

# Overview



## lebanon field office: operations

Palestine refugees living in Lebanon (PRL) reside in 12 Palestine refugees' official camps and in unofficial gatherings, adjacent to the camps, as well as other parts of the country. The camps in Lebanon are overcrowded and characterized by substandard shelters, poor infrastructure, high rates of unemployment and dire environmental health conditions.

Palestine refugees in Lebanon remain socially marginalized and have very limited civil, political, social and economic rights including restricted access to the government's public health and educational facilities, no access to public social services, restrictions on their right to work and right to own property.

As a result of the conflict in Syria, a considerable number of Palestine refugees from Syria (PRS) fled to Lebanon. There are around 29,000 PRS registered with UNRWA in the country. According to the AUB Survey on the Socioeconomic Status of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon published in 2015, nearly 90 per cent of PRS live in poverty (cannot meet their basic food and non-food needs), and nearly 10 per cent live in extreme poverty (are unable to meet essential food requirements).

PRS face additional challenges particularly due to the administratively burdensome process associated with the renewal of their residency documents. PRS without valid legal status fear of arrest at checkpoints and detention.

The presence of PRS in Lebanon has placed an additional burden on the PRL host community and has overstretched UNRWA resources and services. UNRWA's yearly Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal aims at meeting the minimum food and non-food needs of the PRS community which continues to grapple with profound hardship in light of the ongoing conflict in Syria.

Palestine refugees in Lebanon rely almost entirely on UNRWA services including education, healthcare, relief, social and protection services, infrastructure and camp improvement works among others. As such, the Agency's 65 schools, 2 campuses for its vocational centre, 27 health centres and a number of other installations and programmes continue to be the main sources of vital services for both PRL and PRS. About 205,000 persons benefit from UNRWA services in Lebanon every year.



## Education



For the scholastic year 2018/2019, a total of 36,960 students, including 5,254 Palestine refugees from Syria, are enrolled in 65 schools across Lebanon, two of which run on double shift. Among these are 9 secondary schools, a unique provision among UNRWA's fields.

The Agency's 65 schools across the country serve as the main provider of education for Palestine refugee children in Lebanon. In order to promote the full integration of PRS children with their peers, PRS students have been combined into regular classes. Despite the ongoing financial challenges and the difficult circumstances in which UNRWA operates, the Agency is committed to provide all Palestine refugee children with quality, equitable and inclusive education.

In addition to regular classes, UNRWA schools provide students with extracurricular activities, learning support, counselling sessions and school supplies.

As part of UNRWA's education strategy in Lebanon to enhance the employment prospects of Palestine refugee youth, the UNRWA Sibling Training Centre (STC) in its two campuses delivers technical and vocational education and training to prepare young people for employment opportunities available in the local market. STC offers 30 semi-professional and trade courses for its student body of around 1,000 trainees in its two campuses located in the south and north of Lebanon.

In 2017, STC was granted accreditation by the Lebanese Ministry of Education. This has widened the scope of STC graduates either to continue their higher education or to get employed holding an official certificate like any other private or public vocational institute in Lebanon. Since 2018, an Innovation Lab in STC provides students with the opportunity to enhance their social entrepreneurship, digital and coding skills.

The UNRWA Employment Services Centres provide job-seekers with individual counselling, resume coaching, and career guidance. They also connect them with employment opportunities, and refer them to apprenticeships and on-the-job training providers. This service aims to contribute to poverty reduction and social inclusion of Palestine refugees in Lebanon through skills and training development, employment generation, and job matching services.

## Health

UNRWA covers the cost of primary health care services for PRL and PRS. This includes general curative care with consultations and free medication, maternal health care including preconception, antenatal, postnatal and family planning services and child health care including vaccination and growth monitoring. Moreover, the Agency offers early detection and management of non-communicable diseases with special focus on diabetes and hypertension through its 27 health centers located all over the country. On a yearly basis, UNRWA medical staff conduct nearly one million medical consultations for approximately 160,000 users recorded at UNRWA health centers.

UNRWA also supports secondary and tertiary levels of health care. The Agency adjusted its hospitalization policy in Lebanon in 2016 to achieve greater sustainability. The change brought a number of important benefits including increased support for tertiary care which has been a long-standing request from Palestine refugees living in Lebanon and reduced dependence on private hospital care, which tends to be the most costly.

The Agency also contributes towards tertiary hospitalization for emergency and life-threatening conditions. Additionally, UNRWA provides financial support for Emergency Room Services at Palestine Red Crescent Society hospitals and partially covers these services at UNRWA contracted hospitals.

Based on the health programme goal of achieving a long and healthy life, UNRWA continues to operate the Medical Hardship Fund (MHF), set up to ensure that the most vulnerable refugees retain access to costly hospitalization services including treatments for a number of catastrophic and chronic illnesses.





## Relief and social services

The Relief and Social Services (RSS) programme in Lebanon assists impoverished Palestine refugees and promotes the development and self-reliance of disadvantaged members of the refugee community, especially women, children, youth, persons with disabilities and the elderly. UNRWA provides quarterly cash assistance to 61,672 Palestine refugees in Lebanon living below the poverty line and registered under the Social Safety Net Programme – they receive 30 USD a quarter – as well as emergency cash assistance for around 29,000 PRS, including cash-for-food and multi-purpose cash assistance.

The Agency also provides targeted services for women, youth and persons with disabilities, through RSS, other UNRWA programmes or partnerships with community-based and non-governmental organizations. The Agency also runs a microcredit community support programme that provides loans for start-ups or business expansion. This helps beneficiaries pursue their economic development and enhances job creation among the Palestine refugee community. The programme also provides housing loans to improve the refugees' living conditions, given that Palestine refugees in Lebanon have long suffered from poor dwelling conditions and a shortage of housing.



## Environmental health

As a result of increased population in Palestine refugee camps throughout Lebanon, especially following the onset of the Syria crisis, additional pressure has been placed on water-supply sources and networks, sewerage and drainage systems, as well as operations related to the camps' solid waste management. One of the most acute needs of the Palestine refugee community in Lebanon is access to potable water within the camps.

In response, UNRWA with the generous support of its donor community is upgrading the infrastructure systems in the camps through the provision of additional water sources including the drilling of new boreholes, rehabilitating and upgrading existing water wells, and connecting shelters to water supply networks. The Agency also provides solid waste management services; in 2018, approximately 59,000 tonnes of solid waste were removed across all camps.

## Shelter rehabilitation

UNRWA camps in Lebanon face the continued challenge of accommodating an increased population inside a constrained geographical space. The camps suffer from severely dilapidated shelters, overcrowding and poor environmental health conditions. To address shelter needs, UNRWA undertakes shelter rehabilitation using a self-help approach scheme to promote a sense of self-reliance among refugees and to positively impact the health and well-being of Palestine refugee families. The total number of petitions made by camp residents appealing for shelter rehabilitation currently stands in excess of 6,000. In 2018, around 285 homes were rehabilitated through the Agency's self-help shelter rehabilitation programme.



### Protection, legal status and advice

The protection response in UNRWA Lebanon focuses on providing assistance to those most in need through a multidimensional approach, which includes: the identification and referral of protection cases, the provision of legal aid services to nearly 7,000 refugees; access to specialized services for victims of gender-based violence and child protection; the provision of mental health and psychosocial support; protection mainstreaming; and engagement with duty bearers to advocate for Palestine refugees' rights. UNRWA is engaged in a sustained programme to eliminate violence against children and gender-based violence in all its installations, and pursues a zero-tolerance policy with respect to sexual exploitation and abuse as well as sexual harassment. Furthermore, the Agency focuses on neutrality, to maintaining the confidence of all needed to operate independently, safely and effectively, especially in politically-charged or conflict situations.

In 2018, a total of 464 protection cases were identified, while 92 per cent of them were provided with assistance including internal or external referrals.

UNRWA advocates for the removal of obstacles to the exercise of fundamental rights, including the right to work and to own property, and for the elimination of all forms of discrimination in law or practice. In doing so UNRWA works closely with the Lebanese authorities, specifically the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee in the office of the Prime Minister and other key stakeholders.



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 mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5.4 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA across its five fields of operation. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank, including East Jerusalem 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.