



unrwa
الأونروا

60
YEARS

60 Years

Working with Arab Host Countries & Donors

So much achieved together...



so much still to do...



Foreword

For 60 years, UNRWA has worked in close partnership with Arab host and donor countries to cope with the human consequences of the flight of Palestinians from their homes in Palestine – the dislocation, the frustration, the anguish and the pain, but also the resilience, the fortitude and often the achievement against odds, especially in the areas of education, primary health care, humanitarian relief and human development. The purpose of this booklet is to highlight some aspects of Arab-UNRWA cooperation, the extent and importance of which is often not fully recognized.

The host countries – Jordan, Syria and Lebanon – and the Palestinian Authority have shouldered and continue to bear enormous burdens which entail political and economic sacrifices. No mathematical calculation can do justice to this contribution.

Arab donor countries have also given generously, especially in furnishing support to UNRWA's humanitarian response to armed conflict and other emergency situations - funding camp construction and repair projects in Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in the aftermath of armed attacks that cause large scale devastation.

The Arab League itself, in parallel with and complementary to its political role in supporting Palestinians, has never stinted on marshalling Arab diplomatic and material support to help UNRWA. This has never been truer than today, as evidenced by the generous offer by the Secretary General, HE



Mr. Amr Mousa, to host a commemorative event at the Arab League headquarters on the occasion of UNRWA's 60th anniversary. This is in addition to his constant, much appreciated efforts, within and outside formal settings, to support the Agency's work.

UNRWA is grateful for the support of Arab hosts and donors. In these times, when we face daunting financial challenges that threaten the maintenance and quality of our services, we appeal for Arab support to be enhanced and reinforced. This increase in assistance will ensure that UNRWA's partnership with the Arab world, which we value highly, will continue to be strengthened in the interests of the Palestine refugees we serve.

Karen Koning AbuZayd
Commissioner-General

Overview of UNRWA

Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, was established by United Nations General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949 to carry out direct relief and works programmes for Palestine refugees. The Agency began operations on 1 May 1950. In the absence of a solution to the Palestine refugee problem, the General Assembly has repeatedly renewed UNRWA's mandate, most recently extending it until 30 June 2011.

Since its establishment, the Agency has acted as a stabilizing factor in the Middle East. It has delivered its services in times of relative calm in the region, and in times of hostilities. Originally envisaged as a temporary organization, the

Agency has gradually adjusted its programmes to meet the changing needs of the refugees. Today, UNRWA is the main provider of basic services - education, health, relief and social services - to over 4.6 million registered Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In fulfilling its mandate, UNRWA relies on the partnership the Agency enjoys with its donors, as expressed in financial terms and in their commitment to ongoing dialogue. Financial assistance from governments is especially important considering that UNRWA is almost entirely funded by voluntary contributions. This form of support from donors testifies to their commitment to human development and humanitarian assistance while helping to reassure the refugee community that the world cares about their plight and is sensitive to their needs.



Children in an UNRWA school in Syria make a stand for Gaza

UNRWA' Services

Education

Education is UNRWA's largest programme and accounts for over 50% of the Agency's budget. In partnership with donor governments, UNRWA has been able to provide high quality education to three generations of refugees. It currently operates 668 elementary and preparatory schools for nearly half a million children. There is a growing concern, however, that the high academic standards to which the Agency aspires are no more being met. Increased cooperation between UNRWA and the donor community is therefore needed to ensure that the Agency's schools continue to provide a good standard of education to all refugee pupils.

Health



For the past six decades, UNRWA has been the main primary health care provider for Palestine refugees. The Agency's 134 health centres handle almost 9 million consultations per year. UNRWA also provides environmental health services to over 1.3 million refugees living in camps, including solid waste control and access to safe drinking water in collaboration with local municipalities. UNRWA is however facing new challenges, which seriously jeopardize the Agency's ability to preserve the health of the refugee population at current levels. Chief among them is the rise in incidence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like hypertension, diabetes and cancer and the sharp increase in poverty levels in some fields leading to such problems as wide-spread anaemia. The strain that these challenges place on the Agency's health infrastructure and human resources are compounded by chronic under-funding. UNRWA faces an immense challenge in coming years to maintain improvements in the refugee population's health profile and raise the quality of service delivery to an international standard.

Relief and Social Services

The relief and social services department concentrates its efforts on the poorest of the poor Palestine refugees in UNRWA's five fields of operations. The department aims to provide basic food supplies and cash subsidies as well as emergency cash grants and adequate shelter to the most vulnerable refugees. UNRWA however faces a major challenge as population growth and poverty rates outstrip the Agency's ability to provide basic relief assistance to poor refugees.

Microfinance and Microenterprise Department

UNRWA's microfinance department aims to promote economic development and to alleviate

poverty among Palestine refugees and other poor and marginalised groups. The department was established in 1991 and by mid-2008, it had financed over 150,000 enterprise, consumer and housing loans to clients in the West Bank, Gaza strip, Jordan and Syria. The department provides its running costs from its credit operations and expands its loan capital base through project funding.

Infrastructure and Camp Improvements



The Department of Infrastructure and Camp Improvement was created in response to calls at the Geneva Conference on UNRWA (2004) to address the deteriorating living conditions of Palestine refugees in camps where UNRWA operates. Through the department UNRWA is adopting a community driven approach focusing on strategic, participatory urban planning relating to environmental infrastructure, UNRWA installations, shelter, camp improvement and community development.

UNRWA and Host Countries

Jordan

It is estimated that about 100,000 refugees fled to Jordan during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The 1967 war led to a second wave of displacement of Palestinians from their homes. Some 140,000 refugees already registered with UNRWA fled to Jordan from the West Bank, along with about 240,000 residents of the West Bank who were displaced for the first time and are referred to as "Displaced Persons". Although the latter were not registered refugees with UNRWA, the General Assembly called on the Agency to provide them

with assistance on an emergency basis. Today, Jordan is home to ten official Palestine refugee camps and three “unofficial” ones. The population of the ten camps together makes up an estimated 18% per cent of the 1.96 million refugees registered with UNRWA in Jordan. If the refugees living in the three unofficial camps and in the camps’ environs were to be added to that number, it could then be said that about 65 per cent of the Palestine refugees in Jordan live under similar socio-economic conditions. All Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA in Jordan, both inside or outside the camps, are eligible for UNRWA services.

Over the years, UNRWA services in the camps have developed to meet the changing needs of the refugees. While the focus was on relief and emergency assistance in the 1950s, there was a gradual shift of emphasis from relief to education and vocational training. In Jordan, UNRWA runs 176 primary schools with close to 125,000 pupils. Secondary education is provided at the government schools. Because of a lack of adequate premises, most of UNRWA schools in Jordan operate on a double shift basis.

UNRWA’s health programme has also witnessed developments over the years. Today, the Agency runs 14 health centres in the refugee camps and 10 outside of them. These centres provide basic preventive and curative health services. UNRWA does not however offer hospitalization services in Jordan. Patients are normally referred to government hospitals. Pursuant to an agreement with the Ministry of Health, UNRWA covers part of the hospitalization cost of the referred registered refugees.



UNRWA additionally runs a relief and social services programme which offers a variety of services including vocational training courses at women’s centers and community-based programmes for the rehabilitation and integration of disabled persons. The Agency has also launched a microfinance department in Jordan in 2003. The aim of the department is to assist microentrepreneurs and the poorest refugees. By the end of 2008, they had financed over 15,000 loans valued at US\$ 16 million.

UNRWA coordinates with the Jordanian government’s Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA) as well as with the camps’ committees to improve the living conditions in the camp. The Jordanian government has exhibited great magnanimity in hosting Palestinian refugees. It has even granted them all full Jordanian citizenship, with the exception of about 140,000 refugees originally from the Gaza Strip, which had been administered by Egypt until 1967. The latter were granted temporary Jordanian passports, which do not entitle them to full citizenship rights such as the right to vote and employment with the government.

Lebanon

Lebanon has hosted Palestine refugees since their initial displacement from their homes over 60 years ago. About 100,000 Palestinians had initially sought refuge in Lebanon. There are about 421,993 Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA in Lebanon, as of June 2009.

Throughout the violent period of 1974-1990, which included the Israeli invasion of 1982, Palestinian camps witnessed heavy battles and tragedies, most notably the Sabra and Shatila massacre. Of the 16 camps that had dotted the Lebanese territory, only 12 remained by 1990. Today, 53 percent of all refugees are registered in the remaining 12 camps, and the remaining 47 per cent are registered in cities in Lebanon. All Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA in Lebanon, both inside or outside the camps, are eligible for UNRWA services.

All of the camps suffer from serious problems such as a lack of proper infrastructure, overcrowding, poor environmental health conditions, poverty and unemployment. Despite a swelling population, the area occupied by each camp has not increased since the camps’ creation. Residents of the most densely populated camps are thus forced to expand vertically by constructing structurally unsound dwellings, often susceptible to collapse.



Part of a destroyed school in Nahr el Bared camp, Lebanon

The inadequate physical infrastructure has also led to problems in sewage control and storm-water collection. Consequently, many refugees suffer from recurring health problems including respiratory diseases and skin ailments.

The substandard living conditions are compounded by chronic unemployment and poverty. Refugees do not have social and civil rights, and have very limited access to the government's public health and educational facilities, and no access to public social services. Through its 30 primary health care facilities, UNRWA is in fact the sole provider of health services to refugees in Lebanon. The Agency also runs 81 schools in the camps with close to 35,000 pupils. Due to the refugees' limited access to government-funded secondary education, 6 of UNRWA's schools are secondary schools. The Agency also set up 2 vocational and technical training centres as well as a community rehabilitation centre.

The deplorable status of Palestine refugees prompted the then Prime Minister, Mr. Fouad Siniora, to join hands with UNRWA to improve the humanitarian conditions of the 12 camps in Lebanon by launching the US\$50 million Camp Improvement Initiative (CII) in December 2005. The Initiative was accompanied by the establishment of the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC), which was created by the Lebanese Council of Ministers to provide Palestine refugees in Lebanon with the conditions to live in dignity, prosperity, security and harmony with their environment until the refugee issue is resolved in accordance with UN Resolutions. With the establishment of the LPDC, Palestine refugees witnessed a gradual improvement of their legal status, marked mainly by the easing of the restrictions on their right to work.

Positive developments in the social and civil status of Palestine refugees were accompanied by initiatives to improve their living conditions. In March 2006, a ministerial delegation toured and evaluated three of the camps, in the first such visit of its kind. This visit was shortly followed by an appeal for donations to the CII, to which donors responded with contributions totaling \$20.4 million. These funds were used by UNRWA to initiate projects aimed at improving the basic living conditions for Palestine refugees.

On 20 May 2007, fierce fighting erupted between Lebanese Armed Forces and the radical group, Fatah Al-Islam, which had infiltrated the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp (NBC) in Northern Lebanon and used it as their base to launch attacks on the Lebanese Army. The Army responded by laying siege to the camp for three months. As a result of the fighting, the Camp was entirely destroyed and its 27,000 residents were displaced.

From the outset, in close cooperation with the Lebanese Government, UNRWA coordinated humanitarian assistance by all actors via an Emergency Coordination Team for northern Lebanon. UNRWA launched three consecutive appeals to respond to the critical needs of 5,449 displaced families from NBC and its immediate area, and alleviate their suffering until the camp is reconstructed.

Besides the relief appeals, in June 2008, UNRWA and the Lebanese Government launched a special appeal for the reconstruction of the Nahr el Bared camp and its surrounding areas. This latest appeal is for \$445 million, out of which \$328 million are designated for the reconstruction of the old camp and the remainder for the reconstruction of the adjacent area and the 50 surrounding municipalities affected by the conflict. Reconstruction works are scheduled to begin in November.

Syria

There are nine official camps in Syria and three "unofficial" ones. The number of Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA in Syria is currently 467,417, out of which 126,453 (or 27%) live in official camps. In most of the refugee camps shelters remain very basic, and many require structural rehabilitation.

In Syria, Palestine refugees have access to government services such as government-run schools, universities and hospitals. UNRWA

cooperates with the General Administration for Palestine Arab Refugees (GAPAR), a department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which was established in 1950, to ensure that the Agency's services complement those of the Syrian Government.



Reconstruction site at the Neirab Camp , Syria

UNRWA's programmes cover education, health, relief and social services and microfinance/microenterprise. UNRWA operates 118 double-shift schools that provide elementary and preparatory education to over 66,000 children from grades one to nine. All of UNRWA's schools in Syria follow the national curriculum of the Syrian Ministry of Education. Thanks to the Syrian government's generosity, Palestine refugees can pursue secondary and higher education in government-run schools. UNRWA also operates a vocational training centre in Damascus, which prepares young refugees for employment by equipping them with marketable skills.

In the area of health, UNRWA provides preventive and curative services through a network of twenty-three primary health centres. UNRWA additionally sponsors women's programme centres and community rehabilitation centres, and supports refugees in special hardship with additional assistance. Since its establishment in Syria in 2003, the microfinance programme has also provided micro-entrepreneurs with nearly 23,000 loans valued at USD 16 million.

Recently, with the generous support of Arab and Western donors and the full support of the Syrian government, UNRWA embarked on a major camp improvement and development project in Neirab. The Neirab Rehabilitation Project (NRP) is expected to be completed in 2011.

West Bank

Through the commitment of approximately 4,700 staff, UNRWA delivers education, healthcare and relief and social services to some 771,143 registered refugees, in the West Bank; serving those refugees living in camps and reaching out to the 75% of refugees residing outside of the nineteen recognized refugee camps. The Agency's operations in this field are uniquely affected by the occupation regime. The signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, and subsequent events has led to the fragmentation of the West Bank territory into different zones. Thirteen of the camps fell under the exclusive control of the Palestinian Authority (Zone A), leaving three under joint Palestinian/Israeli control (Zone B) and the Shufat, Jalazone and Kalandia camp under Israeli control (Zone C).

Palestine refugees have been hard hit by the stringent regime of closures and movement restrictions imposed on the West Bank by Israeli authorities; thereby seriously limiting access to basic services, everyday goods, and economic resources including land employment and markets. These restrictions are further aggravated by the construction of settlement infrastructure and the 'West Bank Barrier' and its associated regime, which have placed 40 percent of West Bank land off limits to Palestinians. With no access to Israeli markets and impeded movement into and between major Palestinian population centers, the West Bank economy collapsed.

Refugee households, typically disposing of few assets and depending on employment in Israel, were particularly affected by the deteriorating conditions (high unemployment, poverty and food insecurity rates associated with marked reductions in household income and consumption levels). The Education Programme provides free primary and vocational education to 55,970 refugee children in 97 schools and 2000 trainees in 3 vocational training centers. UNRWA schools continue to be subject to overcrowding due to the growth in the school population and the shortage of school buildings, while a number of schools operate in rented premises. In addition, many schools have been damaged by Israeli military activity since September 2000.

The Agency also runs a network of 41 primary health care facilities and a hospital in the town of Qalqilia. A major problem facing the Agency's health programme, as in other fields, is the high number of daily patients' visits to the health centres and the heavy workload of doctors and other health staff.

The Relief and Social Services Programme seeks to alleviate the worst impact of poverty amongst the poorest of the poor with 32,208 refugees receiving regular food and cash assistance as part of the Special Hardship Programme. Those living in hazardous conditions also receive shelter rehabilitation. UNRWA bolsters the social fabric of West Bank camps by supporting key community based-organizations such as Women Programme Centers, Rehabilitation Centers for persons with disability or Children and Youth Centers.

To mitigate the impact of the second Intifada on Palestine refugees, UNRWA launched an emergency programme responding to the deteriorating socio-economic conditions and growing protection concerns through provision of food and cash, temporary employment, subsidized health services, including in isolated areas, rehabilitation of damaged and hazardous shelter and environmental health infrastructure, monitoring and advocacy on human rights violation and psychological support. When conditions are favorable, these projects will be oriented towards early recovery.

Gaza Strip

The Gaza Strip is unique amongst UNRWA's five fields of operations as the majority of its population is refugees and close to half of the refugees live in eight camps. Over three-quarters of the current estimated population of some 1.5 million are registered refugees. The refugee camps in the Gaza Strip have one of the highest population densities in the world. This high population density is reflected in the overcrowded UNRWA schools and classrooms.

UNRWA runs 221 schools through which it provides elementary and preparatory education to close to 198,000 students. The Agency also delivers basic health services through its 20 primary health care facilities. Additionally, all Palestine refugees have equal access to schools

and health care facilities run by the Palestinian Authority. The Agency also operates 10 women's programme centre and 6 community rehabilitation centres.

Notwithstanding UNRWA's efforts to provide basic services to Palestine refugees, the tight blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip since June 2007 has aggravated the needs of the refugees. Poverty and unemployment reached unprecedented levels, which in turn increased the number of people depending entirely on aid to survive. The hardship of Gaza's refugees was further aggravated by a series of Israeli incursions and air strikes culminating in a full scale war in December-January 2009. As military operations were still ongoing, UNRWA launched a Flash Appeal to respond to the emergency needs arising from the escalation of the conflict. Israel's military onslaught on Gaza, codenamed Operation Cast Lead, caused extensive internal displacement of the civilian population with more than 50,000 people seeking refuge in 50 UNRWA schools. The military onslaught resulted also in the widespread destruction of public property and infrastructure, thus leaving thousands of refugees without access to essential services.

In the aftermath of the war, UNRWA issued a Quick-Response Plan (QRP) to Restore Critical Services to Refugees in Gaza. Despite receiving a record level of donations in response to the QRP, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remained precarious several months after military operations had ended. This prompted the Agency to launch the Gaza Ramadan Appeal to respond to the needs of Gaza's one million refugees for food, job creation, and cash assistance for the poorest of the poor. In October 2009, John Ging, the Director of UNRWA Operations in Gaza noted that the number of Gazans living in "abject" poverty has tripled this year to 300,000, or one in five residents. Ging linked Gaza's rise in poverty to the tight blockade imposed by Israel on the Strip. Owing to the state of siege, Gaza's humanitarian crisis remains unresolved.



UNRWA and Arab Donors

Arab donors have been generous in responding to emergency appeals and appeals for project financing. Some recent examples of this generosity are noted below.

The League of Arab States

League of Arab States – Decision Number 7079 (132)

الترحيب بزيادة بعض الدول العربية مساهماتها في دعم موازنة الأونروا ودعوة باقي الدول إلى زيادة دعمها وزيادة نسبة مساهمتها في ميزانية الأونروا بنسبة ٧,٨٣٪. وذلك تفعيلاً لقرارات متعددة صدرت عن مجلس الجامعة في عدة دورات منذ عام ١٩٨٧. ودعوة الهيئات الرسمية وغير الحكومية إلى الاستمرار في دعم برنامج الأونروا الاعتيادية الطارئة.

Established in 1945, the League of Arab States was seized with the Palestinian refugee issue since its creation in the aftermath of the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948. Throughout the past six decades, the League has adopted numerous resolutions in support of Palestinian refugees and of their rights to return, restitution and compensation. The refugee issue remains a top priority on the Council of Arab Foreign Ministers' agenda, which has recently reaffirmed its longstanding support of UNRWA in decision number 7079 issued on 03 March 2009 at the Council's ordinary session (132). In this decision, the Council emphasized the importance of continuing to provide financial support for UNRWA's General Fund, projects and emergency appeals. Additionally, the Arab League welcomed the contributions of some Arab countries to UNRWA's General Fund and called upon the rest of the Arab countries to increase their contributions to the Agency's budget until these cumulatively constitute 7.83% of all contributions (the level they reached in 1982).

Bahrain

In the aftermath of the Israeli assault on Gaza, Bahrain pledged \$5.4 million dollars for reconstruction projects in the Strip. UNRWA and the Bahrain Royal Charity Organization signed an agreement under which Bahrain will finance three reconstruction projects in Gaza. The projects comprise the reconstruction, furnishing and equipping of the health centre of the Khan Younis refugee camp, a new library, open to the public, at Al Fakhoura school in Jabalia Camp, and a

new preparatory boys school also in Jabalia. Al Fakhoura School suffered severe damage during the Israeli assault on Gaza in January 2009. Over 40 refugees sheltering in it were killed and over 50 injured in an incident which with others is the subject of UN enquiry. The agreement represents the first major donation Bahrain has made to UNRWA. Its implementation is currently halted by the Israeli blockade of Gaza precluding entry of construction materials.

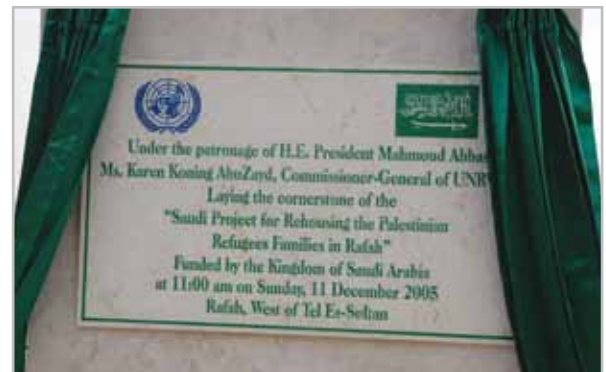
Egypt

Egypt established ties with UNRWA as soon as the Agency had begun its operations in 1950. During its 17-year long administration of the Gaza Strip, Egypt cooperated closely with UNRWA to provide assistance to Palestine refugees residing in the Strip. Egypt has been and continues to be a strong supporter of the Agency. It currently holds the Chair of the UNRWA Advisory Commission.

UNRWA has additionally built a strong partnership with the Egyptian Red Crescent, which has repeatedly assisted the Agency in the transportation of thousands of tons of humanitarian aid into the Strip. In response to UNRWA's 2009 Gaza Quick Response Plan, the Egyptian Red Crescent made an immediate generous in-kind donation of sugar and flour worth \$500,000, followed by others later.

Kuwait

Kuwait has been a long-standing partner of UNRWA contributing over \$30 million to the Agency's General Fund since its establishment. In a strong show of support to the Agency and the people of Gaza, the Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah made a generous donation of \$34 million in the aftermath of the latest war on Gaza. This donation is the largest Arab donation to date. The amount covered the entirety of UNRWA's original flash appeal issued in the first days of the latest Israeli assault on Gaza.



UNRWA also benefits from the continuous support of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, which has most recently made cash and in-kind food donations to the people of Gaza during the month of Ramadan.

The Kuwait Red Crescent Society delivers in kind donations to the people of Gaza

Oman

Oman began contributing to UNRWA's General Fund in 1971, barely a year after it gained independence from the United Kingdom. In addition to its contribution to the General Fund, Oman paved the way for the reconstruction of the Nahr el Bared refugee camp by generously donating \$7 million to the Lebanese government to enable it to compensate Lebanese owners for the expropriation of their land situated in the camp.

Qatar

In the aftermath of the latest Israeli assault on Gaza, Qatar was among the first Arab countries to respond to UNRWA's Emergency Appeals for Gaza with a generous donation of \$10 million from Qatar Charity. The donation was used to create jobs for thousands of destitute Palestine refugees living in the Gaza Strip. UNRWA has also cooperated with the Qatar Red Crescent Society to deliver in-kind donations to refugees in the Occupied Territories worth over \$1 million.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has been a steady supporter of UNRWA, contributing over \$165 million to the Agency's General Fund since its establishment. In addition, Saudi Arabia has been an active member of the Agency's Advisory Commission and has been its Vice-Chair since June 2009.

In addition to regular contributions to the General Fund, the government-affiliated Saudi Fund for Development has pledged \$44 million to various UNRWA projects since 1994. It has pledged \$25 million towards the reconstruction of the Nahr el Bared Camp, thus becoming the project's largest Arab contributor to date. The Kingdom also pledged close to \$39 million for the housing of Palestinian refugee families in Rafah, another project halted by the Israeli blockade on Gaza.



In Gaza in 2005, Karen Abu Zayd lays the cornerstone for a building project funded by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Nahr el Bared Reconstruction Project

The siege and destruction of NBC left thousands of Palestine refugees without homes and livelihoods. During the military operations in NBC (May-September 2007), several camp residents came together and began to document the layout of the camp and the location of every apartment. This group became known as the Nahr el-Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies (NBRC).

In September 2007, UNRWA and the NBRC agreed that the camp reconstruction would have to be carried out in phases and so divided it into eight smaller areas or "Packages". A Preliminary Master Plan was presented to then Prime Minister Fouad Siniora by UNRWA's Commissioner-General Karen Koning AbuZayd in Beirut in February 2008, and distributed to donors at the government's Vienna Conference in June 2008.

In October 2008, rubble removal and unexploded ordinance operations had begun. With some delay, the foundation stone for the construction of NBC was eventually laid on 9 March 2009. Reconstruction in the camp commenced in November 2009. Saudi Arabia has so far pledged \$25 million to Packages 2 and 3. Detailed designs for Package 2 will soon be completed and tendered. The rebuilding of the entire camp will be carried out in stages with construction running simultaneously to work on the detailed designs for each successive package. Reconstruction is scheduled to take three years.

Support for UNRWA is not however confined to governmental agencies. Over the years, the Agency has benefited from the support of a variety of Saudi-based charities and Organizations, first and foremost the Saudi Committee for the Support of the Palestinian People, which, upon the noble initiative of HRH Prince Nayef Bin Abdel Aziz, Supervisor General of the Committee, has pledged over \$10 million dollars to UNRWA in 2009. Assistance has also been provided by the Arab Gulf Programme for UN Development Organizations (AGFUND), the Islamic Development Bank, the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), the King

Faisal Foundation, the Prince Al Waleed Bin Talal Foundation, the Saudi Red Crescent Authority, the Tarek Ahmed Juffali Foundation and the World Assembly of Muslims Youth (WAMY). to take three years.

United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has long been a staunch supporter of UNRWA and its beneficiaries. Through its governmental institutions and affiliated charities, it has donated millions of dollars to UNRWA over the years. Perhaps the most notable donation was the one made by the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent (UAERC) for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Jenin camp in 2002. At the time, the donation of \$22.3 million was the largest single donation ever made for a project. The funds were used to rebuild the Jenin camp, which was the largest reconstruction project UNRWA had hitherto undertaken. The Jenin project marked a turning point in the partnership between the UAERC and UNRWA. Today, UNRWA and the UAERC are cooperating on several large projects in the Agency's areas of operations, such as the reconstruction of the Neirab camp in Syria and the construction and rehabilitation of refugee shelters in Lebanon. Jenin Reconstruction Project In phase benefited from a generous contribution of the UAERC for US\$ 5 million.

Jenin Reconstruction Project

In the aftermath of the destruction of the Jenin refugee camps by Israeli military forces in 2002, UNRWA signed a memorandum of understanding with the UAERC in July 2003 for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the camp. The reconstruction was going to be undertaken in three phases. The project was eventually completed in November 2005. At the time, this project was the largest reconstruction project the Agency had embarked on.

Neirab Rehabilitation Project

The Neirab Rehabilitation Project (NRP) is a prototype camp improvement and development project. It was implemented in two phases. Phase One enabled 1,500 refugees to move from Neirab to the nearby camp of Ein el Tal. Phase Two consists of plans to improve the physical and socio-economical development of the Neirab camp. This phase benefited from a generous contribution of the UAERC for US\$ 5 million.

In recent years, several organizations have joined the ranks of the UAERC by contributing to UNRWA's various projects. UNRWA is currently proud to

be associated with Dubai Cares, the Khalifah Bin Zayed Al Nahayan Foundation, the Mohammed Bin Rashed Al Maktoum Foundation, the Sharjah-based Salam Ya Sughar, the Young Arab Leaders and the Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahayan Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation.



Stone laying ceremony at the Neirab Camp.

UNRWA: An Eye on the Future

In the past 60 years, UNRWA has demonstrated its ability to respond promptly and adequately to humanitarian crises affecting Palestine refugees. UNRWA continued to deliver its services in the aftermath of wars, blockades and mass waves of displacement. Through a combination of circumstances however, including a squeeze on national aid budgets and the costs of sustaining emergency operations in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon, UNRWA today faces severe difficulties, especially in maintaining its regular services. Some examples:



Education

In Gaza and the West Bank, academic performance lags behind regional standards. Among the factors affecting academic achievement are the high teacher/student ratios and doubleshifting both of which are prevalent in so many of UNRWA's schools. In 2009, for example half of UNRWA's schools in Gaza were running on double-shifts. There is also a severe shortage of textbooks and other school materials because of the imposed closure on the Gaza Strip. Although conditions are better in Lebanon and Jordan, there is a worrying downward trend in state-run examinations in both fields. The need to maintain and improve the quality of teaching staff requires a substantial injection of financial resources. In UNRWA's present condition of serious under-funding, it is an immense challenge –if not impossible- for the Agency to remain a competitive employer in the field of education. Funding is also required to make the Special Education Needs (SEN) initiative a part of UNRWA's regular education programme. Lack of funding has also prevented the Agency's Vocational Training Centres (VTC) from offering the variety of courses that meet the requirements of local labour markets.

Health

There has been a near doubling of refugees seeking medical care at UNRWA facilities in Gaza and the West Bank since the start of the Intifada. Recent data indicate a worrisome decline in the nutritional

status of some refugees. Post-traumatic stress disorders and other psychological and behavioural problems have become widespread as a result of the violent conflict-ridden environment in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon. In addition, chronic underfunding limits the Agency's ability to retain and motivate competent staff.

Relief and Social Services

To better equip the poorest refugees to break the cycle of poverty, UNRWA must urgently hire more social workers, enrich the food aid basket and increase funds for targeted cash assistance and Community Based Organisations.

Microfinance and Microenterprise Department

The Microfinance Department has already shed 20% of its staff in Gaza and is looking to cut back by a further 20% before the end of the year. There is indeed the grave prospect that, if collective economic strangulation is not reversed within a short period of time, UNRWA may be forced to cease all microfinance activity in Gaza. This will deprive an already desperately poor small business community of one of its last economic lifelines. The challenge for UNRWA, host countries and donors is to overcome these financial difficulties before severe damage is done to the Agency's fabric and its ability to maintain the standards it has strived to uphold for 60 years.



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