



This report is produced by OCHA oPt in collaboration with humanitarian partners.

Highlights

- A winter storm, characterized by heavy rains, strong winds, low temperatures and snowfall hit the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) on 11 December.
- The storm is exacerbating the already poor humanitarian situation for large segments of the Palestinian population, particularly in the Gaza Strip, which is already dealing with an acute fuel and energy crisis, and in herding communities located across Area C of the West Bank.
- Heavy flooding across the Gaza Strip resulted in the displacement of approximately 10,000 people to temporary shelters and relatives' homes.
- Additional thousands are expected to be evacuated from their homes in Gaza City and Khan Younis following the overflow of water pumping stations and lagoons on 14 December.
- Heavy snow rendered dozens of communities across the West Bank inaccessible; tens of thousands of homes were left without electricity supply.
- Herding communities located across Area C of the West Bank sustained significant damage to already precarious shelters, alongside extensive losses of livestock.



Situation Overview

A winter storm, among the strongest recorded in recent decades, hit the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) on 11 December. It has been characterized by strong winds, heavy rains, low temperatures and, in some areas, heavy snowfall, and has generated humanitarian needs in multiple locations. The storm is exacerbating the already poor humanitarian situation for large segments of the population, particularly those living in the Gaza Strip and in herding communities located across Area C of the West Bank.

In the Gaza Strip, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated in recent months due to an acute fuel and energy crisis, and the long standing restrictions on the movement of people and goods into and out of the Gaza Strip. The fuel and energy crisis has included the shutdown of the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) on 1 November, triggering increased power outages, from 12, to 16 hours, a day. The situation was worsened due to damage sustained by electricity feeder lines from Egypt and Israel on 12 December. Although the lines were repaired by the end of 13 December, the storm has continued to result in damage to the electricity distribution network. The most essential services have been supplied with emergency fuel to operate back-up generators. The Palestinian Authority in Ramallah announced the purchase of 450,000 litres of industrial fuel, designated for the GPP, through a USD 10 million donation from Qatar. The donated fuel is slated for entry to Gaza on 15 December through the Kerem Shalom crossing, and eventually, will allow for the partial resumption of operations at the GPP. The Israeli authorities have also announced an extension of the operating hours of the crossing to 12 hours per day.

The water and sewage infrastructure in the Gaza Strip was overstretched and partially non-operational prior to the storm. As of 21:00, 14 December, several water storm lagoons and pumping stations across Gaza city have overflowed, flooding extensive residential areas. The number of affected people is being currently assessed. The Gaza Municipality declared a state of emergency and requested families to evacuate the affected areas. Heavy flooding has occurred across Gaza since 12 December, resulting in the displacement of approximately 10,000 people to temporary shelters and relatives' homes. This figure is expected to increase. While the Israeli authorities supplied Gaza with four mobile water pumps, another five pumps are urgently needed.

On 13 December, the Erez Crossing with Israel was flooded and rendered inaccessible. Medical evacuations to hospitals in the West Bank and Israel will be temporarily carried out through Kerem Shalom Crossing, normally used for goods. Initial reports indicate that one infant died as a result of the cold and nearly 100 were injured in storm-related accidents.

Over 20 per cent of greenhouses and 10 per cent of open fields crops in Gaza have been flooded or damaged, further undermining vulnerable livelihoods. Food insecurity remains high in Gaza (57 per cent) and thus the impact on food prices and access to food for vulnerable people will need to be closely monitored in the coming days.

In the West Bank, the impact has been of concern as well, characterized by a lack of access to multiple areas. The governorates most affected by the snow, reaching over one metre in some places, are Nablus, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron. Other areas in the northern West Bank (Salfit, in particular) have been affected by heavy rainfall, which has caused flooding and damage to homes. Electricity outages have been widespread, including 80 per cent of Ramallah City during the first day of the storm, among many other areas. UNRWA is closely monitoring the situation in the 19 refugee camps in the West Bank, with several instances of flooding and domestic fires, requiring evacuation or assistance being reported. Emergency Psychosocial Support Teams have been responding to hundreds of calls for assistance, however, the number of families and children reached has been limited due to access constraints and power shortfalls.

The lack of adequate planning and inability to obtain building permits has contributed to the precarious nature of housing and animal shelters in many herder communities in Area C of the West Bank, compounding the impact of the extreme weather; several herding communities had their structures demolished one day before the storm hit, prompting the UN Humanitarian Coordinator to call again for a halt to demolitions due to their humanitarian impact. This population has been also affected by significant livestock losses due to the storm and it is anticipated that further losses will occur due to the spreading of diseases.

Humanitarian needs and response



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Needs

Gaza Strip

As of 21:00, 14 December, several water storm lagoons and pumping stations across Gaza city had overflowed, flooding extensive residential areas (the number of affected people is being currently assessed); a few water pumps and generators were rendered non-operational. The Municipality declared a state of emergency and requested families to evacuate the following affected areas:

- Sheik Radwan Storm Water lagoon: the flooded area is estimated to 4km and around three metres deep. Pumping from Sheik Radwan lagoon towards the sea is taking place 24 hours a day with a capacity of (700-1,000) m³ per hour.
- Al Manara Storm Water pump station generator (200 kilo volt ampere - KVA) and the Sewage PS5 generator (650 KVA) overflowed and are non-operational; size of affected area is being currently assessed.
- Az Zaiton and Asqula areas: the flooded area is estimated to be 3km and around 1.5 metres deep.
- Sewage Pumping Station 7B, including its 1100 KVA generator, was flooded; the station is now operating on a stand-by generator, 800 KVA, located on the roof of the station.
- American Friendship lagoon (Tofah) Area: the flooded area is estimated to be 1km and around 0.5 metre deep.



Shelter and NFIs

- Al Malalha area: the

Needs flooded area is estimated to be 1km. The area is being drained 24 hours by Municipality suction trucks, in addition to a mobile pump with a capacity of 70-100 m³ per hour.

The situation in Khan Yunis has also reached a critical stage; as of 20:00 hours, 14 December, Al Amal pond, a 500,000 m³, over 5 metre deep pond for rainwater collection, is expected to overflow, putting 20,000 people at risk of displacement.

Many homes across the Gaza Strip have been affected by the collapse of cesspits, which lead to further flooding, mixed with sewage.

West Bank

- Flooding of residential areas due to the limited capacity of sewage systems has been widespread, however, it is estimated that they have not required the evacuation of people.
- The Old City of Hebron has been flooded, affecting hundreds of shops; the lack of adequate infrastructure has been compounded by the presence of roadblocks, placed by Israeli forces to control Palestinian pedestrian movement in the area, impeding the flow of stormwater.

Response

- The Israeli authorities, in coordination with UNSCO, facilitated the access of four mobile pumps to the CMWU, which are now operational in Gaza City, Khan Yunis and Rafah.
- On 12 December, UNRWA and the ICRC provided some 64,000 litres of fuel to water and sewage installations to operate generators and prevent further flooding. UNRWA is currently distributing an additional 20,000 litres.
- Gaza municipality, along with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MsA), is currently supporting the evacuation of families from flooded areas.

Gaps

- Efforts continue to obtain five additional mobile pumps with a capacity of 200 m³ per hour from outside Gaza. The four pumps already supplied are smaller than the requested size.
- Additional fuel support to operate stand-by generators.

- In the Gaza Strip, as of 21:00 hours, 14 December, approximately 10,000 persons have been evacuated from their homes as a result of flooding. The most affected areas are North Gaza and Gaza City where over 1,500 houses suffered damage due to water entering houses, damaging furniture and electricity networks. Some houses had their roof sheets blown off due to heavy winds. Those displaced or trapped in their flooded homes require a range of NFIs.
- Thousands of homes and shelters in the West Bank sustained damage, however, the precise scope of the phenomenon remains unclear, in part due to the lack of access to

extensive areas; in the Hebron Governorate, at least 300 people have been displaced in herding and Bedouin communities.

Response

- In Gaza, as of 21:00 hours, 14 December, emergency shelter has been provided to 1,129 displaced families (5,246 individuals), who were evacuated to 10 government schools, one UNRWA school, and three community centers, while the remaining families sought refuge with relatives.
- In Gaza, FRCS, Islamic Relief-Pal, Save the Children, MoSA and UNRWA have distributed a total of 2,042 plastic and tarpaulin sheets, 926 blankets, 1,208 mattresses, 18 mats, 8 gas stoves, 6 kitchen sets and 174 cleaning and hygiene kits, to those displaced or affected by floodings.
- In the West Bank, FRCS teams reached approximately 100 affected families and provided them with hundreds of plastic sheets, mattresses, blankets, heaters, and kitchen kits. UNRWA distributed 116 blankets, 19 food parcels, 6 kitchen kits, and 3 heaters in 19 refugee camps.
- Child Protection partners are supporting the distribution of NFIs to the most affected communities in Gaza and the West Bank and providing psychosocial support, where possible.
- Shelter repairs are being carried out by the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and other local partners across the oPt.

Gaps

- In Gaza, 800 mattresses and blankets to families who moved in with their relatives, as well as 700 plastic and tarpaulin sheets to fortify shelters in Al Mbghraga area of Gaza City, are needed. Access to some areas remains difficult and boats have to be used to reach families that remained in their shelters.
- Approximately 30 families living in ten Bedouin communities in the northern Jordan Valley require emergency assistance.
- The FRCS reported that their NFI stocks are running low and are liaising with the ICRC to replenish them, mainly plastic sheeting and tarpaulin.
- The longstanding shortages of cooking gas continue.



Needs

- In the West Bank, WFP, UNRWA and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) received dozens of food assistance requests for affected families, the majority of whom come from herding communities in Tubas, Jericho and Hebron governorates.
- The MoSA in Gaza is preparing a request for WFP to provide emergency food assistance to displaced families who continue to take emergency shelter in public buildings.
- Due to the adverse weather conditions, as well as an UNRWA strike in the West Bank, regular food distribution cycles have been suspended and are expected to resume over the course of next week.

Response

- In Gaza, at the request of the MoSA, WFP provided assistance to 794 families heavily affected by the storm through a weekly family ration of ready to eat food.
- The FRCS and the MoSA distributed at least 490 bread packs on 13 December.
- In the West Bank, UNRWA distributed food parcels to over 30 refugee families affected by floods and damaged shelters. WFP provided in kind food assistance to 8 families and food vouchers to 20 families in Massafer Yatta in southern Hebron. Food assistance (in kind and via vouchers) to an additional 200 families, mostly in herding communities in Tubas, Jericho and Hebron, is being prepared.

Gaps

- The main constraint faced currently in the West Bank is the closure of roads due to the accumulation of snow, especially in Hebron Governorate, impeding the conduct of needs assessments.
- Urgent funding for WFP's regular caseload is required to address critical shortfalls, as of January 2014. In particular, donor support will be required for the food pipeline that supports the MoSA food distributions and vouchers in Gaza and the West Bank.

Agriculture

Needs

- In Gaza, it is estimated that the agricultural damages are mainly in northern Gaza, with 390 dunum of greenhouses and 2,100 dunums of open field planted with vegetables were damaged and in need of repair (over 10 per cent of greenhouses and field crops).
- According to PARC's initial assessment, 50 animal pens were damaged, and 120,000 chicks and 200 heads of livestock died as a result of the weather.
- In the West Bank, preliminary reports of damages to the livestock sector are emerging from Hebron, Bethlehem and Salfit. Bedouin and herding communities seem to be the most affected. Herders are expected to face increasing livestock fatalities and morbidity in the coming weeks.
- Decrease in milk production among ewes in the current lambing season is expected across the oPt, as well as high risk of diarrhoea among small lambs aged up to a month and a half. The situation could have significant implications to the 27,000 livestock owners in the West Bank and nearly 6,300 in Gaza, that possess around 973,000 heads of small ruminants, cattle and poultry.

Response

- Assistance is expected to reach affected areas during the coming week. Food Security members active in agriculture are looking at two emergency responses: provision of fodder and powder milk to affected herders in the West Bank, and rehabilitation of greenhouses in Gaza.

Gaps

- Due to difficulty in access, no emergency response to date has been provided to farmers and herders.



Needs

- Rescue and evacuation to hospitals: Civil defense led the rescue of affected people and the FRCS provided the ambulance services.

Response

- Ministry of Health announced the emergency at its hospitals. Hospitals in the West Bank are working normally and providing health services to the urgent cases they receive.
- According to FRCS, 24 injuries as a result of road accidents were referred to hospitals. The ambulance crews and emergency response teams provided first aid and transportation to hospitals for 90 cases for chronic patients (Heart disease, kidney dialysis) and child birth.

Gaps

- Lack of access of ambulance services, due to the road closures by snow and the low capacity in opening the roads outside the main cities.



Needs

- All schools across the oPt have closed and classes suspended until further notice
- 17 schools in the Gaza Strip have been turned into emergency shelters
- Five schools in the Gaza Strip have been flooded; no reports about school damage in the West Bank

Response and Gaps

NTR

Coordination

In the Gaza Strip key UN and governmental organizations have been involved in monitoring the situation and coordinating responses: UNRWA has set up an operations room, the CIMMU is following on up on WASH needs and requirements, including with Israel, with the support of UNSCO; the MoSa is coordinating the needs assessments and distribution of food and NFIs with various actors in the food security sector. OCHA has been liaising with all the above bodies to facilitate their efforts.

The Israeli Ministry of Defense (COGAT) called for a meeting with key international donors and diplomats on 14 December to discuss potential measures to address the current crisis in the Gaza Strip.

The overall response coordination in the West Bank has been led by the various Governorate offices, along with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (FRCS) and the Palestinian Civil Defense. Cluster and sector leads have been working closely with their counterparts in key ministries and field coordination has been ongoing between the national and international partners, with the support of OCHA, to optimize existing capacities and avoid overlaps.

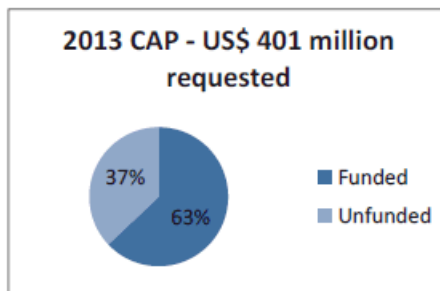
OCHA has also established an inter-agency online database, to track needs and response at the community level. Clusters coordinators and governmental counterparts are feeding information into this system.

The Humanitarian Country Team held an extraordinary meeting on 14 December, led by the Humanitarian Coordinator, James Rawley, focusing on the assessment and response to the extreme weather. The Inter-Cluster Coordination Group would be meeting in the coming days to continue coordinating assessments and response.

Funding

Ongoing needs assessments by various humanitarian actors, aimed at identifying the scope of interventions and funding required to address the impacts of the storm, will continue during the coming days.

The 2013 Consolidated Appeal (CAP) is 63 per cent funded. However, funding has been uneven across Sectors and Clusters. Key sectors for the current response, such as WASH and Agriculture have received low funding, with only 31 and 42 per cent of requested funds met, respectively. Protection Cluster projects received 63 per cent funding; however, of these, none of the nine shelter-related projects received full funding, and four received zero funding.



Since the 2013 CAP is due to expire in two weeks, OCHA will coordinate a joint review of projects included in the 2014 Strategic Response Plan of the Humanitarian Program Cycle (HPC) to highlight to donors those to be prioritized to meet the emerging needs from the storm, as well as those projects requiring revision. OCHA has also encouraged partners to consider applying to the Emergency Response Fund (ERF), which provides rapid funding to NGOs and UN agencies to support humanitarian activities in emergencies. So far no application has been submitted.