



transforming the lives of palestine refugees with disabilities

UNRWA recognises that disability inclusion cannot be a sideline issue – it is central to the Agency’s mission to support the human development and protection of Palestine refugees. Fifteen per cent of the world’s population have a disability.¹ When applied to the population of Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA, this could mean there are around 795,000 Palestine refugees with disabilities.

While all Palestine refugees face challenges due to their protracted displacement, Palestine refugees with disabilities can experience extra obstacles and difficulties in accessing services and reaching their full potential.



28.9%

of Palestine refugee children with disabilities in Lebanon are not enrolled in any school at all.²



34.2%

of all persons with disabilities across the Gaza Strip and the West Bank cannot perform daily activities such as washing and dressing themselves.³



1,000

people are estimated to have acquired permanent disabilities as a result of injuries sustained during the 2014 hostilities in Gaza.⁴



20.6%

of Palestine refugee households living in extreme poverty in Lebanon include at least one individual with a disability.⁵



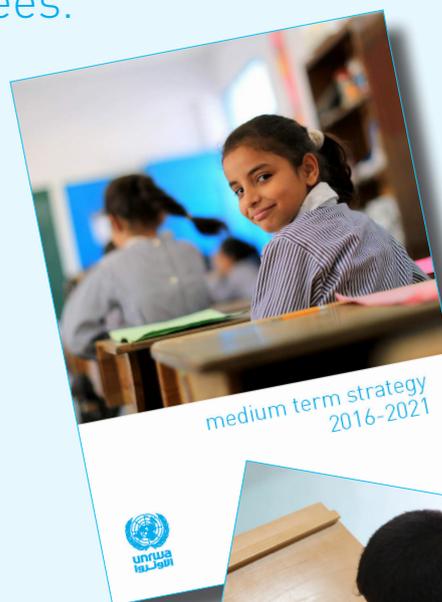
53.3%

of children with disabilities included in a survey in the West Bank were found to have more than one type of disability.⁶

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Disability inclusion is a key part of the Agency's services and programmes for Palestine refugees.

- The UN General Assembly specifically requires UNRWA to carry out its operations in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- The Agency's Disability Policy (2010) commits UNRWA to ensuring that all of its programmes and services are inclusive.
- In May 2016, UNRWA became a signatory to the Charter on Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Action.
- The importance of upholding the rights of Palestine refugees with disabilities is reflected in three of the five strategic outcomes of the Agency's current Medium Term Strategy (2016-2021).
- To operationalize these commitments, UNRWA has developed user-friendly Disability Inclusion Guidelines (2017) to raise awareness among staff of the key principles and practices of inclusion.



“Addressing the needs and protection of Palestine refugees with disabilities is at the heart of UNRWA’s mandate. [...] UNRWA ensures that all programming includes Palestine refugees with disabilities and considers their specific needs.”

UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl
2016 World Humanitarian Summit Special Session on Disability

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HOW IS UNRWA RESPONDING?

EDUCATION

Access to inclusive education is a fundamental right for all Palestine refugee children. UNRWA is working to support the inclusion of all children with disabilities in its schools by focusing on the accessibility of the school environment, as well as adapting learning materials and instructional techniques to provide tailored in-classroom and extracurricular support sessions. In Lebanon, for example, 44 UNRWA schools have Learning Support staff who coach and support children within and outside the classrooms. In the 2016/17 school year, the Learning Support Programme in Lebanon provided tailored support for 3,990 children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

HEALTH

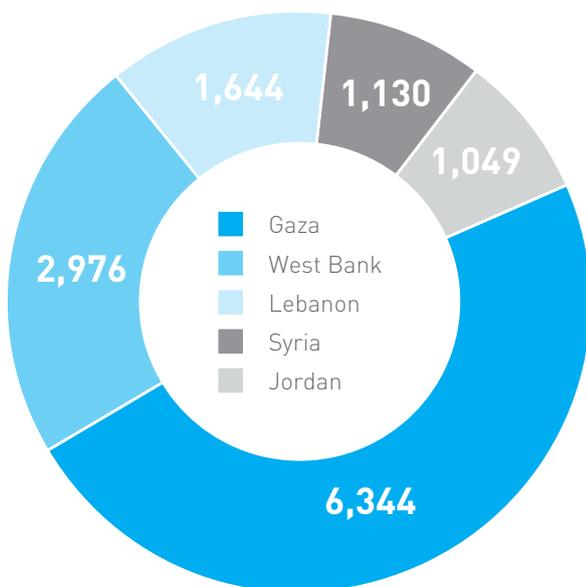
Palestine refugees with disabilities have the same health care needs as those without disabilities. In addition, access to regular health care provision can play a vital role in the early identification of disability to provide timely support. As of the end of October 2017, UNRWA health services had screened almost 60,000

newborn children. This has helped to identify children who might require treatment and additional health care support. This screening process is repeated at 1 year and 3 years of age and helps to ensure Palestine refugee children get access to the additional support they need, such as referrals for assistive devices including glasses and hearing aids.

RELIEF AND SOCIAL SERVICES

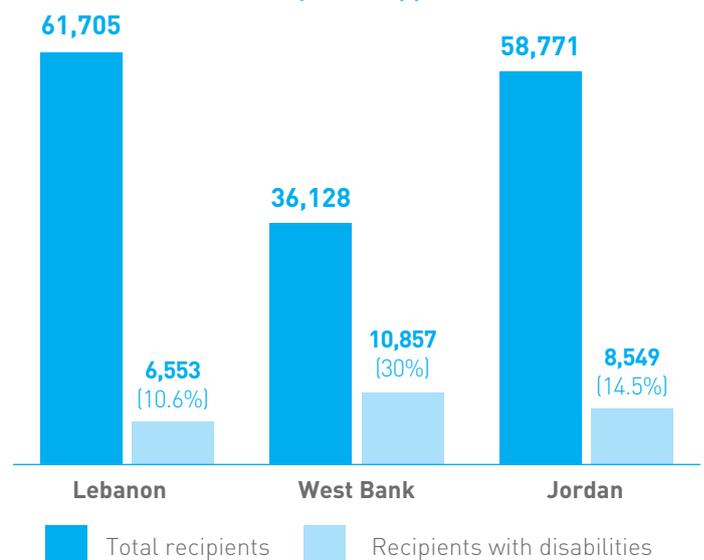
Disability and poverty are linked. Persons with disabilities and their families are more likely to be poor as they often face additional costs, such as paying for more frequent health care, rehabilitation, assistive devices and costlier transportation options. In recognition of this link, the Agency's poverty-targeted Social Safety Net (SSN) Programme is disability-inclusive: 16 per cent of the Palestine refugees receiving SSN benefits in Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank are persons with disabilities. The Agency's social services also focus on disability-specific support. In 2017, the UNRWA Disability Programme has helped to facilitate access to rehabilitation services and disability-specific support for 13,143 Palestine refugees with disabilities.

UNRWA Disability Programme Beneficiaries in 2017



Source: Field Disability Programmes

Palestine Refugees with Disabilities Receiving Social Safety Net Support in 2017



Source: Refugee Registration Information System



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INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAMP IMPROVEMENT

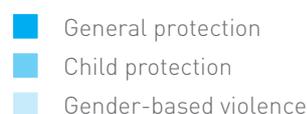
Inaccessibility of services and shelter can be a key obstacle affecting persons with disabilities in their daily lives. To ensure that persons with disabilities are able to benefit equally and independently from the services and opportunities provided in UNRWA premises, the Agency has developed a plan to gradually identify and eliminate physical obstacles and barriers that are faced by persons with different types of impairments, including physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments. Standards for physical accessibility have begun to be implemented in the design of UNRWA schools where, once construction is completed, the school environment will allow freedom of movement and use of all spaces with no obstacles, with dignity, and with the highest possible levels of independence, regardless of age, gender or impairments. In 2017, UNRWA has also designed inclusive play spaces for refugees, including in Rashidieh camp in Lebanon, which will ensure that persons with physical and sensory disabilities can enjoy the space and play with their friends.

PROTECTION

Palestine refugees face profound protection challenges due to displacement, occupation, armed conflict, violence, abuse and neglect. Persons with disabilities can be particularly vulnerable to such risks. They may be reliant on caregivers, isolated from the community, lacking access to support services, and unable to access information explaining their rights and how to access assistance. In the six months from

January to June 2017, UNRWA staff identified a total of 325 persons with disabilities experiencing protection issues, including gender-based violence (GBV), child protection or general protection issues. Out of the individuals identified, 92 per cent were successfully provided with assistance.

Types of Protection Issues Experienced by Palestine Refugees with Disabilities from January-June 2017



HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN EMERGENCIES

In the emergency and humanitarian situations in which UNRWA works, persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected. As evidenced by the Agency's first-hand experience working in conflict situations in Gaza and within the ongoing crisis in Syria, armed conflict worsens the situation of persons with disabilities and is one of the major causes of impairments leading to long-term disability. UNRWA provides assistance to Palestine refugees in times of crisis in the form of cash, food and shelter. In 2017 in Gaza, UNRWA provided emergency cash assistance to 114 of the most vulnerable Palestine refugees, including 42 individuals with disabilities, who are experiencing violence or exploitation.

Data Sources:

1. World Health Organization and the World Bank (2012), *World Report on Disability*.
2. American University Beirut and UNRWA (2015), *Survey on the Socioeconomic Status of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon*.
3. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2012), *Disability Survey 2011*.
4. Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2016), *Gaza: Two years since the 2014 hostilities*.
5. American University Beirut and UNRWA (2015), *Survey on the Socioeconomic Status of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon*.
6. Overseas Development Institute and UNICEF (2016), *Every Child Counts: Understanding the needs and perspectives of children with disabilities in the State of Palestine*.



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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.