

Background

1.7 out of 2.2 million in the Gaza are Palestine refugees

Since 2007, Gaza has been **Blockaded**

UNRWA Operation in Gaza provides educational, health and food aid to Palestine refugee

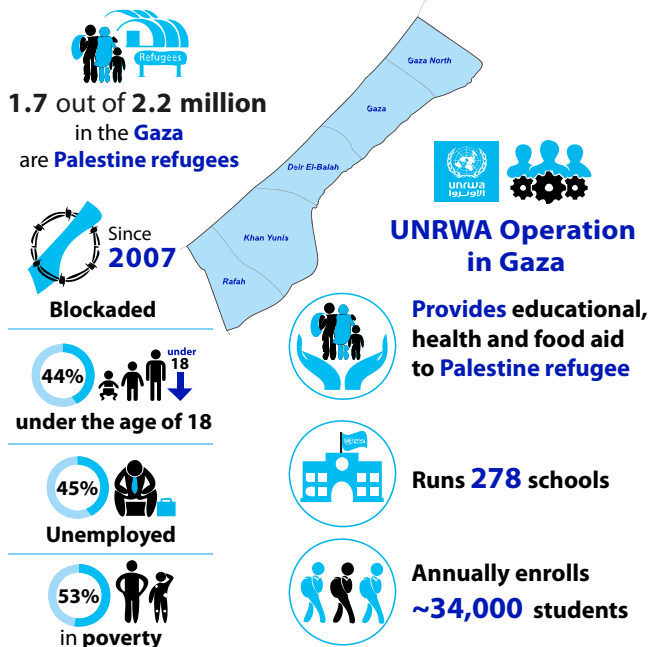
Runs 278 schools

Annually enrolls ~34,000 students

44% under the age of 18

45% Unemployed

53% in poverty

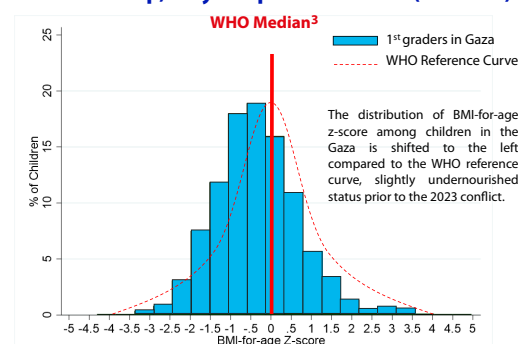


Results

Table 1. Characteristics of Children and their Families, School Entrance Health Exam, Gaza, July - September 2023 (N=3229)

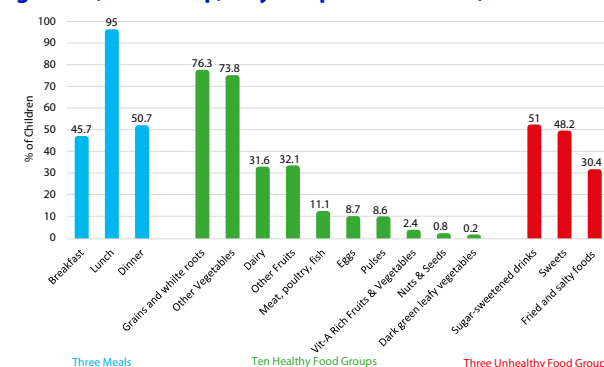
Household & Child Status	N (%)
Total	3229 (100)
Child Status	
< -2 HAZ (Stunting)	94 (2.9)
< -2 BMIZ (Wasting)	129 (4.4)
Minimum Dietary Diversity (≤4 Food Groups)	2225 (68.9)
Anemia (<11.5 g/dL) ²	963 (29.8)
Household Food Assistance	
Receiving Food Assistance	2694 (83.9)
Food Security (7-pt scale) ³	
Food Secure (0-2 pt)	787 (24.9)
Mild/Mod Food Insecure (3-5 pt)	1025 (32.5)
Severe Food Insecure (6-7 pt)	1343 (42.6)

Figure 1. Distribution of BMI-for-Age Z-score for 1st graders in the Gaza Strip, July - September 2023 (N=2915)^a



a n=49 missing values for any combination of weight, height or date of birth.

Figure 2. Daily consumption of meals and 13 food groups, 1st graders, Gaza Strip, July – September 2023 (N=2840-3196)^a



a n=33-389 missing values for frequencies of meal intake in the past 7 days and 13 food groups in the past month since the time of interview.

Methods

1. School Entrance Health Exam for 1st graders at UNRWA Clinics (Feb-Sept each year)

2. Systematically recruited N=3,229 children (~10% of all UNRWA 1st graders)

- Anthropometry
- Hemoglobin
- Usual Meal frequencies in the past 7 days
- Usual Food frequencies in the past 6 months
- Household food security (Arab Family Food Security Score)¹

- 85% of families with 1st graders were on food assistance.
- 75% of families were classified as moderate-to-severely food insecure;
- 50% of children did not eat breakfast daily.
- 70% of children did not meet minimum dietary diversity, consuming ≤4 out of 10 food groups daily.
- 27% of children were thin (<-1 BMI2).
- 25% of children were anemic.

Conclusion

- Children and their families were highly food insecure, but slightly undernourished, which was likely maintained by heavy dependence on food aid.
- High prevalence of micronutrient deficiencies and anemia in Gaza is likely due to poor dietary diversity.
- With mass destruction, dislocation, very limited access to water, fuel, food and medical supplies, children and their families in Gaza risk dehydration, starvation, infectious disease and mortality.

References:

- Sahyoun et al. JNutr 2014.
- WHO, 2011.
- WHO child growth standards. 2006.