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# Palestine. UNICEF partners with Sweden to build 400 schools in Gaza

By Resumen Latinoamericano on April 4, 2026

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Middle East Summary, April 4, 2026

Swedish billionaire Roger Akelius has pledged to fund the construction of 400 schools in the Gaza Strip to replace those destroyed after years of war and Israeli bombing.

The initiative, channeled through his foundation and in cooperation with the Swedish government and UNICEF, seeks to restore educational opportunities to hundreds of thousands of Palestinian children who have been left without access to education due to the devastating impact on school infrastructure.

The **education crisis in Gaza** has reached critical levels. After more than two years of conflict, the school system is virtually devastated: **700,000 children lack access to a safe environment in which to learn** and develop, as more than 90% of schools have been damaged or destroyed.

To respond to this emergency, UNICEF is strengthening its Back to Learning initiative , a large-scale educational intervention that aims to protect the right to education for the most vulnerable children in Gaza. We are working with our partners to ensure that all school-age children return to the classroom as soon as possible.

## What is *Back to School* and why is it key in Gaza?

**Back to School** is one of the world's largest education initiatives **in emergencies** . We launched it at UNICEF so that every child can continue learning, including those living in contexts of war, displacement, or humanitarian crisis.

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The initiative combines **education, protection, and emotional and psychosocial support**, three essential components to ensure that children can regain stability and continue their comprehensive development.

In Gaza, this intervention has become a cornerstone of our work to protect the future of thousands of children. Nearly two and a half years of attacks on the education system have left an entire generation at risk: **60% of school-age children currently lack access to in-person education, and more than 335,000 children under five are at risk of severe developmental delays** due to the collapse of early childhood services.

Before this war against children, the Palestinian population of Gaza had some of the highest literacy rates in the world. Education was a source of pride, resilience, and progress for generations. Today, that legacy is seriously threatened.

## “Going back to school gives me hope.”



Masa, 13, prepared with her school supplies provided by UNICEF to resume her studies, which she had to abandon when the conflict in Gaza began. © UNICEF/UNI939028/Crickx

In a temporary learning space in **Deir al-Balah, south of Gaza City, 13-year-old Masa** fills a small bag with something she has been longing for: school supplies. After two years of war, her education—like that of thousands of other children—was completely disrupted.

After months without access to these basic supplies, Masa received a **school kit** that included a notebook, pencils, an eraser, a ruler, geometry tools, and colored pencils. For her, having these materials means regaining her dream of continuing her studies.

**UNICEF is distributing these supplies after months of being unable to do so**, to help them resume their studies, rebuild their routines and regain the sense of normalcy that comes with going back to school.

*“I love going to school to learn and be with my friends. These materials help me a lot with my studies. I feel relieved because I won’t have to buy them at such high prices,”* says Masa, who dreams of becoming an engineer when she grows up.

**Masa’s story reflects that of thousands of children** who, despite the destruction and losses, find in education an opportunity to look ahead with hope.

For these children, learning materials are not an extra. They are a vital resource that helps them read, write, draw, play, and participate in structured activities that support their development: language, motor skills, problem-solving, and socio-emotional well-being.

## Safe spaces for learning

Given the limited availability of schools for classes, UNICEF has established a **network of temporary learning spaces in tents** and other facilities. These spaces offer reading, writing, and math sessions, as well as access to recreational activities and emotional support.

**Currently, more than 100 temporary learning spaces support more than 135,400 children across Gaza.**

These environments allow children to regain an educational routine, essential for their well-being and to keep their connection with learning alive despite so many interruptions.

In a territory that is often inaccessible and dangerous, these spaces provide safety and vital information for families. They connect children to health, nutrition, and protection services while also offering adequate toilets and handwashing facilities—something many children in shelters simply lack.



One of the most significant challenges in Gaza has been the shortage of school supplies for children to continue their studies. After months of blockade, UNICEF is distributing essential items to facilitate their return to learning. © UNICEF/UNI939046/Crickx

## Mental health and psychosocial support

After more than two years of war, children are showing **severe levels of stress and trauma**. Most have had to endure situations that no child should ever witness.

To address this need, UNICEF is promoting these **educational spaces that include mental health activities and psychosocial support**. They offer not only classes, but also a place to breathe, play, and feel human again—something fundamental in an environment like the one Gaza is currently experiencing.

This comprehensive approach helps children manage their emotions, regain confidence, and reconnect with their peers in a safe environment.

## School supplies to start over

One of the most significant challenges in Gaza has been the shortage of school supplies. After months of blockade, UNICEF has managed to bring in:

- Hundreds of "schools in a suitcase" kits containing notebooks, pencils, rulers, basic materials, and educational games.
- Thousands of recreational kits, with resources for group activities, expression and play.

For many children, these materials represent their first school resources in years, giving them back the real possibility of continuing to learn.

These kits also provide teachers and caregivers with practical, age-appropriate resources to continue their education in difficult conditions, so that children in Gaza can continue learning and growing, even when their lives are disrupted.

**In emergency situations, having these basic learning tools helps to restore routine, reduce stress, and create safer spaces where children can learn, express themselves, and connect with their peers.**

While the world debates how Gaza will recover and rebuild, UNICEF is clear: children must be at the center of all plans, given that almost half of Gaza's population is made up of children under 18.

Returning to school is not just a matter of survival. It is about protecting the engine of Gaza's future. And it is a bridge—not a substitute—toward the full restoration of schools, so that all children can return to formal education and a real future in the classroom.

In the aftermath of this brutal war, rebuilding schools, educational facilities, and universities must be a top priority on Gaza's recovery agenda. **Restoring education restores opportunity.**

Source: Palestine International Broadcast Spanish

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