



2009

Refugees & UNRWA



Improving the lives of Palestine refugees

Linking relief and rehabilitation to the long-term development of Palestine refugees



EU supporting UNRWA

The European Union (EU) is committed to ensuring that Palestine refugees, the largest refugee population in the world, are not forgotten. The EU has been the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees and the Near East (UNRWA)'s largest donor since 1971. The bulk of EU assistance supports UNRWA's core funding enabling it to provide essential services to Palestine refugees.

UNRWA provides substantial humanitarian and developmental assistance to 4.67 million Palestine refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. In the period from 2000 to 2009, the EU has contributed over €1,026 million to UNRWA for its core programmes

in education, food assistance, health and relief and social services.

A principal aim of UNRWA's work is to help reduce poverty levels among the refugee population. EU funding enables UNRWA to provide food and cash aid to 257,222 of the most vulnerable refugees. UNRWA also provides emergency aid such as shelter provision, food aid and temporary job creation to refugees during crises, such as the recent conflict in the Gaza Strip in late 2008 and early 2009. The EU is the main source of funds for these humanitarian interventions.

The EU also supports a large range of UNRWA projects, including projects on water and sanitation, student academic scholarships, school-based activities and camp improvement.

A better life in Halhoul

Sahar, is the eldest daughter of Ibrahim, a struggling labourer from Halhoul in the West Bank, near Hebron. A budding artist, Sahar is partially paralysed from birth and can only walk with the aid of a walking frame. Ibrahim recently worked with UNRWA's Cash for Food programme, and he used the subsidy he received to buy leg braces for Sahar to wear at night to help her circulation. The custom-made braces cost over 2,000 NIS. "I was happy I could get the braces. She wasn't able to sleep at night before I bought them," he said. Ibrahim is convinced that his talented daughter will walk some day.



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EU-funded Damascus Training Centre provides a future for refugee girls

Mariam Al Zabid, a 19-year-old Palestine refugee in Syria, is an electronic technician student at the **Damascus Training Centre (DTC)**. The UNRWA-operated DTC provides technical and semi-professional education to hundreds of refugees. Thanks to a recent EU donation, the DTC has now built its first dormitory for girls. The two-storey building can accommodate 40 girls from outside Damascus. For Mariam, a place in the new dormitory means that she can continue her studies despite her family's recent move to Jordan.



Fun classroom activities help Gazan children cope with trauma

An UNRWA programme running in 85 schools in Gaza provides weekly life skills classes with fun exercises and role play to help develop children's skills at coping with trauma. "Conditions in Gaza are so overwhelming that it's very difficult for children to live normal lives...we try to rehabilitate these children and teach them how to lead a normal life in abnormal conditions," explains Dr Iyyad Zaqqut, head of the programme. Teachers have noted a marked improvement in the behaviour of previously violent and withdrawn pupils since the classes began.

Pioneering computer project produces remarkable results in Gaza

A computer pilot project run in UNRWA summerschools has greatly improved children's literacy and numeracy skills. Kamil Yasim, an elementary teacher and computer game designer, developed a series of interactive computer games to teach children linguistic and mathematical skills. The games were piloted among a small group of children from Beach Camp who attended UNRWA's 2008 summer school programme, which caters for children who fail their basic Arabic and mathematics tests. All the children passed the tests after taking part in the project. UNRWA intends to expand the project to schools across the Gaza strip.



UNRWA: providing sustainable livelihoods for Palestine refugees

UNRWA was established in December 1949 to provide humanitarian relief for more than 700,000 refugees and displaced persons forced to flee their homes in Palestine during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. In the past, UNRWA focused its activities on sustaining the livelihoods of the most vulnerable and impoverished refugees. UNRWA has recently refocused its work on longer-term development projects such as vocational training and micro-credit services. Education is a priority for UNRWA, representing one third of its annual budget. UNRWA is the largest UN operation in the Middle East with over 28,000 employees, almost all of them refugees. The Agency operates 689 schools, 10 vocational training centres, 138 primary health care facilities, 65 women's programme centres and 37 community rehabilitation centres. The Agency has issued nearly 166,000 credit loans worth more than €181 million since 1991. www.un.org/unrwa/

