



## Gaza on the Edge: Urgent Appeal to Help the Poorest of the Poor in Gaza

UNRWA's emergency operations in Gaza are facing a critical situation, whereby insufficient funds have led to a reduction in key humanitarian interventions. In June 2011, UNRWA cut the number of Job Creation Programme (JCP) contracts by 30 percent, reducing the number of average rolling contracts from 10,000 to 6,500 per month, suspended all its activities that supported the agriculture, fishing and health sectors, and decreased the number of temporary contractors serving UNRWA installations by 30 percent. As well, no back to school cash assistance (100 NIS per child to purchase school uniforms and supplies) will be distributed this year, which will affect more than 220,000 students. These cuts are taking place at a time when UNRWA, through improved targeting, is reducing the number of food aid beneficiaries by 120,000.

Unfortunately, these mitigation measures will not be enough if more funds are not realized soon. The current deficit of US\$ 36 million will have a dire impact on UNRWA's humanitarian programs. The key humanitarian impacts are highlighted in the table below.

### MINIMUM FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

**\$36** million

### HUMANITARIAN IMPACT:

- As of 1 September, no JCP contracts will be issued.
- As of 1 January 2012, approximately 600,000 refugees will not receive their three month food ration and 220,000 school children will not receive their second round of school feeding due to a lack of funds to procure food commodities on time<sup>1</sup>.
- As 1 January 2012, the Community Health Programme will be suspended

<sup>1</sup> To ensure timely distribution of food, procurement must take place by 15 October 2011.

## Humanitarian impact:

**JOB CREATION  
PROGRAMME**

**MINIMUM FUNDING REQUIREMENTS**

**\$11** million

*More than 2.4 million job days lost*

Currently, UNRWA has more than 167,000 outstanding JCP applicants seeking temporary employment assistance. The original target proposed in the 2011 EA was 4,693,000 job days. With the reduction from 10,000 to 6,500 rolling contracts, this was already a significant decrease in the number of available employment opportunities. However, now with the reality that UNRWA may have to cease all contracts, this would mean due to the significant funding shortfalls, only 2.26 million job days will likely be realized, a loss of 676,000 job days for the rest of the year, and a cumulative loss of more than 2.4 million job days this year.



UNRWA's impact on employment in Gaza is significant. With upwards of 11,500 regular employees, UNRWA accounted for about 7.5 percent of all private sector employment and about 40 percent of private services employment in the first half of 2011. In addition, the employment effects of the JCP in first-half 2011 generated an average of about 10,735 full time job equivalents. Thus, excluding daily paid and casual workers,

*UNRWA accounted for 8.9 percent of total employment in Gaza, 15.2 percent of private sector employment and 75.2 percent of employment in private services in the first-half of the year. The fact that the JCP, which is temporary in nature, was responsible for nearly one-tenth of private sector employment in the first half of 2011 underlines the precarious and vulnerable nature of the Gaza labour market.*

The situation will also have direct consequences on the delivery of UNRWA and other basic public services. JCPs account for half of the staff in our health centers, 1,500 remedial teachers, more than 2,000 garbage collectors.

## FOOD AID

### MINIMUM FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

**\$16**million

*More than half of the refugee population will go without food in 2012*

UNRWA provides 41,000 abject poor families who live on less than 1.60 USD per day (approximately 240,000 individuals) with 76 percent of their basic daily caloric needs and 81,000 families (more than 400,000 individuals) who are absolute poor and living on less than 4 USD per day with rations that met 40 percent of their basic daily caloric needs. The average food insecure household in Gaza dedicates 61 percent of its total expenditures to purchasing food<sup>2</sup>. The reduction in food assistance will require already extremely vulnerable households to fill the deficit in their household budgets at a time when food prices continue to soar, further exacerbating their food insecure situation and ability to cope<sup>3</sup>.



## SCHOOL FEEDING

### MINIMUM FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

**\$6**million

*220,000 children without nutritional supplementary school feeding*

As the socio-economic conditions in the Gaza Strip continue to deteriorate, many families are unable to provide their children with even the most basic needs, such as daily snacks. Evidence shows that poor nutrition affects students' ability to focus on their schoolwork and discourages them to attend school every day. UNRWA's school feeding program mitigates this situation by providing nutritional prepared meals and snacks, including sandwiches, yoghurt, fruit, and juice/milk. With the lack of funds to procure food, the program will also be suspended on 1 January.

<sup>2</sup> FAO/WFP 2010 SEFsec survey

<sup>3</sup> According to the 2010 SEFsec survey, negative coping mechanisms used by food insecure families include skipping meals, eating less quality foods, selling of assets, forgoing educational opportunities (especially for girls), and reducing expenditures on health.

## COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH

### MINIMUM FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

**\$3** million

### *Psychosocial support to 25,000 children suspended*



As of 1 January, UNRWA will suspend individual counselling to 7,000 children and group counselling to 25,000 children, leaving 250 counsellors out of work. Children in Gaza are regularly exposed to violence, through IDF operations and internal conflict and at the household and community levels, and face persistent violations of their basic human rights. This situation is aggravated by the economic and psychological hardships caused by the ongoing siege imposed on the Gaza Strip. UNRWA's Community Mental Health Programme aims at mitigating the negative effects of ongoing violence, economic hardship and rights violations on the refugee children in Gaza.

### *Credibility at stake*

Objective poverty alleviation measures indicate that interventions to relieve poverty among Gaza refugees have been particularly effective and increasingly efficient in terms of targeting. This is in large part due to UNRWA's capacity to detect and address the most severe needs among its refugee constituency. The consequence of underfunding will have a direct impact on UNRWA's credibility among its 1.1 million beneficiaries, but also for the broader UN family in light of UNRWA's significant operational size in the Gaza Strip. The steps that UNRWA has already been compelled to

make, and with further cuts affecting the livelihoods of almost the entire refugee community, are unprecedented in Gaza. The cuts impact both directly on individuals and families at the household level, but will also impact negatively on UNRWA's core programmes of health and education through the stopping of the JCP programme, further impacting the well-being of beneficiaries and access to key services.

## Why is there still a humanitarian program in Gaza?



Humanitarian needs and aid dependency in Gaza is a direct result of the economic collapse borne out of the ongoing blockade in place since 2007. Lack of access to imports and restrictions on exports have decimated the private sector, leading the majority of the population, who were once self-sufficient, to aid dependent. Prior to 2002, when the economy was functioning normally, only 10 percent of refugees were dependent on UNRWA aid. Today, 70 percent of refugees are receiving UNRWA assistance.

The vicious cycle of unemployment-poverty-aid dependency continues. At the end of 2010, the unemployment rate for refugees stood at 45 percent, with more than 60 percent of youth unemployed.

In the absence of livelihoods and prospects of income among ordinary people yearning to work, international assistance fills the gap between poverty and destitution, whereby UNRWA provides services, including through its Emergency program, to 1.1 million Palestine refugees.

Through the provision of basic food items and temporary employment opportunities, UNRWA gives dignity and hope to those most affected by Gaza's socio-economic crisis.