In 2022, as part of the annual emergency appeal, UNRWA requires US$ 232,029,781 million to sustain the delivery of humanitarian assistance, basic services and protection interventions to the 438,000 Palestine refugees estimated to remain in Syria. As of June 2022, a total of US$ 43,6 million were pledged or received from donors and partners, representing 18.8 per cent of total requirements.

Socioeconomic challenges

The first half of 2022 witnessed a further deterioration of the economic situation in the country, with the humanitarian crisis currently at its worst level since the beginning of the conflict 12 years ago. Since January 2022, the national average price of the standard reference food basket increased by 45 per cent, reaching SYP 318,726 as of June 2022 and nearly doubling compared to June 2021. The conflict in Ukraine has also had its impact on Syria, by disrupting commodity supplies for UNRWA. The increased energy costs have raised shipping costs for maritime transport sectors, with the transportation of dry bulk goods increasing by 60 per cent between February and May 2022.

Data from a May 2021 crisis monitoring survey in Syria shows rising poverty levels in the country, with Palestinian refugees in Syria still among the most vulnerable members of the community and continuing to endure the impact of the worsening socio-economic situation. 83 per cent of Palestinian refugees now live on US$ 1.9 or less per person per day, even after factoring in the emergency cash assistance provided by UNRWA. 51 per cent of Palestinian refugee families reported needing to reduce the number of meals for all family members, and 46 per cent reduced the quantity of food in each meal.

COVID-19 update

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the economic downturn by further reducing already sparse income-generating opportunities. The official Syrian data regarding the number of infections and COVID-19 related deaths remains relatively low due to the limited access to PCR tests. As of 25 June 2022, a total of 55,921 confirmed cases, including 3,150 associated deaths, were reported in Syria. The vaccination rate remains one of the lowest in the world. As of 25 June 2022, a total of 3,477,375 vaccine doses have been administered in Syria as per recent WHO updates, with 9.6 per cent of the population fully vaccinated and 14.1 per cent of population covered with at least one dose. UNRWA continued to apply COVID-19 preventive measures while adapting service delivery to ensure the safety of both refugees and UNRWA staff. These preventive measures included telemedicine, door-to-door distribution of medications for vulnerable older persons with pre-existing medical conditions, distribution of PPE and self-learning materials, the regular disinfection of UNRWA facilities, and COVID-19 awareness sessions.

UNRWA students shine

Four students from the Ras al-Ein school of UNRWA, located in Qudsaya, Damascus. Informatics Club won the Kids and Adolescents Programming Marathon, which was organized by the Syrian Virtual University in cooperation with the Distinction and Creativity Agency in Damascus, sweeping away competition from some 213 participating children from across Syria. All these students have grown up through the conflict in Syria and have been displaced multiple times from their homes in Yarmouk refugee camp. It is through education that they continue to dream of the future. They expressed their interest in the field of science, wanting to further their studies in medicine and IT.

Through its education programme, UNRWA aims to ensure that Palestine refugee students can develop their full potential and become confident and innovative members of their communities. With 48,987 Palestine refugee students enrolled in its 102 schools, the Agency is dedicated to providing high-quality education, non-food items (NFI), health, education, livelihoods and protection to Palestine refugees in Syria. During the reporting period, UNRWA continued to provide humanitarian assistance, including emergency cash food, non-food items (NFI), health, education, livelihoods and protection to Palestine refugees in Syria. Through the Emergency Appeal, UNRWA continued to provide humanitarian assistance, including emergency cash food, non-food items (NFI), health, education, livelihoods and protection to Palestine refugees in Syria. During the reporting period, cash assistance was provided to 416,503 Palestine refugees in Syrian Pounds and food assistance to 374,266 Palestine refugees. The first round of cash assistance started on 6 February 2022 and ended on 17 March 2022, providing each of the most vulnerable Palestinian refugees with approximately US$ 30 and each refugee in the other vulnerable categories with approximately US$ 22 to assist them in covering their basic needs for two months. The second round started on 10 April 2022 and finished on 23 June 2022 providing most vulnerable refugees with approximately US$ 45 and other vulnerable categories with approximately US$ 33 to assist in covering their basic needs for three months. Due to funding constraints under the 2022 Emergency Appeal, UNRWA had to reduce the amount of cash provided to each refugee from US$ 25 to US$ 15 for the most vulnerable and from US$ 18 to US$ 11 for the remaining refugees.

The first round of in-kind food assistance in 2022 started on 12 January 2022 and was still ongoing by the end of June due to delays in securing food commodities from the local market. The second round of food distribution started on 26th June 2022 on an exceptional basis for wheat flour and other vulnerable categories with approximately US$ 33 to assist in covering their basic needs for three months. Due to funding constraints under the 2022 Emergency Appeal, UNRWA had to reduce the amount of cash provided to each refugee from US$ 25 to US$ 15 for the most vulnerable and from US$ 18 to US$ 11 for the remaining refugees.

In addition, the second round of food distribution started on 26th June 2022 on an exceptional basis for wheat flour and other vulnerable categories with approximately US$ 33 to assist in covering their basic needs for three months. Due to funding constraints under the 2022 Emergency Appeal, UNRWA had to reduce the amount of cash provided to each refugee from US$ 25 to US$ 15 for the most vulnerable and from US$ 18 to US$ 11 for the remaining refugees.