

INJURED, DISABLED, SEPERATED OR UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND CAREGIVERS IN GAZA

Summary - Needs Assessment Study

SUMMARY

The psychological toll of the war in Gaza on children is severe. This report examines the impact of the current war in Gaza, which began on 7 October 2023, on families and the psychological wellbeing of children. It specifically focuses on the behavioural and emotional effects of this war on children with specific vulnerabilities – injured, disabled, unaccompanied or separated – and identifies their most immediate needs after enduring more than a year of war. It is based on data gathered in June 2024 from a survey of children and caregivers from 504 families representing 2,315 individuals in north and south Gaza, as well as focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs).

The following findings highlight the severe impact of the ongoing war in Gaza on children who have been displaced and traumatised. This report also reveals that families are experiencing extreme poverty and limited resources. This loss and disruption has resulted in high levels of stress, depression and anxiety among children, with caregivers reporting children exhibiting symptoms such as aggression, pessimism, difficulty concentrating and withdrawal. The war has exacerbated existing challenges in Gaza including unemployment, poverty and a lack of access to essential services such as food, water, healthcare, education and sanitation.

KEY FINDINGS - CHILDREN WITH VULNERABILITIES

as reported by caregivers

73%

exhibit aggressive
behaviour

87%

experience severe
fear

90%

have a bleak outlook
due to the war

49%

have expressed a
wish to die

77%

express feelings of
sadness

83%

exhibit exhaustion
and fatigue

96%

feel that death is
imminent

KEY FINDINGS - HOUSEHOLDS

24%

with 'breadwinner'
under 18 years old

80%

of 'breadwinners'
unemployed

25%

of families have no
income

88%

of households
displaced at least
twice, 21% 6+ times



RECOMENDATIONS

The immediate needs of children in Gaza must be urgently addressed, if children and their families are to recover and rebuild their lives amidst ongoing challenges.

There is an urgent need for **protection and essential services** for children who are disabled, injured, separated from family members, or whose family have been killed. Immediate interventions should include community-based mental health and psychosocial support, developing a referral system to connect families with local service providers, and provision of critical medical supplies and nutritional supplements.

In addition, **training should be provided to caregivers** to enhance their ability to create a safe, nurturing environment for children. This could include MHPSS interventions targeting caregivers to enable them to support the entire family, helping to alleviating stress in households.

There is also a clear need for the **provision of cash assistance**, assistive devices such as wheelchairs, crutches and hearing aids, distribution of winter clothing and hygiene kits to ensure children's wellbeing and dignity, and continued support for maintaining personal hygiene amid challenging living conditions.

Health and education needs must also be addressed. Children must be able to access essential medication, and medical stations in

displacement camps and shelters must be established to improve children's access to healthcare.

Alternative education methods are required to keep children engaged in learning. This could include establishing kindergartens within shelters to maintain children's access to education, and the supply of essential educational materials such as books, bags and stationery to encourage children to continue studying. **Supporting children in managing stress and trauma** will also help them to prepare them for a return to formal education.

This summary report is based on the 'Needs Assessment Study of Children with Disabilities, Injured and Separated or Unaccompanied'. All primary data was collected in June 2024, with participant selection based on lists provided by community members and shelter administrators and direct engagement with eligible families based on pre-defined target groups as children injured, separated or disabled.

The full study was produced by the NGO Community Training Centre for Crisis Management (CTCCM) and supported by War Child.