Livelihoods in Gaza are disappearing. The closure of Gaza’s borders in 2007 compounded an already dire economic situation. Unemployment rates have climbed to 42%, the private sector has almost completely collapsed, and access to agricultural land and fishing areas are under threat as a result of the imposition by Israel of a “buffer zone” along land borders and three mile limit in respect of fishing.

UNRWA’s Job Creation Programme (JCP) aims to ease the impact of widespread poverty and protracted conflict by providing short-term employment opportunities to refugees. The Programme injects cash into the local economy and supports the private sector through additional human resources. Its innovative approach prioritises employment opportunities for youth, women, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Positions through the Programme range from three months duration for unskilled workers to one year for professionals. In order to provide Gaza’s best and brightest university graduates with much needed and deserved work opportunities, JCP offers one-year employment for the 600 top graduates from Gaza’s universities and colleges.

Beneficiaries recruited through the JCP earn a small amount of money for necessary household expenditures. They work in UNRWA installations as well as external organizations, such as municipalities, NGOs, universities, and businesses. The programme prioritises placing JCP employees in projects that maintain and rehabilitate public infrastructure, boost the private sector, improve environmental conditions, and target disadvantaged groups.

The target for JCP is 22,500 employment opportunities per month. Due to funding shortfalls, UNRWA is only able to offer, on average, 10,000 opportunities each month, from an applicant database of 180,000.

Even without reaching its intended employment target, the JCP has had a significant impact in Gaza. The programme has:

- Helped over 700 small businesses re-launch minimal operations using talented graduates;
- Supported the learning process in UNRWA schools through the provision of nearly 1700 support teachers;
- Provided over 1,200 JCP workers to assist in the delivery of public health services, management of insect infestations, and provision of sanitation services.
- Assisted the agricultural and fishing sectors by providing over 2,000 JCP workers annually who contribute to building irrigation systems, rehabilitating greenhouses, harvesting crops and repairing fishing nets with over 2000 workers annually;
- Bolstered the health sector through providing 1,100 workers with various medical qualifications.

About UNRWA
Some 4.7 million Palestine refugee in UNRWA’s five fields of operations - Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are eligible for Agency services, including education, healthcare, social services, shelter, micro-credit loans and emergency aid. UNRWA employs nearly 30,000 staff, the vast majority of whom are Palestine refugees. UNRWA’s operations are financed almost entirely by voluntary contributions from donors. The Agency’s Regular Budget for 2010-2011 is $1.23 billion, which covers the costs of delivering the Agency’s Core Programme in education, health and relief and social services. UNRWA’s headquarters are in Gaza City and Amman.