



# unrwa framework for accountability to affected populations

## Introduction

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), as defined by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, is a commitment by humanitarian organizations to take account of, give account to and be held to account by the populations they seek to assist. AAP concerns the responsible use of resources and assistance by humanitarian organizations through the systematic inclusion of feedback and accountability mechanisms across the programming cycle. For UNRWA specifically, this translates into accountability to more than 5 million registered Palestine refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, in accordance with the Agency's mandate to provide for their human development, humanitarian and protection needs.

## Operational Context

UNRWA operates in a volatile region that has been buffeted by conflict and instability for more than 65 years. Amid the significant political, social and economic changes that are currently unfolding across the Middle East, Palestine refugees are particularly vulnerable. They face increased marginalization and protection threats, due to the direct and indirect impacts of conflicts, ongoing occupation and the absence of a political solution to their plight.

UNRWA is the main provider of basic services to Palestine refugees across its fields of operations and is currently educating half a million children each day, providing over 9 million medical consultations per year and delivering life-saving humanitarian aid to almost 1.5 million persons with urgent needs. The Agency is also responsible for protecting

and promoting the rights of Palestine refugees, in the absence of protection available on the domestic level. In the face of deteriorating conditions, it is more critical than ever that Palestine refugees have a voice and are able to access the information needed to make informed decisions and that UNRWA listens and responds to their feedback in the design and delivery of programmes.

## The Agency's AAP Commitments

UNRWA considers accountability to affected populations to be a cornerstone of quality service provision to meet changing refugee needs and deliver more sustainable development outcomes. A number of formal and informal mechanisms, standards and practices are in place at the field and programme level to ensure the meaningful participation of the Palestine refugee population at various stages in the programming cycle. The form this participation takes varies depending on operational and programmatic circumstances. In all cases, it is grounded in the unique platforms provided by: (1) The Agency's workforce of over 30,000 staff, the vast majority of whom are engaged in the direct-delivery of operations and are drawn from the Palestine refugee communities they serve, and (2) the Agency's extensive network of area offices, camp services offices, schools, health centres and other installations. This ensures that refugees have direct and regular access to UNRWA staff. The Agency's approach is further guided by the priorities identified in the Agency's 2016-2021 Medium Term Strategy (MTS), which includes a commitment to focusing on the needs of the most vulnerable refugees and a responsibility to safeguard and advance Palestine refugee rights.



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As part of the 2016-2021 MTS, UNRWA has committed to strengthening feedback mechanisms and processes, for beneficiaries and staff, by building on existing practices. UNRWA will continue to engage refugees at different stages of the programme cycle and will strengthen mechanisms to facilitate – and respond to – feedback, petitions and complaints. Through a series of reforms planned under the MTS, the Agency will also improve communications with beneficiaries and staff, including through annual reporting to refugees on MTS implementation. These reforms reflect a commitment by the Agency to make refugees core partners in achieving strategic objectives, as UNRWA continues to build on sound management practices and programme reform efforts such that refugees benefit to the maximum extent possible.

## Guiding Principles

UNRWA will deliver on its AAP commitments by focusing on the following five areas:

- **Information-sharing:** Refugee communities, including community-based organizations, are provided with adequate information about UNRWA policies, processes, eligibility and rights to services, and relevant targeting criteria.
- **Information-gathering:** Use of participatory methods to obtain information from different communities and groups through focus group discussions, inclusion of refugee communities in project coordination teams, etc.
- **Consultation:** Active solicitation of the views of refugee communities in assessing, prioritizing, monitoring and evaluating service delivery.
- **Participation of vulnerable groups:** Use of targeted mechanisms and strategies to enable the participation of people who are marginalized and excluded throughout the programme management cycle.
- **Complaints and feedback mechanisms:** Systems to provide individuals and communities with access to safe and confidential ways to make complaints, pose queries or comment about programmes, providing refugee communities with information about these processes and feedback on the results achieved.

AAP compliance will be monitored in various ways, including through management compacts with senior staff, monitoring of and reporting against results including in the Agency's Annual Operational Report, formal programme evaluations, and annual protection audits in all fields. The participation of Palestine refugees is one of the Agency's minimum protection standards, including the proactive involvement of more vulnerable groups, such as women, children, older people and persons with disabilities. Over time, protection audits have identified an increasing understanding of and alignment with UNRWA protection standards; they have also highlighted the scope for further improvements in the area of participation, which UNRWA seeks to address through this framework.

## Links

For additional information, please refer to the following links:

- **Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**  
<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-populations-including-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse>
- **Tools to Assist in Implementing Inter-Agency Standing Committee Accountability to Affected Populations**  
[https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy\\_files/TOOLS%20to%20assist%2in%20implementing%20the%20IASC%20AAP%20Commitments.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy_files/TOOLS%20to%20assist%2in%20implementing%20the%20IASC%20AAP%20Commitments.pdf)
- **Core Humanitarian Standard Guidance Notes and Indicators**  
<https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/resources/chs-guidance-notes-and-indicators>
- **Collaborative for Development Action Do-No-Harm Framework**  
<http://cdacollaborative.org/cdaproject/the-do-no-harm-project/>



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.