covid-19 weekly update
11 – 17 may 2020
Providing assistance and protection to Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem #InThisTogether

highlights

- The UNRWA Health Department is leading on the Agency’s COVID-19 response and issues a one-page daily sitrep with the latest epidemiological figures.
- All 709 UNRWA schools, eight vocational/educational training centres and two ESF (Education Science Faculties) remain closed (in line with host government decisions) affecting 533,342 school students, 8,270 VTC trainees and 1,840 university students. To ensure the continuation of students’ access to quality, inclusive, and equitable education, the longstanding UNRWA Education in Emergency (EiE) programme has been reconceptualized in order to better respond to the challenging COVID-19 context.

jordan Curfew since 17 March extended until end of Ramadan. Movement restrictions have eased and some business sectors resumed with minimal capacities. All borders/ports (air, land, sea) remain closed.
west bank State of Emergency extended until 5 June. Restrictions on business opening hours remain – shops must close by 7 p.m.
gaza Israeli-controlled Erez crossing and Egyptian-controlled Rafah Terminal closed. Controlled entry at Rafah is being facilitated for limited numbers of Gaza ID holders who must then enter a 21-day quarantine.
syria Curfew from 7:30 p.m. to 6 a.m. during Ramadan. All borders remain closed.
lebanon General closure and curfew from 6 p.m. to 5 a.m., with some essential services exempted. The government had agreed to a five-phase plan and lockdown measures started to relax in mid-May. Original lockdown measures re-imposed from 14-18 May to slow down a new rise in confirmed COVID-19 cases.

unrwa representative officies Brussels will continue teleworking measures until 18 May; Cairo and Washington DC until 30 May; New York until 31 May.
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<th>Country</th>
<th>COVID-19 response activities</th>
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| Jordan (JFO) | • Essential medications covering a minimum of two months’ of prescriptions continue to be delivered to patients. As of 17 May, 72,641 patients received their medications.  
• Immunization and family planning services are being provided and since 27 April, 12,488 children have been vaccinated.  
• The Jordanian authorities have issued an additional 184 travel permits to UNRWA health staff on top of the 60 already granted and all 25 Agency health centres (HCs) have now reopened. Due to the lack of travel permits staff from Irbid had been assisting in four HCs in the Jordan Valley.  
• Community mobilization campaigns continue in the camps to disseminate correct information about COVID-19 and to strengthen messages on the importance of social distancing. |
| Lebanon (LFO) | • All 27 Agency HCs have remained open throughout the crisis although with shorter working hours (9 a.m. – 2 p.m.) during Ramadan.  
• Various measures remain in place to reduce foot traffic at HCs to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19. Measures include: triaging all patients with flu symptoms and those without flu symptoms; providing multi-month prescriptions of chronic medicines to patients; and operating an appointments only system. These measures and more have resulted in a 65 percent decrease in daily HC visits since February 2020.  
• Hospital referrals are limited to life-saving cases and tertiary care. Non-urgent cases and scheduled surgeries are temporarily on hold. |
| Syria (SFO) | • As of 18 May, 58 confirmed cases of COVID-19 were reported in Syria (36 recovered, 3 died). Seven new cases were detected on 18 May within a group of travellers who arrived from Kuwait and all are now in a government quarantine centre.  
• The number of people in Syria who have been quarantined to date reached 6,781, of whom 4,224 have left the centres because they were asymptomatic while 2,557 remain.  
• Triage of patients in Agency HCs continues and only urgent cases are referred to hospitals. 9,241 patients have attended UNRWA health facilities with respiratory complaints (non- COVID-19) since 12 April.  
• Leaflets continue to be distributed and telemedicine, including for psychosocial support (PSS), as well as helplines is operational. 1,889 calls for telemedicine have been received since 12 April.  
• The provision of a two months’ supply of medicines to 8,000 vulnerable patients with non-communicable diseases (NCD) (aged 65+) continues through door-to-door visits and identified distribution points. Some 834 home visits have been carried out since 12 April. |
| Gaza (GFO)  | • No new confirmed COVID-19 cases were reported in Gaza over the reporting week. The total number of confirmed cases stands at 20, all detected in, and confined to, quarantine centres for returned travellers. None have reportedly experienced severe symptoms.  
• The total number of persons under compulsory quarantine for 21 days, as of 17 May, was 1,574.  
• 7,758 people attended the Agency’s COVID-19 triage points in the reporting week. Eighteen triage points have been established in Agency schools to isolate patients with respiratory symptoms and another four have been established in HCs. |
## COVID-19 response activities

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| Gaza (GFO) | - HCs are operating with reduced services and the number of patient visits has consequently reduced while there have been 2,594 remote consultations on recently established telemedicine hotlines. Given that no cases of community transmission have been reported some important services are reopening with additional precautions being taken.  
- Home delivery of essential medicines to patients over 70 years and/or with diabetes was carried out in cooperation with the RSS programme; 1,908 drop-offs were made during the reporting week. |
| West Bank (WBFO) | - The total number of reported COVID-19 cases in the West Bank is now 540, including 179 in East Jerusalem. The total number of recovered cases is reported to be 437, including 118 in East Jerusalem.  
- Trainings for volunteers from camps were organized on the management of potential quarantine facilities inside refugee camps in all three West Bank areas on 11 (North), 12 (South) and 13 (Centre) May. The trainings were facilitated by the Ministry of Health with support from WHO and protection cluster partners. |
| Jordan     | - Health services provided at Agency HCs are still limited.                                                                                                                                              |
| Gaza       | - The low number of available COVID-19 test kits throughout the Gaza Strip remains a major concern.  
- Major disruption to the limited transport pipeline for the central procurement of medical supplies remains a real possibility. |
COVID-19 response activities

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| Jordan (JFO) | • UNRWA teachers are completing students' evaluations based on previous academic and general performance.  
                     • Online applications continue to be received for new Grade 1 students.  
                     • JFO is looking into providing catch up classes for school students and students in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts (FESA) in line with Jordanian government directives. |
| Lebanon (LFO) | • Around 70 per cent of UNRWA school students and 86 percent of TVET students are participating in e-learning activities.  
                     • LFO is providing pre-paid Internet cards for 9,300 families to support students' participation in the Self Learning Programme (SLP).  
                     • The Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) had announced on 8 May that schools would reopen on 28 May. This decision was rescinded on 17 May, along with the temporary lockdown, in response to a sudden spike in COVID-19 cases.  
                     • MEHE has cancelled Grade 9 and Grade 12 national exams for the school year 2019/2020. |
| Syria (SFO)  | • PSS counsellors are providing psychosocial support to Grade 9 students who are preparing for their upcoming examinations.  
                     • The Agency’s Damascus Training Centre (DTC) is preparing for a return of its students on 21 May. Staff are updating curriculum to help students compensate for study time lost with a focus on second year students who should graduate by the end of July. Sanitizing liquid and face masks are being procured in line with government requirements.  
                     • Education teams continue to assist other programmes in the emergency response (e.g. with food packaging/distribution). |
### COVID-19 response activities

#### Gaza (GFO)

- There have been 202,904 individual visits to the Interactive Learning Programme, 117,655 individual visits to the Self-Learning Materials and 1,210 individual visits to the TVET platform over the reporting week.
- Preparations continue with the Education Cluster for proposed exceptional support for the sitting of the Tawjihi secondary school exams with some UNRWA schools to be used as additional exam centres.

#### HQ Programme

- HQ Education has developed a holistic response to the COVID-19 crisis by focusing on **five** key Education in Emergencies (EiE) areas: Self-Learning, Psychosocial Support (PSS), Safety and Hygiene issues, TVET, and Monitoring and Evaluation. The EiE Task Force continues to provide strategic direction and support to all Fields.

1. **Self-learning:** The curriculum team conducted virtual meetings with Lebanon and Syria teams to provide feedback and support with regards to the Self-Learning Programme (SLP) used in their Fields during the lockdown due to the COVID-19 crisis. The team also discussed with the Fields the use of SLM, both for any Catch Up period and in preparation for the new school year. Additionally, the team reviewed week seven Self-Learning Materials received from Lebanon.

2. **PSS, Safety and Hygiene:** The HQ Amman and Field PSS Subgroup held the fourth Agency-wide meeting on 12 May with counsellors and health education colleagues from all Fields. The Resource Guide, ‘Supporting Students During COVID-19: A Guide to Learning, Health, Safety and Psychosocial Resources,’ first launched in late March, is being updated to include more resources, particularly on protecting children from COVID-19 and with regards to a new chapter on games and activities to support children’s wellbeing and also to encourage healthy behaviour.

3. **TVET:** TVET HQ leads on the TVET emergency response during the COVID-19 crisis with Field-specific meetings to discuss the components of their emergency response. Guidance is being provided to the Fields in the roll out of the TVET Library, an online platform for sharing learning materials. Alongside all the work on the COVID-19 Emergency Response, a number of TVET Education Technical Instructions have also been finalized and disseminated to the Fields: Organization of Short-Term Courses in UNRWA Vocational Training Centres-4/2020; Production Work and Disposal of Products of Student’s Training Exercises at UNRWA Vocational Training Centres-5/2020; and Storage, Handling and Maintenance of Tools and Machines at UNRWA Vocational Training Centres-6/2020.

4. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The Agency-wide effort to assess students’ technological access is continuing and all Fields will complete the collection of data for the parent survey before the start of Eid al-Fitr. The first draft report reviewing the technological tools in use or planned for use is complete and the review will be complemented by a research brief on the evidence for use of education technology, which is also under development.

- **Funding:** Support to Field offices in the implementation of the six month Education Cannot Wait grant of US$ 1 million continues. The project contributes to Agency-wide work along the following key pillars: continuity of education – SLP for students in UNRWA schools (across all five Fields) and in the TVET centres (in LFO and SFO); Psycho-Social Support for students; Safety and Hygiene; and Monitoring and Evaluation. An Implementation Status Report on the Belgium Education in Emergencies project was submitted to the donor. The report summarizes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on project activities implementation and ways of modifying accordingly.

- **Partnerships:** HQ Education participates in the weekly regional UN Inter-Agency meetings. Here it has actively contributed to framing the discussions around Catch Up and also school reopening through a Regional Framework for MENA. A regional Ministerial webinar around the implementation of the Framework will be held on 20 May with HQ engagement. HQ Education also participated in the INEE global Semi-Annual Working Group’s meetings held between 11-15 May.

- **Planning:** Agency-wide discussions involving all education Chiefs on planning for Catch Up...
**COVID-19 response activities**

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<td><strong>COVID-19 response activities</strong></td>
<td>programmes and back to school are ongoing. Key issues being considered are how to support social distancing through approaches such as: a phased/progressive approach, alternate days by grade, or split classes. The emphasis is on Catch Up at this time so that lessons learned in the last months can be reflected in the model for the Catch Up and that further lessons learning can go on towards the new school year.</td>
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<th>Key Constraints</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Syria</strong></td>
<td>The volatile security situation in southern Syria is impacting on the Education Programme’s ability to follow-up on activities in the area. This includes the registration of Grade 1 school students and preparations for the national exams for Grade 9.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education Programme HQ</strong></td>
<td>Accessibility to the Self-Learning Materials with regards to availability of Internet, electricity and technology devices for some UNRWA students, particularly in Jordan and Gaza.</td>
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## relief and social services

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| **Jordan (JFO)** | • Cash distributions for ex-Gazans in Jerash camp will start on 18 May and the process is expected to take two weeks.  
• A summary report of the socio-economic phone survey was completed and initially shared with some UN partners. A gender-focused analysis is being prepared in collaboration with UN Women.  
• The second quarter (Q2) cash distribution to refugees registered with the Social Safety Net Programme (SSNP) is in progress with cash transfers to bank accounts expected to start on 20 May.  
• Agency social workers continued contacting refugee families, including Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS), via phone and WhatsApp, to provide health awareness messages, support and advice on available emergency hotlines. |

| Lebanon (LFO) | • Distribution of the emergency cash assistance for 257,000 refugees, originally scheduled to start on 14 May, has been moved to a later date due to the sudden announcement of a four-day nationwide lockdown. |

| Syria (LFO) | • April’s cash distribution has been completed and preparations being made for round two covering three months. All registered beneficiaries will receive US$ 10 per person as additional assistance in light of the economic challenges due to COVID-19.  
• 113,393 refugees (82 percent of those eligible) have received the in-kind food basket planned for the first round of 2020.  
• Agency registration services (births, deaths, marriages) have now restarted following the government’s resumption of basic civil registration services.  
• The opening of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Family Support Offices (for legal and GBV survivor support) is being planned for the week after Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr and safety measures aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19 will be implemented.  
• PSS services have been started remotely via phone for some 1,236 refugees with disabilities, older persons and survivors of GBV. |
COVID-19 response activities

| Gaza (GFO) | • The distribution of the second food cycle in 2020 started on 17 May with a new home delivery system for the full caseload of over one million families.  
• Ramadan Suhoor food baskets are being distributed to 2,321 vulnerable families starting on 17 May and preparations are being made for a one-off seasonal cash distribution for 400 vulnerable refugee families.  
• Hygiene kits for children with disabilities are being prepared under the project Intervention to Support Vulnerable Children in the Gaza Strip – Phase IV. |
## COVID-19 response activities

### West Bank (WBFO)

- The second round of food security assistance, which includes food parcels for 4,000 families and food vouchers for 2,000 families both inside and outside camps, is under preparation.
- The psychosocial support first aid hotline received 77 calls during the reporting week.
- Over the reporting week the numbers of refugees supported by the RSS programmes were: 20 (Women’s Programme), 28 (Disability Programme), 50 (Child and Family Protection Programme), and 122 (Crisis Intervention Unit).
- Twenty social workers and counselors completed the third session of the online training for ‘phone consultations’ carried out by the Palestinian Counselling Centre (PCC). The objective of the training was to build staff capacity in communicating with beneficiaries via phone, especially those working on the psychosocial support hotline.

### Staff care:

- An area staff counseling service has been established in all Fields and HQ Amman to support staff while they are working remotely and facing issues arising from the COVID-19 crisis. Training for staff counsellors in LFO and JFO has now been completed. Any area staff member experiencing psychological difficulties, stress or well-being concerns, which may be related to work or impacting work, can directly contact designated staff counsellors in each Field to access the service. Individual counselling is confidential and free of charge.
- Additional support is being provided through a series of videos on the official UNRWA staff Facebook group. An additional video has been uploaded detailing concerns staff may have during this crisis and offering coping strategies.
- A counseling service for international staff continues to be available to international staff in all Fields and HQ Amman upon request. This service is being provided by clinical psychologists external to UNRWA and is confidential and free of charge. Contact details have been circulated and staff can contact the counsellors directly.

### infrastructure & camp improvement (icip)

### COVID-19 response activities

#### Jordan (JFO)

- Contractors for four ICIP projects (construction of Zohour Health Centre and school in Amman, Amman New Camp school and Zarqa Health Centre) resumed work but on a limited scale.

#### Lebanon (LFO)

- More than 300 sanitation staff are daily cleaning the 12 official camps to maintain environmental health standards.
- All HCs are thoroughly disinfected at the end of opening hours.
- New shelter rehabilitation projects have been suspended since the start of the COVID-19 crisis. Existing rehabilitation projects continue.
- LFO is repurposing Sammour school in Ein El Hilweh camp (Saida) and an old Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) hospital in El Buss camp (Tyre) to serve as COVID-19 isolation centres.
### COVID-19 response activities

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| **Syria**     | • Sanitation services in the nine official camps and one unofficial camp are carried out daily in addition to disinfection activities (streets and UNRWA facilities). Garbage collection points continue to be disinfected along with larger areas in the camps. Additional support is provided to disinfection activities for Palestinian gatherings.  
  • Sixteen additional labourers have been recruited to support disinfection activities in camps. |
| **Gaza**      | • Sanitation work, including the cleaning of roads and alleys, solid waste collection and disposal, is ongoing. The total volume of solid waste collected from the camps over the reporting period was 1,530 tons.  
  • All shelter activities and construction work are temporarily suspended. |
| **West Bank** | • The COVID-19 Safety Plan form is being completed by contractors on a daily basis and engineers are reporting to ICIP management on contractors’ compliance with the measures.  
  • Community development projects for the rehabilitation of roads and sewerage networks began in Jalazone, Kalandia and Aqbat Jabr refugee camps. |
| **Key Constraints** | • Following a confirmed COVID-19 case in Beit Ula (southern West Bank) Hebron’s governor has closed off the town. The Agency’s project there has been temporarily suspended. |
### Microfinance

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<td><strong>Fields &amp; HQ Programme</strong></td>
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| • The Microfinance Department (MD) started implementing a four-month deferment on loan repayments, from April 2020 with reviews every month. Deferments for June and July will be reviewed based on developments with the COVID-19 crisis.  
• No new loans are currently being provided, however it is anticipated that loans will start being processed after the Eid al-Fitr holiday.  
• Work in the MD HQ office, based in the West Bank Field office, has partially resumed for staff residing in Jerusalem.  
• In coordination with Field directors, branch offices in Jordan, Syria and Gaza are partially open for 1-3 days a week (variable for each field) with 30 per cent of core staff on duty for a few hours on selected days to receive repayments from those clients who are able to repay or to process clearance forms for clients. In the West Bank, branches are operating five days a week with a rotation of staff in all governorates apart from Ramallah, Hebron and Nablus.  
• Clients with prearranged appointments are permitted to enter offices for specific purposes and during opening times all preventive and safety measures are being followed.  
• Since the reopening of the branch offices in Syria around 400 people have expressed an interest in applying for a new loan.  
• In Gaza, 133 loan repayments were received during the reporting week.  
• MD operations are expected to expand as sectors of the economy start to open up. |

### Protection

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<td><strong>Jordan (JFO)</strong></td>
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| • From 1-13 May, GBV hotlines received 16 new cases and 63 calls were from pre-existing GBV cases. One GBV case was referred to the Jordanian Family Protection Department, which took immediate action. In addition, 176 calls received were related to other Agency services, such as education and health, and forwarded to the relevant programmes for action.  
• The Neutrality Protection Unit (NPU) organized a GBV outreach meeting with the Noor Al Hussein Foundation on 17 May to explore ways to enhance GBV response during the crisis. |
| **Lebanon (LFO)** |
| • Over the past two months, LFO has registered an increase in the number of very vulnerable households unable to pay rent and threatened with eviction, an increase in labour law cases relating to arbitrary dismissals and terminations without indemnities, and a significant rise in the number of child protection and GBV related cases.  
• The Protection team is implementating remote mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), child protection and GBV activities, including through established community groups and is referring urgent cases to partner organizations.  
• Initiatives have been developed to work with communities to combat COVID-19 stigma. |
### COVID-19 response activities

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<td>Syria (SFO)</td>
<td>• A total of 206 calls were received through the helplines between 7-13 May, with the majority (183) relating to cash and food assistance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gaza (GFO)</td>
<td>• Additional neutrality inspections are underway in areas assessed to be of higher risk.</td>
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| West Bank (WBFO)        | • Monitoring of more than 22 vulnerable refugee communities throughout the West Bank continued to identify needs, gaps, protection risks and linking individuals and communities to needed services. In Kafr Qaddum (Qalqilia), 25 vulnerable families were identified for possible food parcel assistance.  
                          | • Protection trainings, through the Inter-Agency Protection Cluster, for volunteers on the management of quarantine facilities for refugee camps focused on mental health, psychosocial support and GBV. Further training and support for the volunteers and quarantine facility managers will be required, including on protection mainstreaming and the development and application of SOPs.  
                          | • A protection checklist for remote documentation and monitoring has been finalized and circulated.                                                                                                |
| HQ Division             | HQ Division is providing the Field protection teams with:                                                                                                                                                 |
|                         | • Support on communication to communities on available services for GBV survivors.                                                                                                                        |
|                         | • Follow up on referral pathways for GBV survivors and existing data collection modalities.                                                                                                               |
|                         | • Follow up on mitigating the risks of cyber-bullying and the guidance on addressing it.                                                                                                               |
| Key Constraints         | • Due to COVID-19 movement restrictions, in-person protection monitoring and direct community engagement and activities have all been suspended.                                                               |
**COVID-19 response activities**

**human resources**

**COVID-19 response activities**

**HQ Programme**
- HR will continue to support staff during the expected return to office work in coordination with Field/department directors and FAQs on return to office work arrangements is being prepared.
- Regular HR services are operating as normal, including the payroll processing for May, and recruitment and training activities will resume through on-line platforms.

**priorities**

**COVID-19 response activities**

**Jordan (JFO)**
- In order to contain the spread of COVID-19 and reduce morbidity, healthcare services and environmental health operations will continue.
- Teachers will remain in contact with students and provide remote individual follow-up support to facilitate access to distance learning opportunities.

**Syria (SFO)**
- Beneficiaries continue to request that the Agency provides a blanket food distribution or increase in cash distribution.
- Discussions are underway for a rapid assessment of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 among Palestine refugees in Syria.

**West Bank (WBFO)**
- Preparations for the second round of food assistance are underway.
- Food baskets and hygiene kits are being procured for families in home quarantine.
- SOPs on the return to work for non-frontline staff are being developed and a phased approach to normal operations is being developed for admin/support functions, construction and maintenance, registration, social services and health.

**HQ Programme**
- Education Programme HQ
  - Self-learning
    - The Review of the newly developed Self Learning Material received from Lebanon and Syria Fields.
  - Psychosocial, Safety and Hygiene
  - TVET
    - Launching the TVET online platform for sharing learning materials and providing technical guidance to the Fields.
  - Monitoring and Evaluation
    - Support Fields in the implementation of Agency-wide phone surveys with parents on students’ access to technology at home.
    - Develop plans for Agency-wide teacher support interviews to explore lessons learned related to teacher support of students self-learning.
united nations relief and works agency for palestine refugees in the near east

Updated COVID-19 UNRWA Flash Appeal

UNRWA has released an updated Flash Appeal, requesting US$ 93.4 million to cover its humanitarian operations for COVID-19 response for the period March-July 2020. The Flash Appeal is available here.

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<td>• UNRWA to participate as a panelist at the upcoming regional Ministerial webinar on potential school reopening planned for 20 May 2020.</td>
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<td>• Discussions will continue around the different modalities for both Catch Up and Back to School, given the importance of continuing social distancing.</td>
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funding

Updated COVID-19 UNRWA Flash Appeal

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UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of some 5.6 registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.