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Health Crisis Looms in Gaza Due to Inadequate Water and Sanitation

October 19, 2023



GAZA & THE WEST BANK

Population: 5.2 million
People in Need: 2.1 million

OUR IMPACT

People Helped Last Year: 820,049
Our Team: 89 employees
Program Start: 2002

Lack of access to water is one of the biggest challenges in the humanitarian emergency

in Gaza right now, and children face the greatest health risks.

Action Against Hunger staff warn that overcrowded displacement shelters are close to the breaking point, as thousands of people accessing the shelters also face inadequate water and sanitation infrastructure. One such shelter is currently supporting more than 24,000 people – with 60 percent of children there affected by diarrhea. People are also resorting to open defecation. This is a health crisis on the brink of explosion.

The United Nations estimates that there is less than one gallon of water per person each day for the 2.3 million people living in Gaza, half of whom are children, who are most at risk from water shortages and diarrheal infections – a leading cause of child mortality globally. This limited amount of water is likely to decrease by the day as supplies and fuel used to make water drinkable in desalination plants become even more scarce.

“Faced with this impossible situation, many Gazan families are resorting to non-drinking water sources, such as agricultural wells. This puts them at imminent risk of dehydration and even an outbreak of infectious diseases such as cholera,” said Chiara Saccardi, Action Against Hunger’s Officer in the Middle East. “Such an epidemic, if it happens, would make this serious crisis an even bigger problem.”

Gaza is still facing a blackout and has been without electricity for more than a week, affecting basic services such as water, sanitation, and access to food. Action Against Hunger is prepared to distribute basic short-term supplies such as water, food, hygiene products, diapers, blankets, and mattresses, but in the absence of a ceasefire and the continuing blockade, this is proving challenging.

“We are urgently calling for a ceasefire and the establishment of a humanitarian corridor to ensure that aid gets to where it is needed the most,” said Saccardi.

Action Against Hunger has been working in the Occupied Palestinian Territories since 2002 and began operating in Gaza in 2005. Our work includes activities to improve the clean water supply throughout Gaza, especially in health centers; to increase food production by supporting farmers in cultivation techniques and greenhouse construction; and to provide employment training to young people and women to help them find jobs and start businesses.

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Action Against Hunger leads the global movement to end hunger. We innovate solutions, advocate for change, and reach 21 million people every year with proven hunger prevention and treatment programs. As a nonprofit that works across 55 countries, our 8,900 dedicated staff members partner with communities to address the root causes of hunger, including climate change, conflict, inequity, and emergencies. We strive to create a world free from hunger, for everyone, for good.