The European Commission and UNRWA
A partnership for development and humanity
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Foreword

Benita Ferrero Waldner
European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy

Louis Michel
European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid

The European Commission is pleased to support a series of events in 2009, which marks the 60th year of UNRWA’s activities. EU assistance to UNRWA is an important component of our support for Middle East peace for three reasons:

Firstly, because UNRWA’s work helps to ensure that the essential humanitarian needs of the Palestine refugees, many of whom live in extremely difficult conditions, are met. It relieves suffering and restores a certain measure of dignity for Palestinians who have lost their homes, livelihoods and much more.

Secondly, the EU sees UNRWA’s work as a support for human development. For example, it delivers education and health services which support generations of Palestinians. The future Palestinian state needs educated, skilled and healthy citizens in order to deliver peace, security and prosperity for all.

Thirdly, the European Commission supports UNRWA’s work because it provides a political space for the efforts to conclude a peace deal and the creation of the future Palestinian state.

By enabling Palestinian families and their children to attend school, to receive medical attention and to survive economically, UNRWA delivers much more than material support. It keeps alive the values of humanity, solidarity, tolerance and dignity; fundamental values which are shared and promoted by the EU. This is why UNRWA’s work makes an inestimable contribution to the path of peace. And this is why the European Union will continue to work with UNRWA to deliver support to the Palestine refugees until a peace deal is accomplished.

The European Commission is one of the key donors to UNRWA’s work in the occupied Palestinian territory, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. Since 1971 the European Union has supported UNRWA on a regular basis, becoming its largest multilateral donor. During the period 2000 to 2009, the European Commission has provided nearly EUR 1 billion of support to the Agency. We currently provide EUR 66 million each year to the General Fund. On top of this, we also provide EUR 1 million for consolidating UNRWA’s reforms (Organisational Development). During the recent period, over 50% of funds allocated for the occupied Palestinian territory have been channelled to Gaza.
Foreword

Karen Koning AbuZayd
UNRWA Commissioner-General

On 8 December 2009, it will be sixty years since the General Assembly established UNRWA to provide urgently needed relief to over 750,000 Palestine refugees caught up in the trauma of the 1948 conflict. Currently, there are some 4.6 million Palestine refugees across the Middle East.

UNRWA's 60th anniversary is an opportunity to reflect on its mission and the dilemmas posed by an Agency which came into being as a temporary body charged with serving Palestine refugees until their situation was resolved. Sixty years on, there appear to be few immediate prospects for a just and durable solution to the conflict which prompted their exile.

We must temper the solemnity of UNRWA's anniversary with pride in UNRWA's sixty years of transforming Palestine refugee lives through humanitarian and human development achievements. Our contribution to the human capital of the region is beyond doubt. In the field of health, UNRWA has achieved a near one hundred per cent inoculation record. Infant mortality rates have dropped from 160 per 1,000 births in the 1960s to 22 per 1,000 births today. In education, UNRWA's record is impressive. Each year, we provide primary education to half a million children in our areas of operation. In 1951, the proportion of female pupils in UNRWA schools was 26 per cent. Today, it has doubled. UNRWA's Microfinance and Microenterprise Programme in nearly two decades has awarded over one hundred and forty thousand loans at a value of some 150 million US dollars. It is a tribute to the industriousness, energy, creativity and determination of the Palestinian people that this programme is self-sustaining.

Our work in all areas is underpinned by the values which we as a United Nations organization embody - neutrality and impartiality, tolerance, peaceful co-existence and respect for the rights of others. Promoting an environment in which these values thrive contributes to stability and prosperity and will be our lasting legacy.

If the past is any indicator of what lies ahead, the immediate future for Palestinians seems likely to be characterized by uncertainty and insecurity. Regardless of the many unknowns, UNRWA will continue its work with unstinting commitment and a clear sense of mission. Until a just and lasting solution is achieved, we will continue to help refugees achieve their full human development potential and to advocate for their protection under international law. We, like the refugees we serve, hold fast to the hope for a better tomorrow.
The year 2009 marks the 60th anniversary of UNRWA's creation. This occasion is a time for sober reflection, and underlines the elusiveness of achieving a just and lasting solution to the plight of Palestine refugees. It is hardly a cause for celebration that six decades on, some 4.6 million Palestine refugees remain in a state of exile. Nevertheless, this anniversary is an opportunity to recall the vital contributions the Agency and its stakeholders have made and continue to make to four generations of Palestine refugees, and its ongoing support for human development and stability in the Middle East.

UNRWA was established by the international community in 1949, and mandated to respond to the needs of some 750,000 Palestinians who lost both homes and livelihoods during the 1948 conflict and were forced into exile. Today, UNRWA serves a population of 4.6 million registered Palestine refugees (nearly half of them under 20 years of age) in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. UNRWA directly provides essential public services necessary for human development; mainly primary education, primary health care, relief and social services, infrastructure and camp improvement and microfinance.

From its humble beginnings providing basic tent shelters to those refugees exiled from their homes in 1948, UNRWA now:

• Provides education to nearly 500,000 pupils enrolled in its 689 schools; it employs nearly 22,000 educational staff and invests EUR 358 per pupil each year. While in 1951 the proportion of female pupils was 26 per cent, today this has nearly doubled. The vast majority of graduates from its vocational training centres find employment within a year particularly in socio-politically stable contexts, such as that prevailing in Syria.

• Runs a health care programme through its 138 Primary Health Care Centers, staffed by some 4,200 health workers. The annual number of patient visits is currently at 9.5 million. Some of the main achievements include an inoculation record close to one hundred per cent and a drop in the infant mortality rate from 160 per 1,000 births in the 1960s to 22 per 1,000 by 2006, thereby exceeding the World Health Organization standards for middle-income countries. Communicable diseases have largely been eradicated.

• Addresses the basic needs of over 257,000 special hardship cases, operates 65 women's centres and 39 community rehabilitation centers through its Relief and Social Services Department.

• Runs the largest micro-finance service provider in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) and the second largest micro-finance institution in Syria. Through its Micro-finance and Micro-enterprise Programme, UNRWA is presently financing 24,000 loans worth over EUR 21.5 million each year and has financed 157,000 loans worth EUR 121 million over the past 18 years.

• Provides public infrastructure services to upgrade living conditions in refugee camps. Today, out of over 4.6 million refugees, 1.4 million still reside in the 58 refugee camps across the occupied Palestinian territory, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Years of displacement and destitution have rendered camps and shelters in desperate need of maintenance, rehabilitation and urban planning. In response, the Agency launched an ambitious camp improvement scheme in 2005.

• Employs over 29,000 Palestinian staff and about 120 internationals.

Besides programmes promoting the human development and self-reliance of refugees, UNRWA also delivers humanitarian aid in Lebanon and in the occupied Palestinian territory to those affected by armed conflict. The focus of UNRWA's humanitarian aid work is on those made most vulnerable by violence, poverty and social exclusion.
UNRWA-60 Years of Partnership

UNRWA’s 60th anniversary provides an opportunity to reflect on the contribution UNRWA has made to the stability of the Middle East region. By creating an environment where peace can take hold, UNRWA has helped to improve the lives of four generations of Palestine refugees. It is also an opportunity to reflect on the partnerships that have made UNRWA’s work possible. The Agency does not operate within a vacuum, and partnerships – with host countries, donors and with refugees themselves - are the vital driving force behind UNRWA’s work in the region.

Since the 1970s, UNRWA has worked closely with the European Union Council of Ministers and its Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission (EC). Most importantly within the EC, with the Directorate General for External Relations, the EuropeAid Co-operation Office and the Directorate General for Humanitarian Assistance. These partnerships have indeed become indispensable – with the EC providing essential funds and support to UNRWA over four decades.

This support has enabled UNRWA to provide essential health, education, and relief services to Palestine refugees and fulfill its mission of helping them to acquire knowledge and skills, give them a healthy life, improve their living standards, uphold human rights, and work towards safeguarding their protection needs.

In the last four decades the European Union has regularly supported UNRWA and is now its largest multilateral donor. Since 2000, the European Commission has contributed over EUR 1 billion to UNRWA, an average of EUR 110 million per year. Out of this, nearly one quarter of the support has been provided by the EC’s humanitarian department (ECHO) for UNRWA’s emergency appeals for humanitarian assistance in the West Bank and Gaza. In combination with contributions from EU member states, EC contributions cover more than half of UNRWA’s budget. At a time when UNRWA faces increased budgetary constraints, the continued stalwart support of the European Parliament and European Commission is crucial.

Until the goal of a durable and just solution to the refugee issue is reached, UNRWA will continue to fulfill its internationally assigned mandate in advocating and providing for the human development aspirations of Palestine refugees. In this role it will continue to rely on the support and contributions of bodies such as the EC.

This brochure provides an overview and summary of the nature of the EC/UNRWA partnership and the humanitarian and human development services provided through this partnership.
The EC and UNRWA
Since 2000, the EC has contributed over EUR 500 million towards the General Fund. In 2008 the EU contributions represented 62% of total regular budget contributions.

A Partnership Overview

The European Commission’s contributions to UNRWA can be broken down into four main areas: the Agency’s General Fund, earmarked contributions to specific programmes such as the Social Safety Net Programme, Emergency Appeals and special projects.

The EC contributes annually to UNRWA’s regular programmes through the General Fund (GF). The GF constitutes UNRWA’s core funding and enables the delivery of UNRWA’s basic education, health, and social services to Palestine refugees in its five fields of operation. It is through the provision of these services that UNRWA fulfils its human development mandate.

Since 2000, the EC has contributed EUR 533,224,387 (or $743,688,127) towards the General Fund. In 2008 the EU (The European Commission plus EU member states) contributions represented 62%, while the EC alone covered 27% of total regular budget contributions. As of May 2009, EU contributions represent 66% of total regular budget contributions while the EC contribution alone represents 26% of its total.

Besides General Fund contributions, the EC also contributes specifically to UNRWA’s Social Safety Net Programme (SSNP). The SSNP aims to bring about long-term poverty alleviation in the refugee community, through cash subsidies and food aid to the most vulnerable. The EC is UNRWA’s largest donor to the programme, and the only donor contributing to its cash component. This programme is presently undergoing reform to move its emphasis more firmly in the direction of long term poverty alleviation – reform which has only been made possible thanks to the EC’s support.

Furthermore, the EC regularly contributes to UNRWA through extra-budgetary special projects, which complement and add value to UNRWA’s regular programmes. For example, EC assistance has provided scholarships and professional training to underprivileged young people, helping them gain the skills they need to compete in the labour market.

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1 The exchange rate used here and throughout the document is the UN exchange rate for June 09; 1 USD = 0.717 EURs.
Finally, since 2000 the EC has contributed more than EUR 143.4 million to UNRWA’s emergency appeals, mainly through its humanitarian branch ECHO. This makes the European Commission the second largest donor to UNRWA’s emergency appeals for the oPt and Lebanon after the US.

Besides regular annual contributions to the main components of UNRWA’s programme, the EC has also been a strong advocate for, and reliable supporter of, the Agency’s organizational development (OD) process, providing EUR 1 million per annum since 2008. Launched in January 2007, the OD process is designed to strengthen UNRWA’s effectiveness and efficiency in serving Palestine refugees.

In addition to supporting UNRWA with financial contributions, the EC has also been an active, involved and reliable partner to the Agency, as demonstrated through its chairmanship of the Subcommittee of the Agency’s Advisory Commission since January 2009. UNRWA’s Advisory Commission is made up of a group of 26 host and donor countries, and is the forum through which the Agency’s key stakeholders provide advice and assistance to the Commissioner-General on issues of programming, budget and the reform of the Agency. The specific role that the EC has as the Chair of the Subcommittee is to harmonize the different views of the members of the subcommittee and then present the jointly agreed upon recommendations to the Advisory Commission.

In 2006, in an effort to bolster the process of management reform, the EC presented a new approach to UNRWA funding, and proposed to incorporate an annual joint review of its main operations, mainly to be used for measuring the impact and the cost efficiency of services delivered to Palestine refugees. This review mechanism is based on a predefined set of results-based indicators and targets set to them, as well as milestones identified for implementing the OD process within UNRWA. Since then joint reviews have been conducted annually and will continue until 2010 when the Agency puts in place its own central monitoring and evaluation systems. From that point forward, the Joint Review will be based on the Agency’s own annual performance reviews, the results of which will be presented to all stakeholders within the forum of the Advisory Commission.
Relief and Social Services

At the inception of field operations in 1950, humanitarian relief formed the core of the programme, accounting for nearly two thirds of the budget. Although relief would dominate UNRWA’s activities for the next two decades, the Agency’s Relief and Social Services Department’s (RSSD) aim has always been to break the vicious cycle that denies many refugees freedom from poverty – a basic human right.

Today the Department provides a range of services to all refugees, such as skills training for women and young people, and rehabilitation for people with disabilities. It also identifies families in need of shelter rehabilitation and those in need of help covering hospitalization costs. The Department provides registration services to all Palestine refugees with regard to refugee status, births, marriages, change of residency and eligibility for UNRWA services. RSSD also safeguards the historical refugee records – dating back to 1948.

However, at present RSSD’s focus is on helping the most vulnerable Palestine refugees – ‘the poorest of the poor’. It does this through its Social Safety Net Programme (previously known as the Regular Food Aid Programme). The primary aims of the programme are:

• To provide basic food supplies and cash subsidies to the most vulnerable Palestine refugees considered to be a caught in a cycle of abject poverty;
• To provide selective cash assistance, such as one-off cash grants or basic household items in the instance of fire, flood, sudden death of a family breadwinner or other family emergency; and
• To ensure that Palestine refugee families have adequate shelter.

These interventions and UNRWA’s integrated approach to poverty alleviation combined, form the core of UNRWA’s strategy to achieve the first Millennium Development Goal – to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

The circumstances of those applying for assistance under the SSNP are assessed using a poverty-based approach, which is family specific and varies according to the local socio-economic context. This approach was adopted in 2008 as part of a series of reforms to the programme to ensure that the ‘poorest of the poor’ could be accurately identified and targeted by the programme. Those eligible are provided with assistance, which includes a standard food basket and basic cash subsidy, and also offered training opportunities and skills development to help them break out of the cycle of poverty. Additional subsidies are distributed to families living below the food security poverty line to cover their poverty gap. The cash subsidies are to give those vulnerable families the flexibility to make purchases according to their primary needs.

Out of the 4.6 million refugees that are eligible for basic UNRWA services, 257,000 are eligible to receive basic relief assistance from the SSNP – an increase from 192,020 in December 2007. Rapid population growth and a rise in poverty levels, especially in the oPt and Lebanon mean that this number is likely to rise in the future. Also, global food prices have impacted on the price of food provided by the Programme. As population growth and poverty rates increase and outstrip the Agency’s ability to provide basic relief assistance to poor refugees, the contributions of donors such as the EC towards the Programme become all the more crucial.
The impact of the EC’s support for the SSNP

In 2009 the EC will donate EUR 44.7 million towards the programme. The EC is also the only donor providing support to the reform of the programme, for example allowing for additional cash payments to those in extreme poverty as family income supplements. This ensures that:

The poorest refugees can meet their basic nutritional and family needs. 257,000 poor refugees (inclusive of 66,000 families) receive food baskets and cash subsidies. In the oPt, the food baskets consist of wheat flour, rice, vegetable oil, whole milk powder and sugar, and account for 82% of an average Palestine refugee’s daily caloric intake. In Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, rice, vegetable oil, whole milk powder, sugar, and lentils are provided, comprising 30% of an average refugee’s daily caloric intake.

Refugees eligible for help under the SSNP are continually assessed to ensure that those who need help receive it. UNRWA’s 380 social workers regularly conduct family visits to determine eligibility for SSNP services and develop tailored interventions to help families get out of poverty – for example getting referrals to specialists for children with disabilities or helping young people to get apprenticeships.

Nutritionally vulnerable pregnant women and nursing mothers have benefited under the new eligibility assessment approach. 46 additional social workers have been hired and trained in 2008 to identify women in this group that are food insecure.
Education

One of the main human development goals of UNRWA is to empower refugees with appropriate knowledge and skills through universal primary education. This is not only central to UNRWA’s mission of helping Palestine refugees to achieve their full potential, but is also part of UNRWA’s commitment the Millennium Development Goal of protecting the right to education and achieving universal primary education by 2015. In line with this UNRWA has an obligation to provide education to Palestine refugee children with education of a guaranteed quality and content in accordance with international standards and good practice, measured by actual learning outcomes for children. Today, education is UNRWA’s largest programme, accounting for over 50% of the Agency’s budget.

UNRWA not only provides basic education to refugee children, but also has a curriculum enrichment policy, which ensures that programmes such as Human Rights, Tolerance and Conflict Resolution are taught and promoted within its schools through student parliaments, drama and storytelling.

As well as running primary and elementary schools, UNRWA is also renowned in the region for the quality of its provision in vocational training. Centres such as the Gaza Training Centre and Damascus Training Centre provide vital skills training in a variety of fields, including plumbing, carpentry, business and computing, and fashion. These centres provide high quality, market-relevant skills, resulting in very high employment rates amongst graduates.
The impact of the EC support on the programme

As the largest multilateral donor to UNRWA’s General Fund in 2009, the EC plays a vital part in enabling UNRWA’s education programme to continue. Currently the demands upon UNRWA’s education system are growing. Over 50% of the refugee population is under 25 and this is putting real pressure on UNRWA’s school infrastructure. Over 77% of schools are run on a double shift system, in which one school will accommodate two consecutive school streams on one given day. As UNRWA strives to redress falling academic standards caused by overcrowding, and create a strong learning environment, the continued constant support of donors such as the EC is vital and ensures that:

All Palestine refugee children have access to primary education. 479,106 pupils are currently enrolled in 689 schools across UNRWA’s five fields of operation.

Boys and girls are educated on an equal basis. The Agency was the first in the Middle East to establish equal enrolment of boys and girls by the 1960s. Across UNRWA’s five fields, 50% of school pupils are girls.

Skills, development and training are offered to young refugees to enhance their employability and maximize their chances of economic independence. UNRWA runs 10 vocational training centres across five fields of operation and offers places to 6,400 students.

Teachers receive improved pre-service and on the job teacher training to enhance the qualifications of UNRWA’s teaching staff. As of UNRWA employs 21,217 teaching staff, out of which 938 of those are in service training, while 1,350 are being trained to become teachers.

The EC also supports specific extra-budgetary educational improvement projects, two of which are illustrated in the case studies below.
The Damascus Training Centre

Almost 1,000 Palestine refugees attend UNRWA’s Damascus Training Centre (DTC), gaining labour market relevant training. The DTC accepts students who are at least 22 years old; women account for 54 per cent of those enrolled. Offering 22 specialisations in trade and semi-professional career tracks, the DTC provides unemployed and underemployed refugees with professional opportunities.

The vocational training given at the DTC provides vital opportunities to young refugees. Refugees in camps face limited access to national vocational education centres, support for small businesses is limited, as are employment services within camps to link refugees’ skills to labour market demands.

The EC has been a long-term supporter of the DTC, and a EUR 2.5 million project began in 2006 to improve the courses on offer at the centre and the facilities. So far, the contribution has enabled the renovation of workshops and building of new computer laboratories. The centre’s facilities and course offerings were enriched with the introduction of two new courses in Graphic Design and Mechatronics. It has also allowed the building of a new dormitory to accommodate up to 38 women students in 10 fully fitted rooms. The dormitory building includes a study and a multipurpose room where the students can spend their free time between classes. The dormitory allows refugees from remote areas of Syria to come and study at the Centre and take full advantage of the opportunities offered there.
Improving Education in Lebanon

The European Commission has committed EUR 15,000,000 to the UNRWA-EU Education Project in Lebanon in 2005. The project aims to improve the quality of UNRWA’s education system and open up better employment prospects for Palestine refugees in the future. Through this project, construction has begun on eight new schools, with six due to be completed in 2009. The most recently completed school was opened in Taalabaya in February. The construction of this school saw an end to ‘double-shifting’ in the area and has meant that children have gained additional three hours of teaching time a day and can now also take part in recreational and extra-curricular activities.

As well as committing funds to upgrading old schools and building new ones, the Project has also dedicated funds for quality focused measures, such as teacher training, pre-schools, after-school activities, and support for children with special needs. By the time the project ends this year:

- 1,100 teachers will have been trained in various specialties.
- 215 staff will have been trained to assist children with special educational needs.
- A total of 232 new classrooms, five science laboratories, ten recreational rooms and 12 remedial teaching rooms will have been built.
- The enrollment of primary school drop outs in vocational training programmes will have increased by 25 per cent.
Health

Since its inception, UNRWA has been the main primary healthcare provider for Palestine refugees. With the cumulative benefits of decades of interventions such as vaccination, ante-and post-natal care and supplementary feeding programmes, refugees have enjoyed primary health standards in many areas matching or surpassing those prevailing in the region. Today, the goal of the Health Programme remains to protect, preserve and promote the health status of Palestine refugees, consistent with the UN Millennium Development Goals, the Convention on the Rights to the Child, and the policies and strategies of WHO.

Currently non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and cancer are on the rise amongst the refugee population, resulting in increased hospitalization costs for the Agency. Furthermore, there has been a sharp socio-economic decline in the occupied Palestinian territory in particular, resulting in fewer refugees being able to turn to private medical care and thus turning to UNRWA medical facilities. Access restrictions in the oPt and the ongoing conflict have had severe health implications, with a sharp rise in the incidence of low birth weight for infants in Gaza, and widespread post-traumatic stress disorders and psychological problems.
Impact of the EC support on the programme

To respond adequately to these challenges UNRWA has recruited more personnel, established mobile clinics, increased the number of health centres and evaluated the effectiveness of its core activities. If UNRWA is to rise to these challenges, and to continue to provide primary health care to the required standard, the EC’s continued support is vital. To date it has ensured that:

- **All Palestine refugees have access to primary health care.** There are 138 primary health care facilities (PHCFs) across UNRWA five fields of operations. In 2008 there were 9.5 million patient visits to UNRWA health facilities.

- **Family planning and mother and child health care are promoted across UNRWA’s five fields.** 135 health clinics provide family planning and mother and child health care.

- **Improved facilities to combat the rise of non communicable diseases.** 132 of UNRWA’s clinics offer diabetes and hyper-tension care.

- **Improved laboratory facilities.** 114 of UNRWA’s clinics offer laboratory services.
Infrastructure and Camp Development

The makeshift tents set up in 1948 have evolved into complex and overcrowded urban settings. While UNRWA does not administer the camps, it does have a clear interest in improving the conditions of Palestine refugees living in them. The Department of Infrastructure and Camp Improvement was created in response to calls at the 2004 Geneva Conference on UNRWA to address the deteriorating living conditions of Palestine refugees in camps where UNRWA operates.

UNRWA has sought to adopt a participatory approach, ensuring that camp presidents and communities are fully involved in planning the improvements and developments within the camps. To this end various pilot initiatives are being implemented, including initiatives such as those in Neirab in Syria, Talbiyeh in Jordan and in Fawwar and Dheisheh in the West Bank. The community planning process adopted in this approach allows residents to work out their own planning vision, including the use of public spaces and better access and infrastructure. Currently, UNRWA’s largest camp development and infrastructure project is the reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared camp in Lebanon, which was destroyed in 2007 by the Lebanese army.
Impact of the EC support on the programme

The EC has been a significant stakeholder in the development of this programme since its inception, playing a major role in the 2004 Geneva Conference and funding the pilot data collection project on the refugee camps in co-operation with the University of Stuttgart.

In Nahr el-Bared, the EC has funded the establishment of the assessment and planning unit for the camp’s reconstruction. This unit successfully guided the camp residents in the participatory process to develop the Master Plan for the reconstruction of the camp that now has full ownership of the community.

As the General Fund is in no position to fund activities in this area of work, earmarked contributions from donors will be essential if UNRWA is to continue its work in camp improvement and urban planning schemes. EC support has ensured that:

*Refugees have a voice in planning the future of their communities.* In Neirab camp UNRWA upgraded sub-standard housing units following a design worked out jointly by UNRWA and camp residents. In Fawwar camp in the West Bank, following discussion with the community, a public square was upgraded for use by residents as a safe playground and for wedding celebrations.

*Detailed social and spatial analyses have been carried out in camps.* The EC funded pilot project was carried out in three West Bank camps (Deheisheh, Amari and Fawwar) in cooperation with the University of Stuttgart. The project developed detailed analyses of camp inhabitants’ needs and also produced aerial surveys of all 19 West Bank camps.
Reconstruction of Nahr El Bared Camp

In parallel with the humanitarian operations implemented in Nahr El Bared Camp in Lebanon, UNRWA began the planning process for the reconstruction of NBC through the *Relief, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (2008 - 2011)*. This plan was carried out in coordination with the Prime Minister’s Office, the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee, the World Bank, the displaced refugee community, the NBC Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies, and sister UN agencies.

The reconstruction of Nahr El Bared Camp was patterned entirely on the community-driven participatory approach outlined by UNRWA’s Department of Camp Improvement. The ongoing design work represents an impressive model of civic participation which began with the community’s own initiative to formulate their vision for the reconstruction of the camp. The process included drawing up guidelines on access and street widths and community agreement to reduce the sizes of plots and the built area to allow for wider roads and pathways and improve light and ventilation. Each individual family was able to work with the architects to design their new homes based on their own specific needs and requirements, including for wheelchair access.

The result of all this work was the Preliminary Master Plan, which was completed in February 2008. The Master Plan has since been refined and is now being verified with government bodies.

The Impact of the EC

Under the 2007 and 2008 Emergency Appeals for Nahr El Bared Camp, the EC contributed EUR 6.4 million towards rubble removal, the reactivation of small businesses, the commissioning of a socio-economic survey of the local economy and the development of a preliminary design for the NBC Master Plan. Under the Relief Recovery and Reconstruction Framework for NBC, the EC donated EUR 4.6 million in 2008 towards the first package of the reconstruction. In 2009, the EC has contributed EUR 6.6 million overall to provide adequate shelter, food and non-food items to displaced families.

Out of a current estimated budget EUR 231.8 million required by UNRWA for the reconstruction of the camp and the rehabilitation of Beddawi Camp, EUR 55.4 million has been pledged as of mid-May 09.
Emergency Appeals
Time and time again the EC has been amongst the first to respond to UNRWA’s calls for additional funding for the delivery of humanitarian aid.

**Background**

In addition to providing basic services to Palestine refugees in line with primary human development goals, the Agency has launched over 20 Emergency Appeals in the last 10 years, to respond to regional crises, starting with the outbreak of the second *intifada* in the oPt in late 2000 and an initial Flash Appeal for EUR 27.9 million. Since then, the total amount of funds requested to address the rapidly deteriorating political, socio-economic and security situation in the oPt and Lebanon, has been in excess of EUR 1.43 billion.

These crises included repeated Israeli military operations in the West Bank and Gaza that destroyed civic infrastructure and entire neighbourhoods (e.g. Jenin Camp, Rafah, Beit Hanoun) and led to hundreds of dead and injured; the construction of the West Bank Barrier and its associated closure regime that continues to strangle the West Bank economy; the Gaza siege following the Hamas take-over in June 2007 and, most recently, the Israeli attack on Gaza (*Operation Cast Lead*) in late December 2008 that led UNRWA to appeal for its largest ever humanitarian operation at a cost of EUR 247.4 million.

In Lebanon, UNRWA was called into action following Israel’s war on Lebanon in July 2006 and then again in the summer of 2007, following the total destruction of Nahr el Bared Camp (NBC) in northern Lebanon resulting from the conflict between the Lebanese Armed Forces and the extremist Fatah Al-Islam group.

Time and time again the EC has been amongst the first to respond to UNRWA’s calls for additional funding for the delivery of humanitarian aid. In total, the EC, primarily through ECHO, has contributed over EUR 169 million to UNRWA’s Emergency Appeals since 2000 making it the second largest donor to this part of UNRWA’s work. Already in 2009, ECHO has contributed EUR 22.5 million, much of which has been allocated to mitigate the devastating effects of *Operation Cast Lead* in Gaza that compounded an already desperate situation following 18 months of siege-like conditions.

**Emergencies in 2009**

Currently, UNRWA is requesting funds against three Emergency Appeals in 2009:

- The West Bank portion of the 2009 *Emergency Appeal for the oPt* amounting to EUR 61 million;
- The *Quick Response Plan to Restore Critical Services to Refugees in Gaza* (QRP) following *Operation Cast Lead*, which has recently been revised upwards from EUR 247.4 million to EUR 266 million;
- The *Relief and Early Recovery Appeal for Nahr el Bared, Lebanon* (RERA, Sep 2008-Dec 2009) amounting to EUR 30.8 million.
2009 Emergency Appeal for the oPt

UNRWA’s emergency programme for the delivery of humanitarian aid to the oPt began in late 2000 at the start of the Al Aqsa intifada. Since then, the crisis has exacted a devastating human and economic cost on an increasingly vulnerable Palestinian population.

The hallmarks of this crisis are a persistent and protracted economic decline, rising levels of unemployment, increased food insecurity levels and tightening of restrictions on movement and access in both the West Bank and Gaza. Official statistics from 2007, for example, show that nearly one-third of all Palestinian households were living in consumption poverty and 18.3% in deep poverty, with rates rising to 51.8% and 35% respectively in Gaza. In 2008, unemployment levels rose to 31.7% of the labour force, according to the relaxed definition, reaching 25.3% in the West Bank and 45% in Gaza - amongst the highest in the world. The movement of Palestinians within the West Bank remains severely constrained, with OCHA reporting in May 2009 of a further entrenchment of mechanisms used to restrict Palestinian movement and deepening fragmentation of West Bank territory; there has been a near total-blockade of Gaza for people and goods since June 2007.

In the context of the persistent and deepening vulnerability for refugees across the oPt, in 2009 UNRWA launched its largest ever annual emergency appeal for a total of EUR 197 million: EUR 135.5 million for humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees in Gaza in 2009 and a further EUR 60.9 million for the West Bank.

In recognition of the rapidly deepening crisis in the oPt over the past two years, the EC has responded by steadily increasing its contributions to UNRWA’s Emergency Appeals in both the West Bank and Gaza, contributing EUR 17 million in 2007 and EUR 22.5 million in 2008.

In 2009, the EC initially contributed EUR 13.9 million towards UNRWA’s Emergency Appeals in oPt. This was later complemented by EUR 13 million via the Commission’s “Instrument for Stability” towards Emergency Job Creation in Gaza, or a total of nearly EUR 27 million for 2009.

The EC’s contributions go towards UNRWA’s emergency food aid and cash for work programmes in the oPt and are indispensable for continued and secure delivery of humanitarian assistance to Palestine refugees, who continue to live in an environment of perpetual crisis.

Within weeks of its launch, the needs outlined in the 2009 Emergency Appeal (West Bank and Gaza) were superseded by the dramatic escalation of military conflict in Gaza, prompting UNRWA to launch a special Emergency Appeal for Gaza only, the Quick Response Plan (QRP) for Gaza.

2 The Gaza portion of the Emergency Appeal for the oPt was later subsumed within the Quick Response Project for Gaza that was launched following the Dec 08 Israeli offensive, Operation Cast Lead, with an overall budget of EUR 247 million.
Impact of the Emergency Programmes

Under its Emergency Social Safety Net assistance in the West Bank, the Agency provides emergency cash and food aid to vulnerable Palestine refugee families, targeting nearly 60,000 families for food aid in 2009 and some 30,000 families for cash assistance.

Under the Emergency Job Creation programme, the largest of its kind in the West Bank, UNRWA provides job opportunities to some 33,460 refugees in 2009, who are supporting financially a further 167,300 dependents.

Through the Emergency Health Programme, the Agency has reached isolated communities and refugee households who have no access to public and private health services. In 2008, for example, almost 140,000 refugees and non-refugees were treated through the operation of mobile health clinics in 150 locations throughout the West Bank, thus ensuring that basic health services are extended to all beneficiaries, irrespective of access difficulties.

In the West Bank, community mental health projects have been funded by the Emergency Appeals since 2008, providing psychosocial and mental health services in UNRWA’s health centres and schools, for example. Furthermore, UNRWA is providing community activities in the West Bank’s 19 refugee camps through Community-Based Organisations. Also, to protect the rights of Palestine refugees, UNRWA has increased monitoring and awareness-raising on issues related to the West Bank Barrier, for example, mainly via its Operations Support Officer Programme.3

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3 The Operations Support Officer (OSO) teams have supported the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the oPt since 2001 in the midst of often intense conflict and in conditions of tight restrictions on movement. They aim to improve UNRWA service delivery through systematic monitoring of humanitarian conditions, facilitation of access to humanitarian aid convoys, safeguarding the neutrality and integrity of UNRWA’s programmes and installations and monitoring problems affecting the human dignity, safety and welfare of Palestine refugees.
“Hope” in Wadi El Maleh (West Bank)

Wadi El Maleh is a small Bedouin community scattered around six encampments in the northern Jordan Valley to the east of Tubas. While there is no Separation Barrier in this part of the West Bank, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have declared almost the entire area around Wadi El Maleh as a Closed Military Area to which access by ordinary civilians is not allowed. The area is also dominated by a number of IDF training camps and Israeli settlements.

It has become nearly impossible for this community of 280 families who depend almost entirely on animal husbandry for their livelihood to sustain itself. As Palestinians, the Bedouin are also not allowed to build in this part of the Jordan Valley and have received 40 warnings from the IDF that their homes will be demolished.

The hamlet is separated from access to nearby Tayaseer or Tubas villages by a military checkpoint. A difficult road leads to the next larger town of Ein al Beida. There is no electricity or running water in Wadi El Maleh, no medical services or schools. Residents are frequently harassed by settlers from nearby settlements. Water is brought in with tanks and children have to walk to school, either through the checkpoint to Tayaseer or through the long road to Ein Al Beida.

The community was identified as being in need of urgent protection and assistance by UNRWA’s West Bank Operations Office in conjunction with the emergency Job Creation Programme (JCP) that is generously funded with donations from ECHO. In addition to creating positions for eight labourers in nearby Tayaseer, the JCP has stepped in to help create Wadi El Maleh’s first kindergarten.

Aysha Suleiman Warad is a resident of Wadi El Maleh and holds a BA degree in Arabic. She decided to use her skills, and her family tent, to start the “Hope Kindergarten” for the youngest members of the community. While teaching them to read and write, play and sing, the kindergarten also offers the children a measure of protection against harassment from settlers. It also keeps the children from playing in the nearby IDF military training fields where injuries of children sustained from playing with unexploded ordinances are not uncommon.

The Wadi El Maleh project began on 5 May 2009 and is an example of how UNRWA has successfully merged its interventions to target poverty alleviation with identifying and protecting the rights of vulnerable civilians in the West Bank.
Small Business Reactivation: "Thanks to the EC grant, my life is getting back on track."

Bilal was working very hard, organizing and cleaning, trying to get his clinic back to how it was before the black days of the war that erupted in Nahr El Bared Camp (Lebanon) in May 2007.

As a 34-year-old nurse, Bilal Assayed opened a clinic in the area adjacent to NBC just one and a half years before the conflict between Fateh Al Islam and the Lebanese Armed Forces cut a swathe of destruction through the camp.

“The clinic was the sole source of subsistence, not only for me, but for a number of doctors and nurses; many patients who couldn’t have the access to private clinics in Tripoli were coming to us. The clinic had a maternity section, a dental unit and an MRI center. This is in addition to a number of specialists who used to come to the clinic regularly.”

Bilal had been wanting to expand his clinic and did not expect that a war would destroy his dreams. He was among the first families who returned to the adjacent area of Nahr el Bared camp in October 2007. His heart sank when he saw what had become of his clinic,

“I was in a complete quandary; all my dreams, my life, my future were gone.”

Bilal had lost all hopes of rebuilding his life until the day he received a business reactivation grant from UNRWA. Bilal had applied for a EUR 7,170 grant from UNRWA’s EC-funded business reactivation programme for NBC. This grant allowed Bilal to repair damaged equipment and purchase new equipment.

“I used this money to invest it in the clinic, to restart from scratch. When I finished with the repairs I was left without a penny, but I did not give up. I knew that there is always a light at the end of the tunnel. In my case, the light was the aid I received from the European Commission, via UNRWA.”

“The moment I held the cheque up in my hand was like a new breath of air in my life and the life of all the families who depend on my clinic for their livelihood. I cannot describe that moment: I was thrilled to bits. At last my life will get back on track.”

The small-business reactivation project is expected to contribute to the development of sustainable economic activities in NBC’s adjacent area and will become the basis for future economic recovery in the reconstructed camp.

“Words are not enough to express my gratitude to all those who contributed to make this happen. This will help me become self-reliant again and recover my dignity,” Bilal says proudly.
Quick Response Plan to Restore Critical Services to Refugees in Gaza

On 31 December, 2008, the Israeli army launched the military offensive *Operation Cast Lead* against Gaza. By the time Israel declared the unilateral ceasefire on 18 January 2009, over 1,400 Palestinians had been killed and 5,000 wounded. Amongst the casualties were large numbers of civilians, including an estimated 313 children killed and 116 women. Tens of thousands of civilians lost their homes and livelihoods.

In Israel, 3 civilians were killed and 182 injured, as a reported 1,200 rockets fell on Israeli civilian areas.

The current appeal - UNRWA’s Quick Response Plan - seeks to restore full service provision in Gaza and address the immediate post-conflict needs of affected families. Initiatives are also planned in support of longer-term recovery efforts.

In early 2009, the EC contributed EUR 1.2 million through ECHO towards the initial Flash Appeal launched immediately following the outbreak of violence in Gaza. This was quickly bolstered by an additional contribution of EUR 8.3 million towards the Quick Response Plan for food aid and EUR 13 million via the EC’s “Instrument for Stability”.

Unfortunately, despite unprecedented levels of donor funding, the Agency’s ability to respond has been severely hampered by Israel’s continued restrictions on entry of materials in Gaza. These restrictions are also preventing Gaza’s industrial sector from resuming operations. Consequently, living conditions for the majority of people in Gaza have not improved in the aftermath of the war and dependency on aid remains unacceptably – and unnecessarily - high.
Impact of the Emergency Programmes

Thanks to the generous funding of the QRP, UNRWA was able to significantly expand its delivery of humanitarian aid in Gaza, while also addressing extraordinary needs resulting from the conflict.

In the first three months following the conflict, UNRWA was able to distribute one of two planned rounds of food assistance targeting all registered refugees in Gaza, helping nearly 900,000 individuals and covering an estimated 60% of their daily calorific needs for a 60-day period. In addition to this, UNRWA carried out an extensive programme of distribution of food and non-food items to affected areas.

Following the re-opening of schools on 21 January, just three days after the end of the hostilities, the Agency resumed its school feeding programme, providing one meal a day to each of 198,568 students. UNRWA also distributed a total of EUR 3.6 million to over 200,000 students at UNRWA schools to purchase school supplies.

To alleviate the immediate needs resulting from the unprecedented shelter crisis - 15% of all refugee housing in Gaza was damaged or destroyed – UNRWA provided a range of non-food items (blankets, mattresses, sleeping mats, hygiene kits, etc.) to some 46,000 families.

Due to the unavailability of construction material in Gaza, no damaged shelters have been repaired directly by UNRWA, but the Agency distributed about EUR 573,000 to 672 families for carrying out minor repairs to their shelters as of May 2009.

Under the Emergency Cash Assistance Programme, UNRWA provided EUR 1.43 million in cash assistance to 2,000 families whose homes have been destroyed or heavily damaged until May 2009. Eventually, total costs of this intervention will reach EUR 11.5 million.

In the public health sector, UNRWA has provided industrial fuel to the power plant to allow the resumption of basic operations, fuel to the municipalities and the Coastal Municipal Water Utility to enable minimal water, waste water and solid waste management services. UNRWA also provided fuel to hospitals, often in coordination with ICRC.
Emergency Appeal for Northern Lebanon

Following the Lebanon War between the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and Hizbullah in July 2006, Lebanon experienced yet another outbreak of hostilities in May 2007 between the Lebanese army and the Fatah Al-Islam group in Nahr El Bared Camp in northern Lebanon that lasted until early September 2007. As a consequence, 95% of the camp and large swathes of the surrounding areas were destroyed or severely damaged, including the UNRWA compound.

The entire population of the camp - some 27,000 Palestine refugees in total - plus thousands of families from surrounding areas were displaced as a result of the conflict.

A close-knit and once relatively thriving community was suddenly thrown into impoverishment. During 2008, only 1,264 refugees returned to damaged homes in the adjacent areas. The majority continue to live in UNRWA-subsidized rented accommodation the surrounding area waiting for NBC to be reconstructed. Many families are living in one room with very basic facilities. Others live in temporary or collective UNRWA shelters in the areas adjacent to NBC.

With few resources and very limited opportunities for any employment, the majority of displaced refugee families are barely coping and continue to rely heavily on humanitarian support from the UN and NGOs for their basic needs.

Several assessments carried out in 2008 record high unemployment and indicate a breakdown in family and social relations, a rise in domestic violence, depression, despair, stress-related illnesses and trauma among children and adults.

The Relief and Recovery Appeal (RERA), is the third appeal in response to this conflict. It is part of the phased approach to the reconstruction of the camp through which families will eventually return to their homes. The current EUR 30.8 million appeal addresses the interim needs for relief and early recovery through 2009.

The EC responded generously to UNRWA’s Northern Lebanon Emergency Appeals in 2007 contributing EUR 1.5 million for the construction of temporary shelters and EUR 6.4 million for the demolition of hazardous buildings, rubble removal, participatory planning and assessment for the design of the reconstructed camp, reactivation of businesses damaged by the conflict, and the undertaking of a socio-economic survey of NBC and neighbouring Beddawi Palestine refugee camp.

Within the context of the Vienna Conference on 23 June 2008, for the reconstruction of NBC, two additional contributions of EUR 4.6 million and EUR 2.3 million for a UN joint project were received from the European Commission.

In 2009, two contributions of EUR 1.5 million and EUR 5.12 million were received for the provision of food and non-food items and for rental cash subsidies consecutively.

Likewise, access to education for around 9,000 displaced pupils was secured, including through the construction of seven pre-fabricated school buildings and the provision of essential school supplies.

Contributions from the EC and EU-member states amounting to EUR 8.1 million enabled UNRWA and its partners to start rubble removal operations in October 2008. By March 2009, around 60% of the overall rubble in NBC had been removed. In coordination with the Nahr el Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies, a preliminary NBC Master Plan, including structural and urban plans, was produced (Feb 2008), a major pre-condition for reconstruction.
The focus of the relief effort has been on families displaced from NBC and the adjacent areas. UNRWA's relief strategy aims to ensure that the most critical needs of the displaced refugees are met until all families are able to return to reconstructed NBC or to their repaired or rebuilt homes in the adjacent areas.

Assistance has also been extended to those families who have been able to return to their homes in the adjacent areas but who lack the means, as a result of the destruction of the economy, to cover their basic needs. Provisions were also made to guarantee continued access to services normally available as part of UNRWA's general assistance programme.

UNRWA has helped to maintain the minimum nutritional standards of displaced refugees through the provision of food parcels and non-food items to the 5,553 displaced families. UNRWA also ensures access to primary health care for the displaced refugees through the establishment of two semi-permanent clinics in 2008 and by covering the full medical costs, including hospitalization, for displaced refugees who are chronically sick and for emergency cases, for example.

UNRWA has secured access to safe and adequate temporary accommodation. By the summer of 2009, UNRWA will have completed a total of 850 temporary shelter units for a total of 938 families at five sites in the adjacent areas. 165 families have been housed in collective centres and 3,200 families receive rental subsidies. Its water and sanitation programme ensured that 100% of the displaced population had access to safe water and adequate sanitation facilities.

The emergency programme also addressed the need of livelihood support. A socio-economic survey conducted in 2008 revealed that 40% of NBC returnees to the adjacent areas, for example, were unemployed. UNRWA developed a plan for reactivation of small businesses whereby grants ranging between EUR 717 and EUR 7,170 have been awarded depending on the nature of the business. In the adjacent areas, 195 such grants were awarded. The EC contributed EUR 2 million towards this plan.
EC support of “UNRWA at 60” events

UNRWA sees its 60-year anniversary in 2009 - 2010 as a unique chance to further strengthen relations with its beneficiaries while maintaining, building and extending its partnership with the European Union and its institutions.

In Brussels, this translated into the "EU–UNRWA Partnership for Peace & Humanity" initiative covering two "UNRWA at 60" events funded by the European Commission with EUR 200,000:


This conference looks at the economic, social and cultural empowerment of Palestinians as refugees as well as a people under long-term occupation or in diaspora. The conference explores their right to enjoy a cultural identity and to develop a viable economy with employment opportunities regardless of the circumstances. The approach is an interdisciplinary rights-based one, that explores a complex network of rights and responsibilities including those of the Palestinians, the international community, Israel, and the host countries where refugees reside.

2. "A Goal for Peace" – a friendly football match on 6 May 2009 between the FC Molenbeek-Brussels and the Palestine national team, who played for the first time in Europe.

"A Goal for Peace" was also a fundraising event for the benefit of the UNRWA Scholarship Endowment Fund, and promoted the ideals of Sport for Development and Peace in partnership with its designated UN Special Advisor. It was hosted at the Edmond Machtens Stadium of the Molenbeek municipality. The match was preceded by a musical performance by Palestinian musicians, including Ammar Hassan, Shadia Mansour, Jaser Switat, and GTown, all organized by the Palestinian music promoting association "SABREEN". Over 4,500 participants attended, and millions in the region watched the live broadcast of RTBF, with cheering crowds at public viewings. This event thus not only connected UNRWA and the EC with the Belgian public, but also with the Middle East, and the Palestine refugee communities.

The European Commission funding allowed for an EC-UNRWA partnership visibility campaign that saw the distribution of 10,000 posters, and 25,000 leaflets across the Capital Region of Brussels, as well as posters on 100 trams and buses for two weeks, in addition to email and website information.

The "A Goal for Peace" initiative also found partners in the Capital Region of Brussels, the Belgian Ministry of Social Integration, the UN Office for Sport Development and Peace, the UN Regional Information Office Brussels, the General Delegation of Palestine in Brussels, the Flemish Region Ministry for Sport, Youth & Culture, Bank of Palestine, al-Quds 2009 Capital of Arab Culture, as well as various NGOs, among others the Belgo-Palestinian Association, and individuals.
Concluding Statement

For the last six decades UNRWA has been effectively providing substantial humanitarian and human developmental assistance to 4.67 million Palestine refugees in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. It is the largest UN operation in the Middle East with 29,000 staff (over 90% of whom are themselves refugees). In the absence of a solution to the Palestine refugees' problem, UNRWA's mandate has repeatedly been renewed, most recently until 2011.

The European Commission has been supporting UNRWA for the last four decades to ensure that it continues to play its unique role in advocating and providing for the human development and humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees as well as its role in providing minimum stability in the region.

While the European Commission remains committed to support UNRWA until a just solution to the Palestine refugee cause is attainable, UNRWA is equally committed to fulfil its mandate and to continue to provide services as a long term investment into the future of the Palestine refugees and for the development of the region as a whole.
The European Commission and UNRWA
A partnership for development and humanity