



EDUCATION MATTERS

JULY-2024

IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT
OF HALTED EDUCATION
PROCESS ON THE CONFLICT-
AFFECTED CHILDREN WITH
AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES

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About Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children (ASDC):

Atfaluna is a local non-governmental organization, established in 1992 in Gaza City, in order to enable persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip to have their chance in life through education, rehabilitation, and job training and employment opportunities. From its establishment as a small school for persons with hearing disability serving 27 students, Atfaluna now serves more than 40,000 persons annually through a multitude of services and training programs implemented within an inclusive approach for persons with and without disabilities. These interventions aim at providing equal opportunities for persons with hearing disability in the society.



Study Objective:

In the Gaza Strip, since October, 2023 the education system is totally halted. The war has caused severe damages into the educational infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. A complete scholastic year was lost. The assessment studies the multi-factors impact of war and damaged educational system on children with and without disabilities. The assessment aims at advising measures that can eliminate the negative impact of interrupted education.

Methodology & Sampling:

To evaluate the disturbed education situation among children with and without disabilities during the current escalation and emergency, we will employ a mixed-methods approach that integrates both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. This comprehensive strategy ensures a thorough understanding of the educational challenges and needs faced by these children, regardless of their disabilities.



Data Collection Tools and Processes:

Surveys:

Structured surveys were administered to a representative sample of parents and caregivers of children with and without disabilities. These surveys gathered quantitative data on educational access, available resources, and challenges faced by these groups.

Focus Groups:

Focus group discussions were organized separately for parents and children. These discussions explored personal experiences and perceived barriers in detail, providing a richer understanding of the issues.

Interviews:

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, school administrators, and representatives from disability organizations. These interviews aimed to gain in-depth insights into the educational environment and the specific needs of children with disabilities.

Data Collection Tools and Processes:

Observations:

Direct observations in educational settings (where possible) were carried out to assess the physical and instructional environment, identifying any accessibility issues.

Sampling:

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation from both children with disabilities (males and females) and those without, across all Gaza Strip regions.

Stakeholder Engagement

Key stakeholders, including educators, parents, children, disability advocacy groups, and were actively engaged throughout the assessment process. Their involvement ensure a comprehensive understanding of the educational needs and challenges.

Data Collection Tools and Processes:

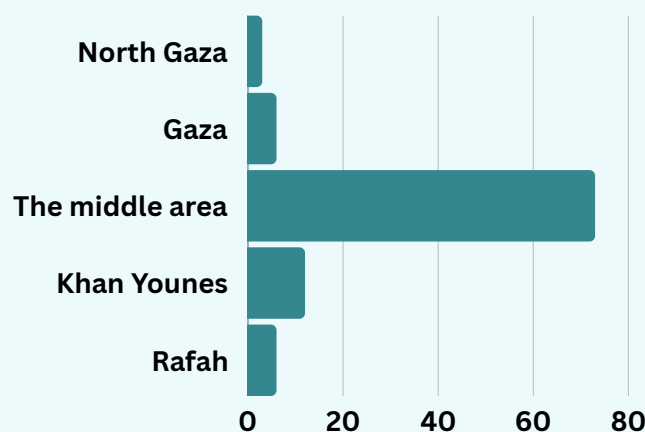
Target Population:

The target population includes children aged 5-18 years, both with and without disabilities, who are currently residing in the affected areas within the Gaza Strip.

Sample Size:

A sample size of approximately **372** children (including both **52%** males and **48%** females) were targeted, with **35%** children with disabilities. This size is chosen to ensure statistical significance and sufficient power for comparative analysis. Geographical distribution was considered during the assessment to ensure diverse representation.

Geographical Distribution:



Background:

On 7th of October Gaza strip was subjected to an escalation results in a catastrophic situation affected the living conditions for people with and without disabilities within the Gaza strip.

The recent escalation affected the education system where most schools damaged and the remaining ones transferred to displacement shelter for displaced individuals who had to leave their homes due to continuous bombing and evacuation instructions.



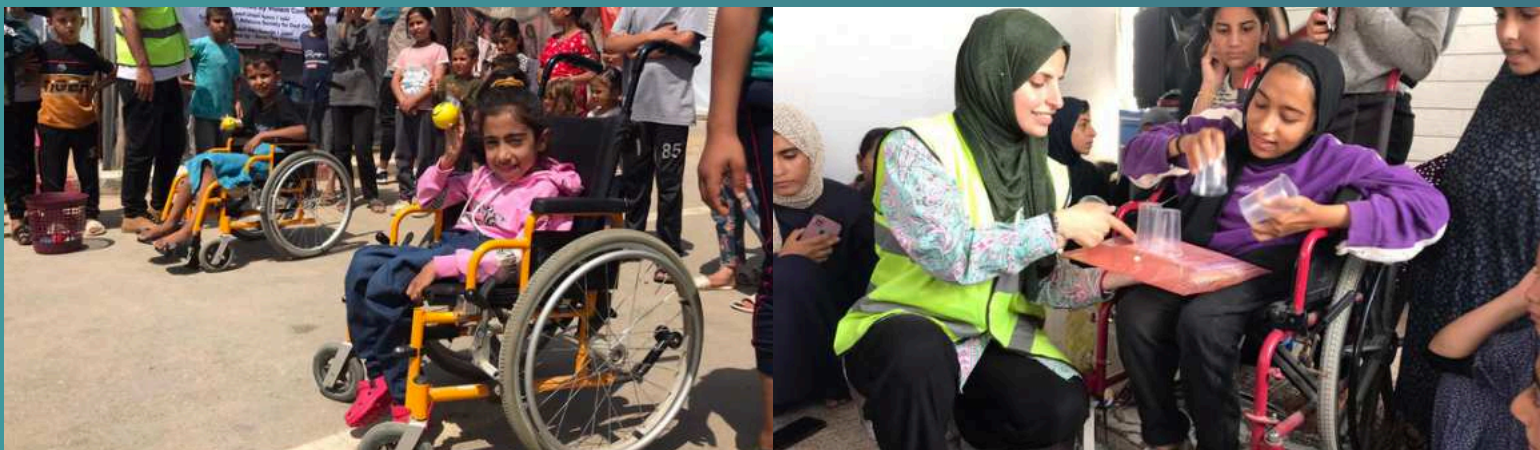
Education Cluster "OCHA" assessment titled "Education Under Attack"-January,2024

OCHA assessment showed that more than **625,000** students and close to **23,000** teachers in the Gaza Strip have been affected by school closures and attacks on education since 7 October 2023 with no access to education and a safe place, **78%** of total buildings sustained damages(386schools), **92%** of total school buildings are either being used as IDPs shelters (almost four times their capacity) and/or sustained damage. This will constitute an additional burden to ensure the continuity of education when security condition allows, as they need rehabilitation, and cleaning works and many will continue to serve as IDPs centers for families who have lost their homes among them (**107** UNRWA School,**279** Public School), the assessment showed that **465k** were affected by school damages (**448k** students,**17k** teachers) also there is(**4660** students killed and 8109 injured in addition to **239** teachers killed and **756** were injured.



World Bank assessment titled “Gaza Strip Interim Damage Assessment “ -March,2024

found that for students in Gaza, this year marks the third year out of the last four that their education has been severely disrupted and or completely interrupted. Currently, **100%** of children in Gaza are out of school (approximately **625,000** students). To date, half a year of schooling is effectively lost, leaving school-aged children missing critical instructional hours and losing foundational skills essential to achieve a better livelihood in their future. Likely at least a full year of schooling will be lost, putting the education system at significant risk of massive dropouts as students become unable to return to school even after the current conflict ends. The education system will take years to operate even at pre-conflict levels. Surviving students and teachers are experiencing psychosocial trauma with varying levels of severity,



the education system has completely collapsed, with all children out of school and most schools being used as shelter for internally displaced people (IDP). An estimated **17,000** children have been separated from their families,⁸ rendering them particularly vulnerable to various forms of exploitation and abuse. Owing to pervasive trauma linked to the ongoing violence mental health has deteriorated severely especially among the vulnerable including women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, The conflict has terminated any dignified, safe, and stable career/job prospects for youth, due to its punishing toll on Gaza's economy, infrastructure, and education system affecting 80,000 higher education students.



Education Cluster” OCHA” assessment titled” Education Under Attack” -March,2024 showed that

274 school buildings have been hit directly since 7 October 2023, **134** schools were damaged, while **75** schools were likely damaged, **21** where possibly damaged while **21** Unknown (school buildings with no reported damage).



A previous assessment conducted by ASDC” titled” Education situation” - 2022 showed that

8% of school principals reported that none of the teachers in the school had received any training related to inclusive education strategies and lacked knowledge and skills about the strategies of the inclusive approach and dealing with persons with disabilities from a right based approaches rather than a humanitarian aspect, as stipulated according to the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The results shows that **83.1%** of teachers reported that they do not have sufficient experience and skills to deal with students with various type of disabilities, and school principals reported that **56%** of teachers do not have the capacity to identify and disaggregation of the students who have learning difficulties, **66.8%** of teachers lack the capacity and skills to develop appropriate teaching plans that consider the individual differences among students and responds with the needs of students with and without disabilities, and **61%** of teachers do not prepare teaching plans that suitable for the students with learning difficulties and people with disabilities,

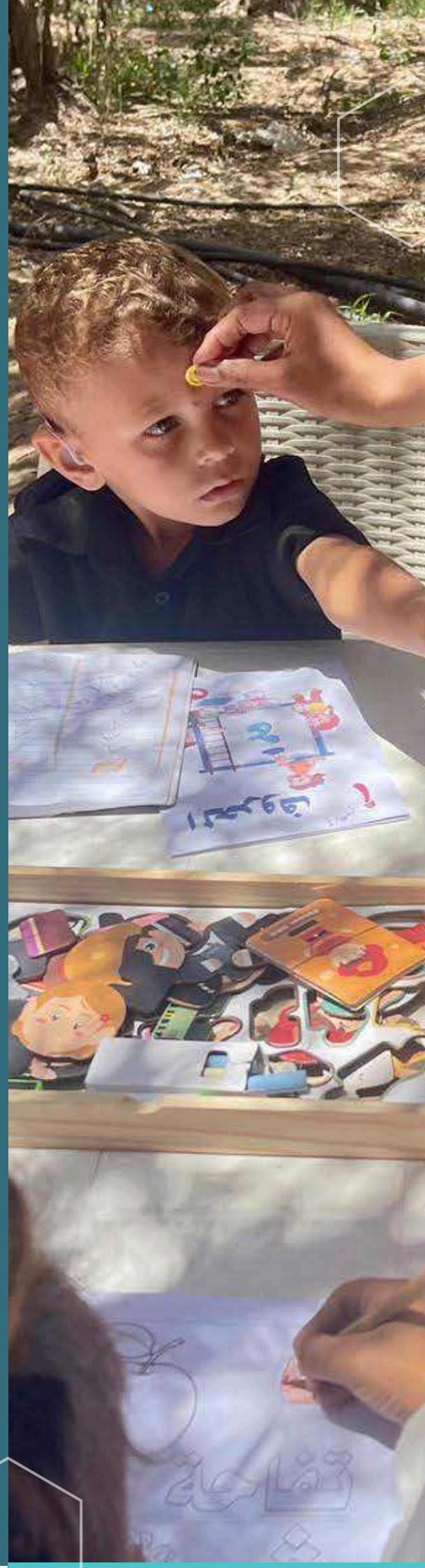


87.3% of school principals reported that the curriculum is not adapted for students with disabilities and learning difficulties, **96.2%** indicated that the current e-learning with existing inclusion gaps cannot replace the face-to-face learning, accordingly, **82.9%** parents and students are not satisfied with the quality of the current e-learning processes, The situation analysis indicated that **70.5%** teachers do not accept students with disabilities in the schools. **59.3%** of teachers notice that students with disabilities are subjected to bullying by their peers in public schools, **76.2%** of teachers reported that students with disabilities are excluded in the classroom sittings, **88.3%** of teachers believe that people with disabilities constitute a burden on society, and **79.7%** of teachers believe that the prevailing systems are a major reason for negative discrimination against students with disabilities.



A need assessment conducted by ASDC titled “Situation of conflict affected persons with and without disabilities” March,2024

showed that **94.5%** of children with and without disabilities reported that they face shortages in medical support, **96.7%** reported that they suffer from continuous crying and panic attacks., **96.7%** reported that they suffer from continuous crying and panic attacks. The percentage among males reached **93.6%** while among females **98.3%**, **57.6%** reported that manifestations of violence among children increased during the war the percentage among males reached **66.4%** while among females, **52.25%**, while the result among CwDs showed higher rate and reported to be **79.8%** while **37.4%** reported that children are suffering from bed wetting the percentage among males reached **40%** while among females, **35.7%**.



Findings:

Children with and without disabilities in displacement shelters:



%72

- **72%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that the current displacement shelters are not suitable for children, with this percentage rising to **73%** among children with disabilities (CWDs).



%74

- **74%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, indicated that the current displacement shelters have contributed to the spread of infections and seasonal diseases, with the percentage reaching **77%** among CWDs.



%65

- **65%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that their children do not receive suitable medical care when they suffer from any problems or diseases.



%87

- **87%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that their children are susceptible to physical abuse in the current displacement shelters, with the percentage reaching **89%** among males, **85%** among females, and **87%** among CWDs.



%51

- **51%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that they lack the ability to calm their children during emergencies such as bombings. This percentage was **52%** among males, **50%** among females, and **43%** among CWDs.



%90

- **90%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that there are no WCs that consider privacy issues for children and women, with this percentage rising to **98%** among CWDs.



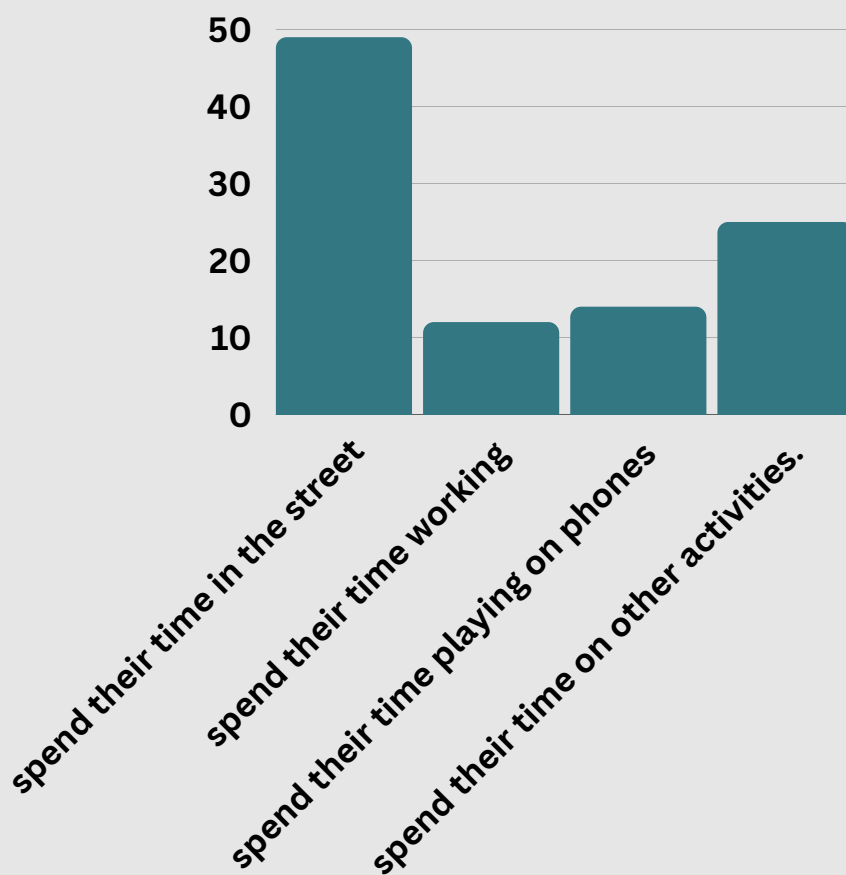
- **65%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that there is no clean water for drinking in the displacement shelters.



- **31%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that they did not receive any relief aid during the current escalation.

How Children spending their time!

- Parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported how their children spend their spare time as follows:
- **49%** spend their time in the street or around the displacement shelter.
- **12%** spend their time working and selling.
- **14%** spend their time playing on phones and electronic games.
- **25%** spend their time on other activities.



Impact of protection of children with and without disabilities:



%87

- **87%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that the lack of inclusive educational and recreational activities has led to increased problems for their children. This percentage was **89%** among males, **86%** among females, **87%** among children without disabilities, and **87%** among children with disabilities.



%86

- **86%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, stated that engaging children in non-curricular educational activities helps decrease anxiety and stress. This percentage was **85%** among children without disabilities and **87%** among children with disabilities.



%79

- **79%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, admitted to using violence against their children when they make mistakes during the current situation. This percentage was **75%** among children without disabilities and **87%** among children with disabilities.



%79

- **79%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported an increase in manifestations of violence among their children during the current circumstances. This percentage was **83%** among males and **74%** among females.



%44

- **44%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, stated that their children do not receive clear instructions on how to protect themselves. This percentage was **45%** among children without disabilities and **43%** among children with disabilities.



%69

- **69%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that the current displacement shelters have led to increased problems and violence among their children. This percentage was **64%** among children without disabilities and **77%** among children with disabilities.

Impact of protection of children with and without disabilities:



%90

- **90%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that their children face bullying. This percentage was **93%** among males, **87%** among females, and **100%** among children with disabilities.



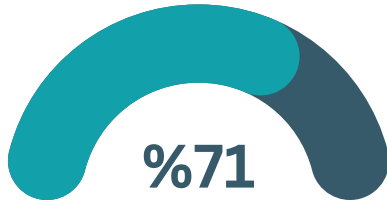
%87

- **87%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that their children are exposed to protection issues in the current displacement shelters. This percentage was **87%** among children without disabilities, **87%** among children with disabilities, **89%** among males, and **85%** among females.



%91

- **91%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that there are no safe places for women and children to spend their time during the day. This percentage was **92%** among males, **90%** among females, **87%** among children without disabilities, and **98%** among children with disabilities.



- **71%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that their children do not receive education from either parents or education centers.
- **Symptoms among children with and without disabilities:**
 - Children with and without disabilities suffer from distraction and lack of focus.
 - Children with and without disabilities suffer from bedwetting.
 - Children with and without disabilities suffer from fear and panic.
 - Children with and without disabilities suffer from crying.
 - Children with and without disabilities suffer from introversion and unwillingness to talk to others.
 - Children with and without disabilities exhibit violent behavior towards their peers.

- Impact on food security status of families of children with and without disabilities:



- **21%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that within the last month, their children did not receive even one meal per day.

· Impact on the education status among children with and without disabilities:



%88

- **88%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that their children's academic performance has deteriorated due to the suspension of education. This percentage was **86%** among children without disabilities, while it increased to **93%** among children with disabilities.



%83

- **83%** of children, both with and without disabilities, expressed that they miss going back to school and following up on their lessons. This sentiment was shared by 84% of parents of male children and **75%** of parents of female children.



%90

- **90%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported an urgent need for their children to return to school. This need was felt by **89%** of parents of children without disabilities and dramatically increased to **91%** among parents of children with disabilities.



%96

- **96%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, expressed concern about their children's future due to the interruption of education.



%94

- **94%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, believed that using active and interactive learning methods would encourage their children to engage in education. This belief was held by **93%** of parents of male children, **96%** of parents of female children, **94%** of parents of children without disabilities, and **95%** of parents of children with disabilities.



%87


- **87%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, felt that their children should start engaging in both curricular and non-curricular educational activities during the current situation. The percentage was **89%** for parents of children without disabilities and **84%** for parents of children with disabilities.

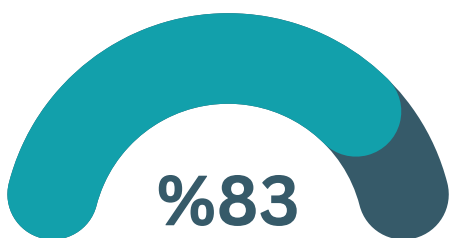


%88



%74

- 
- **88%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that their children's inability to follow up on their lessons negatively affected their behavior. This was true for **90%** of parents of children without disabilities and **86%** of parents of children with disabilities, with **91%** of parents of male children and **86%** of parents of female children reporting the same.
 - **74%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported that their children had developed negative habits and behaviors due to the interruption of education. This was reported by **75%** of parents of male children, **74%** of parents of female children, and **75%** of parents of children with disabilities.



- **94%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported a lack of specialized centers providing educational services during the current circumstances. This percentage was **98%** among parents of children with disabilities and **92%** among parents of children without disabilities.

- **83%** of parents of children, both with and without disabilities, reported a lack of internet access or smart devices necessary for completing e-learning.

Children testimonials:

Ola, 13 years old:

"What I miss the most is wearing my school uniform. It was a comforting routine to come back from school and do my homework while still dressed in it. It made me feel focused and ready to learn. Now, not having that routine feels strange.

Eman, 15 Years old:

"I feel really sad that I didn't get the chance to move from middle school to high school this year. I miss my friends a lot; we used to have such meaningful conversations and always supported each other through everything. It's been tough not being able to see them every day."





Sondos, 7 Years old:

"I miss school so much. I miss waking up early every morning, getting dressed, and preparing for the day. Maths classes were always my favourite; I loved solving problems and learning new concepts. Since the conflict started, I've been feeling really sad. I miss the routine, seeing my friends, and having teachers who helped me learn and grow. I hope things get better soon so we can go back to school."



Ahmed, 8 years old:

"I really miss going to school every day and playing with my friends during break times. It's been hard being away from everyone. I'm worried because it seems like it's taking a really long time for school to open again. I hope we can all be back together soon."



Youssef, 7 years old with hearing disability:

"I miss school because I want to move to second grade, grow bigger and bigger, write and draw again, and find friends I can communicate with."



Alma, 12 years old with hearing disability:

"I really want to see my friends again and talk with them, and meet up like we used to. It's been a long time without school, and at school, we stop being lazy and play more."



Nada, 9 years old with a physical disability:

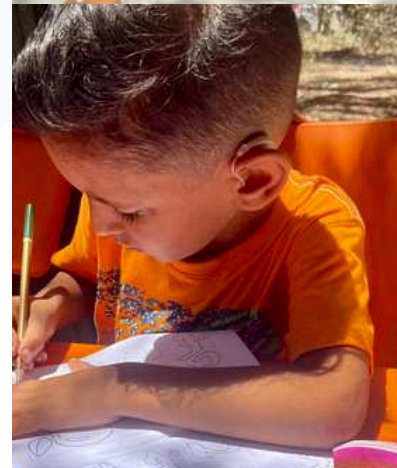
"School was where I had a lot of fun. I really want classes to come back. I love Arabic lessons a lot and I miss solving its assignments."

Recommendations

Based on the findings regarding the conditions faced by children with and without disabilities in displacement shelters, the following recommendations are proposed to address the various issues identified:

1. Improve Living Conditions in Displacement Shelters

- **Suitability for Children:** Ensure that displacement shelters are designed and maintained to be suitable for children. This includes creating child-friendly spaces that are safe and conducive to their well-being.
- **Hygiene and Health:** Implement rigorous sanitation protocols and provide necessary resources to reduce the spread of infections and seasonal diseases. Ensure access to adequate medical care, particularly for children with disabilities.
- **Privacy and Safety:** Install WCs that consider privacy issues for children and women. Enhance physical security measures to protect children from physical abuse and bullying.
- **Water and Sanitation:** Provide clean drinking water and improve sanitation facilities to meet the needs of all residents, with particular attention to children and those with disabilities.



2. Enhance Support and Resources for Families

- **Relief Aid:** Increase the distribution of relief aid to ensure that all families, especially those with children with disabilities, receive the necessary support during escalations.
- **Emergency Support:** Offer training and resources to parents to help them manage and calm their children during emergencies such as bombings.
- **Food Security:** Implement programs to ensure that children receive at least one nutritious meal per day. This is critical for their physical and mental health.



3. Address Educational Needs

- **Return to School:** Develop and implement strategies to facilitate the safe return of children to school. Address the urgent need for education among children with disabilities.
- **Alternative Education Methods:** Utilize active and interactive learning methods to engage children in education. This includes both curricular and non-curricular activities to reduce anxiety, stress, and promoting, enhancing the concept of inclusive self-learning for children with and without disabilities.
- **Access to Resources:** Ensure that children have access to the internet and smart devices to enable e-learning. Establish specialized centers to provide educational services tailored to the needs of all children, especially those with disabilities.
- **Inclusive Activities:** Create inclusive educational and recreational activities to mitigate behavioral issues and enhance the overall development of children.



4. Enhance Protection and Safety Measures

- **Protection from Violence:** Implement programs to reduce violence within displacement shelters. Provide clear instructions to children on how to protect themselves and ensure these instructions are accessible to children with disabilities.
- **Safe Spaces:** Establish safe spaces where women and children can spend their time during the day. These spaces should be inclusive and accessible to all children, with and without disabilities.
- **psychological and Mental Health Support:** Provide mental health services to address issues such as distraction, lack of focus, bedwetting, fear, panic, crying, introversion, and violent behavior among children.



5. Foster a Supportive Community Environment


- **Community Engagement:** Engage the community in creating a supportive environment for children. Encourage positive interactions and activities that can help build resilience among children and their families.
- **Training for Parents:** Offer workshops and resources for parents on non-violent discipline methods and ways to support their children's emotional and psychological needs during stressful times.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regularly monitor the conditions in displacement shelters and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented programs. Adjust strategies as needed based on feedback and changing circumstances.



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