



The right to work

Overview

In Lebanon, restrictions imposed on Palestine refugees in relation to their right to work discourage young people and many of those of working age from continuing their education or seeking a job. 56% of refugees of working age are jobless, more than half of whom live in South Lebanon. Women are significantly more likely to be unemployed than men. Those with a job are often in low status, casual and precarious employment, insufficient to lift them out of poverty.

On 17 August 2010, the Lebanese Parliament approved legal amendments granting certain rights to Palestine refugees registered and residing in Lebanon, including the issuance, free of charge, of work permits and the provision of end of service benefits through the Lebanese Social Security Fund.

While these legal amendments constituted an important step towards the right to work, they have yet to be put into legal effect. Furthermore, this legislation does not address the fact that Palestine refugees remain barred from practicing in over 30 syndicated professions. In this context, the absence of employment opportunities and decent jobs means that Palestine refugees continue to experience great hardship.

UNRWA Lebanon's Response

Improving access to employment for Palestinians is one of UNRWA's key strategic objectives in Lebanon. UNRWA's vision is for Palestine refugees to be able to obtain decent jobs, enabling them to escape from poverty and to live with dignity. UNRWA aims in particular to enhance the employability of unskilled and low-skilled Palestinians.

An important step is to build the capacity of UNRWA's Employment Services Centres (ESCs) which refer jobseekers to employment opportunities, thus improving access to decent and quality employment. Finally, UNRWA will continue its ongoing advocacy efforts at the policy level with a view to improving the legal status of Palestinians, facilitating easier access to work permits and to a larger spectrum of professions.

Employment Services Centres (ESCs)

- Since 2009 UNRWA has been operating two ESCs to improve the access of Palestine refugees to decent, sustainable and high quality jobs.
- These centres also provide support in relation to alternative employment options including self-employment or small-business development.
- In order to facilitate access of Palestine refugees to the labour market, the ESCs also offer job coaching activities (i.e. workshop preparation for successful job seeking and job interviews).
- A new ESC will open during the course of 2011 in Tyre to address jobseeker's needs in an area which is particularly affected by unemployment.

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At a glance

- The Palestine refugee labour force in Lebanon is estimated at 120,000 individuals.
- 56% of Palestine refugees are jobless: among them, 83.3% are female and 16.6% male.
- 21% of employed refugees work in seasonal employment, and only 7% of those employed have a contract.
- 46.6% of the refugees who are jobless reached preparatory school but do not have any degree.
- Two-thirds of those aged between 23 and 65 with a vocational or university degree are employed.
- Of those with a university degree, 70% work as professionals or associated professionals.

Source: AUB/ UNRWA Socio-economic Survey of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, 2010

Budget

The annual budget for all ongoing employment interventions amounts to US\$ 3 million and is financed from both the general fund and projects. US\$ 800,000 is required every year to fund employment activities through projects.

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Advocacy

- UNRWA has been active in advocating for the right of Palestine refugees to work through the Committee for Employment of Palestine refugees (CEP).
- In cooperation with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UNRWA will continue to advocate for a mechanism to be put in place within the Ministry of Labour to issue work permits for Palestinians.
- An information campaign will be launched to promote these new initiatives.

Vocational Training

- UNRWA currently provides vocational training for approximately 1,400 Palestinian youths in two centres located in Sibliin (South) and Nahr el-Bared (North).
- UNRWA is seeking the accreditation of Sibliin Vocational Training Centre by the Ministry of Education. This will allow Palestine refugees to obtain vocational diplomas recognised in Lebanon and therefore increase their chances of finding employment.
- Throughout 2011, new courses are being introduced within UNRWA's Vocational Training Centres in order to better respond to the needs and requirements of the labour market.

Apprenticeship Programmes and On-the-Job Training

- In 2010 UNRWA piloted an apprenticeship programme targeting young people in the North which proved very successful. The Agency will replicate this initiative in other areas in 2011 and 2012.
- A new project was launched in March 2011 which provides short-term training to unskilled or low-skilled Palestine refugees in the South and the North of Lebanon.
- UNRWA's Placement and Career Guidance Unit's role was strengthened. It aims to provide improved orientation and career guidance services for young Palestinians at various stages of their studies.

UNRWA's Fundraising Priorities

UNRWA is seeking donors' support to fund core programs underpinning its poverty alleviation strategy:

- Reinforcing the skills of Palestine refugees through increased access to technical and vocational education, on-the-job training opportunities, as well as providing employment services to jobseekers.



UNRWA provides assistance, protection and advocacy for some 4.7 million registered Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the occupied Palestinian territory, pending a solution to their plight. The Agency's services encompass education, health care, social safety-net, camp infrastructure and improvement, community support, microfinance and emergency response, including in times of armed conflict. Through these services UNRWA strives to help Palestine refugees achieve a decent standard of living, long and healthy lives, knowledge and skills and full enjoyment of human rights. These goals are formulated according to the UN criteria for human development.



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