The generous support of donors over the past five months has allowed UNRWA to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs of more than 525,000 Palestine refugees in Syria through the provision of cash assistance, food and material support, and protection in addition to regular education and health programming.

As part of its new appeal for the second half of 2013, UNRWA will continue to adapt and expand its regular programmes in Syria, including in the fields of education, health, technical training and micro-finance. However, much more is necessary to prevent a worsening of the humanitarian crisis facing Palestine refugees in Syria. Palestine refugees who fled to Lebanon and Jordan are also in need of urgent assistance, with support structures in these countries overburdened by the influx of refugees. UNRWA is appealing for a total of US$ 199.6 million to provide vital emergency assistance to Palestine refugees until the end of 2013. Of this, more than US$ 150 million will be spent on humanitarian operations within Syria, with a further US$ 44.7 million spent in Lebanon and US$ 4.3 million in Jordan.

Palestine refugees in Syria have been severely affected by the armed conflict in the country, with virtually all their residential areas experiencing armed engagements or the use of heavy weapons. The relative safety of Palestine refugees in Syria, which their neutral stance in the conflict helped preserve, no longer exists. UNRWA estimates that by the end of 2013, the entire population of 525,000 Palestine refugees residing in Syria will be affected by the conflict, with 420,000 in need of emergency humanitarian assistance in Syria and over 50 per cent displaced internally.

The majority of Palestine refugees from Yarmouk and Damascus area refugee camps nearby, as well as Dera’a in the south, and Ein el Tal in the north have fled their homes. Although many have reached neighbouring countries, the large majority remains inside Syria. Most have found shelter in schools and safer camps, or with friends and relatives. The spreading violence in Palestine refugee camps resulting in the unraveling of livelihoods and social structures is a devastating material and psychological blow that will have repercussions for years to come.

In Lebanon, the number of Palestine refugees from Syria has exceeded 50,000. The pressure on existing camps, which
UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of some 5 registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA’s services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.