



UNRWA Gaza Women's Committee



The Role of the Women's Committee

Within the framework of UNRWA's Gender Strategy, and as part of Gaza Field's Equality in Action initiative, the UNRWA Gaza Women's Committee has been established. This Committee will contribute to the efforts that are being made to foster equality and equity amongst staff by providing UNRWA female employees with mechanisms through which their voices are more often and more clearly heard, and through which they can more actively participate in the organisation, including in a decision-making capacity.

The Women's Committee works to promote an institutional culture that respects and adheres to the values of gender equality. In practical terms, it seeks to provide tools to help women employees improve their day-to-day work life and explore future opportunities to develop themselves professionally. The changes promoted by the Women's Committee are intended to improve overall employee job satisfaction while at the same time improving job performance.



Representation of the Female Staff

The Women's Committee consists of 17 members (plus alternates), with equitable representation from each of the UNRWA Departments, as well as from Headquarters Gaza, the Gaza Field Office Local Staff Union (LSU, GFO) and the HQ Gaza Area Staff Union (ASU, HQ).

With the impetus created by the official launch of the Women's Committee during celebrations marking International Women's Day 2008, the Committee embarked on a communication drive to promote the free flow of information, ideas, complaints and suggestions between individual female staff and members of the Committee. This involved identifying "focal points" in over 200 UNRWA installations throughout the Gaza Strip.

Assessing Needs

The first task for the Women's Committee was to hold an extensive series of meetings with the female staff in all departments. The

About UNRWA

UNRWA provides education, healthcare, relief, social services, micro-credit loans and emergency aid to more than 4.4 million Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. UNRWA employs more than 28,000 staff, the vast majority of whom are Palestine refugees, including 20,000 educational staff and 4,000 health workers.

meetings provided an opportunity to explain the function of the Committee and to hear from the female staff as to their needs, their interests, and how they would like to bring about changes that benefit all UNRWA staff.

During these needs assessment meetings, women raised a range of issues including work loads and allocation, training, promotion, professional development, child-care, harassment and discrimination, health matters, leave entitlements, occupational health and safety concerns, and social networking.

From these meetings the Committee produced an Action Plan for 2008 and 2009 that outlines, against a clear timeframe, the priority issues to be tackled and the actions that will be undertaken.

Taking Action

The focus for action includes:

- providing women with forums for receiving information and conferring about professional and personal (but not political) issues, such as through meetings, an anonymous feedback box, a regular bulletin and electronic discussions;
- making known the views of the female staff on issues of importance to them as UNRWA employees (e.g. recruitment and selection, work allocation, supervision, training, promotion, professional development, childcare, harassment and discrimination) and organisational initiatives to Management;
- developing recommendations that address the concerns of women and improving their status across the organisation, at all levels;
- assisting with the implementation of the organisation-wide gender mainstreaming strategy;
- organising educational seminars and workshops on topics of interest and relevance to female staff;
- facilitating recreational activities, holding social events, and marking days of importance, such as 8 March and 25 November, as well as other significant dates; and
- fostering networking amongst women with common interests.

The Women's Committee also promotes the goals of UNRWA's Gender Mainstreaming Strategy, including:

- increasing the hiring, promotion, and retention of women staff at all levels;
- creating a welcoming learning and working environment for women;
- providing better and more targeted training, and other professional development measures to female staff; and
- facilitating an effective organisational structure that improves the status of women.



UNRWA Gaza Women's Committee members