



CRS transitional shelters alongside damaged and destroyed homes.  
*Photos by Shareef Sarhan*

# CRS Gaza Shelter Programming Overview

ENABLING VULNERABLE PALESTINIANS TO LIVE IN DIGNITY

## CONTEXT

After the 2014 conflict, entire neighborhoods along Gaza's eastern border were reduced to rubble. More than 100,000 people were displaced and in need of long-term housing. Four years later, reconstruction efforts continue to be slow due to restrictions imposed by Israel on construction material. Thousands more families are living in substandard housing because they do not have the means to make repairs themselves.

## EMERGENCY SHELTER PROGRAMMING

In response to the 2014 war in Gaza, CRS built almost 500 transitional shelters for families whose homes were destroyed. Designed to exceed Sphere\* standards, CRS' timber-framed shelters were constructed on each family's land, enabling households to return to their communities and begin rebuilding their lives while living in safe and dignified conditions. Each shelter was designed to last a minimum of 5 years and its L-shaped design allowed for easy expansion for greater privacy and freedom of movement for women.

\* [Sphere](#): A widely known and internationally recognised set of standards for humanitarian response.



# 8,290

INDIVIDUALS IN  
1,230 HOUSEHOLDS HAVE BEEN  
SERVED THROUGH  
CRS SHELTER ASSISTANCE  
SINCE 2014

“ We are going to rebuild what was lost, and now we can live with respect while we do it.

Miriam Baraka,  
transitional shelter beneficiary

 **CRS** *faith.  
action.  
results.*  
CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES



CRS also provided cash assistance to conflict-affected households for repairs to homes that sustained major and minor damage. These included resurfacing exterior walls, replacing broken windows and fixing damaged roofs. The cash assistance allowed households to return their homes to their pre-war condition or even improve them.

Since the 2014 war, the humanitarian situation in Gaza has continued to worsen, with tense and unpredictable relations with Israel. If there is further conflict, CRS is preparing to respond quickly by designing and field-testing new transitional shelter models with local communities, as well as exploring alternatives to transitional shelters, such as cash-based assistance.

### SHELTER UPGRADE PROGRAMMING

CRS supports vulnerable families living in substandard homes to make permanent upgrades to improve their living conditions. Throughout Gaza, people are living in homes with damaged roofs, unsecured windows, unfinished walls, poor plumbing, no access to sewage networks and insufficient space. Simple, durable upgrades for these households make the difference between just having a roof over their heads and living comfortably in a home. Those improvements also lead to better hygiene, a safer environment and enhanced dignity—especially for women and girls, who spend most of their time in the home.

“ Every winter I suffered when rainwater leaked into my house. The children were constantly sick because of the cold.

Warda Shurab,  
shelter upgrade beneficiary



### AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO SHELTER

Everyone has an idea of what kind of home they want, so CRS makes sure all family members get a say. A specially trained social worker meets with each family to make sure women, the elderly, disabled, and even children, have a chance to give their input on their home upgrades, and that upgrade plans include special considerations for accessibility, such as handrails and ramps where needed. CRS engages with both spouses in all project activities, with the result that home upgrades better reflect the needs of the whole family.



### SAFE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE

CRS is Gaza's leading shelter agency in safe asbestos removal (left). Our rigorous standards, such as required training on safe removal and disposal of asbestos, help ensure the health and safety of families and workers. CRS has also designed environmentally responsible sanitation solutions, such as a cost-effective septic tank and cesspit that prevents sewage seeping into groundwater.

Photos by Mohamed Reefi for CRS



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For more information visit [crs.org](http://crs.org)