



unrwa's ten youth commitments

On March 19-20 2012, UNRWA convened a conference funded by the EU and hosted in Brussels by the Government of Belgium. "Engaging Youth: Palestine Refugee Youth in a Changing Middle East" saw world leaders and opinion makers, civil society and Palestinian refugee youth come together to discuss their concerns in a frank, open manner.

The youth seized the space, making clear that they were more than equal partners in the discussions. There was consensus among host and donor countries, private partners, NGOs and UN agencies on the need to work with and for youth.

The event provided new clarity to UNRWA's programming vision. At the conference's close, Commissioner-General Filippo Grandi unveiled an agenda of ten commitments. Many of these build on work that the Agency is already doing; others will enhance UNRWA's ability to incorporate youth views.

UNRWA seeks support for these commitments, which readily link to existing strengths and assets within the organization.

1. Education

We will make classroom life more dynamic, emphasizing critical thinking skills among our students; in part by supporting our teachers to lead student-centered classrooms as part of education reform. Children should learn how to question and know how to find the answers. This is indispensable if we want children to become young people able to think critically, and to make informed choices.

2. Health

We will better focus on youth issues within the new family-centered health reform. With non-communicable diseases now the single greatest threat to the health of the refugees, preventive care and learning healthy life-styles are crucial for youth. We want young people to make healthy life choices and to have their health concerns addressed sensitively.

3. Vocational training

We will continue to invest in making technical training more relevant. We will introduce more short-term courses, driven by labor market demands and on-the-job training. We want youth to be economically productive.

4. Microfinance

We will increase lending to young refugee entrepreneurs. We have already launched a project with Silatech, an Arab microfinance innovator, to give refugee youth entrepreneurs what is often beyond their reach: their first loan to start their first business. We want youth to know entrepreneurship is within their reach and holds great potential for them.

5. Scholarships

We will better connect students to scholarship opportunities. We want youth to have an open door to higher education, necessary in today's job market.

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Refugee youth at a glance

- There are 1.42 million registered refugee youth
- Jordan hosts biggest refugee youth cohort (40.3%)
- Refugee youth numbers have tripled since 1975

as of January 2011

UNRWA and youth

- 699 schools
- 486,754 pupils
- 49 per cent of pupils are girls
- 10 vocational training centres
- 6,652 VTC places
- 3 educational science faculties

as of January 2012

By 2020, refugee youth (refugees aged 14-29) will number over 1.5 million. This represents an overall 6% rise since 2010: 4% in Jordan, 8% in the West Bank and 15% in Gaza.

6. Skills development

We will expand the Engaging Youth approach, piloted in Syria, to other fields, stressing leadership, entrepreneurship, project and community development and technical training. We want youth to believe in themselves, develop career and life agendas, and see them to fruition.

7. Rights

We will advocate more clearly and specifically for the rights important to young refugees, such as the right to education, the right to work, the right to freedom of movement, just as we keep advocating for their rights as refugees. We want youth to have the opportunities they deserve and to be able to seize them.

8. Partnerships

We will build new alliances and strengthen our existing links with NGOs, the private sector, the UN system and others involved in youth programming. We want to learn from and work with others, and be swift and effective in our work with youth.

9. Participation

We will establish mechanisms to ensure that the views of young people play a real role in Agency programming. The American University of Beirut will lend space, resources and expertise to help us explore options. We want youth to know and to feel that the UNRWA is their Agency and aims to address their needs.

10. Communication

We will enhance direct communication between us and our young stakeholders, including through new media and social networking. We must be highly responsive in a rapidly changing environment and communicate with youth in ways they prefer to communicate.



united nations relief and works agency
for palestine refugees in the near east

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UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of some 5 million 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's 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.

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