



UNRWA communications with communities

September 2016

Communications with Communities (CwC) is an approach within the field of humanitarian response that helps to meet the information and communications needs of people affected by protracted and acute crises. Through CwC, UNRWA provides Palestine refugees greater access to the information they need and ensures that their voices are heard and taken into account in decision-making processes related to the provision of humanitarian services. Building on existing community engagement practices within its programmes, and CwC work through the 2014 conflict, approximately one year ago the UNRWA Communications Office in Gaza established a designated Outreach and CwC team. The CwC team has piloted various projects related to CwC, advocacy, awareness, and outreach campaigns targeting Palestine refugees in Gaza.

cwc projects

- **New UNRWA food baskets:** Earlier in 2016, the CwC team headed a task force that organized an extensive refugee community outreach campaign on the Agency's improved food baskets to ensure that all questions and concerns of UNRWA staff, beneficiaries as well as other community representatives and leaders are addressed in a pro-active way. The campaign included briefings and information sessions for front line staff, FAQs for UNRWA staff, outreach meetings with different stakeholders, two-way radio programmes, posters, fact sheets, an animation video and a cooking show based on the new food basket ingredients, all produced by the CwC team targeting the refugee community and with refugee input.

- **Story-writing exercises:** To listen to and promote the voices of Palestine refugees, the CwC team implements story writing workshops with selected UNRWA students and youth, encouraging them to express themselves using their imagination.
- **Focus groups and surveys:** In cooperation with the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) team, the CwC office is implementing a survey among beneficiaries and staff, focusing on how they receive, and prefer to receive, information and provide feedback about UNRWA services. The survey helps to enhance relations with staff as well as beneficiaries and allows to better plan strategic outreach and communications campaigns. In addition, the CwC team regularly implements focus groups to develop and test communications tools and messages, including UNRWA TV productions such as the educational lessons.
- **Gaza CwC/accountability working group:** The CwC team co-chairs, together with Oxfam, the first CwC/accountability working group in Gaza, with a focus on the information and feedback needs of internally displaced persons. Members include NRC, OCHA, representatives from local NGOs and the Ministry of Social Affairs.
- **Women's health talk show:** The CwC team is currently producing a talk show to address the most pressing health needs of women in Gaza. The show features health experts as well as patients/survivors. For the development of the script, the CwC team organized focus groups with UNRWA and non-UNRWA doctors and patients to gauge the most important health issues women face in Gaza and to understand their information needs and how they wish to receive information to prevent health risks.

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- **Gender-Based Violence outreach and advocacy:**

In the coming months, the CwC team will focus on advocacy on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Gaza. For this purpose, the team will launch a two-way radio programme in cooperation with a community radio, featuring experts, activists and GBV survivors; a podcast story-telling project; a comic-writing workshop with youth focusing on GBV related topics; and the production of an awareness animation video for UNRWA TV based on the experience – and with the input from – GBV survivors in Gaza.

cwc in emergencies

During the summer 2014 conflict, GFO communications led a CwC approach, utilizing two-way dialogue tools through radio programmes coordinated by BBC Media Action and Internews. UNRWA staff regularly spoke to issues on the radio that the community had identified to the radio stations as being important. Listeners were able to call in and ask questions. Radio programmes complement the community information through UNRWA TV and other existing communications tools that help beneficiaries receive vital, life-saving information during emergencies. Communications with refugees through radio programmes in conjunction with information campaigns falls under a “Communication is Aid” approach. The GFO communications team is currently working on a communications in emergencies manual.

other cwc practices within GFO communications

- **UNRWA TV – GFO’s satellite channel:** GFO engages the community through its satellite channel, UNRWA TV. It involves students and teachers (community members and UNRWA employees) in educational and informational programmes. The production of its educational lessons is based on a “children are teaching children” approach, which aligns with Communication for Development (C4D) methods.
- **Ask the Director on UNRWA TV:** This programme, in which the Director of UNRWA Operations in Gaza answers questions submitted by beneficiaries online through the portal page, is a key communication tool between UNRWA and the refugee community in Gaza. There is a particular interest from community on UNRWA activities, such as the job creation programme, food assistance and shelter assistance.

- **Meet the Editors:** Regular meetings with Gaza based journalists to enhance communication with the community, and provide journalists a forum to meet with UNRWA senior management.

- **Staff Portal Feedback Mechanism:** Through this mechanism beneficiaries can submit questions to UNRWA about its services and programmes; questions are regularly forwarded by the portal team to the relevant programmes to provide answers directly to the beneficiaries.

success and challenges ahead

The CwC team in Gaza currently consists of two people, the outreach and communications officer and the associate outreach and communications with communities officer. The team sits under the Communications Office and works alongside the Multimedia/UNRWA TV, Public Information and Visibility teams. The CwC office has been a huge success since its inception, showing creativity in pioneering new, two-way communications approaches within UNRWA and in Gaza overall. The CwC work is currently project based, as well as integrating into the work across communications, with a view to mobilising resources around longer-term initiatives whilst leading on institutionalising CwC approaches within UNRWA, as aligned with the Mid-Term Strategy in which the Agency commits to foster and institute a culture of partnership with refugees and staff, recognizing the importance of refugee communications. A key future objective is the set-up of a structure with CwC focal points represented in the Chief Area Offices in all five areas of Gaza, as well as the incorporation of M&E activities in all of its projects, to measure success and create more opportunities for improvement and feedback.



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

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UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA’s services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.

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