

Gaza Winter Operational Needs and Gaps 2026-27

Winter will compound the severe shelter crisis in Gaza, where 94% of people¹ need some type of shelter and household items assistance. The response urgently needs both pre-positioned stocks for emergency distributions for preparedness and after storms and flooding incidents, along with materials to repair and reinforce damaged shelters before winter. Without urgent funding and the removal of restrictions on shelter materials, hundreds of thousands of families in Gaza will face winter rains, wind and cold without adequate protection.

Israeli restrictions force aid agencies to rely on items like tents, plastic sheeting, and basic sealing-off kits, short term emergency shelter assistance that does not provide adequate protection and requires frequent replacement. **Last winter, Shelter Cluster partners provided 135,800 families with shelter support and around 284,000 households with essential household items (NFIs).** Yet some materials failed to withstand the winter, leading to inadequate weather protection, and forcing agencies to assist the same families multiple times. The below analysis outlines the need for emergency shelter materials under the current reality of the response under material entry constraints. Emergency shelter materials such as tents and tarpaulins are highly insufficient and inadequate for the fourth winter since 2023; **the shelter response in Gaza urgently requires diverse shelter materials to enable recovery beyond emergency shelter towards transitional and durable sheltering solutions.**

71%	950,000	54%	84%
of households experienced flooding during winter 2025-2026	people estimated to be living in sites at medium or high risk of flooding	of tents and makeshift shelters are in poor or very poor condition	of households report their heating solutions were mostly or entirely ineffective

The response is already severely underfunded. At least 294,250 families are estimated to need shelter assistance this winter, but current stocks and materials in the pipeline are sufficient to provide only partial emergency shelter and household item assistance to around 52,000 families. A minimum of **USD 283 million** is required for basic materials and delivery. Today, about **34%** is covered by stock, pipeline and pledged tents, leaving a gap of USD **186.6 million**.

If the gap is not closed, winter weather will further deteriorate already inadequate living conditions. Last winter, **71%** of households reported having experienced flooding, with widespread damage to essential household items and food stocks. Flooding was particularly common among people living in tents and makeshift shelters. Without site-level flood mitigation these impacts are likely to recur. As Israel continues to move the yellow line and shrink the space in which people can live, the ability to move people from high-risk to safer areas becomes increasingly limited, leaving few options to protect people from flooding and other hazards.

Cold weather will further expose people to health and protection risks. Last winter, heating solutions were mostly or entirely ineffective for 84% of households, while 48% relied on burning plastic, tyres, garbage or cardboard for cooking, increasing risks from smoke and fires. Overcrowding, rubble and other environmental hazards will compound these risks, while people with disabilities face additional barriers accessing and navigating shelters. Tents and tarpaulins alone will not provide adequate protection from winter conditions: additional materials and adaptations are needed to improve insulation, reinforce shelters, reduce flooding and make living spaces safer and more accessible.

¹ Palestine Shelter Cluster, Exposed on All Sides, 20 August 2026. Available at: <https://www.sheltercluster.org/palestine/documents/shelter-severity-and-household-needs-across-accessible-areas-gaza>

The response therefore needs to move beyond short-term emergency assistance towards more durable shelter options that protect health and uphold human dignity. In the immediate term, this means supplementing tents and tarpaulins with a wider range of materials to adapt, repair and reinforce damaged shelters before winter. Yet Israeli authorities continue to restrict or deny the entry of essential items including timber, corrugated galvanised iron (CGI), cement, and basic construction tools, limiting partners' ability to provide safer shelter.

Even approved items that are designated as “critical Humanitarian Items”, including tents and tarpaulins, are only permitted to enter Gaza one day per week, preventing humanitarian partners from delivering minimal assistance at scale. The limited materials that are allowed to enter in small quantities degrade quickly and provide little insulation or protection from strong winds and winter weather. Even this basic emergency response will be impossible without the sustained and predictable entry of supplies.

Planned Emergency Shelter Activities

The winter response will target the most vulnerable households, based on identified needs and emerging incidents. Activities may be delivered through in-kind, cash/voucher or hybrid modalities, depending on material availability, and market conditions, to ensure feasibility, cost-efficiency and risk mitigation. Where appropriate, interventions will include information, education and communication (IEC) materials to support the safe use of shelter and NFI items and promote winterization and other risk-mitigation measures. Critical items such as cooking and heating fuel, stoves, and food and water storage are not included in the packages below but based on market availability, may be procured and distributed to the most vulnerable households.

Activity	Priority households	Required materials
Provision and pre-positioning of emergency stand-alone shelter, support for voluntary relocation, when necessary	Households without any shelter as well as those residing in high-risk flood-prone areas, buildings at risk of collapse, or deteriorated tents and makeshift shelters	Tents, Emergency Shelter Kits (ESKs) ² , Relief Housing Units (RHUs)
Improved weatherproofing and reinforcement of makeshift and temporary shelters	Households in displacement sites that live in shelters with leaks and in minor to medium damage	Sealing Off Kits (SOKs), tarpaulin packages, ropes, duct tape, and toolkits
Minor and medium emergency shelter repairs of structurally stable damaged housing units	Households in homes that flood and leak	SOKs, tarpaulin packages, ropes, duct tapes, and toolkits
Provision of essential household items for winter	Especially vulnerable households, including families with newborn babies and chronically ill people	Bedding kits, kitchen sets, solar lighting, and winter clothing
Technical and material support for site improvement and flood mitigation, including digging drainage canals and providing sandbags	Households living in displacement sites prone to flooding but not requiring relocation (selected in coordination with the Site Management Cluster)	Toolkits, sandbags, and sand
Provision of rapid emergency shelter and non-food item assistance	Households affected by sudden shocks, including extreme weather, displacement, or protection risks, identified through coordinated referral mechanisms.	Tents (or another stand-alone shelter as applicable), tarpaulins, rapid response packages

² ESKs consist of timber framing, tarpaulins and a toolkit. With only tarpaulin walls, it is still inadequate for winter but performs better than a tent and is a preferred option. However, due to ongoing restrictions in import of timber, limited quantities of ESKs will be available for repairs and stand-alone shelters.

Winterization Needs, Pipeline & Financial Gap

Winter item	Unit	People/HH in need	International procurement cost*	Gaza local market cost**	Pipeline + stock	Confirmed pledges	Remaining gap (# of People/HH)	Unit Coverage	Funding gap
NFI									
Blankets	Person	1,548,000	\$6	\$71	260,103	—	1,287,897	17%	\$7.73M
Mattresses	Person	1,741,500	\$10	\$69	288,100	—	1,453,400	17%	\$14.53M
Solar lights	HH	304,000	\$8	\$131	48,868	—	255,132	16%	\$2.04M
Winter clothing	Person	1,078,000	\$52	\$200	8,116	—	1,069,884	1%	\$55.63M
Kitchen kit	HH	155,500	\$27	\$130	46,744	—	108,756	30%	\$2.94M
SUBTOTAL – NFI									\$82.87M
SHELTER									
Tents	HH	129,000	\$430	\$655	36,542	60,000	32,458	75%	\$13.96M
ESK	HH	57,250	\$300	\$4,000	13,204	—	44,046	23%	\$13.21M
SOK	HH	81,250	\$51	\$317	11,463	—	69,787	14%	\$3.56M
Tarpaulins	HH	591,952	\$11	\$142	444,400	—	147,552	75%	\$1.62M
Tool kits	HH	166,000	\$55	\$500	24,630	—	141,370	15%	\$7.78M
RHU	HH	5,000	\$2,700	—	2,900	—	2,100	58%	\$5.67M
SUBTOTAL – SHELTER									\$45.80M
*Funding calculation is based on international procurement, ** local market cost are included for reference calculation for cash/voucher								Baseline	\$128.7M
Procurement & Regional Logistics							(30% Outside Gaza)		\$38.6M
In-Country Operational Support							(15% Inside Gaza)		\$19.3M
							Total Funding Gap		\$ 186.6M

The identified needs are based on current shelter conditions, recent distributions, and last winter's needs, severe weather incidents and response capacity. The estimate includes both preparedness and response activities and only covers minimum basic emergency shelter materials (see Annex A).³ Only approved emergency shelter materials, such as tents and tarpaulins, were included because Israeli authorities continue to reject and deny the entry of other critical materials needed to provide more durable shelters.

³ Contact Shelter Cluster IM for more information on calculation of critical gaps and needs

Recommendations to Donor States

- 1) Ensure predictable humanitarian and commercial entry. States should support efforts to enable the rapid, unimpeded and sustained entry of humanitarian relief at volumes that reflect assessed needs. This should include tents, tarpaulins, repair and construction materials, fuel, solar-energy equipment, water-storage items, heavy machinery and debris-clearance equipment. Entry procedures must be predictable and sustained, and volumes must reflect assessed needs so agencies can replenish depleted stocks and maintain operational pipelines.

Predictable commercial entry is also essential to the shelter response. The sustained entry of essential commercial goods and construction materials would increase availability and help reduce and stabilise market prices. It would allow more households with sufficient resources to purchase materials and undertake repairs independently, reducing reliance on humanitarian assistance. It would also support local procurement and cash-based shelter assistance where markets can respond safely and effectively.

- 2) Fund the immediate shelter and NFI response. The scale of identified need substantially exceeds current response capacity. States should provide predictable, multi-year and flexible funding for emergency shelter and NFI assistance, seasonal preparedness, contingency stocks and sustained delivery pipelines. Funding should reflect the near-universal scale and severity of need, not short-term distribution targets alone. Flexible funding is essential to allow delivery modalities to adapt to changing needs, access constraints and the unpredictability of the situation in Gaza.
- 3) Expand transitional shelter alongside continued emergency assistance. States should fund urgent emergency shelter assistance while enabling safe repair and more durable transitional options. Support should include dignified, climate-appropriate transitional shelters and the water, sanitation, energy, drainage and other services they require.

Transitional shelter must complement, not replace, the repair and reconstruction of damaged housing. Its location, design and duration must reflect household preferences and avoid creating barriers to households returning to, repairing or reconstructing their homes. States should also enable the entry of the materials, equipment and technical capacity required for safe repair, debris clearance and basic-service restoration. A diverse range of transitional shelter options should be supported, underpinned by the sustained availability of essential materials such as timber, steel, cement, CGI, nails and tools.

Annex A

Winterization needs and gaps calculation:

Shelter

Damaged buildings

- The needs of households in damaged buildings for emergency repairs and sealing-off are calculated using an average of UNOSAT's total number of minor and moderately damaged housing units and AIOCP and UNDP's physical damage assessment findings for partially damaged buildings, and SSC.
- AIOCP's ongoing damage assessments have estimated that 40% of the remotely assessed housing units are repairable. Using the same proportion against approximately 320,000 damaged housing units ([SC's multisource damage mapping](#)), gives about 128,000 repairable homes, of which 100,000 are prioritised for urgent winter repairs.
- Another route of validation: The SSC found that approximately three quarters of households living in buildings were residing in structures with minor or moderate damage [The OCHA Population Estimate \(18 Aug 2026\)](#) shows about 680,000 people in buildings. At 5.6 persons per HH, that is about 121,000 HH. 75% of this is 90,000 households.
- Recent physical damage analysis in Gaza has identified 50,000 individuals residing in structurally unsafe, unstable buildings. This requires voluntary relocation, land allocation, and the provision of 10,000 standalone emergency shelters.

Breakdown proposed by assistance type

Assistance	HU
Emergency repair (ESK)	24,999
Sealing-off (SOK)	31,249
Weatherproofing (tarpaulins)	43,752
Total	100,000

Sites

- Based on OCHA's population dashboard, 1.45M people i.e. 258,928 families live on sites. Winter shelter needs for households in sites are identified for **118,250 HHs** *(by applying shelter severity indicator for tent and makeshift shelter conditions in poor and very poor conditions i.e. 54% of 258,928 families = 139,821 HHs minus 21,571 HHs who received tents/ESK/RHUs in last 6 months). For 118,250 HHs standalone shelter need for winter calculated as = 86,000 tents, 32,250 ESKs.*
- In addition, shelter needs are identified for **66,000 HHs** at risk of floods (SMC mapping): calculated as 50% in need of tents and 50% in need of tarpaulins, to be determined based on needs assessments and considering voluntary relocations where essential.
- Thus, the total need for **184,250 households** is calculated using SSC findings of shelter conditions on sites, last winter 5Ws, and based on flood risk assessment maps.
- Tarpaulins

Category	Calculation basis	Quantity
A. Tarpaulins for separate distribution		
Sites	-2 additional tarpaulins each for approximately 70% HHs with poor and very poor tent/makeshift shelter conditions that are calculated to receive new stand-alone shelters = 200,000 tarpaulins -3 tarpaulins each for 70% HHs with good or very good tent/makeshift shelter conditions for additional roofing and flooring for winter = 248,200 tarpaulins	448,200 pieces
Flooding	33,000 households in flood-prone zones to receive 3-4 tarpaulins each.	100,000 pieces

Damaged buildings	43,752 tarpaulins for weatherproofing (as per above, see damaged buildings section)	43,752 pieces
SUBTOTAL A – Tarpaulins for separate distribution Sites + Flooding + Damaged buildings		591,952 pieces
B. Tarpaulins included in shelter kits		
ESK tarpaulin	Total 57,250 ESK for sites and damaged buildings with 5 tarpaulins for each kit = 286,250	286,250 pieces
SOK tarpaulin	Total 81,250 SOKs with 2 tarpaulins in each kit = 162,500	162,500 pieces
SUBTOTAL B – Tarpaulins included in kits ESK + SOK		448,750 pieces
GRAND TOTAL (A + B)	1,040,702 pieces	

Household items

The need for key household items: blankets, mattresses, solar lights, clothes, and kitchen kits for sites and damaged buildings is determined based on shelter severity indicators and the needs of these specific items, excluding the quantities that were distributed in the last 6 months. The identified needs include the quantities required to respond to flooding incidents. Priority winter items like clothing and bedding, and solar lights are calculated to have a higher coverage than non-priority, but still essential items, such as kitchen sets.