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- ........and a special feature interview with H.E. Mohamed Haji Al-Khoori, General-Director of **Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation**.
Donor contributions

Saudi Arabia through the Saudi Fund for Development contributes to education and health for Palestine refugees

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) has generously donated $10 million towards UNRWA’s programmes in Gaza and the West Bank. The contribution will be used to acquire essential education materials and supplies such as textbooks, library books, stationery, and IT equipment, and repair and upgrade educational facilities in the twenty seven schools in Gaza and the West Bank which have been identified as being most in need of improvement. The contribution will also fund the repair and upgrade of health clinics together with procurement of medicines, and medical supplies and equipment.

Speaking in Riyadh where the agreement was signed with HE Engineer Yousef Al Bassam, Vice Chairman and Managing Director of the SFD, Mr Grandi said, “Once again, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has stepped forward, proving itself to be an exemplary supporter of UNRWA and the Palestine refugees whom we serve. This latest contribution will allow UNRWA to deliver much-needed equipment, supplies and other essentials to thousands of refugees who rely on us for basic services in education and health. These services are not optional, but a necessity for the Palestine refugees and we urge other donors to follow Saudi Arabia’s lead in coming forward to help us meet these needs.”

Eng. Al Bassam said, “This new donation comes in the context of the widely consistent support by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Palestinian people through regional and international organizations. UNRWA is one of these who perform a vital role in providing basic and social services for Palestine refugees and has a great degree of transparency with high professional capabilities to prepare, manage and implement such programmes and projects. SFD and UNRWA throughout their long cooperation have achieved together great results a source of pride for all parties”.

UNRWA educates more than 265,000 children in 336 schools in Gaza and the West Bank. Of these schools, 20 in Gaza and a further 7 in the West bank have been identified as being in need of special support. Saudi Arabia’s contribution will allow UNRWA to carry out the set of targeted interventions developed to support pupils and teachers in these schools to bring them up to standard. The contribution will also be used to provide health services to Palestine refugees in the Agency’s 61 health centres across the occupied Palestine territory.

Contributions from Saudi Arabia made Saudi Arabia the number three donor to UNRWA, and the foremost Arab donor in 2011.

Islamic Development Bank and UNRWA sign agreements worth $26 million for Gaza reconstruction

The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in its capacity as Coordinator for the Programme of the Gulf Cooperation Council for the Reconstruction of Gaza and UNRWA have signed three sets of agreements worth more than $26 million supporting reconstruction in the Gaza Strip. IDB representatives, Mr. Mansour Bin Fetan, Mr. Ahmad Sammour and Mr. Omar Mehyar of the Bank’s Trust Funds Department signed the three agreements in Amman, Jordan with Mr Peter Ford, Representative of the UNRWA Commissioner-General between November 2011 and February 2012.

Under these agreements, the IDB will contribute almost $14 million for shelter repair for 280 families. The conflict in Gaza between December 2008 and January 2009 left thousands of refugees homeless, while others were forced to live in insecure and unsafe accommodation. The IDB will also build and equip one new school in Gaza and equip a further three schools previously funded by the IDB, as well as provide $3.21m for the reconstruction of Rafah Health Centre and additional support for infrastructure and sanitation needs.

Commenting on the latest stage in IDB and UNRWA’s co-
operation, Mr. Filippo Grandi, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, said, “Our partnership with the GCC through the IDB continues to go from strength to strength. The IDB and the states of the GCC have proved themselves to be among the most committed supporters of the Palestine refugees in Gaza. These agreements will improve the living conditions of Palestinians refugees across the Gaza Strip. Hundreds of refugees will no longer have to endure sub-standard accommodation, thousands of children will no longer have to learn in inadequate environments, and sick refugees will no longer have to take endure cramped and shabby health facilities. All the refugees in the camps will meanwhile benefit from a more salubrious environment. They and UNRWA are very grateful to the GCC and the IDB.”

The latest agreements take the IDB’s contribution for Gaza reconstruction to almost $57 million. Last year the IDB was the sixth largest donor to UNRWA.

OPEC Fund supports education of Palestine refugees in Lebanon with $1.25 million

The OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) has contributed $1.25 million in support of the reconstruction of Samakh School for Girls in Nahr el-Bared Camp, Northern Lebanon. The camp was razed in 2007 during a three-month conflict between the militant group Fatah Al-Islam and the Lebanese Armed Forces, forcing at least 27,000 refugees to flee and abandon their homes.

The neighbouring UNRWA compound – which housed the Agency’s schools, health clinics and relief offices – was also destroyed, among them, Samakh School. Thanks to OFID’s generous contribution UNRWA has secured just over half of the funds needed to rebuild the school which once complete will educate around 1000 girls in 27 classrooms. Given the unique and challenging circumstances that face Palestine refugees in Lebanon it is especially important that UNRWA is able to return these children to a normal school environment after over four years of displacement and uncertainty.

OFID has been an important contributor towards Palestine refugee education in Lebanon, having financed scholarships for students as well as the reconstruction of a further two schools in Nahr el Bared Camp, which opened their doors to students in September of last year. Both UNRWA and OFID remain committed to the education of Palestine refugees, which is a vital tool in the building of the Palestine refugee community as a whole. Last year, OFID contributed $1 million to start a Scholarship Fund for Talented Palestinians. So far almost 130 students have benefitted.

Silatech and UNRWA partner for Palestine refugees

Silatech and UNRWA are working together to provide innovative financial services to thousands of young Palestinian entrepreneurs in the Levant region. Silatech is an innovative social enterprise established to address the critical and growing need to create jobs and economic opportunities for young people starting first in the Arab world.

Despite UNRWA’s traditionally strong outreach to young entrepreneurs aged 18-30, there is a significant cohort of young prospective clients who wish to start new income generating projects, but are not able to get access to microcredit.

Responding to this unmet need, UNRWA and Silatech have structured an initiative which will enable UNRWA to further deepen its outreach to young entrepreneurs by reducing the risk in lending to start-up businesses. The partnership involves the launch of a new youth start-up loan product called “Mubadarati”, which will be financed by UNRWA’s microfinance program and supported by a unique partial guarantee financed by Silatech.

“Mubadarati” is the first youth start-up loan product to be offered in the West Bank and Gaza, while the Silatech loan guarantee is the first of its type in the Arab region. According to Silatech CEO Tarik Yousef, “Through this partnership, Silatech and UNRWA will help unlock opportunities for young Palestinian entrepreneurs to finance their own businesses, develop their entrepreneurial skills, and create new employment opportunities both for themselves and others.”

UNRWA’s microfinance department provides credit and complementary financial services for Palestine refugees, as well as other poor or marginal groups who live and work near them.
The Kuwait Fund through the Islamic Development Bank signs groundbreaking agreement to build schools in Gaza

The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (acting through the Islamic Development Bank) and UNRWA have signed an agreement worth $9.55 million to construct five new schools in the Gaza Strip. The agreement was signed in Amman between the Director of the IDB’s Trust Funds Department, Mr Mansour Bin Feten, and Mr Peter Ford, Representative of the UNRWA Commissioner-General. These five new schools will go a significant way towards easing the overcrowding that is endemic in Gaza’s schools.

Among the five schools funded by the Kuwait Fund is a groundbreaking, pilot “environmental zero impact” school. “UNRWA is delighted to have signed this agreement to build five schools in Gaza. Education remains the key intervention for the Agency in Gaza and we are most grateful that the Kuwait Fund has come on board to help us meet our goals for Palestine refugee children,” said UNRWA Commissioner-General, Mr. Filippo Grandi. “This contribution is the first-ever agreement between UNRWA and the Kuwait Fund, acting through the Islamic Development Bank, one of the Agency’s most valued partners, and we are confident that this marks the start of a long and fruitful relationship.”

The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development assists Arab and other developing countries in developing their economies by providing loans, guarantees, grants, technical assistance, and contributing to capital stocks of international and regional development finance institutions and other development institutions.

Kuwait Red Crescent donates food for poor refugees in Gaza

The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) has again generously contributed towards food for the poorest Palestine refugees in Gaza. This latest two contributions totaling $200,000 come on the back of similar donations from KRCS for food, most recently in August to feed the fasting during Ramadan.

These contributions from KRCS are for essential basic food stuffs for some of the poorest refugees on UNRWA’s rolls who receive essentials such as flour, rice, sugar, sunflower oil, whole milk and canned meat, allowing them to spend scarce resources on other essentials such as education and health.

UNRWA is grateful to KRCS for its continued and timely support of food needs for poor refugees in the oPt. In 2011, KRCS donated a total of $550,000 towards the food needs of Palestine refugees under UNRWA’s care.

Turkey contributes towards relief activities for poor refugees in Lebanon

Turkey has donated $250,000 toward the Restoring Dignity fundraising appeal for Lebanon. The appeal aims to carry out relief and recovery activities for vulnerable Palestine refugees throughout Lebanon, and is meant to raise funds for special projects in addition to regular funding to sustain the Agency’s core programmes, such as education, health, and poverty alleviation. UNRWA Com-
missioner-General Filippo Grandi launched the appeal on 28 September 2011, requesting approximately $147 million over a five-year period, until 2016. In the aftermath of the conflict in Nahr el-Bared, Turkey responded generously to the humanitarian emergency with a contribution of almost $2 million for relief and reconstruction activities as well as in-kind food assistance.

In order to fund its activities in 2012, UNRWA requires $41 million to support Palestine refugees in Lebanon. This figure includes funds needed for the relief activities of Nahr el-Bared Camp. While some pledges have already been received, the Agency remains in urgent need of $10 million for the first half of 2012. A joint socio-economic report by UNRWA and the American University of Beirut released in December 2010 brought to life the dire situation facing Palestinian refugees in Lebanon who suffer from a number of hardships as a result of their lack of political and social rights in the country.

**Donors contribute to UNRWA core programmes**

Contribution towards its core programmes from the Agency’s generous donors help UNRWA to deliver critical health, education, and humanitarian programmes for five million Palestine refugees in the region, through 700 schools, 137 primary health centres, and cash and food support for nearly 290,000 of the poorest refugees.

In 2011, the Agency faced worrying shortfalls in its funding however, Member States’ generosity meant that a crisis was averted. UNRWA is grateful to donors who have stepped forward so far this year.

**Human Appeal International eases overcrowding in Gaza schools**

In January 2012, NGO Human Appeal International, based in Ajman (UAE), pledged over $128,000 to construct nine classrooms in Al Durj Primary School in Gaza Strip. The agreement signals the first example of cooperation in what UNRWA hopes to be a long and fruitful partnership between the Agency and Human Appeal International.

In May of last year UNRWA Representative of the Commissioner-General, Peter Ford met with Mr. Abed Allah Mohammed Alawadi, Assistant Secretary General for Financial and Administrative Affairs at Human Appeal International where future cooperation was discussed.

UNRWA educates some 218,000 children in Gaza in 243 schools, many of which suffer from overcrowding and run-down premises. Rapid population growth rates have increased the demand on UNRWA schools, while the imposition of the blockade means that the Agency had lacked, until recently, the authorisation to build many of these premises due to the restrictions on bringing in construction materials.

**Egyptian Red Crescent donates food and medicine for refugees in Gaza**

UNRWA has received an in-kind contribution of rice, flour, and sunflower oil from the Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC) for distribution to poor refugees in Gaza. The contribution comprises 9 tonnes of rice, 30 tonnes of flour, and 2 tonnes of sunflower oil. In addition, the ERC has sent a consignment of 20 cartons of medicine for use in UNRWA’s health centres in Gaza.

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For 2012, **Kazakhstan** has come on board as one of the newest donors to the Agency with a contribution of $50,000.

**Qatar** has raised its annual contributions to the Agency for 2012, doubling its contribution to the Agency from $50,000 to $100,000.

**Kuwait** has provided UNRWA with $2 million for 2011 core programmes.

**Turkey**, which has been a committed supporter of UNRWA, has again pledged $1 million after last year’s increase from $500,000.

**Bahrain** has once again contributed $50,000 to UNRWA’s core programmes.

**Egypt**, a steady supporter of UNRWA has pledged $25,000 towards UNRWA’s core programmes for 2012.

Last year, **Iraq** came forward as a new donor to the Agency’s core activities, contributing $2 million making it joint highest Arab contributor to UNRWA’s core programmes with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
UNRWA is grateful to the Egyptian Red Crescent Society, longstanding partner of UNRWA, for this generous contribution.

**World Assembly of Muslim Youth donates meat for Gaza refugees**

UNRWA has received an in-kind contribution of canned meat for poor refugees in Gaza from the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY). The generous contribution of over 180,000 cans of corned beef, worth more than US$ 113,000 was distributed to poor refugees in Gaza as part of the Agency’s emergency food assistance programme.

Thanking WAMY for the donation, UNRWA Representative of the Commissioner-General Mr Peter Ford remarked: “WAMY’s generosity comes at an important time for the Agency as UNRWA is currently facing critical shortages in funds for food aid distribution to the most needy refugees. This gratefully received contribution from WAMY has gone towards relieving the current burden on the Agency and the refugees.”

A Riyadh-based NGO, WAMY has previously cooperated with UNRWA in Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territory, having funded several interventions in 2009 and 2010, including scholarships in Lebanon and cash assistance for poor refugees in Jerusalem.

**Qatar Red Crescent helps young refugees in Lebanon brave the winter**

The Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has donated winter coats to UNRWA students in Lebanon for the second year in a row. The donation targeted students who did not benefit from last year’s donation, with the exception of Beqaa area where all students in Grades 1 - 9 received a winter coat.

The coats were distributed in UNRWA schools in Beqaa on 26 January and were distributed to other areas during the following week.

Approximately two thirds of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are unable to meet basic food and non-food needs, while almost 7% cannot even meet essential food requirements. This donation comes as a relief for such families cannot afford appropriate winter clothing for their children.

**AAAID contribution received**

UNRWA has received a further $100,000 from the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development in payments related to earlier years. This follows on from $500,000 received last year.

The AAAID funded an agriculture project in Lebanon which assisted 176 of the poorest of the poor families through in-kind grants to generate income while boosting the Palestinian economy in the South of Lebanon.

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon continue to be denied many basic rights, such as the right and the opportunity to work in many professions. As a consequence, the livelihoods of many of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon rely on insecure independent commerce based activities in the camps and gatherings that can often only provide an insecure income.
The Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation was established in July 2007 by law No. 20, issued by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

The Foundation’s vision is to pioneer initiatives that serve humanity. Its strategy focuses on health care and education, locally, regional and globally. KBZF supports vocational training projects in the region, health needs emanating from malnutrition, provision of drinking water globally and support for poor and vulnerable communities by providing essential infrastructure such as schools and hospitals. The Foundation also responds to emergencies and natural disasters.

What is the developmental role played by the United Arab Emirates in general, and KBZF specifically with regard to funding for developing countries?
Undoubtedly, the UAE, under the guidance of the President, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, has come to be renowned for the foreign aid it provides to developing countries thanks to the UAE’s humanitarian policy which supports people regardless of colour, gender or religion - this is the secret behind the success of the Emirati development model. Through its humanitarian projects, KBZF also focuses on strengthening human capacity and opening up horizons for work and collaboration, allowing people to contribute to societal development and growth.

What are your priorities in 2012 in respect of geographic locations and type of support?
With the support of Allah, KBZF will continue delivering its humanitarian message and playing its humanitarian role. Over the last five years, the Foundation has implemented various humanitarian projects in 13 Arab states, 21 Asian and African states and 9 European states, in addition to Australia and Argentina. However, there are various challenges to humanitarian and development work in some countries and it’s important for international organizations and civil society associations to coordinate, collaborate and consult in order to allow humanitarian work to continue unrestricted.

As a main financer in the Arab region, how does KBZF see the change in the aid landscape in light of recent events?
KBZF works within its capacity to shift the focus from humanitarian aid to support sustainable economic and social development wherever possible.

Has the financial crisis affected your funding of projects?
Thanks to Allah, the financial crisis has not had an impact on the funding of our projects - the number of those benefiting from our projects, locally and internationally, are increasing notably. For example, the number of beneficiaries from the Feed the Fasting project, which KBZF implements during the holy month of Ramadan every year, has increased from around 1.5 million in 2010 (inside and outside the UAE) to more than 2 million in 2011.

What would you say to other organizations who are thinking of partnering with UNRWA?
KBZF is proud of its partnership with UNRWA. UNRWA has a bright record of achievements that stretches over 60 years in relief, development and social work for the benefit of the Palestine refugees. We work together to alleviate the humanitarian suffering which has been inflicted upon the Palestinians in their host countries like Lebanon, Syria and Jordan and other places, as a result of the Israeli occupation.

Which one of KBZF’s project is your personal favourite?
I would say it is the Feed the fasting project in the UAE. Last year the challenges to implement this project for the benefit of the UAE families were immense. Honestly, it’s not an easy thing to provide 60,000 Ramadan meals everyday in the UAE to help more than 500 families living in different areas -this requires a lot of effort, time and follow up. However, with sound planning and determination to overcome the obstacles as well as the sincere support of the families who participated in the project, we successfully completed the project in 2011 and provided more than 1.8 million Ramadan meals regardless of religion, colour or gender.

KBZF has proven its place as a special, indispensable partner to UNRWA in the area of food aid and as we enter the new year, refugees’ food needs continue to be one of our top priorities. How would KBZF evaluate its growing humanitarian partnership with UNRWA to meet the food needs of poor refugees?
There is no doubt that the food needs of poor refugees is an important issue. KBZF hopes from its cooperation and partnership with UNRWA that development projects will be supported to combat poverty and deprivation and to focus intensively on development projects so as to promote group work mechanisms and build human capacity in Palestinian communities.

What is your message to the Palestine refugees for 2012 who have known you over the last five years through your partnership with UNRWA?
Through the partnership with UNRWA, we will work to strengthen collaboration and partnership to serve the Palestine refugees.

Al Shuraka thanks HE Mohammed Haji Al Khoury
UNRWA News

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon visits UNRWA in Gaza

UN Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon visited the occupied Palestinian territory on 1 and 2 February 2012. While there, accompanied by UNRWA Commissioner-General, Mr. Filippo Grandi and staff from UNRWA, Mr. Ban visited a number of UNRWA sites in Gaza including a girls’ school and an UNRWA Housing Project and met with children who had been seriously injured during the 2008-2009 Israeli attack. The UN Secretary-General also received a briefing on an UNRWA environmental zero impact school in Gaza which once complete will rely on renewable and free locally available resources only. Commenting on the school, Mr. Ban noted that, "UNRWA is transforming the landscape of Gaza."

Mr. Ban underlined his commitment to continue working for peace and stability in the Middle East and called for increased humanitarian assistance for Palestinians. He reiterated that the UN would continue its own commitment to the region and the Gaza Strip through supporting infrastructure development, humanitarian assistance and longer-term initiatives to stimulate economic and social growth.

Commenting on the situation facing Gaza, Mr. Ban noted, "That is why I am here again for the third time. There are very dire social, economic and humanitarian problems. People need to be able to move freely. Goods must be imported and exported without any restrictions. That is why I have been urging the Israeli authorities to lift completely and unconditionally the restrictions."

Houses and three UNRWA schools inaugurated at Nahr el-Bared camp

Under the patronage of His Excellency the President of the Council of Ministers Mr Najib Mikati, an inauguration ceremony took place for package 1, the first package of houses delivered to the displaced families of Nahr el-Bared camp, and three UNRWA schools. Jointly hosted by the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC), the Embassy of Palestine in Lebanon, and UNRWA, the ceremony was attended by representatives of the Lebanese government, the Palestinian community and high-level donor delegations.

Among the guests of honour at the event was Mr Suleiman Jasir El Herbish, the Director General of the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), which funded two UNRWA schools in Nahr el-Bared. Mr Herbish stated that “The Palestinian cause is one of OFID’s priorities and will always remain so. OFID believes that the most powerful weapon in the hands of the Palestinian youth is education.” He added: "In the Vienna Conference, we pledged to construct these two schools that we are inaugurating today. I can assure you that we will be the first present at any upcoming donors’ conference."

Mr Ahmed Al Hatti, the Director General and Chairman of Cayan, which funded the reconstruction of one school, said: “The Palestinian community enjoys exemplary courage and dignity but what they need is hope that one day their suffering will end.” Engineer Hassan Al Attas of the SFD noted that, “The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia donated US$ 3 billion over the past years to support Palestinians through the Palestinian Authority and through UNRWA and other organisations.”

Thanking UNRWA, the Lebanese government, and the donor community, the Ambassador of Palestine to Lebanon Dr Abdallah Abdallah announced a new donation of $2 million from the PLO for the reconstruction of NBC and invited all the donors to do the same in order to speed up the reconstruction of the camp. Mr. Filippo Grandi, UNRWA Commissioner-General, meanwhile paid special tribute to the government of Lebanon and the “unwavering commitment of UNRWA’s generous donors” while also commending “the dignity, and strength, demonstrated by the refugees of Nahr el-Bared”. 
Royal Charity Organization of Bahrain and UNRWA complete health centre and library in Gaza

Bahrain and UNRWA have completed two important reconstruction projects in Gaza: a health centre and a school library.

In the wake of the devastating Israeli attack on Gaza between December 2008 and January 2009, the RCO and UNRWA signed an agreement worth over $5 million providing for reconstruction of a health centre in Khan Younis refugee camp, a library at Al Fakhoura School in Jabalia camp, and a new school. Implementation of the projects had been delayed by the Israeli blockade of Gaza, however, the projects were able to begin on the ground in 2011.

Al Bahrain Health Centre at Khan Younis, which cost a total of just over $2.6 million to build and equip, will be one of the largest health facilities for the refugees of Gaza, while Al Bahrain library, located in Al Fakhoura School is the first ever UNRWA library in the Gaza Strip, and will serve as a tribute to the memory of the victims who were killed and injured by Israeli shells while taking refuge in the school during the Israeli onslaught on Gaza.

UNRWA is grateful to His Majesty Sheikh Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, His Highness Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad al Khalifa and the RCO for Bahrain’s support to Palestine refugees. Two further projects to construct Al Manama School at Tel al Hawwa and eight classrooms in the existing Fakhari school are due to be completed later in the year.

UNRWA Goes Green in Gaza

UNRWA is set to launch first ever environmental zero impact school in Gaza. The blueprint was showcased by UNRWA at last December’s UN Climate Change Conference in Durban, South Africa to great interest from onlookers.

The pilot green school is being generously funded by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development through the Islamic Development Bank. The design has been developed by world-renowned, award-winning architect Mario Cucinella, who has blazed a trail in developing green architectural design and technology.

“With its huge outreach in the Middle East, UNRWA is an ideal partner for this project,” said Cucinella, “which is about improving living conditions for Palestine refugees with better access to water and energy, and with as little impact as possible on the Gaza environment, which has been so badly degraded by decades of conflict & blockade”.

At $2 million, about the same cost of a regular UNRWA school, the new green school provides educational facilities for 800 students. While promoting high academic standards within, this concept also promotes high levels of respect for the environment outside. The stand alone school building relies only on renewable and free locally available resources (rainwater, solar and ground energy) instead of waterworks and energy grids. The design promotes the use of affordable and locally available materials, as well as simple construction systems, minimising the need for advanced and expensive technologies.

UNRWA is hopeful that this pilot project will lead to the creation of environmentally friendly schools across UNRWA’s five areas of operations.

UAERC repairs refugee homes in Gaza and Lebanon

Two major housing projects funded by the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent (UAERC) have reached completion.

In early 2009, the UAERC generously agreed to finance a shelter rehabilitation project in Burj el-Shemali camp in...
South Lebanon to reconstruct and repair 348 of the most unsafe shelters in the camp, benefitting 1,664 refugees. The project worth almost $5 million spanned 5 housing lots and was successfully concluded last year.

In another project, the UAERC also provided cash assistance to repair shelters in Beit Hanoun, Gaza. This project was the result of a reprogramming of a previous larger project in Beit Hanoun to repair 106 shelters worth $2.3 million which had regrettably been halted as a result of the blockade on Gaza. Not only has the UAERC committed itself to supporting UNRWA in resuming this project once the Israeli blockade is over, but had also kindly agreed to redirect $1.23 million of the unspent pledge amount under the larger project to enable families to repair their houses through a self-help approach instead.

On 1 November 2006, approximately 70 Israeli military vehicles and tanks entered Beit Hanoun in north-eastern Gaza resulting in massive destruction including damages and demolitions to a large number of shelters belonging to Palestinian refugees. The UAERC’s contribution of $1,225,000 was used to repair 104 houses through the self-help approach benefitting some 650 individuals.

The UAERC is a regular contributor to UNRWA’s activities, and a committed supporter of major UNRWA construction projects, having supported initiatives in Syria, Gaza, Lebanon and the West Bank.

Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan Charitable & Humanitarian Foundation’s Gaza Strip projects completed

The Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan Charitable & Humanitarian Foundation’s ongoing projects in the Gaza Strip have reached completion.

Although support had been pledged for the construction of 2 schools and the construction and furnishing of 8 classrooms at the end of 2006, implementation had been stalled due the Israeli blockade of Gaza. However, following receipt of approval from the Israelis, work was re-tendered in July 2010.

The three projects which have recently been completed are construction and equipping of two schools at Nuiserat and Khan Younis, along with construction and furnishing of eight classrooms, four at the existing elementary Co-ed School at Beit Lahia and a further four classrooms at Beit Lahia Preparatory Girls School.

Given the harsh socio-economic circumstances in which the children of Gaza live, the right to education holds particularly critical importance however, Gaza’s schools suffer from chronic overcrowding which hampers the quality of education. UNRWA continues, with the support of its generous donors to build extra schools in Gaza to ease overcrowding.

Together, the completed projects total some $3.5 million. UNRWA is grateful to the Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan Charitable & Humanitarian Foundation for its support.

UNRWA launches Gaza satellite channel

In response to community requests, UNRWA has launched an educational satellite channel in February 2012 to assist students, parents and teachers in education, inspire youth not to give into despair and to provide information on UNRWA services. The channel is expected to have a significantly positive impact on education indicators as well as enhance support for UNRWA in the community.

The pilot phase of the channel provides 12 hours a day of Math and Arabic lessons based on the Palestinian Authority curriculum used by UNRWA in Gaza. The remaining broadcast time focuses on educational and entertain-
ing film clips which celebrate and promote Palestinian culture, heritage, and ingenuity through child drama, songs, Dabka, storytelling, and profiles of traditional Gazan trades. In order to advance goals two and three, there are documentaries and informational features.

The start of the pilot phase was timed to coincide with the start of the second semester in February 2012. Teachers and parents expressed their wish that skills and concepts of TV lessons occur after students had received them in the classroom, as a form of re-enforcement.

For the next semester, following community requests, UNRWA plans to enhance the programming offered to the community by adding the additional subject of English and Science.

The channel is available on Nilesat 11679H.

**UNRWA AdCom takes place at Dead Sea, Jordan**

The second UNRWA Advisory Commission (AdCom) meeting of 2011 took place at the Moevenpick Dead Sea, Jordan on 27 and 28 November under the Chairmanship of Jordan.

In his opening speech, UNRWA Commissioner-General, Mr. Filippo Grandi drew attention to the changes sweeping the Middle East region, noting how “regrettably, this dynamic atmosphere has been in stark contrast with the stagnant political context in which Palestinians, and even more so Palestine refugees, continue to find themselves”. The Commissioner-General however, underlined the importance of UNRWA’s work in this volatile environment and the importance of the Agency’s and international community’s commitment to protect and support the refugees.

Turning to the Agency’s funding needs. Mr. Grandi highlighted the need to continue to meet the needs of tens of thousands of refugees living in abject poverty with food and cash assistance. He warned that unless food aid resources are mobilized above the amounts currently projected by UNRWA for 2012, UNRWA may have to make cuts in its programme of assistance to the most impoverished and vulnerable refugees leaving these refugees in further hardship and at greater risk.

The AdCom meets several times a year to discuss issues of importance to UNRWA, providing advice and assistance to the Commissioner-General of the Agency.

**Thousands run the Gaza Strip to raise funds for Palestine refugee kids**

Braving cold winds, rain, close to 2,000 runners – from children to professional athletes – participated in the Gaza Marathon on 1 March, to raise funds for the annual Summer Games, which gives the children of Gaza a rare chance at a normal summer, despite the difficulties of living under the Israeli blockade.

At 42 kilometres long, the entire Gaza Strip is the same length as an official marathon. From Beit Hanoun in the north to Rafah in the south, local and international runners participated in ten, 20, and 42-km races.

“For many of these athletes, reaching Gaza was an exercise in itself, with coordination taking months,” said UNRWA’s Christer Nordahl. Their determination paid off, with about 70 supporters arriving from around the world to run the marathon. Over 1,800 local children also joined the athletes on the route in their own three-kilometre relay.

“The children of Gaza always mesmerise me,” explained Nordahl. “They deserve these opportunities. They deserve to have what is normal for most children around the world, and for their dreams to come true.”
An iconic peace message from Palestinian youth

On 25 November hundreds of young people from United Nations schools in the Jericho area created a massive aerial image in conjunction with the world-renowned aerial artist, John Quigley, sending out a peace message to the world.

Directed by Quigley, they gathered at the foot of the Mount of Temptation just outside Jericho in the shape of Pablo Picasso’s Peace Dove. John Quigley worked with local assistants to create the grid for the image that the children would form.

Persons from all over Jericho volunteered to help the artist prepare the image on the day before and in the early morning of the day of the event, from refugee camp officials to Bedouin families living nearby the canyon where the Peace Dove was created.

Hundreds of children came to the canyon because they wanted to help Quigley on their day off, not because their teachers had told them to go.

The event was organized by UNRWA and the “Peace on Earth” project.

Visits

A Royal Reception in Saudi Arabia

On 25 November hundreds of young people from United Nations schools in the Jericho area created a massive aerial image in conjunction with the world-renowned aerial artist, John Quigley, sending out a peace message to the world.

Directed by Quigley, they gathered at the foot of the Mount of Temptation just outside Jericho in the shape of Pablo Picasso’s Peace Dove. John Quigley worked with local assistants to create the grid for the image that the children would form.

Persons from all over Jericho volunteered to help the artist prepare the image on the day before and in the early morning of the day of the event, from refugee camp officials to Bedouin families living nearby the canyon where the Peace Dove was created.

Hundreds of children came to the canyon because they wanted to help Quigley on their day off, not because their teachers had told them to go.

The event was organized by UNRWA and the “Peace on Earth” project.

Visits

A Royal Reception in Saudi Arabia

From February 20 to 21, the UNRWA Commissioner-General, Mr Filippo Grandi was in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia to meet with high-level Saudi officials.

Calling on the Al Waleed bin Talal Foundation, Mr Grandi and his delegation held a productive and positive meeting with HRH Prince Al Waleed Bin Talal, HRH Princess Amira Al Taweel and Engineer Nadia Bakhurji, Secretary General of the Foundation. UNRWA and HRH Prince Al Waleed discussed the possibility of further cooperation given the near completion of the Al Waleed bin Talal Foundation project to train medical staff in Gaza.
Mr. Grandi also visited prominent Palestinian philanthropist Mr. Ahmed Al Hatti, Director General and Chairman of Cayan Construction. Cayan, in association with NGO Welfare Association had last year generously funded construction of a school in Nahr el Bared Camp in Lebanon.

Meanwhile, Mr. Peter Ford, UNRWA Representative of the Commissioner-General met with the Executive Director of the Saudi Committee for the Relief of the Palestinian People, Mr. Mubarak Al Bakr. The Saudi Committee has been a keen supporter of the Agency in the areas of food and health. This meeting provided a valuable opportunity for UNRWA and the Saudi Committee to discuss how this cooperation could be continued into 2012.

During this same visit to Saudi Arabia, UNRWA also signed an agreement worth $10 million with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through the Saudi Fund for Development for education and health in Gaza and the West Bank. See page 1 for the full story.

**UNRWA delegation to Doha for Conference on Jerusalem**

An UNRWA delegation led by the Commissioner-General, Mr. Filippo Grandi was in the Qatari capital, Doha for a three-day regional conference dedicated to discussing recent developments in occupied East Jerusalem held under the patronage of the Arab League.

Among the distinguished speakers were Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Moroccan Foreign Minister, Mr. Saad-Eddine Othmani, Arab League head, Dr. Nabil al-Arabi, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu and Secretary-General of the Cooperation Council of the Arab Gulf States, Dr. Abdullah bin Rashid Al-Zayani and UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Robert Serry.

During the conference, Mr. Grandi attended a special lunch hosted by the Emir of Qatar, HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani for high-level participants and discussed cooperation with the Islamic Development Bank and the Omani Ambassador to Cairo, H.E. Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Issa al Harthy. Separately, Mr. Peter Ford, UNRWA Representative of the Commissioner-General met with Iraq’s Ambassador in Cairo, HE Mr. Mohammad Al-Hmeimedi and the Libyan representative, HE Mr. Abdel Hamid Faraj Ferhat, Director of Arab Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The sidelines of the event provided an opportunity for UNRWA officials to meet with key donors and interlocutors based in Qatar. Mr. Ford met with Silatech CEO, Mr. Tarek Yousef to sign a loan guarantee agreement for the Agency’s Microfinance programme and with Qatar Red Crescent’s new Executive Director, Mr. Saleh Al-Muhanadi and adviser Mr. Hamid Moharrar. A positive meeting was also held with education-focused Foundation, Reach Out to Asia’s Executive Director, Mr. Essa Al Mannai and UNRWA discussed past pledges and future cooperation with Mr. Ahmed Al Suwaidi, Deputy Director in the International Cooperation Directorate of the Qatari MFA and Qatar Charity Executive Director Mr. Yousef Al Kawari.

Saudi Fund for Development visit Lebanese Camps to Witness Plight of Palestine Refugees

On 9 and 10 February 2012, Engineer Mohammed Al Namlah, Chief of the Civil Engineering Department at the Saudi Fund for Development visited Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon to witness first-hand the plight of Palestine refugees in the country.

In a two-day itinerary Engineer Al Namlah visited Ein el Hilweh Camp in the south of Lebanon, where UNRWA-Lebanon staff briefed Engineer Al Namlah on the scope of the works needed. Years of lack of funding and overcrowding have left much of the camp’s infrastructure dilapidated, dangerous and unfit to serve the camp’s 60,000 residents. Engineer Al Namlah also visited Bourj Barajneh, another camp in the country’s south to see
the conditions there.

Palestine refugees in Lebanon continue to live in precarious circumstances as poor housing and infrastructure in the camps and legal discrimination contributes to endemic poverty and social marginalisation. While in Lebanon, Al Namlah was struck by the appalling condition of infrastructure and shelters.

The following day he visited Nahr el Bared Camp near Tripoli, the site of UNRWA’s most ambitious reconstruction project to date following the complete destruction of the camp in fighting in 2007. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through the SFD is currently generously funding reconstruction works in Packages two and three. The SFD have generously signed agreements for Nahr el Bared reconstruction for $25 million to date.

UAE Red Crescent visit Palestinian camps in Lebanon

From October 13 to 14 a delegation from the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent Society (UAERC) visited Palestinian camps in Lebanon accompanied by UNRWA officials. The delegation included Mr Ahmed Al Mazroui, Chairman of the UAERC, Mr Omran Matar Treim, Member of the UAERC board, and Mr Abdel Karim Bensiali. The group visited Burj Barajneh camp in Beirut, Nahr el-Bared camp near Tripoli as well as shelters in the adjacent area which were set up in 2009 thanks to a $1 million donation by the UAERC. The delegation also paid a visit to Burj Shemali camp, to visit families whose houses had been rehabilitated thanks to a generous donation of $5 million from the UAERC.

Engineer Omar Mehyar and Engineer Ahmad Sammour of the Trust Funds Department of the Islamic Development Bank visited UNRWA in Gaza in December. While in the Gaza Strip, the IDB delegation along with Engineer Rifat Diab of the EMCC, met with officials from the UNRWA Gaza Field Office and discussed ongoing cooperation for the benefit of refugees in Gaza as well as future directions for the IDB’s partnership with UNRWA.

After his visit to the camp, Mr Ahmad Mazroui thanked UNRWA and all those who contributed and supervised the rehabilitation works. He added: “Palestinians are our brothers. Assisting them is one of the priorities of the UAERC. I saw that people were very happy with their newly rehabilitated homes. When the home environment is sound, all the family will be psychologically and socially sound. This project is only the first step that will be followed by many others to contribute to the social development of our Palestinian brothers.”

The UAERC is one of the Agency’s key Arab donors and shelter rehabilitation in all camps remains one of the main priorities for the refugees and UNRWA.

Islamic Development Bank visit to Gaza

The GCC through the IDB is a major supporter of UNRWA’s Gaza Reconstruction and Recovery plan which was launched in 2009 in the wake of the devastating events of the 2008-2009 Israeli attack on Gaza which destroyed and damaged much of the Gaza Strip’s infrastructure. Among the IDB’s most important ongoing projects in Gaza is repair and reconstruction of the thousands of shelters destroyed during Israeli military incursions in Gaza. To date the IDB has pledged over $35 million for shelters for affected families.
Since the Al Aqsa intifada broke out in September 2000, recurrent violent conflicts, restrictions on the movement of people and goods, and the destruction of homes and infrastructure have marked the territory’s humanitarian crisis. Although modest economic growth was reported in 2011, this was mainly due to donor-supported public expenditures and the expansion of the Gaza Strip tunnel economy. The sustainability of this growth therefore remains highly uncertain, and the private sector continues to struggle to overcome Israeli restrictions that limit access to resources and markets in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Given this protracted vulnerability, significant parts of the population rely on humanitarian assistance to meet their most basic needs. The 2012 Emergency Appeal focuses on refugees’ most basic and acute needs, including:

**Emergency food aid**
In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 40 and 63 per cent of refugee families, respectively, are food insecure or vulnerable. UNRWA plans to meet the basic food requirements of food insecure and food vulnerable households through quarterly food distributions to 667,500 food insecure and vulnerable refugees.

**Temporary job creation programme**
UNRWA’s job creation programme aims to relieve economic hardship for 53,620 refugee families (275,000 individuals) by providing temporary employment opportunities.

**Emergency cash assistance**
By providing small cash grants to the most vulnerable refugees, UNRWA will mitigate the impact of the protracted crisis. Specifically, these grants will assist 72,500 families facing unexpected shocks and 221,000 pupils in need of back-to-school assistance.

**Emergency health**
Health programmes will ensure access to essential health services, thereby mitigating the impact of closures and the protracted socio-economic crisis on the health of refugees. Through a network of clinics, schools and referrals to specialised care, the sector will benefit 1.2 million refugee patients and 221,000 school children.

**Emergency education (Gaza Strip only)**
UNRWA runs 243 schools in the Gaza Strip which enrol roughly 221,000 refugee students. The emergency education sector will develop a participatory, equitable and conducive learning environment for these students, focusing on supplies, remedial programmes and improved discipline.

**Community mental health**
Life in the oPt creates an enormous amount of stress, which can lead to mental illness and destabilise families. UNRWA will support refugee coping mechanisms by addressing psychosocial needs of 102,700 refugees.

**Emergency water and sanitation**
Quality water and sanitation are often in short supply in the oPt, creating an environment potentially conducive to disease outbreaks. UNRWA will ensure access to adequate and safe water and sanitation for refugees in camps and surrounding areas in an effort to reduce this risk.

**Temporary shelter (Gaza Strip only)**
When emergencies destroy or damage people’s homes in the Gaza Strip, rebuilding can be a daunting task – particularly in light of the blockade that tightly restricts the flow of construction materials. UNRWA will ensure improved living conditions for up to 50,000 people affected by the conflict, blockade or natural disaster.