

# Executive Summary: Gaza Emergency Response Strategy

CRS JWBG COUNTRY PROGRAM: OCTOBER 2023 – SEPTEMBER 2024



In Gaza, a woman who is displaced with her family receives shelter materials from CRS. Photo by Mohammad Al Hout/CRS.

## CONTEXT

On October 7, 2023, armed groups based in Gaza launched an attack on communities and military facilities in Southern Israel. In response, Israel announced a “total siege” on Gaza, cutting off water and electricity supplies and launching a sustained series of aerial attacks and a ground invasion. Gaza remains tragically become one of the world’s most dangerous places for civilians.

The conflict has led to an immense need for food and shelter. An estimated 90% of the population (2 million people) is facing acute food insecurity, the largest ever recorded globally.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 85% of the population, an estimated 1.9 million people,<sup>2</sup> has been displaced.<sup>3</sup> Over 80% of residential housing infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed,<sup>4</sup> along with infrastructure like hospitals, health centers and critical, water, electricity and telecommunications services.



1 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). Gaza Strip Acute Food Insecurity Situation. <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1156749/?iso3=PSE>. Accessed Feb 14, 2024.  
2 OCHA. Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel – Reported Impact, Day 73. <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-73>. Accessed Dec 18, 2023.  
3 OCHA. Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel – Flash Update #72. [https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-upd\\_te-72](https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-upd_te-72). Accessed Dec 18, 2023.  
4 Shelter Cluster Palestine. Shelter Cluster Meeting Gaza Escalation Jan 10, 2024. <https://sheltercluster.org/palestine/documents/shelter-cluster-meeting-gaza-escalation-10-jan-2024-presentation>. Accessed Feb 14, 2024.



CRS provides bedding supplies to displaced Gazan families in Rafah and Deir al-Balah.

Photo by Mohammad Al Hout/CRS

Access to clean water, sanitation facilities and hygiene supplies is severely constrained. Water availability for internally displaced people is far short of minimum standards, and water quality is a significant challenge, with water sources at risk for contamination. Access to sanitation facilities is limited, and solid waste management is a major issue. Additionally, many families are unable to meet their hygiene needs due to limited availability and rising prices of items such as soap, diapers and menstrual hygiene supplies.

As OCHA has stated, nowhere is safe in Gaza, with ongoing shelling and military operations at schools, hospitals, residential neighborhoods and so-called evacuation safe zones. Children and adults face extreme distress due to the traumatic experiences of war, displacement and loss of loved ones. The trauma and losses will have a lasting impact on the psychosocial well-being of families, particularly children and adolescents.



### CRS RESPONSE CAPACITY

Even in the context of the enormity of need, CRS is well positioned to respond to this humanitarian catastrophe. CRS' Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza country program is made up of 83 seasoned staff—including 44 in Gaza—two offices, and multiple distribution points. Additionally, CRS has diverse partnerships and collaborates with a wide range of international

and national nongovernmental organizations, U.N. agencies and other coordination forums.

In Gaza, CRS has a rich history of integrated multi-purpose cash (MPCA) assistance, shelter, WASH, and psychosocial resilience programming. Since 2016, CRS has leveraged its in-country and global technical expertise to support over 10,000 people within Gaza through the rehabilitation of 1,500 homes. We have also supported 17,000 children and adolescents, as well as 4,500 caregivers, through psychosocial support.

Since the onset of the current crisis, CRS has drawn on its experienced staff and network of trained local partners to provide immediate emergency assistance to displaced families and collective centers in Gaza.

### WITHIN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF THE RESPONSE, CRS' GAZA TEAM REACHED MORE THAN

**600,000**  
PEOPLE

These efforts in the extremely challenging operating context included the opening of two new offices and warehouses in both Rafah and Deir al-Balah, as well as the set up of logistics and operations hub in Cairo and Jordan.



### CRS EMERGENCY RESPONSE

CRS' emergency strategy is focused on the delivery of lifesaving assistance to meet immediate needs while transitioning to a sustainable set of solutions to support recovery once the context has stabilized and active conflict has ceased.

CRS is proposing an integrated approach to help families surviving and recovering from the conflict to meet their priority needs for food and living supplies, safe and dignified accommodation, and access to water, sanitation and hygiene, or WASH. Our holistic approach also incorporates the

**“ From the war’s unsettling beginning, our efforts have been a constant attempt to navigate the evolving circumstances, with a strong emphasis on providing not just shelter and food, but a lifeline to those in desperate need.**

- Nesma Naseem,  
CRS Gaza Shelter Field Officer



critical programming to help reduce suffering and bolster coping skills and psychosocial well-being.

### **Basic Needs**

CRS will support conflict-affected families in Gaza in meeting their basic needs through multi-purpose cash assistance, vouchers and/or in-kind distributions, depending on the context.

When food is not available in sufficient quantities or quality in the local markets—or where families do not have safe access to markets—CRS plans to provide unconditional in-kind food assistance.

If fuel and water are not available, or if families lack access to cooking facilities, CRS will provide ready-to-eat food rations. If cooking fuel and safe water are available, CRS will provide dry rations such as lentils, beans and bulgur.

### **Safe and Dignified Shelter**

CRS will provide short-term, emergency shelter assistance to displaced and affected host families. This support will include bedding kits, sealing-off kits, emergency shelter kits and tents.

CRS recognizes the importance of shelter beyond the provision of a physical structure as the center of family life and a key contributor to dignity. In line with CRS' global shelter strategy, CRS will adapt interventions according to the needs and priorities of women, men and children.

CRS is co-chairing the transitional shelter working group, which helps to inform the design and strategy for transitional shelter for early recovery, elevating our priorities for a holistic, comprehensive approach.

### **WASH**

For the acute emergency phase, CRS will support early WASH interventions to ensure that families are able to meet their needs for water, sanitation and hygiene. This will include the provision of essential hygiene items. CRS and partners will promote key messages around hygiene through a variety of channels, and ensure access to appropriate sanitation facilities. Additionally, CRS will integrate hygiene promotion activities at every stage of the response to ensure consistent, safe approaches among displaced families living in crowded conditions.

### **Psychosocial Support**

CRS and its partners will support families in coping with traumatic, life-threatening experiences and loss through psychological first aid and psychosocial support activities.

Psychosocial support activities will be tailored for different ages, genders and social groups, and will include targeted outreach to caregivers with resources to help them build coping skills. CRS will provide referrals to other actors for individuals who require more advanced mental health and psychosocial support and protection support.

Photo of At an informal camp outside Rafah, Gazan families —many of whom have been displaced multiple times —live in tents to protect them from the elements.

*Photo by CRS Staff*



## **OUR COMMITMENT**

At CRS, we believe that all human life is sacred, and we extend our support and solidarity for the safe, dignified lives of our sisters and brothers throughout the Holy Land. We continue to work toward a shared future where people can flourish and live in just and peaceful societies.