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1. introduction

1.1 purpose and structure of the strategy

Inclusive Education is a right-based approach to education, one which appreciates the diversity of all learners and caters for their needs, placing particular emphasis on the needs of children vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation. Inclusive education is central to the UNRWA Education Reform Strategy, which seeks to ensure a quality education system that develops the full potential of all Palestine refugee students. The Inclusive Education Policy and this Strategy, along with supporting documents, provide an Agency-wide, unified framework that will support Fields and schools in moving towards inclusive education.

The Inclusive Education Policy articulates UNRWA’s statement of commitment to, and principles of, inclusive education. It outlines a unified inclusive approach to be established in the education system and within the teaching and learning processes. This approach is based on support at three levels: quality, inclusive, and child-centred education in a safe and stimulating environment for all students; the provision of additional support for children with additional needs; and the development of support systems to better respond to children with extensive needs.

This Inclusive Education Strategy aims to support planning, resource mobilisation, implementation, as well as quality assurance of inclusive education practices and systems. It provides the means for the achievement of the Education Reform Strategy Outcome of equal access for all children to quality education regardless of gender, abilities, disabilities, socio-economic status, health, and psychosocial needs.

To facilitate this outcome, this Strategy outlines three strategic dimensions. The first dimension focuses on inclusive approaches for all children, the second dimension focuses on additional support, and the third dimension focuses on developing support systems for extensive needs.¹

Further, this Strategy outlines a set of standards that describe the inclusive approach at the levels of: school and classroom practices, education administration, and support staff and services. It emphasises how progressive, gradual steps within each dimension may be taken to realise these standards within the available resources.

Ultimately, decisions about specific implementation need to be made at Field and school levels - translating this strategy into concrete plans and actions and aligning inclusive education, as much as possible, into existing plans and activities.

This Strategy does not reference technical and vocational education and training (TVET), as the Implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy in the UNRWA TVET system will be outlined in the TVET Strategy.

1.2 agency-wide framework for inclusive education

The Inclusive Education Policy, Inclusive Education Strategy, School Health Strategy, and Conceptual Framework for Psychosocial Support together form an Agency-wide framework for inclusive education. Within this framework the Inclusive Education Policy articulates UNRWA’s statement of commitment to, as well as the principles and approach of, inclusive education. This Inclusive Education Strategy outlines key dimensions, steps and standards for the development of inclusive practices and systems. In addition the School Health Strategy will incorporate the inclusive approach into UNRWA's School Health Programme covering four main areas: comprehensive school health services, healthy school environments, health

¹ See annex 1 for a strategy overview diagram
promoting schools, and healthy nutrition and canteens. The Conceptual Framework for Psychosocial Support in UNRWA Schools aims to guide counselors and educators to apply the inclusive approach of holistic, comprehensive, rights-based, child-centred, child-friendly, and enabling psychosocial support, within UNRWA’s education system.

In addition, a number of Agency-wide supporting resources are being developed to facilitate the implementation of inclusive approaches within individual schools and the education system as a whole. These include an Inclusive Education Advocacy Package, Gender Guidelines for Teachers, and a Toolkit for Identifying and Responding to Diverse Needs of Students. Further guidelines and other capacity building materials may be developed in the future.

Agency-wide framework for inclusive education

1.3 implications for programming

International evidence shows that education systems which strive to be inclusive by recognizing and responding to the needs of students, lead to greater cost efficiency and effectiveness and are by far the most cost efficient way of meeting special educational needs\(^1\). The inclusive approach is considered a means for UNRWA to achieve not only greater quality and equality of education, but also achieve cost efficiencies as a result of reduced remedial programmes, repetition, and drop out. This Strategy reflects the principle of inclusive education as an approach for programming, not as an additional programme, which requires recurrent costs.

The inclusive approach will be mainstreamed into the existing activities within the UNRWA education programme, with existing resources, structures, and systems being used in a way that better meets the diverse needs of the students. At the Agency-wide level, inclusive education will be aligned with, and supported by, all other developments within the Education Reform, including Teacher Development and School Empowerment, the Curriculum Framework, the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, the Governance Framework, the revision of Education Technical Instructions, the Human Rights Education and

Conflict Resolution Programme, the Education Partnerships Strategy, the TVET Strategy, as well as data collection and research.

More specifically, the inclusive approach will be supported by professional development through the school based teacher development programme: *Transforming Classroom Practices* for Grade 1-6 teachers, and the *Leading for the Future*-programme for head teachers. Thus, the bulk of the financial implications for strengthening system capacity for inclusion will be met through these developments. The specific outputs pertaining to inclusive education as determined in the Education Reform Strategy are included in the costing for the Education Reform.

In addition, at the Field level, specific interventions may be implemented to target students vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion, in particular students with extensive needs. This is in line with the Agency’s Medium Term Strategic (MTS 2010-2015) objective: *Enhancing access to educational opportunities for learners with special educational needs*, and the 2012-2013 Field Implementation Plans3. Fields will continue to seek funding for programmes and projects that support students vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion; in particular students with extensive needs. The programmes and projects will reflect the inclusive approach as addressed in this Strategy.

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2. strategic approach for field and school implementation

2.1 overview and indicators

This Inclusive Education Strategy follows three complementary, interrelated, and equally important strategic dimensions reflecting the inclusive approach and contributing towards achieving the Education Reform Strategy outcome of: equal access for all children to quality education regardless of gender, abilities, disabilities, socio-economic status, health, and psychosocial needs. These are:

1. the UNRWA education system and schools move towards quality, child-centred, and inclusive approaches that benefit the education of all children.
2. additional support is provided to children vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion (children with additional needs).
3. support systems are developed to better respond to extensive needs.

strategic dimensions of the inclusive approach

1. the UNRWA education system and schools move towards quality child-centred and inclusive approaches that benefit the education of all children.

outcome: Equal access for all children to quality education regardless of gender, abilities, disabilities, socio-economic status, health and psychosocial needs.

3. support systems are developed to better respond to extensive needs.

2. additional support is provided to children vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion (children with additional needs).

Progress towards the overall outcome and strategic dimensions will be measured through the following indicators:

- inclusive education embedded in educational practice
- percentage of schools meeting healthy school criteria
- percentage of students identified with additional and extensive needs (SEN), which consist of
  - students identified as having a disability
  - students identified with additional health, psychosocial, and learning needs
Specific details regarding measurement of these indicators will be outlined in the Education Reform Monitoring and Evaluation Framework as well as the FIP planning guidelines for core common indicators.

2.2 inclusive approaches for all children

The first dimension of the strategic approach for field and school implementation of inclusive education: “the UNRWA education system and schools move towards quality, child-centred, and inclusive approaches that benefit the education of all children”, focuses on ensuring UNRWA schools are more inclusive. This includes planning, awareness-raising, and capacity building on inclusive education, child-friendly and child-centred practices. Implementation will utilize existing structures, resources, and channels, through embedding inclusive education into existing activities. Thus the approach to implementing this dimension is: “doing what is already done but with a stronger focus on inclusiveness”. Implementing this dimension requires commitment, participation, and dedicated planning from all stakeholders. The following strategic steps are key to the implementation of this dimension:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dimension 1</th>
<th>The UNRWA education system and schools move towards quality, child-centred, and inclusive approaches that benefit the education of all children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>step 1.1</td>
<td>advocacy is carried out to support inclusive approach among educators and support cadre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>step 1.2</td>
<td>inclusive approach is aligned in planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>step 1.3</td>
<td>capacity of educators to implement child-centred and child-friendly practices is strengthened</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 additional support provided

The second dimension of the strategic approach for field and school implementation of inclusive education: “additional support is provided to children vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion”, focuses on how to strengthen support systems for children who need some additional support. Implementing this dimension requires some changes in, and strengthening of, existing systems and approaches, such as forming of Student Support Teams at schools. This requires capacity building of a number of key staff to build the support cadre to provide this additional support. It necessitates strengthening existing initiatives and programmes, such as remedial and compensatory classes, summer schools, and school health, counselling and psychosocial support programmes, and ensuring these support students through a comprehensive inclusive approach. The approach to achieving this dimension is: “doing something different and more inclusive”. The following strategic steps are key to the implementation of this dimension:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dimension 2</th>
<th>additional support is provided to children vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>step 2.1</td>
<td>student support teams are established and functional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>step 2.2</td>
<td>staff capacity to identify and respond to diverse needs is strengthened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>step 2.3</td>
<td>learning, health, and psychosocial support programmes and initiatives are strengthened to support students through a comprehensive inclusive approach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.4 Support systems developed to respond to extensive needs

The third dimension of the strategic approach for Field and school implementation: “support systems are developed to better respond to extensive needs”, focuses on developing specific support systems for the few children who will need (on a temporary or permanent basis) extensive support. The approach to implementing this dimension is: “doing something new and more inclusive”. Here progressive, gradual steps towards ensuring access to educational opportunities for students with extensive needs need to be taken. This includes, developing and strengthening referral systems and information sharing though enhanced coordination within existing resources, in particular enhanced coordination with the UNRWA Health and Relief and Social Services Departments, as well as Host Governments and NGOs. Implementation also requires developing the capacity of existing special education provision, for instance, Learning Support Centres, Special Need Classes, and other learning support programmes, to ensure that students with the most extensive needs benefit from these support services. Collaboration between schools, Field staff, and partners such as Community Based Organisations will be essential to ensure that extensive needs are addressed. The following will be key to implementing this dimension:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension 3</th>
<th>Support systems are developed to better respond to extensive needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>step 3.1</td>
<td>Referral systems and information sharing are strengthened to identify and support children with extensive needs either within UNRWA or through external bodies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>step 3.2</td>
<td>Capacity of special education provision is developed to ensure the available support by specialised staff better targets students with the most extensive needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 inclusive education implementation standards

The following standards grouped under six different domains describe the inclusive approach at the level of school and classroom practices, education administration, and support staff and services. It is essential that the awareness and capacity of educators and administrators is built so that the UNRWA education system is able to reflect these standards of best practices. Progressive steps towards implementing these standards should be made as far as the available resources allow.

3.1 access and environment

The following standards describe the inclusive approach to addressing barriers to access, learning, development, and participation.

- UNRWA schools and classrooms aspire to be welcoming, child-friendly, child-centred, healthy, safe, and stimulating environments with zero tolerance to violence, bullying, and discrimination of any kind. Schools are encouraged to take initiative to address these issues.

- Measures are taken to address any attitudinal, environmental, and external barriers to education in the community and school environment.

- School management encourages parents, family, and community members to support schools and volunteer to assist individual children and/or the school.

- UNRWA teachers reflect inclusive language, attitudes, and teaching practices. Positive behaviour management strategies are used, and school discipline procedures are based on positive behaviour management.

- Schools provide opportunities for free play and recreation as an integral part of their efforts in meeting the needs of the whole child.

- Measures are taken to ensure physical accessibility of schools and classrooms. Physical accessibility criteria must be taken into account in school construction, renovation, and lease of rented facilities. In existing facilities, small changes including the building of ramps, adapting seating and desks, lowering of chalkboards, and selecting fabrics to avoid echo and extra noise, shall be undertaken on needs basis.

- When children with disabilities need assistive devices and accessible learning material, schools, in collaboration with the Health Department and other service providers, seek to address these needs.

- Deaf children have the right to education in sign language. UNRWA, in collaboration with other service providers, needs to consider how this right can be realised.

3.2 identification of individual learning, health and psychosocial needs

The following standards outline the inclusive approach to the identification of individual learning, health and psychosocial needs of students.

- The school keeps records on disabilities, additional learning, psychosocial, and health needs of students.

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4 Refer also to Human Rights Education and Conflict Resolution Policy, UNRWA 2012 and Protection Policy, UNRWA 2012
5 Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Department Procedure No. 17 for Providing Universal Accessibility for UNRWA Facilities, ICID, 2008
Mechanisms for sharing essential information about disabilities, learning, psychosocial, and health needs between health centres, social workers, school health teams and schools are in place and utilized effectively.

Parents and students are encouraged to discuss the student’s needs with teachers and the school.

Teachers are encouraged to identify learning, psychosocial and health needs through informal assessment, observation, and information gathering.

Teachers are encouraged to exchange information about the individual needs of students with colleagues teaching the same students, especially when the student moves to a new class.

The school has a Student Support Team that assists teachers in identifying and responding to needs. The schools Student Support Team meets both on a regular basis and on demand, to review and plan overall approaches for support, as well as how best to support individual students. Teachers may refer individual students to the Team and the Team will advise the teacher on how best to meet the student’s needs. The Team, in agreement with the child’s parents, may refer students for assessment, counselling, health, rehabilitation, and social services where necessary and available. Possible members of a Student Support Team include the school principal/deputy principal, a teacher counselor, health tutor and other teachers who can support the learning and well-being of students. When available, Team members may include a learning support teacher and/or a school counselor.

Teachers and school counselors have a responsibility to detect and refer gender based violence survivors. UNRWA has a referral system in place to increase the access of gender based violence survivors to internal and external service providers in order to provide necessary services.

Personal information should be treated with absolute confidentiality. Information should only be shared with others when it is in the best interest of the child, and only after conferring with parents and other care-givers. This information will be in a confidential child file and made available only to teachers teaching the child.

### 3.3 Learning, health and psychosocial support

The following standards describe the inclusive approach to meeting diverse learning, health, and psychosocial needs of students through school based support.

- **UNRWA teachers** provide quality child-centred and active learning opportunities that encourage children’s social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

- **UNRWA schools** implement a comprehensive school health programme as outlined in the School Health Strategy.

- **Teachers** seek to address psychosocial, emotional, and behavioural needs of their students. Psychosocial support may include demonstrating understanding, care and compassion, listening to the student’s worries, giving individual attention to the student, and using positive behaviour management strategies.

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*Supported by: Teachers Toolkit for Identifying and Responding to Diverse Needs of Students in UNRWA Schools

/ Working with Gender Based Violence Survivors – Reference Training Manual for Frontline Staff, UNRWA 2012

/ UNRWA School Health Strategy

/ Psychosocial Support in UNRWA Schools – A Conceptual Framework*
• Teachers provide learning support to meet the diverse needs of their students. Teachers include learning support in their daily lesson plans or make a separate plan for learning support activities for a specific period of time.

• Learning support may include enrichment, differentiation, or adaptation of the classroom environment, materials, teaching and learning methods, curriculum, and/or assessment. It may be provided for a group of children or to an individual child.

• If a student’s needs cannot be met through support initiated by the teacher, the teacher may refer the student to the Student Support Team. The Student Support Team, in collaboration with the referring teacher, will plan for school based **additional support** measures for the child. This may include parental involvement, counselling, learning support and any other special arrangements to meet the student’s health, learning and psychosocial needs.

• Additional support should be outlined in an individual education plan**¹⁰** agreed by the class teacher and the Student Support Team outlining the child’s needs and measures to be taken to support the child. The child’s parents should be involved to discuss the plan whenever possible.

• Student support staff at area level (education specialists, school counselors and school health teams) will provide schools with advice on additional health, psychosocial and learning support.

3.4 curriculum and assessment

The following standards describe the inclusive approach to teaching and learning the curriculum, as well as the assessment of learning.

• While UNRWA schools follow Host Government curricula, teachers need to analyse the curriculum, and as appropriate, differentiate, enrich, and adapt the curriculum according to the needs of the students and the context of their communities. The curriculum must be free from any discrimination and gender bias**¹¹**.

• Increased emphasis is placed on developing core competencies in literacy and numeracy through improved teaching and learning methodologies. These skills should be integrated in all subjects.

• A variety of auditory, visual, tactual, and active learning methods and materials should be used to deliver the curriculum in a way that meets the diverse needs of the students. Teachers should utilise all available materials, and design materials, that are tailored to the needs of their students.

• Learning support may include differentiation of curricula through increased focus on basic skills and core competencies, including literacy and numeracy. Teaching should begin at the level of the child’s understanding.

• Learning support may include enrichment of curricula through provision of additional learning content or more in depth knowledge to students with gifts and talents.

• The curriculum may be adapted in cases where delivering the grade specific content is not meaningful with regard to a student’s extensive learning needs. Any adaptation of curriculum content will be agreed on by the Student Support Team and outlined in the Individual Education Plan of the student.

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**¹⁰** For a simple individual education plan template refer to SBTD Transforming classroom practices, module 5.

**¹¹** UNRWA Framework for Quality Curriculum Implementation, 2012
Where necessary, flexible examination arrangements, for example, more time in examinations, oral examinations, Braille or large print examination papers, are encouraged to allow learners with disabilities equal opportunity to demonstrate their progress.

Teachers should use continuous formative assessment to follow up their student’s progress throughout the school year and to identify and address learning needs as they emerge.

Alternative assessment methods may be needed to identify progress of students who otherwise would struggle to perform in standard examinations and assessment. A certificate recognising their effort and progress can be issued.

3.5 special education provision for children with extensive learning needs

The following standards describe the provision of extensive support and special educational services.

Some students may be in need of more extensive support. Extensive support refers to specialized, long term and/or intensive, and structured support that should be based on an Individual Education Plan developed for the student. Extensive psychosocial support may include professional counselling or the involvement of social workers. Extensive learning support refers to special educational services. It is vital that schools are aware of what services are available in their proximity and know the referral process to such services.

Special education may be provided in an UNRWA Learning Support Centre or a Special Needs Class. Alternatively special education may be provided outside of the UNRWA education system. Children may attend special education provision either part time or full time.

Existing initiatives in Fields, such as UNRWA Learning Support Centres and Special Need Classes, will be developed in line with these implementation standards and the Inclusive Education Policy. This will help to ensure that children from different schools and camps have equal access to quality education and that the support is directed to those children with the greatest needs. Teaching in the Learning Support Centres and Special Need Classes will be based on the students’ individual needs and Individual Education Plans.

Collaboration with the related UNRWA Departments is essential for identifying and meeting the needs of children with disabilities.

3.6 professional development of staff

Staff professional development is a crucial element in building the education system’s capacity to support the inclusive approach to education. The following standards outline the broad approach to professional development of staff on inclusive education.

Training on inclusive approaches needs to be incorporated into all UNRWA pre- and in-service teacher education and training programmes. In addition, greater knowledge and understanding of inclusive education, along with specialised training programmes, are also needed.

All school principals, teachers, and support staff should be provided with professional development in inclusive education and learning support.

Some education specialists and related student support staff will be provided with specialised professional training for additional and extensive learning, psychosocial, and health support (special educational needs).
• Learning support teachers, where feasible, may be appointed to support students with extensive needs as either school based resource persons or based in the Learning Support Centres or Special Need Classrooms. These teachers should have a specialisation in special education or inclusive education as part of their qualification or equivalent in-service training and experience.

4. conclusion

This Inclusive Education Strategy aims to support the implementation of the UNRWA Inclusive Education Policy by establishing a set of standards, as well as articulating the three strategic dimensions for its implementation. Decisions about implementation of the strategic dimensions and steps to realise the Policy commitment and the implementation standards need to be made at Field and school levels. This will be through translating the Strategic dimensions into concrete plans and actions and aligning inclusive education, as much as possible, into existing plans and activities.

While the inclusive approach will be introduced to UNRWA as part of the Education Reform during 2012-2015, the process towards inclusion needs to continue for much longer. Therefore, during the coming years it is essential that inclusive education is addressed in future Agency-wide Strategies as well as Field Implementation Plans.
Inclusive Education Strategy
February 2013

Annex 1: Strategy Overview Diagram

1. The UNRWA education system and schools move towards quality child centred and inclusive approaches that benefit the education of all children.

1.1 Advocacy is carried out to support inclusive approach among educators and support cadre

1.2 Inclusive approach is aligned in planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting processes

1.3 Capacity of educators to implement child-centered and child-friendly practices is strengthened

2. Additional support is provided to children vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion (children with additional needs)

2.1 Student support teams are established and functional

2.2 Staff capacity to identify and respond to diverse needs is strengthened

2.3 Learning, health and psychosocial support programmes and initiatives are strengthened to support students through comprehensive inclusive approach

3. Support systems are developed to better respond to extensive needs.

3.1 Referral systems and information sharing are strengthened to identify and support children with extensive needs within UNRWA and through alternatives

3.2 Capacity of special education provision is developed to ensure the available support by specialized staff better targets students with the most extensive needs
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