Construction, Reconstruction and Infrastructure

Protracted conflict and limited access to materials, coupled with rapidly declining socio-economic conditions and natural population growth, have resulted in the dramatic degradation of housing, school, healthcare, community and water and sanitation infrastructure in Gaza.

UNRWA’s Engineering and Construction Services Department and Special Environmental Health Programme work to construct and maintain UNRWA facilities, such as schools, health centers and refugee shelters; promote environmentally sustainable and livelihood building neighborhoods; provide water, storm water runoff and wastewater management infrastructure; and enhance the quality, reliability, and cost effectiveness of infrastructure development and maintenance in Gaza. All of this work is undertaken with significant community consultation.

Since June 2007, the blockade imposed by Israel on Gaza has barred the entry of construction materials, with very minimal exceptions. As a result, all of UNRWA's reconstruction and construction projects, worth almost 100 million dollars, have been stalled since 2007 and no new projects have been able to commence. The critical need for materials was exacerbated following Israel’s “Operation Cast Lead” in December 2008/January 2009, which destroyed or damaged 60,000 homes in Gaza.

UNRWA’s highest priority is advocating for the end of the blockade in order to allow the full reconstruction and recovery of Gaza.

Construction and Reconstruction of Schools

Due to the growing student population and lack of available classroom space, around 90% of UNRWA schools in Gaza operate on a double-shift basis, with one group of students attending in the morning and a different group of students attending in the afternoon. This severely truncates the education of UNRWA's students. UNRWA estimates that a further 100 schools should be built to accommodate the current and future student population in Gaza. Despite having funds to construct several schools, progress has been thwarted by the blockade.

Construction and Upgrading of Health Centres

UNRWA currently operates 17 primary health care centres and has funding for the much needed construction of three new health centers and upgrading of two existing health centres. These projects would directly benefit 150,000 beneficiaries but cannot presently be carried out due to the blockade.

Providing New Community Facilities

Years of conflict and poverty have resulted in a serious shortage of recreational and community facilities in Gaza. UNRWA has funds to build two new community centers, one public library and one sports field since 2007 but has been unable to complete these projects due to lack of available materials.

Water and Sanitation Projects

Conflict, closure and dramatic socio-economic decline have caused severe degradation to and devastation of Gaza’s water and sanitation infrastructure. In 2009, 90% of Gaza’s water supply was classified as unfit for human consumption. UNRWA has funds for three wastewater treatment projects, which would improve the living conditions of tens of thousands of refugees, should the materials for the projects become available.

UNRWA Gaza Field Office

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.