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الأونروا

outline of protection initiatives





contents

1. Introduction	4
2. What protection means to UNRWA	5
3. Key protection initiatives	8
4. UNRWA Field Protection Priorities	11

1. introduction

“Protection is what UNRWA does to safeguard and advance the rights of Palestine refugees”.¹

Serving a population of approximately 5 million Palestine refugees in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza eligible for services, and with a staff of nearly 30,000, UNRWA is one of the largest agencies in the United Nations. The services UNRWA provides through its five main programmes – education, health, relief and social services, microfinance and infrastructure and camp improvement – mean that it has direct responsibilities for ensuring the well-being of Palestine refugees in a variety of sectors. Addressing protection needs is an essential dimension of UNRWA’s humanitarian and human development work, ensuring that the challenges Palestine refugees face are comprehensively addressed.

This document presents an overview of UNRWA’s work and priorities within protection for the period 2011-2013. Section 2 of the document outlines what protection means to UNRWA and the Agency’s protection framework and methodologies. Sections 3 and 4 of the document present, respectively, key protection initiatives for the Agency as a whole and for the each of the five UNRWA Fields. The initiatives presented in this document are either under implementation or are planned. In order to ensure their continuation, additional financial and technical resources are needed.

The protection priorities outlined in this document will contribute to all four UNRWA Human Development Goals and related strategic objectives set out in the UNRWA Field and Headquarter Implementation Plans for 2012-2013. For each initiative described below, information is presented explaining to which human development goal and related objective the initiative contributes. Progress and results will be monitored and reported on as part of achievements of outcomes in Field and Head Quarter Implementation Plans.

¹ Morris, N. (2008) “What protection means for UNRWA in concept and practice”, Consultancy report, pp. 2-3, para. 3.1. See also UNRWA Medium Term Strategy 2010-2015, para. 49.



2. what protection means to unrwa

For UNRWA, protection is an integral part of a holistic approach to meeting refugee needs in education, health, relief and social services, microfinance and infrastructure and camp improvement, and to obtaining full respect for the rights of refugees under relevant international law.²

UNRWA's protection activities are firmly grounded in relevant General Assembly (GA) resolutions, which recognise the *"valuable work done by the Agency in providing protection to the Palestinian people, in particular Palestine refugees"*³ and provide specific encouragement to UNRWA to make *"further progress in addressing the needs and rights of children and women in its operations"* in accordance with, respectively, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women.⁴

Also, as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, UNRWA has an inherent commitment to observe human rights and associated international standards and good practice in its programmes. This commitment is in line with the stated purpose of the UN under the Charter of the United Nations⁵ and the GA's call *"upon all parts of the United Nations to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms"*⁶

UNRWA's operational definition of protection, as referred to in the Agency's Medium Term Strategy 2010-2015, is as follows:

2 UNRWA's Interim Programme Strategy 2008-2009, 24 September 2007, section 3.2.2., p. 9

3 See for example, UNGA res. 63/93, 5 Dec. 2008 and res. 64/89, 19 January 2010

4 See for example, UNGA res. 64/89, 19 January 2010

5 Charter of the United Nations, Art. 1, para. 3, 1945.

6 General Assembly A/RES/60/1. 2005 World Summit Outcome, para 119.

"Protection is what UNRWA does to safeguard and advance the rights of Palestine refugees".⁷

This definition is based on wording used in a consultancy report, "What Protection Means to UNRWA in Concept and Practice", prepared by Nicholas Morris in March 2008⁸ and is in line with the definition of protection adopted by the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).⁹ The Agency's commitment at the highest level to protection is recognised by the central place human rights and protection occupy as a key cross-cutting theme in the Agency's Medium Term Strategy 2010-2015 (MTS) and as one of UNRWA's four human development goals,¹⁰ *"Human rights enjoyed to the fullest"*.¹¹ The UNRWA protection strategy as described in the MTS focuses on achieving protection through quality service delivery and action on international protection.¹²

7 UNRWA Medium Term Strategy 2010-2015, para. 49.

8 Nicolas Morris, "What protection means for UNRWA in concept and practice", 2008, pp. 2-3, para. 3.1.

9 The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) defines protection in the following terms: "The concept of protection encompasses all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (that is, human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law)". See: IASC, Protection of Internally Displaced Persons: Inter-Agency Standing Committee Policy Paper, New York, December 1999, p. 4 and IASC, Growing the Sheltering Tree: Protecting Rights Through Humanitarian Action, 2002. It should be noted that this definition was first arrived at through a series of inter-agency workshops conducted under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) at the end of 1990s. See: ICRC, Third Workshop on Protection, background paper, 7 January 1999.

10 UNRWA's four goals for the human development of Palestine refugees are: 1. A long and healthy life; 2. Acquired skills and knowledge; 3. A decent standard of living; and, 4. Human rights enjoyed to the fullest.

11 UNRWA MTS 2010-2015 paras 47-49

12 UNRWA MTS para 49



2.1. UNRWA's protection framework

There are four components in UNRWA's protection work. Two components are centred on UNRWA's programmes and staff (and therefore have an

internal dimension), and two are directed to entities external to UNRWA and depend primarily on them for their realisation (and therefore have more of an external dimension). These four components of the UNRWA protection framework are as follows:

Internal

- (1) *Protection in programming* – Ensuring that protection needs are addressed in all aspects of programming, project design, policies, protocols and procedures, as well as in staff training.
- (2) *Protection in and through service delivery* – Delivering services in a manner that promotes and respects the rights of beneficiaries and ensures the security and dignity of beneficiaries and of UNRWA personnel.

External

- (3) *International protection* – Promoting respect for Palestine refugee rights through monitoring, reporting and intervention.
- (4) *A just and durable solution* – Highlighting to the international community the urgent need for a just and durable solution to the plight of the Palestinian people and helping to ensure that in its elaboration the rights and interests of the refugees are safeguarded.

2.2. UNRWA's protection methodology

UNRWA is first and foremost responsible for ensuring that its own service delivery provides for the safety and dignity of refugees and adheres to international standards and best practice.

UNRWA further provides protection to refugees through the provision of core services as well as through targeted assistance to address specific vulnerabilities of individuals and groups. These programmatic efforts go hand in hand with monitoring, reporting and intervening, either directly or indirectly to the authorities that have the primary responsibility to protect refugees.

In order to facilitate implementation of protection UNRWA has developed various tools and methodologies to support the Agency's management and staff.

- *Tool for Incorporating Minimum Standards on Protection into UNRWA Programming and Service delivery.*

This tool consists of a set of minimum standards, key protection principles and guidance notes for UNRWA's protection work. It provides the Agency staff with concrete ideas about what "protection standards" referred to in the Medium Term Strategy and the Field Implementation Plans actually mean in practical terms for UNRWA.

- *Tool to Assess the degree of Alignment with UNRWA Protection Standards.*

This tool has been compiled primarily to provide a means of assessing progress towards mainstreaming protection in UNRWA programming and service delivery. It is meant to be used in conjunction with the UNRWA's "Tool for incorporating minimum standards on protection into UNRWA programming and service delivery", which lays out what UNRWA aims at in terms of protection mainstreaming. Assessing alignment of programming with UNRWA's protection standards provides a baseline against which to measure progress, acts as a protection needs assessment to identify future areas of focus and helps to raise the understanding and awareness of UNRWA staff on protection issues.

- *Advocacy policies*

While UNRWA programmes and services mitigate the consequences arising from protection concerns, UNRWA also promotes respect for Palestine refugee rights by engaging directly or indirectly with the relevant authorities. This includes:

- *Monitoring reporting and intervention with authorities, to prevent or deter violations and to pursue remedial or corrective action;*
- *Interventions to help create and consolidate an environment and practices in which rights are respected;*

- Engaging with bodies potentially able to affect protection outcomes, such as UN human rights mechanisms, e.g., treaty bodies, special rapporteurs;
- Advocacy at all levels, including through the media when appropriate and in coordination with NGO and UN partners.

- Participation

Throughout its protection interventions, UNRWA recognises the importance of involvement of the Palestine refugee community. The aim is to involve the community to the greatest degree possible in prioritising and planning activities, as well as in the monitoring and evaluation of programme performance. Special attention is given to participation and involvement of the most vulnerable. The UNRWA Programme / Project Cycle Management Handbook provides a description of the management of participatory methodologies.

- Cooperation with external actors

UNRWA's protection work is pursued in cooperation with national authorities, other UN agencies and the NGO community. UNRWA also provides input, where appropriate, to UN Cluster and Working Group coordination mechanisms addressing programme and advocacy issues relevant to the protection of Palestine refugees.

Where, for whatever reason, UNRWA is not able to provide an adequate response internally it refers cases to relevant external specialist agencies that have the ability and capacity to respond appropriately. Coordination with these specialist partners includes a clear understanding of what information needs to be communicated in what timeframe. The aim of external referral is to ensure that the individual, whose rights have been threatened or violated, can access the most appropriate support, be it material assistance, legal, medical, psychosocial counselling, etc., as soon as possible.



3. key protection initiatives

3.1 UNRWA Agency-wide Protection Priorities

The scope and depth of UNRWA's service delivery places it in a strong position to contribute a holistic response to protection threats¹³ and vulnerabilities.¹⁴ It also, however, places a strong responsibility on the Agency to ensure that the manner in which it provides its services promotes and respects the rights, dignity and safety of its beneficiaries. As a major provider of public services, UNRWA seeks to ensure that the manner in which it delivers its services protects the safety and dignity of beneficiaries and staff. For example, throughout its Fields of operation:

- UNRWA takes steps to ensure a violence free environment in all its learning facilities;
- UNRWA promotes knowledge of individual rights through a human rights and tolerance curriculum in its schools;
- UNRWA staff have a responsibility to report any protection problems encountered;
- UNRWA takes steps to prevent and respond to incidents of gender based violence and child abuse;
- Partnership with the community is a vital aspect of UNRWA's approach to protection;
- The perspective of UNRWA beneficiaries is taken into account in the planning and implementation of services;

3.1.1 Agency wide key protection initiatives

Mainstreaming UNRWA protection standards

UNRWA has developed a tool¹⁵ providing means to assess progress towards mainstreaming protection in UNRWA programming and service delivery. The tool has been used by each of the five UNRWA fields to conduct 'protection audits', producing quantitative baselines for measuring the degree of alignment with UNRWA standards for incorporating protection across all aspects of programming. The tool will be continuously used in order to monitor progress compared to defined baselines.

The protection audits contribute to UNRWA's

¹³ The term "protection threat" refers to any event or process that, if it occurs or continues to occur, will negatively impact on the safety, dignity, rights or overall well-being of an individual or group.

¹⁴ UNDP defines vulnerability as "A human condition or process resulting from physical, social, economic and environmental factors, which determine the likelihood and scale of damage from the impact of a given [threat]." UNDP, Reducing Disaster Risk: A Challenge for Development, 2004.

¹⁵ Tool to Assess the degree of Compliance with UNRWA Protection Standards

mainstreaming of protection within all its programming and more specifically to UNRWA's strategic objective 12:

- Ensure Service delivery meets the protection needs of beneficiaries, including vulnerable groups.

Capacity-building of staff

Practical protection involves the responsibilities of every staff member who comes into contact with a person in need thereof or with a situation requiring a protection response. Timely and effective action by the staff member may be of critical importance to the outcome. The nature of the staff member's responsibility will be determined by her or his position in the Agency and by the specific situation. Staff require training to enhance a shared understanding of what protection means to UNRWA in order to equip them with the knowledge and tools to implement protection in their day-to day work. Overall one of the most important outcomes of this capacity-building process, closely linked also to the work on mainstreaming UNRWA protection standards, is to further develop an awareness of protection concepts and a protection way of thinking, or a 'protection reflex',¹⁶ throughout the Agency.

UNRWA will provide protection training for staff at different levels targeting different needs:

- Introduction level for all new local and international staff.
- In-depth training for relevant staff on protection principles and their associated responsibilities.
- Technical training for managers on incorporating protection into the project cycle management.

The protection training will provide UNRWA with the capacity to mainstream protection within all its programming and more specifically contribute to UNRWA's strategic objectives 12 and 13:

- Ensure Service delivery meets the protection needs of beneficiaries, including vulnerable groups.
- Safeguard and advance the rights of Palestinian refugees by promoting respect for human rights, international humanitarian law and international refugee law.

¹⁶ The term 'protection reflex' was used by Nicholas Morris to refer to staff being 'alert to instances where the rights of individual refugees are threatened or violated, coupled with competencies and mechanisms to address those violations wherever possible'. Morris, N. (2008) "What protection means for UNRWA in concept and practice", consultancy report, paras. 1.2 and 9.2.



Protection through education

UNRWA's education programme operates 700 schools for approximately 500,000 students; 10 vocational training centres; three pre-service teacher training institutions and in-service teacher education. UNRWA's operating context is highly varied, ranging from relative stability in some countries to more complex environments and sporadic flare up of more intense violence and instability. These challenging environmental conditions in which Palestine refugee children live in make them vulnerable resulting in additional psychosocial, learning and health needs. It is estimated that between 13-20% of all students in UNRWA schools have special educational needs. Children with disabilities are in a particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable position.

The vision of UNRWA's education programme encompasses the protection principles of safety and dignity of beneficiaries and staff, targeted quality service delivery, accessibility, equity and impartiality, participation, partnerships and coordination, as well as advocacy and accountability. To further strengthen its education programme, an Agency-wide Education Reform Strategy was developed. Two key areas of the education reform are particularly important for the Agency's protection work:

- Develop and implement an inclusive approach to meet the diverse need of the students and thereby contribute to equal quality education for Palestine refugee students with additional learning, psychosocial and health needs.
- Develop a strategy which will facilitate a comprehensive response to emergencies when they happen and also contribute to the

prevention of, preparedness for, and recovery from situations in emergencies.

The initiatives will contribute to UNRWA's *HDG 2 Acquired knowledge* and skills and, more specifically to strategic objective 4 and 6:

- Ensure universal access to and coverage of basic education
- Inclusive education is one of the four substantial reform areas in the Education Reform Strategy and improving access to educational opportunities for children with special educational needs is an Agency wide strategy objective.

Increase awareness of UNRWA protection programming amongst general public

Further to these objectives, UNRWA promotes the understanding of protection-based programming amongst the general public through a comprehensive protection-based communications strategy which distributes film and text through UNRWA's website, social media sites, and local and international media. Four main communications themes fall under the protection campaign:

- UNRWA protects the right to knowledge and skills through educational programming;
- UNRWA protects the right to long and healthy lives through health programming;
- UNRWA protects the right to a decent standard of living through relief and social services, microfinance, and emergency programming;
- And UNRWA promotes human rights with emergency and protection programming.

The work for increased awareness is in line with the human development goals delineated in the MTS, and seeks to change the way UNRWA's service delivery is discussed. (For example: UNRWA does not just provide educational opportunities to nearly 500.000 Palestine refugees: UNRWA protects the right to knowledge and skills of nearly 500.000 Palestine refugees through its delivery of educational programming.) The work will specifically contribute to UNRWA's strategic objectives 12 and 13:

- Ensure Service delivery meets the protection needs of beneficiaries, including vulnerable groups.
- Safeguard and advance the rights of Palestinian refugees by promoting respect for human rights, international humanitarian law and international refugee law.

Interaction with the International Human Rights System (IHRS)

As part of its protection work, UNRWA considers the IHRS (e.g. the High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office; Treaty Bodies; Special Rapporteurs) a strategic avenue to advance protection of human rights of Palestine refugees. In this regard, the Agency has recently adopted a Framework to promote efficient, effective and coordinated Agency interaction with the IHRS. The Framework identifies and prioritizes interactions with the most effective international human rights mechanisms, on Agency

protection priorities, and where the Agency can provide timely, factual and reliable information (e.g. economic, social and cultural rights of Palestine refugees such as the rights to adequate housing, health, education, water, and an adequate standard of living). Interactions include input into various IHRS reports, processes and focused meetings in Geneva, where the centre of the IHRS is located, and New York.

The strategy and its implementation will contribute to UNRWA's *Human Development Goal 4* Human Rights Enjoyed to the fullest, more specifically to strategic objective 13:

- Safeguard and advance the rights of Palestine refugees by promoting respect for human rights, international humanitarian law and international refugee law.

Further, the UNRWA Midterm Strategy recognizes that: "Within the limits of its mandate, UNRWA has an important role to play in (...) monitoring violations and interventions to press for remedial action; (...) reporting to bodies potentially able to affect protection outcomes". In a broader sense, Agency interaction with the IHRS is part of the general commitment of all parts of the United Nations to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms.¹⁷

¹⁷ See, for example, 2005 World Summit Outcome, General Assembly res. 60/1 of 15 Sep. 2005, para 119



4. unrwa field protection priorities

4.1 Gaza Field

There are 1.2 million Palestine refugees in Gaza, over 70 percent of the total population. For the last decade, the socio-economic situation of the refugees has been in steady decline. Years of occupation, conflict and the ongoing blockade have left the vast majority of the population in need of international assistance. Enforcement of the blockade has negatively affected key sectors of society including health services, education, trade and employment. The community continues to experience rising levels of unemployment, food insecurity and poverty.

UNRWA will continue to use its unique position as the largest direct service provider in the Gaza Strip to advocate at international, national and local levels on the issues limiting both UNRWA's ability to maintain core services, as well as refugees' ability to access those services and enjoy basic human rights. In 2012, UNRWA will further improve its protection work in Gaza by conducting a protection analysis, in collaboration with refugees and staff, to further identify key protection issues and by establishing an operational protection strategy to address those issues through its programming, using a more strategic and better coordinated approach.

Gaza field office will focus its protection within the following areas:

- Access – continuing to mitigate the consequences of the blockade through the delivery of services, with a particular focus on improving targeting in order to reach the poorest and most vulnerable refugees and through continuous public and private advocacy to lift the blockade on Gaza
- Shelter – ensuring that 10,000 families living in inadequate housing or displaced by the conflict receive shelter support, including reconstructed homes.
- Education – promoting safe and violence free schools, reducing drop/push-outs, supporting children with special needs and overage students to succeed, and equipping teachers and school counsellors to improve support to children traumatized by the conflict.
- Social services – identifying problems that threaten the well-being of refugee families and society, such as widespread violence, including

Gender-Based Violence, and poverty, and providing targeted, tailored interventions.

- Youth – supporting refugee youth to develop marketable vocational skills and to be positively and meaningfully engaged in UNRWA services and in their communities

4.1.1. Gaza Field key protection initiatives

Mainstreaming of protection and Human Rights in UNRWA education services

Several protection issues have been identified in the education sector, including students with special needs, students at risk of underperforming and being pushed out of school, and violence in schools. In order to ensure that each refugee child has access to quality education, UNRWA has developed the *Schools of Excellence* initiative, whereby UNRWA is working to increase academic standards, improve behaviour, and promote universal values in UNRWA's schools. Key elements of this initiative include:

- Providing additional assistance to students most in need through its Special Children, Special Needs and Over-aged Student initiatives
- Identifying children that have been pushed out of school, and the reasons for it
- Establishing violence free schools through the promotion of Respect and Discipline.
- Teaching a dedicated Human Rights curriculum in all UNRWA schools teaching students and raising their families' awareness and understanding of Human Rights, non-violent communication skills, conflict resolution and tolerance.
- Enhancing the quality of teacher training in Gaza, and improving teachers' skills to support students traumatized by conflict.

The initiative will contribute to UNRWA's HDG 2 *Acquired knowledge* and skills and HDG 4 Human Rights Enjoyed to the fullest, more specifically to strategic objective 5 and 13:

- Enhance education quality and outcome against set standards
- Violence free schools established.
- Safeguard and advance the rights of Palestine refugees by promoting respect for human rights, international humanitarian law and international refugee law.



Protection from violence, including child abuse and Gender based Violence (GBV), and referral system

Years of conflict, border closures, crushing poverty and inadequate housing have placed Gazan society and families under extreme pressure. Restrictions on women’s movement, opportunities and pursuits have also increased, compounded by years of blockade and conflict, leaving women vulnerable to disempowerment and marginalization. As a result, violence in the Gaza Strip has become widespread, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, with 51% of ever married women and nearly 60% of children aged 12-17 suffering domestic violence.¹⁸ Nearly one in four children age 12-17 experienced physical or psychological violence from teachers or other students and 30% of male youth and 10% of female youth experienced violence on the street. In Gaza, however, there is little protection and even fewer services for women and children who have been victims and witnesses of violence.

To respond to this epidemic of violence, UNRWA has launched efforts to detect cases of refugees who suffer from gender-based violence (GBV)

and refer them for services, including health care, psychosocial support, and legal advice. By end 2011, UNRWA had received reports of over 250 cases of GBV. In January 2012, a comprehensive electronic case management system was launched to ensure better follow-up of refugees seeking assistance due to GBV. Over the coming year, UNRWA will:

- Continue to monitor and improve its GBV detection and referral system
- Seek opportunities to expand the system to also better target children and adolescents
- Further train social workers, mental health counsellors and other key staff to detect and assist children and women facing a wide array of abuses

The initiative will contribute to UNRWA’s *HDG 4 Human rights enjoyed to the fullest extent possible*. More specifically to strategic objective 13 and 14:

- Safeguard and advance the rights of Palestine refugees by promoting respect for human rights, international humanitarian law and international refugee law.
- Strengthen refugee capacity to formulate and implement sustainable social services in their communities.

¹⁸ Incidence refers to the period of August 2010 to July 2011

Empowering youth for positive, productive engagement

Palestine refugees in Gaza are overwhelming young: 57% of the 1.2 million registered refugees are under age 24. Approximately 243,000 are youth age 15-24. The overwhelming majority of youth in Gaza are educated, peaceful and seek productive employment opportunities that will enable them to financially assist their families and prepare to start their own families. However, with the blockade on Gaza now in its fourth year, frustration and unemployment are high (33%¹⁹) and opportunities for positive, productive engagement are low. The World Bank estimates that the youth unemployment rate is approximately 10 percentage points higher than the general rate and that labour force participation for youth is negatively correlated with education levels. The more educated a youth is, the more likely they are to drop out of the labour force.²⁰ Families with a youth out of the labour force are also more likely to be in poverty.

When asked, youth in Gaza identify employment as their primary desire, and families and communities state they want to “inspire youth not to give into despair.” In response, UNRWA is working to keep open the windows of opportunity for productive, positive engagement of youth in Gaza. It is doing

¹⁹ Unemployment rate for January-June 2011.

²⁰ The World Bank defines youth as aged 18-34. Participation among adults age 35 and over shows a positive correlation between age and education, indicating that youth without skills and older adults with more experience are most able to find jobs, respectively. World Bank Report No. 61293 - GZ, July 2011.

this by increasing targeted employment and training opportunities, such as:

- **Over-Age Apprenticeships**, providing young people with vocational training and job placements
- **Young Women Leaders Program**, which advances young female graduates’ personal and professional skills and provides work placements
- **Trainings in computer, management, statistical analysis, financial management, evaluation and reporting, and English skills** by the Small and Micro-Enterprise Training Programme, where over 30% of participants are youth.
- **Support to re-build the private sector in Gaza** by underwriting the cost of some 6,500 jobs over three years for identified businesses; at least 350 jobs will be earmarked for young graduates.

Recognizing the overwhelming need in Gaza, UNRWA is examining how to expand these efforts and further increase its support for youth to achieve their goal of being productive and positively engaged.

The initiative will contribute to UNRWA’s *HDG 3 A decent standard of living*. More specifically to strategic objective 9 and 10:

- **Offer inclusive financial services and increased access to credit and saving facilities, especially for vulnerable groups such as women, youth and the poor.**
- **Improve employability.**



4.2. Jordan Field

Jordan hosts nearly 2 million Palestine refugees, most of whom have been granted citizenship. However, there are still a number of challenges that face Palestine refugees living in Jordan.

The safety and security of children in schools has been highlighted as a key protection risk linked to UNRWA service delivery. In addition, the Palestinian refugees that were displaced from Gaza in 1967 remain particularly vulnerable (ex-Gazans). The 132,000 UNRWA registered ex-Gazan refugees, as well as an unknown number of unregistered ex-Gazans, do not hold Jordanian citizenship. Consequently, they now face a number of restrictions, including to employment opportunities, secondary health care and access to higher education.

Jordan field office will focus its protection within the following areas:

- Education – Providing safe schools, including protection from sexual harassment.
- Equal access to services – Advocacy to ensure equal access to basic services for all official UNRWA refugee camps.
- Poverty - Improving employability for vulnerable groups of Palestine refugees, in particular, the ex-Gazan refugees.
- Participation - Support area level protection working groups to identify and address protection issues through close collaboration with the local community.

4.2.1. Jordan Field key protection initiatives

Protection from child abuse and gender based violence, including sexual harassment

When UNRWA front-line staff members (social workers, teachers, doctors, nurses, midwives, etc.)

identify cases of child abuse and gender based violence (GBV), they often do not have the means to provide the care and case management necessary for an effective response and intervention. UNRWA is therefore in the process of increasing the capacity of staff to detect and respond appropriately to cases of child abuse and GBV, strengthening referral mechanisms with specialist, partner organizations and working with the community on awareness-raising and prevention.

Within GBV and child abuse, an issue that has been identified as a major concern by UNRWA programme staff, is vulnerability of children to sexual harassment and abuse inside UNRWA facilities. Several incidents have been recorded of young men climbing over the boundary walls of UNRWA schools and abusing school children (boys and girls). This abuse often happens in the bathrooms, located away from the main school building. UNRWA staff have acknowledged that children have little awareness of how to avoid and report on such incidences. UNRWA's response to these challenges includes:

- Strengthening the capacity of front-line staff to detect, refer and provide necessary support to survivors of GBV and child abuse;
- Coordinating with existing national referral systems and local NGOs to ensure support for victims of GBV and child abuse;
- Improve school infrastructure to ensure security and protection of boy and girl students from sexual harassment and abuse;
- Raise student awareness on how on how to avoid and reach to sexual harassment and abuse.

This initiative will contribute to HDG 1 *A long and healthy life* and HDG 4 *Ensure universal access to and coverage of basic education*, specifically to strategic objectives 2 and 5:



- Protect and promote family health;
- Enhance education quality and outcomes against set standards.
- Violence free schools established.

Equal access to infrastructure

The Government of Jordan has actively demonstrated support for Palestine refugees through the provision of electricity, water, sewerage, shelter rehabilitation and road pavement across the ten official and three unofficial camps. Jerash camp is the only remaining Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan which is not yet connected to an underground sewerage network. Consequently, sewerage is drawn through open drains through the camp, leading to sanitary hazards including seepage into the drinking water system. Palestinian refugees dwelling in the camp experience elevated health problems. For example, 2010, incidences in Jerash camp of water borne diarrhoea in children under three years old were three times higher than in other Palestinian refugee camps.

UNRWA has long been advocating for improving the living conditions of refugees living in Jerash camp. A sewerage treatment plant has been built in the local area, but due to lack of funding, the Government of Jordan has been unable to complete the infrastructure networks to connect the plant to pipes in the camp. Consequently, the Government of Jordan has been actively seeking, and has now received, the financial backing of the Swiss Development Cooperation to connect all households in Jerash camp with the sewerage and water supply networks. Although further funding for shelter rehabilitation, including toilet and kitchen updated connections, may be needed, the connection of Jerash camp to the sewerage and water supply networks is a significant improvement. The project will positively impact the living conditions, health status and overall well-being of camp residents.

This initiative will contribute to HDG 1 *A long and healthy life* and HDG 3 *A decent standard of living*.



Scholarships for Palestine Refugees in Jordan originating from Gaza

Ex-Gazan Palestine refugees form a particularly vulnerable group in Jordan. The combination of high poverty rates within the community, high fees for tertiary education and restrictions on a number of employment opportunities present significant challenges to ex-Gazans trying to reach their full potential.

UNRWA seeks to:

- Improve employability and access to education for ex-Gazan refugees by providing a number of scholarships to obtain university degrees.

This initiative will contribute to HDG 3 *A Decent Standard of Living*. More specifically to strategic objective 10:

- Improve employability



4.3. Lebanon Field

Approximately 425,000 refugees are registered with UNRWA in Lebanon, with over 50% living in refugee camps. Palestine refugees in Lebanon do not enjoy full respect of several basic socio-economic rights, including continued restricted access to the labour market, despite the amended legislation that was passed by Lebanese parliament in August 2010. High poverty rates are a major concern. The refugees also suffer from lack of security and rule of law in the camps, and prevalence of violence in schools and homes. A category of Palestinians in Lebanon who do not hold the identification card for Palestinian refugees issued by the Lebanese authorities (generally referred to as non-IDs) are particularly disadvantaged.

Lebanon field office will focus its protection within the following areas:

- Socio-economic rights – continuing to advocate for full implementation of the right to work and other socio-economic rights
- Child protection and violence against women - enhancing prevention of violence against women and children.
- Access to justice – providing legal support to help Palestine refugees improve their access to socio-economic rights.
- Recognition of non-ID refugees – continuing to work with the relevant authorities to provide legal status for this vulnerable group of refugees.
- Governance – continuing to participate in the joint UN-project in the North aimed at improving the capacity of the Popular Committees, particularly in regard to conflict

resolution methods, participation and inclusion development.

- Protection for disabled – provision of support to two community based early intervention centres.

4.3.1. Lebanon Field key protection initiatives

Prevention of and support to victims of Gender Based Violence

The incidence of GBV, including domestic violence and child sexual abuse amongst the refugee community in Lebanon is significant. At the same time, UNRWA has realised that there is a lack of functioning mechanisms to identify persons vulnerable to GBV. There is also an inadequate referral system. UNRWA will:

- Build the capacity of its social workers, and other relevant staff, to detect and provide support to persons vulnerable to GBV;
- Build a reliable data base to enable reporting on the issue;
- Establishing a well-functioning referral system.

This initiative will contribute to *HDG 1 A long and healthy life* *HDG 4 Human rights enjoyed to the fullest extent possible*. More specifically to strategic objectives 2 and 12 :

- Protect and promote family health;
- Ensure service delivery meets the protection needs of beneficiaries, including vulnerable groups.

Based on the experiences from the pilot project in Tyre, UNRWA hopes to expand its activities on GBV to other areas of Lebanon.



Right to work

Over the years Palestine refugees in Lebanon have suffered from severe employment restrictions. UNRWA has actively worked to implement the right of work for Palestine refugees and recent amendments to the labour legislation have eased access to the labour market for the refugees. The legislation is, however, still new and there are uncertainties around its implementation and issues such as provision for social security for working refugees and removal of demand for work permits for the refugees. UNRWA has identified the need to:

- Monitor the situation in the labour market for Palestine refugees;
- Provide refugees with information about the amended law;
- Provide legal aid to refugees pursuing civil action through Lebanese courts.
- Coordination with relevant bodies in order to ensure strong advocacy for right to work for the refugees.

This initiative will contribute to *HDG 3 A Decent Standard of living and HDG 4 Human rights enjoyed to the fullest extent possible*. More specifically to strategic objectives 10, 12 and 13:

- Improve employability;
- Ensure service delivery meets the protection needs of beneficiaries, including vulnerable groups;
- Safeguard and advance the rights of Palestinian refugees by promoting respect for Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law and International Refugee Law.

Recognition of non-IDs

Non-ID refugees are a category of Palestinians in Lebanon who do not hold the identification card issued by the Directorate General of Palestinian Refugee Affairs (DPRA), are generally referred to as the non-IDs. Their absence of legal status seriously restricts their freedom of movement. In response to advocacy efforts, the Government of Lebanon decided in 2008 to issue non-IDs with a special identity card (SIC). At present 995 non-IDs have been issued with a Special Identity Card, while approximately 1000 persons have been rejected.

UNRWA will continue to strengthen advocacy efforts to ensure full rights and benefits for SIC holders. The Agency will be:

- Facilitating their access to relevant services, particularly hospitalization services.
- Advocate with partners for clear renewal procedures for SIC holders; recognition of civil registration (marriage), issuance of travel documents, establishment of procedures for issuance of DPRA IDs to new born children of non-ID parents.

This initiative will contribute to *HDG 4 Human rights enjoyed to the fullest extent possible*. More specifically to strategic objectives 13:

- Decline in number of Palestinians without legal identification documentation.

Disabled Early Intervention Centres

Palestine refugees with a disability have very limited access to public therapeutic and rehabilitation services in Lebanon. In 2008 UNRWA established two specialized early intervention units in Saida and Tyre areas. The centres provide vital services and support to disabled persons in these areas. UNRWA will continue to:

- Provide rehabilitation services in the two units through specialists.
- Provide home based service through a counselling and family support program.
- Provide social integration services through

activities carried out by social workers in cooperation with local NGOs and parents.

- Build capacity of local kindergarten teachers and community workers in other specialized institutions.

This initiative will contribute to *HDG 4 Human rights enjoyed to the fullest extent possible*. More specifically to strategic objective 14:

- Strengthen refugee capacity to formulate and implement sustainable social services in their communities.



4.4. Syria Field

More than 490,000 Palestine refugees are registered with UNRWA in Syria. The refugees have access to social services provided by the Syrian government. However, the Palestine refugee population suffers from lower performance in some of the main development indicators, such as higher infant mortality, compared to the host population. Furthermore, school enrolment is lower and school drop out higher in the refugee community than within the host community. Unemployment rate is high within the refugee community, especially among youth, of whom more than 50 percent are unemployed. There are also a number of Iraqi Palestine refugees in Syria, whose situation is difficult; vulnerable to harassment and exploitation.²¹

Syria field office will focus its protection within the following areas:

- Disability - Mainstreaming disability in programming and ensure access to UNRWA services for persons with disabilities.
- Youth - Equipping Palestine and Iraqi Palestinian refugee youth with marketable vocational skills and advocating for entrepreneurship and employment opportunities for young refugees in Syria.
- Iraqi Palestinian refugees – in cooperation with UNHCR continuing to support the needs of this vulnerable group.

Syria Field Office mainstreams protection through a number of thematic fields, including access to services, gender-based violence, cash assistance and psycho-social support. While protection projects remain ongoing, rapidly increasing needs among Palestine refugees are outpacing UNRWA's ability to mobilise resources. In particular, the large rise in the number of urgent cash assistance applications since the beginning of the unrest, mean UNRWA lacks sufficient funds to support a majority of eligible cases.

Palestine refugee households typically lack the asset base and wider social security networks of Syrian nationals, meaning their ability to respond to emergencies and wider economic challenges is significantly lower. As such, UNRWA's protection activities focus on the poorest and most vulnerable sections of this population.

4.4.1 Syria Field key protection initiatives

Ensure access for refugees with disabilities

UNRWA has identified over 5,400 persons with disabilities as a group in the Palestine refugee population that is particularly vulnerable in terms of access to services. In order to prevent neglect and support disabled persons to access services to which they are entitled, the need to enhance social and physical accessibility of UNRWA installations for persons with disabilities has been identified as an important protection priority. UNRWA has conducted an audit of all its facilities in Syria and identified a number of facilities that are not currently complying with physical accessibility requirements. To ensure the equal enjoyment of human rights for persons with disabilities the Syria field has designed a project, yet to be implemented, to:

- Enhance accessibility of UNRWA services for persons with disabilities;
- Work with UNRWA staff and the community to address the social barriers to service access for persons with disabilities.

This initiative will contribute to *HDG 4 Human rights enjoyed to the fullest extent possible*. More specifically to strategic objective 12:

- Ensure service delivery meets the protection needs of beneficiaries, including vulnerable groups.



²¹ Syria FIP 2012-2013

Prevention of and support to victims of gender based violence

The incidence of gender based violence and other forms of exploitation have been identified as a protection priority within the Palestine refugee community in Syria. UNRWA has therefore assessed what support refugees would need to increase their protection through prevention and the provision of care to those who have been abused.

In response to the identified needs, UNRWA is providing:

- [Free legal and social advice counselling on GBV through a telephone hotline;](#)
- [Mental health services in health clinics for women that have suffered from GBV;](#)
- [Training to staff on detection and referral of persons subject to GBV.](#)

This initiative contributes to *HDG 1 A long and healthy life and HDG 4 Human rights enjoyed to the fullest extent possible*. More specifically to strategic objectives 2 and 12:

- [Protect and promote family health;](#)
- [Ensure service delivery meets the protection needs of beneficiaries, including vulnerable groups.](#)

Cash Assistance

UNRWA operates several cash assistance projects across Syria, using a social safety-net approach to address the needs of poor and vulnerable Palestine refugees. This Social Safety Net assistance is provided to families and individuals in distress (special hardship cases) and abject poor (those unable to meet basic food needs) who are suffering from rising costs of living and food prices. Households headed by unemployed women, elderly people and internally displaced refugee families are prioritised. Cash transfers help protect access to healthcare and education (including clothing and school supplies), providing children with a healthy diet, buying essential household items or servicing rent and utility costs.

Provision of cash assistance to the poorest households mitigates the impact of the ongoing crisis on the most vulnerable Palestine refugees in Syria, particularly those living below the abject poverty line and female headed households. Beyond meeting essential needs, it is intended to empower refugee communities to act as the primary agents of their own recovery. It also provides UNRWA with

the ability to respond flexibly to emerging needs and enables refugees to determine and meet a range of essential priorities. Actual assistance varies based on household poverty assessments and the humanitarian and security situations in the surrounding area.

This initiative contributes to *HDG3: A decent standard of living*. More specifically to strategic objective 8:

- [Mitigate the effects of emergencies.](#)

Psychosocial Support and Referrals

Although implemented by other field offices, the provision of psycho-social support is a relatively new field for UNRWA in Syria, delivered in response to the emerging needs of the Palestine refugee community affected by recent unrest. The response, due to be rolled out in 2012, will be managed on the basis of a detailed needs assessment and followed by psycho-social support services through school counselling, health service delivery, CBO activities, support to victims of gender-based violence and social worker services; all delivered through UNRWA facilities and referral systems. A framework for the programme will be designed in consultation with external psycho-social and behavioural experts, before engaging in staff training and roll-out of the new services.

The programme comprises five primary elements:

- 1) [Formulation of psycho-social programme framework for UNRWA Syria Field Office, in consultation with external experts.](#)
- 2) [Development and production of training materials for UNRWA staff delivering psycho-social services, including health workers, teachers, social workers and management.](#)
- 3) [Training of trainers for UNRWA staff involved in psychosocial programming](#)
- 4) [Delivery of psycho-social support and family counselling to refugee women and victims of gender-based violence.](#)
- 5) [Delivery of psycho-social support to Palestine refugee patients psycho-somatic and post-traumatic conditions.](#)

This initiative contributes to *HDG 1 A long and healthy life and HDG 4 Human rights enjoyed to the fullest extent possible*. More specifically to strategic objectives 2 and 12:

- [Protect and promote family health;](#)
- [Ensure service delivery meets the protection needs of beneficiaries, including vulnerable groups.](#)

4.5 West Bank Field

Nearly 800,000 Palestine refugees are registered with UNRWA in the West Bank. These refugees are facing a protracted crisis with profound economic, social, political and humanitarian consequences. This can be contextualised as a protection crisis, resulting from ongoing confiscation and annexation of Palestinian land, increased settlement construction, home demolitions, forced evictions, revocation of residency rights and obstructed access to land, markets and essential services all of which prevent Palestinians from fulfilling their fundamental rights and freedoms.²²

UNRWA has responded to the crisis with protective programming, designed to target specific protection vulnerabilities as well as the mainstreaming of protection principles throughout its service provision.

West Bank field office will focus its protection within the following areas:

- **Forced displacement and violence - continuing to mitigate the consequences of forced displacement and violence through the delivery of services adapted to the specific vulnerabilities of Palestine refugees, combined with advocacy activities aimed at preventing human rights abuses.**
- **Mobilization and empowerment of communities at risk of forced displacement - supporting**

communities' resilience and self-protection in times of armed-conflict crisis through psycho-social interventions and self-advocacy training sessions.

- **Family and child protection – strengthening internal coordination and external**
- **referral systems to recognise and respond to violence against women and children.**
- **Engineering protection and related interventions aiming at improving UNRWA Health, Education and Administrative installations' level of alignment with standards of dignity, safety and accessibility to services.**

4.5.1. West Bank Field key protection initiatives

Protection of Palestine refugees affected by forced displacement and violence

The deterioration of humanitarian conditions in the West Bank may be contextualized as a protracted protection crisis, resulting from ongoing confiscation and annexation of Palestinian land, increased settlement construction, home demolitions, forced evictions, and obstructed access to land, markets and essential services, all of which prevent Palestinians from fulfilling their fundamental rights and freedoms. Further, Palestine refugees living in the West Bank are frequently exposed to physical danger. In general, the levels of violence are particularly high inside refugee camps as reflected in the number of military incursions and search operations.

²² West Bank Field Office FIP 2012-2013 p 1



In response, UNRWA:

- Conducts systematic monitoring and reporting of IHL violations to increase accountability of duty bearers to respect their responsibility under International Law; in particular of hostilities in refugee camps;
- Facilitates access to livelihood and services and reduced HR violations by increased physical presence, interventions, monitoring, reporting and advocacy in communities affected by the Barrier;
- Alleviates forced displacement pressures by providing humanitarian assistance;
- Responds to some of the immediate basic needs created by IHL/HR violations through the provision of cash assistance;
- Has developed a Crisis Intervention Framework.

This initiative contributes to *HDG 4 Human rights enjoyed to the fullest extent possible*, more specifically to strategic objectives 12 and 13:

- Ensure service delivery meets the protection needs of beneficiaries, including vulnerable groups;
- Safeguard and advance the rights of Palestinian refugees by promoting respect for Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law and International Refugee Law.

Community Mobilization and Outreach

The communities most at-risk of displacement face significant pressures from legal and administrative harassment, violent protests, and regular violence by Settlers and / or by authorities. These chronic stresses reduce the ability of communities and families to cope and resist against displacement. Herding communities in area C of the West Bank, refugee camps, communities living along the Barrier and communities living along settlements have been identified as particularly at risk to armed conflict and displacement.

To support communities' self-protection, UNRWA will conduct the following activities:

- Enhance community capacity to resist forced displacement and cope with the impact of other rights abuses through psycho-social support
- Legal, communication, advocacy coaching sessions will further encourage communities' awareness, understanding, leadership and ability to advocate for their rights and ensure the affected populations know how to access services

- Debates and discussion around informational documentaries about human rights, minority rights, and Bedouin communities in the Middle East will raise communities' awareness and belief that they can also mobilise themselves against threats to their traditional way of life

This initiative contributes to *HDG 4 Human rights enjoyed to the fullest extent possible*. more specifically to strategic objectives 12 and 13:

- Ensure service delivery meets the protection needs of beneficiaries, including vulnerable groups.
- Safeguard and advance the rights of Palestine refugees by promoting respect for human rights, international humanitarian law and international refugee law.

Community Mental Health and Family and Child protection

Demand for mental health services continues to rise in the West Bank; the number of refugees accessing individual counselling services nearly tripled from 2010 to 2011. Localized studies show increasing rates of social and stress-related mental health disorders among the Palestinian refugee population and a widespread need for psychosocial assistance. Further, in a 2009 participatory needs assessment of psychosocial problems amongst the Palestinian refugee population in the West Bank, participants indicated noticeable increases in cases of family and child violence and abuse. The occupation, coupled with a conservative patriarchal culture, and rising poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity have contributed to a tremendous strain on the traditional roles within Palestinian families and society, and to an integrated system of violence against women, children and vulnerable groups.

UNRWA has developed a cross-sectoral, multidisciplinary, community-based family and child protection programme to promote positive mental health and well-being, and to prevent and respond to domestic violence, child abuse and neglect. To achieve this, UNRWA will continue its efforts to;

- Integrate Mental Health into Primary Health Care and Education services;
- Strengthen UNRWA staff capacity and internal and external referral mechanisms to detect, manage, and refer common mental disorders and domestic, gender-based, and child abuse, violence, and neglect cases.



- Strengthen community-based family and child protection networks to prevent family and community violence and abuse, protect vulnerable groups, and ensure support structures and services for survivors.

This initiative will contribute to HDG 1 A long and healthy life and HDG 2 Knowledge and Skills and HDG 4 Human Rights Enjoyed to the Fullest. More specifically to strategic objectives 2, 6 and 14:

- Protect and promote family health;
- Improve access to education opportunities for learners with special education needs.
- Strengthen refugee capacity to formulate and implement sustainable social services in their communities.

Engineering Protection Interventions

For UNRWA, protection is an integral part of a holistic approach to meeting refugee needs in education, health, relief and social services, micro-finance and infrastructure and camp improvement, and to securing all their rights. One aspect of UNRWA protection strategy is to ensuring that protection needs are addressed in all aspects of programming and that services are delivered in a manner that promotes and respects the rights of beneficiaries and ensures the security and dignity of

beneficiaries and of UNRWA personnel²³. While the conditions of UNRWA installations are an essential element in the provision of safe, dignified and accessible services, a protection audit conducted in February 2011 in 91 UNRWA Education, health and Administrative facilities indicated the need to improve UNRWA infrastructure dignity, safety and accessibility standards. As a result, UNRWA is planning to implement in 2012-2011 the following Engineering protection-related interventions:

- 55 UNRWA school, clinics and office Installations provided with access ramps for the physically impaired persons.
- 55 UNRWA school, clinics and office Installations provided with separate men and women toilets and toilets for the physically impaired persons
- 55 UNRWA school, clinics and office Installations provided with emergency exits & fire escapes

This initiative contributes to *HDG 4 Human rights enjoyed to the fullest extent possible*, more specifically to strategic objectives 12.

²³ Protection in and through service delivery", is a term used by Nicholas Morris in his 2008 report, "What Protection Means to UNRWA". Protection "in" service delivery refers to the most fundamental level of protection mainstreaming which ensures that all UNRWA programmes deliver services in a manner that ensures the security and dignity of beneficiaries and UNRWA personnel. Protection "through" service delivery refers to the identification of programme options that are specifically designed and targeted to advance the rights of beneficiaries