



Students on their first day of school in the UNRWA Jabalia Elementary Co-Educational School "A".
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an investment in a quality education: promoting human rights and tolerance in the region

UNRWA achievements: high quality education and gender parity

UNRWA operates over 700 schools in its five fields of operation (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Gaza, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem), providing free basic education for over 530,000 Palestine refugee children. The Agency plays a unique role to ensure that Palestine refugees have access to quality, inclusive and equitable education and can achieve their full potential, thereby contributing to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

In the 1960s, UNRWA schools were the first to achieve gender parity in the region. Since the 1950s, over 2 million students graduated from UNRWA schools and contributed to the social and economic development of the region.

A recent World Bank-UNHCR study demonstrated that UNRWA offers the most cost-effective education for refugees and the highest quality, with refugees outperforming their national

counterparts by one year of learning, despite the adverse environment in which they live. Other internationally recognized and neutral evaluators, such as the donor driven Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) that monitors the performance of multilateral development organizations, praises UNRWA schools and student educational outcomes, stating the Agency is "competent, resilient and resolute". The British Council honoured 59 Agency's schools with the "International School Award", that support schools that have introduced collaborative, curriculum-based internationalism in teaching and learning this year.

In a region where unemployment is ramping and poverty and despair are growing in Palestine refugee camps, particularly among the youth, UNRWA seven Technical and Vocational Education Training Centers (TVET) and two faculty of educational sciences employment rate stands at 75 per cent. UNRWA TVET students perform higher on their exams compared to their national counterparts, reaping the majority of "top ten ranked individuals" in various specializations. The UNRWA TVET programme is renowned for both its quality and its pioneering role in curricula development. This has been achieved through alliances with the industry, labour market relevance and continuous innovation.

From Refugee Camp to Vaccine Laboratory: Nowras' Journey of Discovery

The success of UNRWA students is the real measure of the importance of the Agency's education programme. Among them is [Nowras](#), a young Palestine refugee who studied at an UNRWA school in Syria, who is now working at the renowned Max Planck Institute in Germany, leaving behind his family in war-torn Syria to help a team of researchers develop a vaccine candidate against COVID-19. Another example of extraordinary UNRWA school alumni achievement is Loay Elbasyouni, a graduate of UNRWA schools in Gaza. The successful first flight of Ingenuity, the helicopter that accompanied the Perseverance rover to Mars, was a monumental achievement previously unimaginable and made possible by [Loay's](#) hard work. Today, he is the lead electrical engineer on the Ingenuity project.



Promoting human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination

As a UN Agency committed to uphold humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence, UNRWA promotes UN values in its schools and has a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination and incitement to hate and violence.

Unique to the region, UNRWA introduced [human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance education](#) in all its schools to promote proactively UN values, including neutrality, human rights, tolerance, equality, and non-discrimination. In 2001, UNRWA began introducing student parliaments in each of its schools as part of its human rights education programme. School parliaments help to promote a culture of respect, peaceful conflict resolution and tolerance and play an effective role in promoting these values within the schools and the broader community. UNRWA education is an antidote to the widespread violence, hatred and intolerance spreading in the region.

Consistent with best UN practice in refugee settings, the Agency uses in its schools the curriculum of the Host country. This ensures Palestine refugees can integrate into host educational systems at any level and more broadly participate in the social and economic life of the host country. The Agency conducts [in-depth reviews of every textbook](#) issued by the Host countries and empowers teachers to address the specific identified issues of concern in a way that is in line with UN values. While there is nothing like zero risk when operating in complex humanitarian settings,

it is the Agency's responsibility to reduce the risk of violation of UN values to a minimum. To this end, we continuously strengthen our monitoring, textbook review and risk management processes and address immediately and forcefully any breaches.

Pioneering Education in Emergencies to respond to conflict, displacement and a global pandemic

Operating in a region facing multiple conflicts and crisis affecting the access to formal education in school, the delivery of quality education to Palestine refugees is a continuous challenge, requiring flexibility, adaptability and innovation. UNRWA has pioneered the '[Education in Emergencies](#)' framework in the region, ensuring Palestine refugee children can continue to access their right to education, leaving no student behind. In Syria, UNICEF utilized UNRWA self-learning materials to support Syrian children. The unique and innovative work of the UNRWA [YouTube channel](#), provides supplemental video learning material and has reached 1 million subscribers. The channel also brings educational content to students and their parents beyond the the Agency's five fields of operation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNRWA education experts rose to the challenge again, launching a [centralized, online digital learning platform](#) where supplemental teaching material was made available for remote learning. This platform provides a safe, accessible and centrally monitored system for teachers, administrators, parents, and students to access instructional materials. All material on the platform is centrally cleared to ensure full compliance with UN values.

What's next: closing the digital divide

Modernizing the UNRWA education system is key to close the digital divide highlighted by COVID-19. This will ensure that UNRWA students continue to engage with ideas from around the world. Further, digitalizing the Agency's education programme is part of broader UNRWA plans to modernize operations to ensure effective and efficient service delivery, in line with the times and fulfilling its mandate, as outlined by the UN General Assembly. The Agency is also working to further enhance the learning experience of Palestine refugee children and youth through information technology and increased internet access. The Agency will seek to further increase accessibility by partnering with providers to offer connectivity packages and ensure that UNRWA students are digitally savvy and well positioned to seize opportunities in the growing global digital economy.



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 with a mandate to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to registered Palestine refugees in the Agency's area of operations, namely the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. Thousands of Palestine refugees who lost both their homes and livelihood because of the 1948 conflict have remained displaced and in need of significant support for over seventy years. UNRWA helps them achieve their full potential in human development through quality services it provides in education, health care, relief and social services, protection, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.