In response to the ongoing Syria crisis, UNRWA has played a crucial role in ensuring that Palestine refugee children from Syria, including those who have been displaced to Jordan and Lebanon, are able to access quality education, even within the context of protracted conflict and repeated displacement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Description</strong></th>
<th><strong>Number</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNRWA schools operating in Syria</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools operating in UNRWA facilities</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools operating in donated facilities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational spaces in Syria</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe-learning spaces in Syria</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children accessed self-learning materials through EiE by the end of 2016</td>
<td>13,739</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 46,733 students in Syria, 760 PRS students in Jordan and 5,642 PRS students in Lebanon – total number of UNRWA students enrolled in Syria and PRS students enrolled in UNRWA schools in Lebanon and Jordan; out-of-school children not included in this number; EiE: Education in Emergencies

Figures as of 1 March 2017

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*united nations relief and works agency for palestine refugees in the near east*

[www.unrwa.org](http://www.unrwa.org)
UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip achieve their full human development potential, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. UNRWA services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, protection and microfinance.

Throughout the past six decades, UNRWA has been the main provider of public services to Palestine refugees across the Agency’s five fields of operations and is well regarded as a pioneer in public service delivery in fragile contexts and in emergencies.

The UNRWA Approach to Education

Recognizing that education is fundamental to helping each and every child achieve their full potential, UNRWA has worked for over 60 years to ensure that Palestine refugee children have access to quality education. Since its operations began, UNRWA has educated three generations of refugees, or more than 2 million refugee children. Currently, UNRWA provides free basic education to over 500,000 Palestine refugee children and youth in 702 schools, 8 vocational training centres and 2 educational science faculties across the Agency’s five fields of operations. UNRWA has made a substantial and unique contribution to the human development of Palestine refugees and has earned a reputation for both innovation in its approach and its commitment to education.

The Education Reform

Despite its achievements, UNRWA recognized the need to transform its programme to better respond to the demands of the twenty-first century. Therefore, in 2011, UNRWA embarked on a major reform to further strengthen its education system and develop the capabilities of refugee students so that they can contribute positively as local, regional and global citizens. The education reform has resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, increased efficiency (i.e. more students graduating on time), and a reduction of ‘wastage’ (i.e. student drop-outs and repetition of school years). The policy and accountability framework that is now in place, built around a clear vision of quality, equitable and inclusive education for Palestine refugees, serves to further strengthen students’ resilience and to actively contribute to their development.

Education in Emergencies

As the Syria conflict enters its seventh year, it continues to have a devastating impact on the more than 560,000 Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA in Syria, of which an estimated 450,000 remain in Syria, almost 60 per cent of whom are displaced. In addition, the conflict has rendered 70 per cent of UNRWA schools inoperative, due to damage to school infrastructure, access restrictions or the need for schools to be used as collective centres sheltering internally displaced persons (IDPs).\footnote{For further reading, see UNRWA, \textit{Schools on the Front Line: The Impact of Armed Conflict and Violence on UNRWA Schools and Education Services} (2016).} For example, in Khan Eshieh camp, in September 2016, one UNRWA school was destroyed, and in November 2016, two UNRWA schools were damaged. As a result, there is a need for a sustained and innovative approach to ensure that the most vulnerable children and youth are not left behind, but given the support they need to continue their education even during times of emergencies. The reform of the UNRWA education system has enabled it to be better prepared, and more able, to respond and ultimately to recover from conflict and crisis; the Education in Emergencies (EiE) response builds on the reform. The approach is renowned in the region and beyond, with host countries and other UN agencies replicating its approaches and utilizing the specific resources developed.
The key dimensions of the UNRWA approach to education are:

- **Safe and secure learning environments**, which address both the physical and emotional needs of children. The capacity of education personnel and communities is also being built to respond to insecurity, provide safe learning spaces and psychosocial support to help students deal with trauma and support their recovery.

- **Quality teaching and learning**, including the provision of alternative learning modalities and the professional development of teachers on these modalities and resources.

- **Student, parent and community engagement and participation**, which involves identifying and mobilizing available resources within the community and building consensus and support for EiE programming. During emergencies, UNRWA increasingly relies on communities to manage and deliver essential education services. As such, building active community participation from the onset through to recovery is key in an EiE response.

Through these innovative approaches, including safe learning and recreational spaces, interactive self-learning materials, learning support activities, and safety and security training, the Agency’s EiE response helps ensure that Palestine refugee children can continue to access quality education and learning opportunities, even in times of crisis and conflict.

**Safe Learning and Recreational Spaces**

During emergencies, many Palestine refugee children live in shelters or far away from schools and are therefore unable to access their regular schools. To support these children, UNRWA establishes safe learning and recreational spaces to ensure a protected and child-friendly environment for children to learn and to also engage in recreational activities, supported by qualified supervisors and specialized psychosocial counsellors.

The Agency’s safe learning spaces are key to providing:

- **A ‘safe haven’ for children**: a safe and secure space which is spacious enough for activities to be organized that promote children’s right to protection, psychosocial well-being and education needs; and
- **An ‘intersectoral’ space**: in which different UNRWA programmes and departments can collectively provide a holistic response to the needs of children and parents living in the shelter and beyond.

**Psychosocial Support**

In light of the widespread negative psychosocial impact on children and teachers inflicted by the experience of armed conflict, the Agency’s EiE response emphasizes the provision of psychosocial support. This is achieved through its deployment of counsellors that cater to the specific needs of both boys and girls, as well as through capacity-building of its education cadre in identifying student needs and delivering psychosocial support. The counsellors provide support to children as part of the school day, but also run summer activities. Children benefit from individual and group counselling, recreational and learning activities, and referral of cases to specialized services as required.

To support counsellors and teachers in providing recreational activities for UNRWA students and promote the well-being and resilience of children, the Department of Education has developed a recreational activities guide that includes a wide range of psychosocial support activities developed by organizations working in conflict and crisis contexts.

**Interactive Self-Learning Programme and Learning Support Activities**

The UNRWA Department of Education has also developed self-learning materials (Grades 1-9) in line with the basic skills and concepts of core subjects. These were designed to support children who cannot regularly access school and include the following:

- **Online Interactive Learning Programme** and educational games focusing on literacy and numeracy; and
- **TV lessons broadcast on UNRWA TV** covering the core subjects of English, maths, Arabic and science for Grades 4-9.

In addition, through organized summer activities in several fields, the UNRWA education programme provides catch-up classes for some children who are lagging behind or who have dropped out.

**Safe and Secure Delivery of Education**

Finally, in order to deliver safe and secure quality education services to Palestine refugees from Syria, the UNRWA EiE team has developed a safety and security component. This promotes safety and resilience in UNRWA school communities, protects children and education staff, and strengthens conflict prevention and disaster resilience.

A number of activities have been organized in coordination with the UNRWA Department of Security and Risk Management to develop awareness and capacity on safety and security, ranging from training and workshops to carrying out risk assessments and security drills in schools. In Syria, an SMS notification system for staff and parents has been established, while in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, a mapping of the education facilities and of related incidents has further helped enhance the Agency’s capacity to safely deliver its programmes.

Despite all the hardship, displacement, violence and poverty endured by UNRWA students during a punishing conflict, Syria is one of the Agency’s highest-performing fields in terms of educational outcomes, equity and attendance. This suggests that the Agency’s concerted investments in building a quality, inclusive and equitable education system and in deploying an innovative, integrated approach to Education in Emergencies has proven to be successful in Syria.

**Advocacy**

In addition to its operational education response, UNRWA engages in private and public advocacy with relevant authorities to prevent attacks on its schools and services and to seek accountability. UNRWA also engages with the international human rights system to promote greater respect for and protection of the rights of Palestine refugees. For example, the Agency provides regular inputs to the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations of child rights to the UN Security Council. The Agency also undertakes a series of activities to underline the neutrality and inviolability of UNRWA schools to ensure, as far as is possible, that they are not used by armed actors during hostilities.
UNESCO

UNRWA and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have had a unique partnership since 1951. The partnership between the two agencies has been key in enabling UNRWA to provide quality education over the past six decades. The technical assistance of UNESCO continues today, with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2014 to formally renew the partnership between the two Agencies in support of education for Palestine refugees. This MoU recognizes the importance of the two Agencies’ long-standing partnership and highlights the opportunity for increased mutual cooperation as both Agencies work to develop and provide quality, inclusive and equitable education in the twenty-first century, as well as the new demands this brings. Throughout the Syrian conflict, support from UNESCO has been invaluable in the work of UNRWA to sustain education delivery during emergencies to Palestine refugee children.

Government of Belgium

The Government of Belgium partnered with UNRWA in July 2016 to support UNRWA in providing Education in Emergencies to over 314,900 Palestine refugee children from the Agency’s five fields of operations. The generous contribution of Belgium to UNRWA has helped the Agency establish safe learning spaces, provide psychosocial support and recreational activities for students, and offer self-learning materials and lessons online and through UNRWA TV to Palestine refugee children who cannot access classrooms. Funding from Belgium has contributed to the Agency’s overall mission to address the educational and psychosocial needs of Palestine refugee children and will contribute to strengthening the Agency’s EiE system and resources.

European Union

The EU is the largest multilateral provider of international assistance to Palestine refugees, providing crucial and reliable support to UNRWA since 1971. Between 2007 and 2014, the EU contributed over EUR 1 billion (US$ 1.44 billion) in support of UNRWA, including EUR 809 million for the Agency’s core programmes and services, including education. In addition, the EU has generously contributed to UNRWA humanitarian emergency appeals and projects in response to various crises and specific needs across the region. EU Member States provide additional crucial support to the Agency. The partnership between the EU and UNRWA has allowed millions of Palestine refugees to be better educated, live healthier lives, access employment opportunities and improve their living conditions, thus contributing to the development of the entire region.

Educate A Child

Educate A Child (EAC), a global programme launched by Qatar’s Education Above All Foundation, partnered with UNRWA between December 2013 and June 2016 to support the Agency in providing Education in Emergencies to over 67,000 Palestine refugee children from Syria. The generous EAC contribution has helped the Agency to address the educational and psychosocial needs of Palestine refugee children from Syria, whether they are in Syria, Lebanon or Jordan.