Regional Update on Palestine Refugees

Al–Shuraka

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SFD is Proud to Support UNRWA

A publication of the UNRWA External Relation and Communications Department-
Arab Partnership Unit - Amman
OFID contributes $1 million for food for poorest refugees in Gaza

$500,000 to meet basic food needs of poorest families
$500,000 to replace food parcels distributed during Gaza Crisis in November

The first contribution is being used to meet the basic food needs of 28,125 of the most vulnerable families in Gaza, many of whom have lost their livelihoods as a result of the Israeli-imposed blockade, through UNRWA’s regular food distributions in the Gaza Strip.

The second contribution is being used to replenish emergency stock after food parcels were distributed to 7,900 families during the largest military escalation offensive since 2008 against the Gaza Strip on November 14th 2012. An exchange of hostilities continued nearly unabated for eight days, until a ceasefire was implemented on 21 November 2012. In providing daily sustenance for needy refugees, the Agency will alleviate the negative impact of deepening poverty and food insecurity at a time of multiple hardships.

Welcoming this contribution, which is being used to provide emergency food supplies, UNRWA Commissioner-General Filippo Grandi said: "This is by no means the first time OFID has demonstrated its strong commitment to supporting the Palestinian people and backing UNRWA’s mandate to this end. Although a ceasefire is now in place, this new pledge will be very helpful in our efforts to restore conditions to normal."

OFID is a longstanding partner of UNRWA in the area of food security. OFID has also funded job creation programmes and has had long-term cooperation with UNRWA in microfinance. OFID is currently funding the construction of new schools in Nahr el-Bared camp in Lebanon which is under reconstruction, and scholarships for Palestine refugees in UNRWA’s five fields of operation.
Bahrain Royal Charity Organization donates $25,000 for Ramadan Iftar for families with disabled children in Gaza

During the holy month of Ramadan, 2,788 hot meals were distributed through six rehabilitation centres, reaching 872 families from all over the Gaza Strip who have children with disabilities.

The Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain has been a steady contributor to the Agency, and currently gives $50,000 annually to support UNRWA’s core programmes in the area of health, education, and relief and social services. Since 2009, the Royal Charity Organisation has also supported Gaza reconstruction through funding the construction of a health centre, school, additional classrooms and a library.
The contribution from the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent (UAERC) was used to provide 426 families (4,699 people), representing the poorest refugee families and classified as abject poor families, with a sheep.

This immensely eased the burden on impoverished parents who suffer arduous social pressures to meet the demands of the Eid El-Adha traditional feast, and ensured thousands of children could enjoy and celebrate this important feast.

The UAERC is a regular supporter of Palestine refugees. Over the last five years, the UAERC has contributed over five million dollars for food aid. The UAERC also supports the Agency’s shelter reconstruction projects, having contributed funds for rebuilding in Lebanon, Gaza, and Syria.
The initiative allowed UNRWA in Gaza to provide hot, protein-rich *Iftar* for 28,386 poor persons during the Holy Month, targeting those who would otherwise be unable to access such meals during Ramadan. The hot meals were distributed to the most vulnerable by 19 community-based organisations, using a coupon system to ensure the whole family benefits, and not just those who are able to travel to the organisation.

The Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation is one of UNRWA’s most consistent donors in the Gulf. In addition to regular food support for the neediest refugees in the West Bank and Gaza, the Foundation was also the first to adopt a school under the Agency’s “Adopt-a-School Initiative”. In 2010, the Foundation adopted Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Elementary Boys & Co-ed School in Gaza, and has recently renewed its sponsorship for the scholastic year 2012/2013.
Donor Contributions

Cairo Amman Bank awards scholarship to an economically disadvantaged Palestine refugee in Jordan

To commemorate the achievement of personal loans granted to individuals in Jordan crossing the JOD1 billion mark, Amman Cairo Bank generously funded a scholarship for an economically disadvantaged Palestine refugee in Jordan to attend university.

The scholarship will support one student aged between 17-21 years-old to study financial and banking sciences or accounting at a Jordanian University. During his/her study years the student will also be offered the opportunity to receive on-site training at the bank and finally, upon completion of the course they will be offered a job.

You can find out more about UNRWA’s scholarship programme and how you can contribute in our feature article on page 22.

Dubai Private Company ‘SAP’ launches employee-led initiative to support Beit Hanoun Elementary School in Gaza

The Dubai-based enterprise application software company ‘Systems, Appliances and Products in Data Processing’, has launched an employee-driven initiative called ‘Back to School’ to support Beit Hanoun Elementary Co-ed School in Gaza. This is the first time a private company from Dubai has supported Palestine refugees through a contribution to UNRWA.

Through this initiative, SAP has raised over $4,000 which will be used to purchase essential school supplies such as uniforms and stationery for the school in Gaza, which serves 1,918 students.
The contribution is being used to provide tools and materials and subsidise 70 agricultural labourers to help farmers replant olives trees damaged by settlers in three villages near Hebron in the West Bank and cultivate land threatened by settlement expansion. The agricultural labourers selected are food insecure Palestinian refugees who, along with their families, will benefit from these cash grants.

Mr. Khalaf Al Habtoor is a well-known philanthropist and supporter of Palestinians. In November 2011, Mr. Al Habtoor was awarded UNRWA’s prestigious ‘Shield of Merit’ in recognition of his humanitarian work in Palestine.
Support from our partners

The Saudi Committee contributes over $2 million in emergency food aid to most needy Palestine refugees affected by Syria crisis

- $2 million cash donation for food for Palestinians affected by crisis
- $78,000 worth of food parcels delivered to Palestine refugees who have fled to Jordan

The donations were made possible by King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and the charity’s Supervisor-General and Saudi Minister of the Interior, HRH Prince Mohammed Bin Nayef Bin Abdul Aziz.

Following approval by HRH Prince Mohammed Bin Nayef Bin Abdul Aziz, Saudi Minister of Interior and Supervisor General of the Saudi National Campaign to Support Brothers in Syria, an agreement for the $2 million contribution was signed on 20 November 2012, in UNRWA Headquarters in Amman, by Mr. Mubarak Al Bakr, Executive Director of the Saudi Campaign for the Relief of the Palestinian People in Syria, and Mr. Peter Ford, Representative of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA.
The ceremony was attended by HE Mr Fahd Al Zaid, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Jordan. The Saudi relief project will allow UNRWA to provide emergency food aid to the most needy.

The donation of relief parcels was composed of 400 boxes of food rations, 400 children’s kits, 400 hygiene kits and 420 cartons of dates and were distributed to the most vulnerable Palestine refugee families who have fled from Syria to Jordan.
Mr. Khalaf Ahmad Al Habtoor, the Chairman of the UAE’s Al Habtoor Group, signed a sponsorship agreement with UNRWA to support Palestine refugees affected by the crisis.

Through this generous contribution, Mr. Al Habtoor has helped UNRWA to provide food and basic non-food items for the thousands of Palestinian refugee families living in Syria caught up in the conflict.

Mr. Al Habtoor commented, “The conflict in Syria has taken the focus off the situation in Palestine. It is important not to forget these men, women and children who are suffering because of a new crisis in the region. I hope my contribution will help offer some relief and hope to the many families in need.”

He added, “The UNRWA is playing a vital role in assisting, protecting and representing refugees in the Middle East and occupied Palestine, but it needs more contributions to continue doing its job.”
How can you help?

From January to June 2013, UNRWA plans to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to up to 360,000 Palestine refugees affected by the conflict in Syria in Syria, up to 5,500 Palestine refugees from Syria in Jordan, and up to 20,000 in Lebanon.

In all three countries, vulnerable conflict-affected Palestine refugees are in desperate need of assistance to meet their basic food, medical, and education needs. The winter season presents additional challenges, as Palestine refugees whose homes have been damaged or have been displaced to temporary accommodation are exposed to harsh winter conditions. Blankets, heating fuel, and warm clothes are needed to protect them from exposure to the cold.

The priority areas of intervention are:

- Cash assistance
- Protection
- Food aid
- Non-food items
- Emergency environmental health
- Emergency health
- Emergency education
- Emergency rehabilitation of UNRWA installations
- Safety and security
- Capacity management and support

To find out more information about UNRWA’s Syria Crisis response, please visit: http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2012122163648.pdf
In September 2012, a delegation from the Saudi Fund for Development Eng Mohammed Al-Namleh and Eng. Abdullah Al Khowaiter, visited SFD’s landmark housing project for the first time in Gaza and met Gaza senior managers, including the Director, Mr Robert Turner, and his Deputy the Chief of Infrastructure, and the Chief of Relief.

The Saudi project to Rehouse Palestine Refugees at Rafah is the largest housing project that UNRWA has ever taken on to date in the Gaza Strip. The project also includes the construction of the largest mosque in Gaza, which is nearing completion, and the largest health centre in UNRWA’s five fields of operation.

SFD also went on a tour to meet all departments involved in the construction of the housing project and thanked them for their efforts which have led to the success of this project. This mission was particularly important, and also symbolic, as it was the first time officials from the Government of Saudi Arabia have visited Gaza.

Eng Mohammed Al Namleh stated that “this project is a milestone in the successful cooperation between the Saudi Fund for Development and the Agency. It is the largest integrated project of its kind carried out by the agency since its inception sixty-two years ago. We both are proud of this huge achievement, which was carried out by local Palestinian companies and with the participation of Palestinian engineers from the agency. This project represents one of many success stories brought to fruition by the Fund and the Agency.”
In November, a delegation from the Royal Charity Organisation, headed by Dr. Mustafa Al Sayyed, visited Gaza to officially inaugurate the school. The event was deemed a great success by all who attended and was the perfect setting to reflect upon and be thankful for the Kingdom of Bahrain’s support over the years to the Palestinian refugees in Gaza.

At the beginning of September 2012 the newly constructed school for Palestinian refugee children, ‘Kingdom of Bahrain Preparatory Boy’s School’, opened its doors to 1,395 students enrolled for the scholastic year 2012/2013. The young refugees are now enjoying lessons in this brand new school, which comprises 51 classrooms, 2 computer and 2 science laboratories, a library, and a classroom catering exclusively for special needs education.

Our active partners in the field
The Royal Charity Organisation inaugurates the “The Kingdom of Bahrain Preparatory Boys School” in Gaza

Mr Peter Ford, the Representative of the Commissioner-General (left); Dr Mustafa Al Sayyed, Secretary General of the Royal Charity Organisation (centre) and Mr Robert Turner, Director of UNRWA operations in Gaza (right).
The Office of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser of Qatar has entered into a strategic partnership agreement with UNRWA to promote education for children living under occupation and in conflict zones.

The agreement, signed on 14 November, at the launch of Sheikha Moza’s worldwide “Educate a Child” initiative, at the World Innovation Summit on Education (WISE) in the Qatari capital sets out a plan for both sides to cooperate in advancing primary education for Palestine refugee children, with a special focus on those whose access to school has been hampered by conflict.

“Vulnerable populations know best that primary education is one of the fundamental building blocks of a productive and happy life”, said UNRWA Commissioner-General Filippo Grandi. “For Palestine refugees, educational achievement has long been a national priority; a source of pride and identity. UNRWA has been able to serve them well, now educating half a million Palestine refugee children every day. This new partnership with the Office of her Highness Sheikha Moza recognises the urgent needs of these children to be assisted with their education despite the deplorable conditions in which they live.”

The Educate a Child initiative was launched in the margins of the World Innovation Summit on Education, an annual three-day event in Doha, Qatar, bringing together over 1,000 practitioners, decision makers and thought leaders from multiple sectors and more than 100 countries to explore current educational challenges and innovative solutions with the aim of turning ideas into action and replicating proven good practices.
Regional events and visits

Second Advisory Commission of 2012 takes place at the Dead Sea, Jordan

The second round of the bi-annual UNRWA Advisory Commission meeting took place at the Moevenpick Dead Sea Resort in Jordan on 26 and 27 November under the Chairmanship of Spain.

In his opening address to the Advisory Commission, UNRWA Commissioner-General, Mr. Filippo Grandi, called for “the illegal Israeli blockade (on Gaza) to be lifted in all its aspects– crossings, fishing zones, imports, exports – with proper guarantees given to and by all parties in respect of the security of all civilians.” Mr. Grandi stressed that to address root causes “difficult political work would have to be carried out, including promoting and supporting lasting Palestinian unity. But failing to act now will have dire consequences. The greatest danger is to return to the status quo ante, and restore the prison-like conditions of Gaza. If this happened, it would be only a matter of time till violence resumed.”

Mr. Grandi’s speech also touched upon the ongoing crisis in Syria where he expressed “concerns about the welfare of the half million Palestine refugees there have grown as they are increasingly affected by the conflict.” He said that the vast majority of Palestinians in Syria “maintain the shield of neutrality aware that their protection depends on it.”

On UNRWA’s strategy in Syria he stated that “UNRWA’s strategy in Syria, as in Gaza, is to be there, maintain services and address the growing emergency needs as much as possible.”

The purpose of the Advisory Commission, which meets twice a year, is to provide a platform for UNRWA’s top donors and the host countries to discuss issues of importance to UNRWA, providing advice and assistance to the Commissioner-General.
The Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Mr. Filippo Grandi, travelled to Baghdad in November, the first ever trip by a head of UNRWA to Iraq. During the two-day visit, Mr. Grandi met senior members of the Iraqi administration, including the Foreign Minister Mr. Hoshyar Zebari.

This trip follows Iraq’s reemergence as an important donor to UNRWA in 2011 after two decades of absence, with a donation of $2 million in 2011 to UNRWA’s General Fund.

“I was pleased to have the chance to outline the many challenges facing UNRWA and to discuss the regional situation as it concerns Palestinian refugees. I am hopeful that Iraq will become in the future a key Arab partner of the Agency,” the Commissioner-General said following his meeting with the Iraqi Foreign Minister.

During the visit, the Commissioner-General discussed with senior Iraqi officials the impact of the crises in Gaza and Syria on Palestinian refugees as well as Iraq’s support for UNRWA's regular operations.
UNRWA has been coordinating a scholarship programme for young gifted Palestine refugees from economically disadvantaged backgrounds from across the region since 1955, providing access to university education for young Palestine refugees who excel academically but would otherwise be unable to afford tertiary education.

Since 2011 OFID has supported UNRWA’s scholarship programme with a grant of $1,000,000. The contribution is being used to fund scholarships for Palestine refugee students in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza, allowing young Palestine refugees who excel academically to attend university.

Under this programme, OFID is generously providing the full tuition fees for these high-achieving students who would otherwise be unable to afford higher education. These students are being given the chance to pursue degrees in science, business, technical and legal fields.

It is planned that these students will go onto contributing towards the development of a highly skilled workforce for Palestinian state building and social development.

Now the students are in their second year of university, the UNRWA Arab Partners Unit took this opportunity to visit Al Hashemeyyeh University in Zarqa, Jordan to meet one of the scholarship students, Osama, to talk to him in more detail about his experience so far, his ambitions, and his hopes and dreams for the future.
Osama Bashnaq is nineteen years old, and is a Palestine refugee living with his mother, father and younger brother in Amman. His father is the main breadwinner of the family and is employed as an electricity meter reader. He did not go to university and his salary is not sufficient to put his sons through university. Thanks to the generous support from OFID Osama is now in his second year at Al Hashemeyyeh University studying general mechanical engineering.

Like all of the students benefitting from this programme, without a scholarship, and despite excelling academically at school, there is very little chance that Osama would be at university today. ‘At most I would be able to enroll in a basic diploma course which would allow me to be a technician, but never an engineer.’

Top of his class and already tutoring classes in his own year and for first year students, Osama is a bright, enthusiastic and positive student who has a clear vision for his future, the future of his family, and of Palestinian refugees.

**What do you enjoy most about your course?**
The fact that I have been given a chance to live an ordinary life, like my friends. My course combines physics, my favourite subject, with design, so I can learn to develop new technology.
Tell us more about university life - what are you involved in outside the lecture hall?
I belong to a student-led initiative called the ‘business and engineering initiative” which encourages students to develop small business ideas whilst studying. This allows us to develop job skills and will hopefully boost our career prospects upon graduating. I also volunteer at the university through tutoring groups of engineering students in the first and second year.

What are you plans after you graduate?
I would like to do research in the renewable energy field and eventually set up my own renewable energy company.

What is your greatest ambition for the future?
To solve the energy problem in Jordan.

Do you have siblings?
I have one brother, he is sixteen years old.

What does your brother want to do when he finishes secondary school?
He would like to be a vet. Biology is his favourite subject at school. I encourage him to study hard so he has the chance to win a scholarship and go to university where he can follow his dream.

What are the biggest challenges facing Palestinian and Jordanian youth today?
The rise in fuel prices has made everyday life very expensive, but there are opportunities for young graduates to set-up micro-enterprises.

What are your dreams for the future of Palestine youth?
My dream is that the crisis will be solved and there will be peace in the region.
How do you think you can contribute to this?
As an engineering student, focusing on renewable energy, I would like to help people by increasing the availability of renewable energy sources, to reduce dependency on fossil fuels which are becoming increasingly expensive and thus decreasing regional socio-economic tensions.

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What advice would you give to economically disadvantaged Palestinian youth still at school?
To concentrate on your studies because the world needs you. There are 7 billion people on the Earth with 7 billion ideas.

Do you have any other comments?
All I can say is thank you very much OFID, you are changing the lives of Palestine youth by supporting them through university. This is great testament to your efforts in developing the world. I hope that you will keep working for a better world; the future has lots of challenges!
Access to higher education is limited for many refugees because of their difficult socio-economic situation. This limits their employment opportunities and their chance to improve their living conditions. The Agency’s University scholarships contribute towards the development of a highly skilled workforce. Past university scholarship holders have gone on to hold key positions in UNRWA, host countries and other Gulf States, contributing to the social and economic development of the region.

With a contribution of $3,200 - $72,000, depending on the field and duration of university course, you will enable a Palestine refugee to complete his/her education and have a brighter future, not only for themselves but for their families and communities at large.

### Annual cost per Scholar

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How you can help Palestine refugee students?
Thank you for your support

season’s greetings
كل عام وأنتم بخير

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

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