

Gaza



Amidst ongoing conflict and political instability, International Medical Corps has provided critical health services to vulnerable populations in Gaza since 2008, including emergency medical, mental health and psychosocial assistance.

We are currently in the midst of a five-year humanitarian assistance project entitled “Gaza 2020: Health Matters.” This project aims to strengthen the emergency preparedness and response capabilities of local non-governmental (NGO) organizations and community-based organizations (CBOs), while improving access to quality primary and secondary health care for all residents in Gaza. Through the project, an International Medical Corps-led consortium consisting of CARE, Mercy Corps, and Juzoor for Health and Social Development works to provide support to both primary and secondary healthcare sub-partners. To date, the project has supported over 14,000 beneficiaries.



Gaza's population of approximately 2 million reside in a politically tense 25-mile long, 6-mile wide strip of land that has passed from Egyptian to Israeli to Palestinian administrative control within 70 years.

Israeli authorities continue to maintain tight control of Gaza's borders as the long-running Israeli-Palestinian dispute exacerbates development efforts, causing delays in the delivery of supplies and restrictions on the mobility of humanitarian workers, along with significant impacts to the health and well-being of the Palestinians living within Gaza. With a robust long-term presence in the region, International Medical Corps continuously monitors Gaza's security situation and remains prepared to respond to emergencies that arise.

The 2014 conflict forced thousands in Gaza to evacuate their communities, destroyed over 20,000 homes, killed over 1,000 people, and resulted in the internal displacement of thousands of Gazans. Today, the humanitarian situation in Gaza—now a result of protracted conflict—continues to deteriorate as a result of Israel's 10-year blockade and internal Palestinian political divisions. Of Gaza's nearly 2 million people, 1.6 million are currently in need of humanitarian assistance, including mental health and psychosocial support. Health facilities struggle to deliver services due to severe shortages in electricity and fuel, with some forced to reduce operations to a few hours during the day in areas where vulnerable populations already suffer from access issues. Water and sanitation (WASH) concerns are also high given the lack of access to clean water and long-term power outages.



HEALTH MATTERS

As the first program of its kind in Gaza, "Gaza 2020: Health Matters" strengthens non-governmental (NGO) and community-based (CBO) health organizations to increase access to and improve the quality of health services in Gaza. Currently funded through USAID's Humanitarian Assistance Package, Health Matters is implemented through an International Medical Corps-led consortium that includes CARE, Mercy Corps and Juzoor. The Consortium brings together varied expertise for a holistic program that is gender-sensitive, responsive to crisis and reflects the different needs of men, women, boys, girls and vulnerable persons in Gaza. The program addresses gaps in Gaza's current health system with a focus on primary and secondary health, nutrition, mental health and community-based rehabilitation.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND COORDINATION

With its well-earned reputation as a fast, reliable First Responder, International Medical Corps leads the emergency preparedness and response component for Health Matters, preparing people in disaster-prone areas to better withstand adversity. We have prepositioned medical supplies at partner facilities across the Gaza Strip for emergency use, and continually train partner staff in key medical techniques to prepare them to handle a potentially high influx of patients. Because quick and accurate decision-making processes prove vital during an emergency, we have also developed software systems for our partners to electronically track and manage their medical supplies and patient data.



SECONDARY HEALTHCARE

International Medical Corps works with three partner NGO hospitals across the Gaza Strip to strengthen the quality of and access to services provided by these organizations, including ophthalmology, orthopedics and minimally invasive surgery. Through Health Matters, partners are able to renovate operating rooms and other medical infrastructure to improve their surgical services. To date, over 180 surgeries have been made possible through Health Matters.

In 2017, Israeli authorities denied permits for 54% of the Gaza citizens who applied to travel abroad for medical treatment. Through Health Matters, International Medical Corps facilitates surgeons from Gaza to travel to Jerusalem for medical fellowships to obtain training that they can then bring back to Gaza in order to make more lifesaving medical skills available locally. We also facilitate medical missions to Gaza that train and supervise local surgeons in acquiring updated surgical techniques.

PRIMARY HEALTHCARE

Working with local NGOs and community-based organizations through small grants, Health Matters supports priority technical areas for Gaza, including non-communicable diseases, mental health and psychosocial support, nutrition and community-based rehabilitation. Health Matters has reached over 14,000 Gaza residents to date, from the elderly to children under 5 and their caregivers, providing treatment, training and health education. International Medical Corps also provides primary health care services to marginalized communities along Gaza's border in access restricted areas through mobile medical teams, with an estimated 9,000 patient visits. In addition, International Medical Corps is leading the Health Matters effort to address a critical gap in Gaza's health care system: breast cancer prevention and awareness.



EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

In Gaza, chronic conditions of stress and deprivation due to continued violence impacts the ways in which parents care for their children. Specifically, trauma and distress can contribute to maternal depression and poor caregiving practices. Under our Early Childhood Development program, International Medical Corps provided mothers a safe haven to form supportive relationships and work together to address challenges they face in developing a healthy supportive relationship with their children. The program included 10 weekly workshops, where mothers learned childcare skills and approaches for managing stress, establishing structure and positive discipline, while supporting the physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of their children.

International Medical Corps also hosted sessions with fathers focused on the importance of play for children, positive methods of discipline and strategies for keeping children safe within a treacherous environment. Our early childhood development initiatives have directly benefited more than 20,000 parents and children, including a fathers-teens program on stress awareness attended by 4,600 participants.



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A preeminent First Responder for more than 30 years, International Medical Corps has provided emergency relief to those struck by disaster, no matter where they are, no matter what the conditions, working with them to recover, rebuild and, through training, gain the skills and tools required to achieve self-reliance.

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