



UNRWA

PRESS RELEASE

Press Release No. HQ/G/25/2002
10 December, 2002
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UNRWA launches \$94 million Appeal for West Bank and Gaza

Jerusalem - The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) today launched an appeal to the international community for US\$94 million. The funds are needed to allow the Agency to carry out emergency relief work in the occupied Palestinian territory during the first half of 2003. By comparison, in 2002 UNRWA asked donors for US\$173 million over the full year. To date almost \$92 million has been pledged.

Over two years of violence, curfews and closures have had a catastrophic impact on the humanitarian conditions of the 1.5 million Palestinian refugees living in the West Bank and Gaza. Around 22 per cent of children are suffering from acute or chronic malnutrition. Unemployment has risen to more than half of the population and over two-thirds are living on less than \$2 a day. Thousands of families have had their shelters demolished or destroyed. There are increasing signs that Palestinian society is teetering on the edge of collapse.

Under its 2003 appeal UNRWA plans to launch the largest food aid programme ever seen in the territories. Around 222,000 families (1.1 million people) will receive regular supplies of iron-fortified flour, chickpeas, olive oil and other staples designed to provide a nutritional safety net for those worst affected by the crisis. UNRWA requires US\$32.4 million to put this feeding plan into operation.

UNRWA plans to create almost one million job opportunity days for refugees in Gaza and the West Bank, to inject badly needed cash into the local economy and provide meaningful temporary employment. The Agency will hire additional teachers, medical staff, labourers and others on short contracts to help it implement its humanitarian programmes and to provide breadwinners with a much-needed income.

The Agency also plans a major rebuilding programme to replace or repair shelters that continue to be destroyed or badly damaged in Israeli military operations. Additionally, UNRWA is asking the international community for funds to supply extra medicines, medical staff and mobile clinics for refugees cut off from health care by curfews and closures. In the education sector a large-scale distance-learning project is planned to help children whose education is being disrupted by the long periods when they or their teachers cannot reach their classrooms.

Peter Hansen, UNRWA's Commissioner-General said: "UNRWA is the largest humanitarian actor in the region and is the only organisation with the kind of infrastructure able to have an major impact on the living conditions for Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. So rapid has been the humanitarian collapse that it will take an emergency programme of the scale we present today to prevent a complete breakdown in Palestinian society. It is my hope and my wish that the international community responds generously and urgently to help UNRWA help the Palestinians."

-Ends-

For more information contact:

In Gaza:

Paul McCann

Office: +972-8-677-7526

Mobile: +972-59-428-008

p.mccann@unrwa.org

In Jerusalem:

Sami Mshasha

Office: 972-2-589-0408

Mobile: 972-50-317-094

s.mshasha@unrwa.org

In New York:

Maher Nasser

Office: +1-212-963-2255

nasser@un.org

In Geneva:

Rene Aquerone

Office: +41-22-917-1166

raquarone@unog.ch

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees provides education, health and relief and social services to four million registered Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Since September 2000 UNRWA has been working to alleviate the effects of violence, curfews and closures on the refugee population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. To finance its emergency programmes it has launched a number of appeals for funds to the international community.

The latest appeal covers January - June 2003. Six main programmes require funding.

APPEAL FACTSHEET:

UNRWA today (December 10, 2002) appeals for \$93.7 million in additional funds, for emergency activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip over the period January-June 2003. Demands on the Agency have increased dramatically in light of the steadily deteriorating humanitarian situation and growing number of victims of ongoing violence. As of 1 December, 2002 UNRWA had received pledges of cash and in-kind donations totaling \$225.5 million to its emergency programmes since the outbreak of strife in September 2000.

Emergency Food Aid

According to latest research, 22 per cent of Palestinian children are suffering from acute or chronic malnutrition. Four out of five children in Gaza and the West Bank have inadequate iron and zinc intake, deficiencies that cause anemia and weaken the immune system. Under its crisis appeal UNRWA is planning the region's largest ever food security programme - covering two-thirds of all refugees in the occupied Palestinian territory. Over 222,000 families (1.1 million people) will receive supplies of iron-fortified flour, chickpeas, olive oil and other staples designed to provide them with up to 1,600 calories a day. UNRWA needs to raise \$32.4 million to fund this programme.

Emergency Job Creation

Unemployment has risen to over 50 per cent in the occupied territory as a consequence of the closures and is the root cause of Palestinian poverty and malnutrition. UNRWA plans to provide almost one million work days for skilled labourers, teachers, medical staff and others. Some staff will be hired directly by the Agency on emergency contracts that last for three months and will pay around \$12 a day. Other jobs will be created through private-sector companies or through community-based programmes. The Agency needs to raise \$29.2 million to fund this programme.

Emergency Shelter Reconstruction and Repair

In the West Bank, UNRWA has received donor funding to rebuild 400 shelters destroyed in Jenin camp. However, in Gaza and the rest of the West Bank another 5,500 refugees have had their homes destroyed during Israeli military operations. Thousands more have had their shelters damaged in the fighting. Under this appeal UNRWA is asking the international community for \$12.9 million to fund the repair and rehousing of those who have already lost their homes and provide assistance to those who may lose their homes or need help with repairs in the first six months of 2003.

Emergency Health

Demand for the Agency's medical services has leapt since the start of the intifada. There has been a 60 per cent increase in consultations and a 30 per cent growth in physiotherapy cases. Curfews and travel restrictions increasingly means the Agency has to take its health care to the refugees. Under its new appeal UNRWA requires \$3 million to pay for over 300 extra staff, extra medicines and health supplies and mobile clinics. The Agency also plans an extensive programme designed to identify and treat children and adults suffering from psychological stress.

Emergency Education

Curfews and closures have crippled Palestinian education. UNRWA lost on average one month's schooling per pupil in the West Bank in the 2001-2002 academic year because students or staff could not reach their classes. Test scores have collapsed. UNRWA is appealing for \$4.2 million to allow it to enroll 40,000 pupils in Gaza in additional remedial classes and to hire 190 teachers in the West Bank. The funding will also be used for self-learning materials and audio tapes for children trapped under curfews. A programme of extra-curricular cultural and sports activities to mitigate stress and violence on children, and keep them off the streets, is included.

Emergency Relief and Social Assistance

Poverty rates among Palestinians have reached 60 per cent of the population and UNRWA is being called on the support more and more destitute families. With \$10.1 million in funding from this appeal it will provide emergency cash assistance to families who have lost their homes or their incomes due to the intifada. Under this programme the Agency will provide physical rehabilitation, counselling and adapt shelters for disabled living. In addition the Agency will provide school clothes, shoes, bags and stationery for 70,000 children from impoverished families.

Appeal Totals

EMERGENCY PROGRAMME	WEST BANK US\$	GAZA US\$	TOTAL US\$
Food Aid	13,729,230	18,760,120	32,489,362
Job Creation	9,354,850	19,903,450	29,258,302
Shelter Reconstruction & Repair	4,233,600	8,667,790	12,901,392
Health	1,862,370	1,209,600	3,071,976
Education	2,240,870	2,047,130	4,288,008
Relief and Social Services	3,696,000	6,450,080	10,146,080
Logistics and Operations Support	818,210	740,880	1,559,097
Total	35,935,154	57,779,063	93,714,217