assessment, the below figures provide initial estimation of the required investment.

	<i># units affected</i>	<i>Average cost per unit</i>	<i>Total cost</i>
Minor repairs (based on 2014 %)	150,000	\$1,000	\$150 M
Major repairs	31,000	\$3,500	\$109 M
Severe damage	7,000	\$8,000	\$56 M
Subtotal			\$315 M
Totally destroyed	35,000	\$40,000	\$1.4 B (out of humanitarian scope)
Total			\$1.715 Billion

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Using the activities matrix provided by the cluster, partner agencies are expected to report on activities implemented, including number of beneficiaries per location at neighbourhood and governorate level, type of activity, # of beneficiaries and household, funding, starting and end dates and if available sex and age desegregation.
- The cluster will actively seek and monitor feedback and complaints from beneficiaries on the appropriateness and quality of assistance provided (e.g. quality of tents)
- The cluster collects data on operational presence of partners per governorate and shares information on activities and response through dashboards and tools like 4Ws and 5Ws.
- The cluster collects and collates data from partners and facilitates coordination with MOSD and MOPWH for cross-checking.
- The cluster tracks and updates pipeline projects and monitors availability and prepositioning of NFIs stocks regularly.
- The cluster collates collective progress towards HRP objectives on a quarterly basis.
- Joint field visits are conducted with participation from cluster partners to different interventions to share experience, knowledge and best practice between partners.

Advocacy

The shelter response is supported by advocacy on the rights and entitlements of displaced populations. Response tracking and analysis of displacement will contribute to key messages on the links between shelter conditions and impacts on a wide range of outcomes – not only the provision of life saving support but the medium-term impacts in terms of minimizing additional risks and the need to support integrated approaches such as WASH service provision. Key advocacy messages and strategy will be developed on the implications of the extensive damage to housing and the rights of affected populations.

The cluster will work with the Protection Cluster to coordinate on the documentation of violations and produce joint advocacy notes on the links between shelter, international law and people's rights and entitlements, particularly as this relates to attacks on residential housing and civilian infrastructure, and in support of people's right to restitution. The Cluster team will also advocate with donors on behalf of the members for funding for both emergency and longer-term response.

Key advocacy messages at this time include:

- **Safeguard and ensure the right to live in safety and dignity** through the immediate cessation in bombardment of civilian homes and designated emergency shelters
- **Urgently establish a full ceasefire** to allow for the safe movement of people and goods inside Gaza and the possibility of return
- **Sufficient and substantial humanitarian aid** must be allowed to enter Gaza, including the removal of packing restrictions that limits sufficient and cost-effective entry of shelter NFIs
- **Sufficient fuel must be allowed** to deliver aid and operate machinery to clear rubble
- **Rapidly mobilize humanitarian funding** to meet urgent Shelter/NFIs needs and protect IDPs during the upcoming winter season

Advocacy messages regarding living standards:

- **Humanitarian Law must be upheld**
- **Civilians have the right to protection wherever they are**
- **Access is needed for assessment of shelter and living conditions**
- **Adequate and timely funding for recovery** and dignified shelter is necessary to reduce the compounding impacts of displacement and insufficient shelter protection

Cash Responses:

The recommended cash assistance is through PalPay which is a subcompany for Bank of Palestine. PalPay has nearly 200 shops across Gaza that can serve the people nearly in every neighbourhood. The fees per beneficiary transaction is 6ILS.

Short description for the PalPay procedure:

- The origination prepared the list of beneficiaries, including the name of the beneficiary, ID number, mobile number, address, and the amount of cash assistance.
- The organization transfer the amount of the money to PalPay account + 6 ILs per transaction.
- PalPay notify the beneficiary with special code and recommended shops list where to receive the money.

- It is recommended to inform the beneficiary in advance for the amount of assistance and the expected date to receive the code.

See attached PalPay shops list in Gaza.

Coordination Focal points at Egyptian Side for SNFIs materials entry:

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Annexes

- [NFI kits list](#)
- Logistic Cluster SoPs

To be considered/reviewed

- Material entry SOP
- Minimum standards
- HLP guidance