



supporting persons with disabilities

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (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 solution to their plight.

UNRWA services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance, and emergency response, including in situations of armed conflict. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.

Palestine refugees represent the largest protracted refugee population in the world. In the absence of a just and lasting solution, and with an increasing number of protection threats from armed conflicts, the political, social and economic instability experienced by Palestine refugees is more critical than ever. But while all Palestine refugees face immense difficulties due to their protracted displacement, being a Palestine refugee with disabilities compounds these difficulties and resultant vulnerabilities, even more so for a woman or child with disabilities.

Although there is no comprehensive data on the number of persons with disabilities among the Palestine refugee population, based on global figures at least 15 per cent of the 5 million refugees registered with UNRWA are estimated to have a disability. Palestine refugees with disabilities have the same basic needs as other refugees including shelter, income, education, health care and food, but they often have additional or specific needs, which when not addressed or overlooked can result in their exclusion from services and isolation from mainstream processes. By far, the most significant barrier to effective participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities are the negative attitudes and stereotypes they encounter. Stigma associated with disability often manifests in families and communities keeping children with disabilities hidden, making them invisible and cutting them off from vital services such as education.

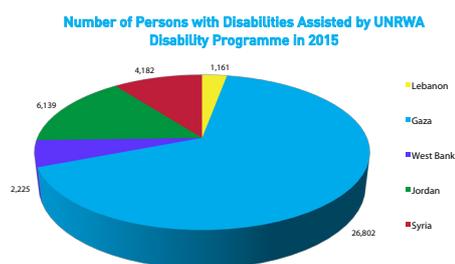
Discrimination, isolation and exclusion from mainstream processes also make persons with disabilities disproportionately more vulnerable to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Children with disabilities are three to four times more likely to be victims of violence. Girls and women with disabilities endure violence, abuse and exploitation twice as often as non-disabled women, over a longer period of time, and suffer more serious injuries as a result of violence.

UNRWA is committed to working with all Palestine refugees to achieve their full potential in human development. In doing so, UNRWA strives to promote and protect the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by Palestine refugees, including persons with disabilities. The Agency's Disability

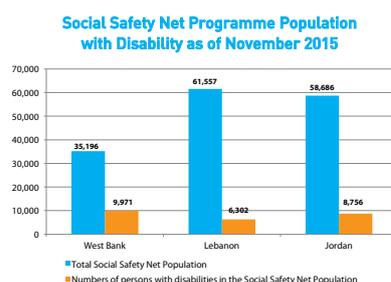
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Policy, adopted in 2010, underlines our commitment to Palestine refugees with disabilities in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which UNRWA is mandated by the UN General Assembly to implement. In recognition of the particular vulnerabilities experienced by persons with disabilities, UNRWA has committed to ensuring that all programming addresses issues pertaining to this group of Palestine refugees and that the specific needs of Palestine refugees with disabilities are included and considered in all of its programmes and service delivery.

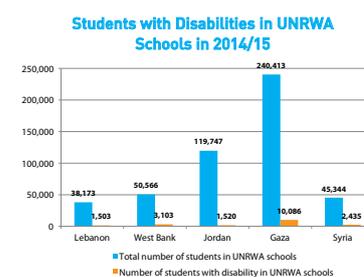
In addition to this mainstreaming approach, all five UNRWA fields of operations have Disability Programmes which aim to promote, rehabilitate and equalize opportunities for persons with disabilities and facilitate their inclusion. The Disability Programmes also play a key role in supporting the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools and of adults and youth with disabilities in vocational training and employment. In 2015 alone, the Disability Programmes in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank provided services to more than 40,000 refugees with disabilities.



Source: Field Disability Programmes



Source: Refugee Registration Information System



Source: Field Disability and Education Programmes

Facts at a Glance

- 1 in 10 Palestinian households in Lebanon and Gaza have at least one family member with a disability
- Households living in extreme poverty in Lebanon are almost twice as likely to have a family member with disability living in the household.
- In Lebanon, one in three (29 per cent) of Palestinian children with disability are not enrolled in school.
- In the occupied Palestinian territory, 37.6 per cent of all persons with disabilities aged 15 and over have never enrolled at school. Furthermore, 33.8 per cent of all persons with disabilities dropped out of school, while 53.1 per cent of all persons with disabilities are illiterate.
- In Gaza, only 3,127 (11 per cent) persons with disabilities over 18 years of age were in the labour force.

Individual fields also run their own initiatives which provide specialized support to persons with disabilities and promote their inclusion in mainstream services:

Learning Support Programme (Lebanon)

The Learning Support Programme in Lebanon aims to help students acquire a desired level of academic achievement through instructional materials and techniques specifically designed to address and respond to the learning needs of individual children. All UNRWA schools in Lebanon have Learning Support staff who coach and support the children within and outside the classrooms. In 2014/15, the UNRWA programme provided tailored support for 2,641 children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The Hope Initiative (West Bank)

In the West Bank, the Disability Programme, in coordination with the education programme, implements the Hope initiative, which aims to assist students with disabilities to be effectively included in schools and address their educational needs. In 2014, 1,855 students benefited from assessment and intervention services through the initiative, and 800 parents, teachers and students without disabilities were provided with a number of awareness workshops on disability and an inclusive learning environment.

Rehabilitation Centre for the Visually Impaired (Gaza)

The Rehabilitation Centre for the Visually Impaired established in Gaza in 1962 provides training, educational and recreational activities for children and adults with vision impairment. The Centre works with more than 130 students, including children with low vision and Braille users from kindergarten to Grade 6. It also supports the inclusion of children in mainstream schools through its integration programme – currently supporting 300 children in Palestinian Authority, private, and UNRWA schools.



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