

UNRWA Fact Sheet

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a relief and human development agency, providing education, healthcare, social services, microfinance, camp improvement and emergency aid to over four million refugees living in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

UNRWA's Mandate

UNRWA was established in 1949 to provide humanitarian assistance to Palestine refugees. It deals specifically with Palestine refugees and continues to provide services pending a solution to their unique political solution.

Who is a Palestine Refugee?

Those people, and their direct descendants, who lived in Mandate Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948 and who lost both home and livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war are considered Palestine refugees.

Where do refugees live?

One third of the refugees live in one of the 58 camps scattered across the Middle East. The other two-thirds live in the cities, towns and villages of the host countries, as well as in the cities around the world. UNRWA provides services to refugees in five fields of operation regardless of whether they live in the camps or not. The Agency provides five main services and emergency aid as required.

Education

Providing education for refugee children is UNRWA's largest area of activity and accounts for half of the Agency's regular budget and three-quarters of its staff. Free elementary and preparatory education is provided in 684 schools across all five fields of operation.

Health

UNRWA's healthcare is delivered by its own doctors in 134 busy health clinics. These clinics provide primary medical care focusing on mother and child, family planning and disease prevention.

Relief and Social Services

UNRWA's Relief and Social Services Department concentrates its efforts on the poorest of the poor, supporting them with food aid, shelter, selective cash assistance and hospitalization costs, among other services. The Department also works to promote self-reliance and poverty alleviation through community development projects. It offers financial and technical support to 104 women's programmes and community rehabilitation centres, which provide skills training, childcare facilities, advice and other social services to the refugees.

Microfinance

UNRWA's microfinance department provides inclusive financial services to help microentrepreneurs, households and women create business development opportunities, create and sustain jobs, increase households' assets, improve habitat, empower women and alleviate poverty. In 2008 it awarded 23,858 loans valued at US\$ 30.53 million in all its areas of operation.

Infrastructure and Camp Development

Established in 2004, the Infrastructure and Camp Development Unit strives to ensure that the housing and infrastructure for refugees is adequate. UNRWA is developing sophisticated camp models using physical and socioeconomic data to allow it to identify and meet the most urgent needs of camp inhabitants.

Emergency Operations

UNRWA's current emergency programme for the West Bank and Gaza, launched in late 2000, seeks to mitigate the impact of the crisis there since the second intifada. By providing food aid, temporary jobs, shelter, mobile health clinics and other services, the programme supports those who are most affected by the external and internecine fighting and severe movement restrictions which resulted in a devastating economic crisis both in Gaza and the West Bank.

Furthermore, in June 2007, UNRWA launched an Emergency Appeal in response to the complete destruction of the Nahr el-Bared camp in Lebanon in the summer of 2007, which left 31,000 residents reliant on UNRWA's Emergency Operations for food, shelter and urgent financial support.

In late January 2009, UNRWA launched a Quick Response Plan to assist Gaza in response to the vast devastation there resulting from Operation Cast Lead.

UNRWA Funding

UNRWA operations are mainly funded by contributions from governments and the European Commission. UNRWA requires some \$545 million for its General Fund to enable the continuation of services in health, education and relief. Unfortunately, UNRWA's General Fund faces a deficit next year in excess of US\$150 million. Given this shortfall, UNRWA will find it exceedingly difficult to meet its 2009 targets for servicing Palestine refugee needs.

The 2009 Emergency Appeal for Gaza and the West Bank aims to raise nearly US\$ 275 million - the largest emergency appeal in UNRWA's history. In June 2008, UNRWA also requested US\$ 228 million for the reconstruction of Nahr El Bared Camp in Lebanon. The appeal for Relief and Early Recovery of Nahr El Bared Camp calls for US\$ 42.7 million from October 2008 to September 2009.

In January 2009, UNRWA launched a nine-month Quick Response Plan (QRP) for US\$ 345 million to restore critical services to refugees in Gaza.

About UNRWA

Some 4.6 million Palestine refugees in UNRWA's five fields of operations - Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem - are eligible for Agency services, including education, healthcare, social services, shelter, micro-credit loans and emergency aid. UNRWA employs nearly 30,000 staff, the vast majority of whom are Palestine refugees. UNRWA's operations are financed almost entirely by voluntary contributions from donors. The Agency's regular budget for 2008-2009 is \$1.1 billion, which covers the recurrent costs of the Agency's education, health and relief and social services activities. UNRWA's headquarters are in Gaza City and Amman.