



about unrwa

Figures are drawn from UNRWA registration data at 31 December 2020

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established as a subsidiary organ of the United Nations General Assembly on 8 December 1949 and became operational on 1 May 1950. It is one of the largest United Nations programmes. Created as a temporary agency until a just and durable solution for Palestine refugees was achieved, the UNRWA mandate was set to expire in one year. Seventy years later, the Agency continues to provide essential services for the well-being, human development and protection of Palestine refugees, pending a just solution.

Palestine refugees

The operational definition of Palestine refugees is people whose normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, and who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict. Descendants of Palestine refugee males are eligible to register as Palestine refugees.

UNRWA services are available to all those requiring assistance in the Agency's areas of operation who meet the definition of a Palestine refugee and are registered with the Agency, and to some other groups.

Direct Service Delivery

UNRWA is unique among UN agencies in that it delivers services directly. These services include education, health care, relief and social services, microfinance, infrastructure and camp improvement, emergency assistance, and the protection of refugees' rights under international law. UNRWA services are delivered in accordance with the United Nations principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and operational independence.

UNRWA operates in

five fields

- Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem

5.7 million

persons are registered as
Palestine refugees with UNRWA

UNRWA employs nearly

28,756

staff, some

28,563

of whom are Palestine refugees



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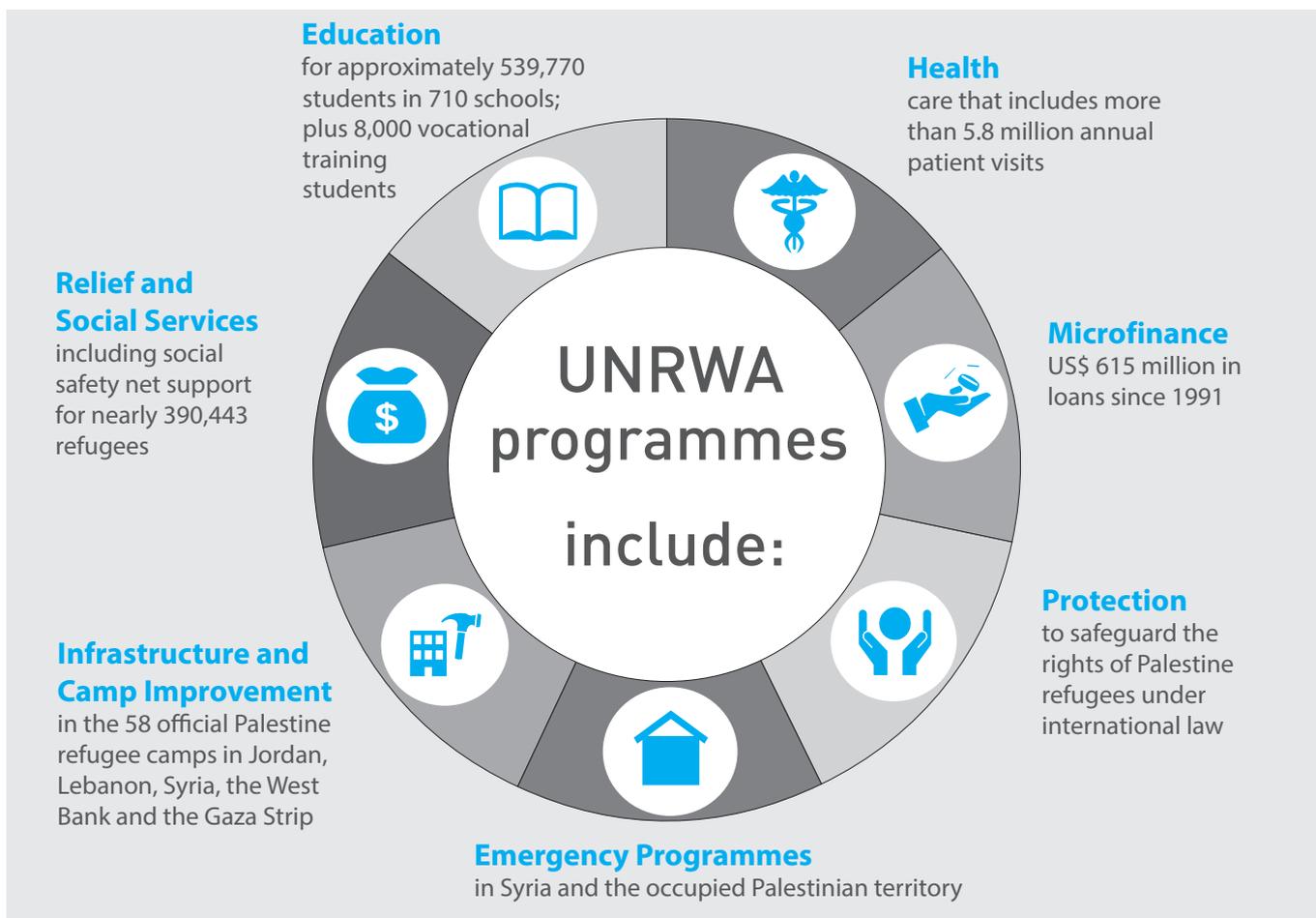
Palestine refugees are facing a human development and protection crisis. Food insecurity and poverty levels are high and rising, and youth unemployment rates are alarming, especially among young women. Despite possessing strong human capital that has been developed with the help of the education and health care provided by UNRWA and host authorities, many Palestine refugees lack the assets and opportunities required for sustainable livelihoods.

Palestine refugees are facing increasing protection threats from armed conflicts in Syria, the West Bank and Gaza. A growing number are denied the same basic human rights as other citizens due to their legal status, and are excluded from key aspects of social, political and economic life.

In this context, UNRWA is a stabilizing factor and supports the resilience of Palestine refugees by working towards the five strategic outcomes codified in the Agency's Medium-Term Strategy for 2016-2021:

1. Refugees' **rights** under international law are protected and promoted
2. Refugees' **health** is protected and the disease burden is reduced
3. School-aged children complete quality, equitable and inclusive basic **education**
4. Refugees' capabilities are strengthened for increased **livelihood** opportunities
5. Refugees can meet their **basic human needs** of food, shelter and environmental health

UNRWA relies on voluntary funding from donors, prioritizing the limited resources among its most critical services, with particular emphasis on the most vulnerable. Financial support for the Agency has not kept pace with an increased demand for services caused by growing numbers of registered refugees, deepening poverty and conflict. As a result, the Agency's core fund, which supports essential services and most staffing costs, operates with a large deficit.



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UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 with a mandate to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to registered Palestine refugees in the Agency's area of operations, namely the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. Thousands of Palestine refugees who lost both their homes and livelihood because of the 1948 conflict have remained displaced and in need of significant support for over seventy years. UNRWA helps them achieve their full potential in human development through quality services it provides in education, health care, relief and social services, protection, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.