

## GAZA SITUATION REPORT 109



## 1 September - 8 September 2015 | Issue 109

- With the 2015/2016 school year now underway, UNRWA school attendance rates have steadily normalized, growing from around 75 per cent at the beginning of the school year to a current attendance rate of 96 per cent. UNRWA runs a total of 257 schools in Gaza. At the start of the school year 61 schools are operating on a single shift basis and 192 are operating on a double shift basis, while a total of four are operating on a triple shift basis. For the new school year, four new school buildings have been opened, one in Deir El Balah in central Gaza, two in western Gaza city, one in Jabalia and one in Beit Hanoun, both in northern Gaza. In UNRWA schools, students do not only find a safe and secure place to learn and develop, but the Agency's Community Mental Health Programme also continues to offer individual and group psycho-social counselling for the children, many of whom continue to suffer from their experiences during last summer's conflict. Palestine refugee children in Gaza and across the region face incredible obstacles in obtaining quality basic education, with protection crises, armed conflicts, regional turmoil and socio-political barriers threatening their access to schools. Yet despite this Palestinians continue to emphasize the value of education for their children. In Gaza, the first semester of the school year runs until 7 January, 2016; the second semester starts on 24 January, 2016 and runs until 1 June, 2016.
- UNRWA is delighted to welcome its new Director of UNRWA Operations (DUO) in Gaza, Mr. Bo Schack, who commenced with the Agency on 1 September. The DUO has a thirty-year career in the United Nations system and brings extensive peacebuilding, humanitarian response and protection expertise to the senior role. Mr. Schack joined the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in August 1985 after having worked as an Associate Attorney in Copenhagen and with the Danish Ministry of Industry. His most recent posting with UNHCR was for more than two years (2013-2015) in Afghanistan as Agency Representative and Country Director. Mr. Schack was the United Nations Special Adviser Cote D'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), from April to July 2012. Prior to this, he served for two years the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General in the Central African Republic. This appointment was in addition to the nominations in October 2009 as the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, as well as UNDP Resident Representative in the country. Between 1985 and until the appointment as Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, UNRWA's new DUO in Gaza worked with UNHCR in a number of legal and protection oriented functions in Senegal, Hong Kong, UNHCR Headquarters, the Asia Bureau, the UNHCR Special Operation in the former Yugoslavia and in Sri Lanka. In 2000, he was appointed to Iran as the Deputy Representative before a three years assignment as Head of the Policy Unit, Europe Bureau, UNHCR Headquarters. From 2007 to 2009 he was the UNHCR Representative in Burundi. In each of his roles the functions were predominately associated with negotiations involving all those affected by or involved in refugee situations, internal displacement and repatriation operations, with additional experience in development oriented reintegration programmes. Mr. Bo Schack holds a Law Degree from the University of Copenhagen. He studied International Law at the European College in Bruges, Belgium and obtained a Master's Degree in Business Administration (MBA) from the Open University Business School, United Kingdom. With the arrival of Mr. Schack the Agency also announces the departure of Mr. Christer Nordahl, UNRWA's former Deputy Director, who took up the position of Interim Director of Operations for a two-month period. UNRWA Gaza thanks him for his leadership during this period.
- Since early September, UNRWA has been implementing a Shelter Cash for Work (SCfW) project in Gaza, designed to offset temporary accommodation costs through short term employment opportunities supporting early recovery efforts. UNRWA created this SCfW project in light of the huge shortfall in its US\$ 720 million required for the Agency's strategic response to the summer 2014 conflict. All registered Palestine refugee families whose shelters were identified by UNRWA as uninhabitable are eligible to participate in an optional three-month employment placement (up to two opportunities per family household). Participants will earn US\$266 per month, which is slightly higher than the monthly transitional shelter cash assistance (TSCA) payment which ranges from US\$200-\$250 per month depending on family size. Eligible families are not obligated to participate; participation is entirely voluntary. The Agency sent SMS notifications to approximately 4,900 refugee families. There has been a mixed response in the community and only 304 families have applied. The funding for this project is earmarked and part of the emergency response. While reasonable funding for this project is secured, traditional TSCA funding is uncertain for the remainder of 2015.
- The UNRWA Collective Centre Management Unit (CCMU) has organized a training of trainers (TOT) to build the capacity of UNRWA personnel in the management of designated emergency shelters and Collective Centres (CCs) during and post emergencies. The training is based on lessons learned and training guides designed for UNRWA personnel to roll out future trainings. The sessions run from 6-10 September and include mandatory modules on the establishment and management of shelters and the implementation of food assistance, psycho-social and community mental health, protection, water, sanitation and hygiene, safety and security, and registration procedures. During the training, participants are introduced to standard operating procedures, tools and guidelines and how to use these during or after an emergency. Approximately 35 emergency-experienced UNRWA personnel from different areas of Gaza and from various departments such as health, relief and social services, logistics and education, participated in the training. This TOT will be complemented by an interagency training scheduled for later this month.
- To address increasing diabetes rates among Palestine refugee communities in Gaza, UNRWA has partnered with the not-for-profit development organization Microclinic International (MCi) to build up the capacity of UNRWA's medical staff through the Microclinic Programme for Diabetes Prevention and Management. This programme aims at involving communities to choose and sustain healthy lifestyle changes to prevent or manage diabetes. From 10 August to 22 September, twice a week UNRWA is training its nursing staff on the prevention of diabetes so they are equipped to train and pass their knowledge to patients and the patient's support network such as families and friends. The training takes place in UNRWA Health Centres in Gaza City, Nuseirat (central Gaza) and Khan Younis (southern Gaza). To maximize its reach to the Gaza population the training will also include staff members from the Palestinian Ministry of Health.
- The interest of foreign delegations to visit and follow up on humanitarian projects supported by their governments in Gaza remains high. A delegation from the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) visited Gaza on 1 September, 2015 when UNRWA representatives organized a visit to a refugee family living in the heavily destroyed neighbourhood of Shuja'iya, in eastern Gaza; the family had received UNRWA shelter assistance funded through BMZ and the German delegation heard about their experience and background. During the reporting week, a delegation from the Representative Office of Japan in Ramallah also came to Gaza to visit a Japanese-funded project in an UNRWA Health Centre in Khan Younis, southern Gaza. Furthermore, from 7 to 9 September UNRWA received a delegation from the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) who met with UNRWA staff and visited some of the projects SFD funds, including the construction site of Al Azahar university in Gaza city (implementation of which is supervised by UNRWA), a completed UNRWA Health Centre in Rafah and the Rafah Re-housing Project, now in its last and third construction phase. This project is UNRWA's largest refugee rehousing project and phase three will include 230 houses accommodating 1,310 Palestine refugees. Since commencement, the project has provided more than 1,700 housing units for some 10,000 refugees. The

project is set for completion in March 2016. Through its three phases the construction project has created more than 160,000 working days in the Gaza Strip for some 10,000 labourers.

#### • SHELTER UPDATE

- Since the start of the 2014 emergency shelter response, the Agency has distributed over US\$ 125.8 million (excluding Programme Support Costs) to Palestine refugee families whose homes were damaged or demolished during the 2014 summer conflict. To date, UNRWA has completed the payments to over 66,200 Palestine refugee families – more than half of the caseload – for minor repair works and to 428 families to repair their severely damaged shelters. Payment transfers for 11,956 refugee families to continue repair works of their shelters and for 69 families to continue the reconstruction of their shelters are ongoing.
- Over 12,500 families have received a rental subsidy payment to cover the period from September to December 2014. Disbursement of subsequent instalments entailed further eligibility checks through which over 9,000 families have received the relevant rental subsidy payments during the period from January to August 2015.
- Due to lack of sufficient funding, to date, over 47,000 refugee families have not received the first tranche for repair works of their shelter. UNRWA has processed these cases and they have received approval through the [Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism](#); as soon as funding is secured, the Agency can distribute the urgently needed assistance to these families. Also, due to lack of funding thousands of refugee families were not yet able to start the reconstruction of their totally demolished home.
- The 2014 summer conflict led to the largest displacement recorded in Gaza since 1967 with approximately 500,000 persons displaced at the height of the conflict; tens of thousands remain so to this date. As a response to the ongoing displacement crisis the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as chair of the internally displaced persons (IDP) working group, in the occupied Palestinian territory is leading a re-registration and vulnerability exercise among IDPs on behalf of the humanitarian country team. The exercise serves the purpose of having an in-depth analysis of the living situation of IDPs and helps to identify response gaps and protection concerns; it also has an emergency preparedness function as the registration form that is being piloted could be considered for use in shelters in potential future emergencies. The exercise is carried out by the IDP working group in Gaza consisting of UN agencies including UNRWA and OCHA, the Palestinian non-government organisations network (PNGO), international non-government organizations, such as the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), community-based organizations, the Ministry of Social Affairs, municipalities and other relevant line ministries as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross and its national society, the Palestine Red Crescent Society. These agencies contribute resources, expertise and data support to the exercise. Other organisations provide financial support or support with communication tools. Data of nearly 18,000 displaced families will be collected by 300 field workers, mostly volunteers, at the household level and the aggregated data will be used for response purposes mostly; however, public documents will be produced as well for advocacy and information purposes. The re-registration exercise is rolled out per governorate and started on 16 August in Rafah, and then continued in Khan Younis and the Middle Area. As of 7 September, 2,000 families have been re-registered in Rafah and Khan Younis. The exercise also contains a communications with communities component and feedback mechanism, with information brochures, an SMS platform and a hotline for IDPs.
- UNRWA continues to implement approved construction projects, and as of 31 August, 33 infrastructure projects worth over US\$79.3 million are under implementation. This includes construction of 23 schools, two clinics, two housing projects and two infrastructure projects including one currently implemented in six different camp locations in the Gaza Strip. In addition, UNRWA is currently implementing three maintenance projects and UNRWA Gaza's Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme (ICIP) will supervise two local companies that will undertake the construction work of the Faculty of Art and Students' Activities Centre at the new campus of Al Azhar University in Gaza City. During the month of August, UNRWA received from the Coordination of the Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) approval for two projects. Seven project approvals are pending. UNRWA received an updated dual-use goods list issued by COGAT during August. According to the list, the thickness of wood that can be imported without prior approval has been further restricted to less than one centimetre. For UNRWA, this new restriction will mainly affect production of doors for infrastructure projects as well as production of furniture for schools, which are needed due to both the increase in student enrolment and to replace school furniture damaged during the use of schools as Collective Centres following the 2014 summer conflict, up to June 2015. UNRWA Gaza's August 2015 construction update is attached.
- A report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) from July 2015, titled [UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory](#), has gained significant media attention. In the report, UNCTAD describes the disillusioning reality of a society suffering from the consequences of decades-long occupation, isolation and repeated armed violence. The report states that socio-economic conditions in Gaza are at their lowest point since 1967 due to years of blockade and three conflicts within six years, with full-scale military operations. The prospects for the remainder of 2015 remain bleak, according to the report. Insufficient donor support is further undermined by the occupation yet "no amount of aid would have been sufficient to put any economy on a path of sustainable development under conditions of frequent military strikes and destruction of infrastructure," the report states. The Israeli military operations and blockade have created a process in Gaza in which development is "not merely hindered, but reversed." Referring to the study conducted by the UN in 2012, in which UNRWA participated, titled [Gaza in 2020: A liveable place?](#) - the report notes that three years ago the UN warned that "herculean efforts" would be required for Gaza to be a liveable place; yet "instead of such efforts, the tragedy in Gaza has deteriorated and its de-development was accelerated by destruction in 2014." The report also warns of a severe housing and water crisis, both of which could potentially lead to a serious health crisis.

#### GENERAL

**Operational environment:** The environment in Gaza has becoming more difficult and tense over the past few weeks. The UNRWA Safety and Security Division (UNSSD) registered in its monthly report for August 2015 a total of 28 crime incidents in Gaza, of which 14 are reported to be family disputes. Furthermore, UNSSD reported 82 demonstrations in August, with 46 of them held against UN agencies.

On 5 September, an alleged dispute between supporters of President Mahmoud Abbas and Palestinian politician Mohammad Dahlan resulted in 10 injuries and the arrest of several persons by the police.

On 7 September a dispute between a client and a shop owner in Gaza city resulted in the owner firing shots from his pistol. No injuries were reported.

On 7 September an Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) was found in an agricultural area in central Gaza; the Ordnance Disposal Police defused it.

Repeated protests continued during the reporting week, with protestors demonstrating against UNRWA's newly launched Shelter Cash for Work pilot project or in solidarity of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

#### UNRWA'S RESPONSE

##### RAFAH RE-HOUSING PROJECT PROVIDES SHELTER FOR DISPLACED REFUGEES



Kana'an Abu Libda with his grandchildren in his new housing unit in the Saudi-funded Rafah Rehousing Project. © 2015 UNRWA Photo by Khalil Adwan

62-year old Palestine refugee Kana'an Abu Libda, a father of seven, used to live in the "Brazil" refugee camp in Rafah, southern Gaza. However, in 2003 his house, together with many others in the camp, was demolished by Israeli forces and his life was turned upside down.

After losing their home, the family received rental subsidy payments through UNRWA to be able to rent a temporary shelter. However, "constantly moving from one house to another

was very difficult because we never felt that a house was really ours; we were not able to change or fix things or give it our own touch," Kana'an explained. After more than 10 years living in temporary accommodation, in June 2014 the Abu Libda family received a housing unit in phase two of the Rafah Rehousing Project. "We felt such relief when we received the shelter; after a long time we were finally able to settle down again in a house that is just for us," Kana'an said satisfied. The Abu Libda family's house in the Rehousing Project consists of three floors, each with two rooms. The space is very tight, since his married sons, their wives and their children, also lived in the housing unit. However, despite the difficulties, Kana'an is very thankful for the new home: "The house is very clean, there is an automatic water generator and the electricity lines are very good; we also have a refrigerator, a washing machine and a cooking stove." And he added: "We do appreciate the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for funding this project that helps people like me to keep our dignity in these difficult times; and we also see what an important role UNRWA plays in supervising, implementing and following up on such projects."

After more than ten years of searching, hoping and moving from one place to the other, the Abu Libda family has finally found a real home again.

#### SUMMARY OF MAJOR INCIDENTS

Israeli forces fired towards Palestinians near the security fence or towards Palestinian boats on a daily basis. On 1 September Israeli troops arrested a Palestinian who allegedly illegally tried to cross into Israel from southern Gaza. On 2 September, Israeli troops fired towards and arrested a Palestinian in northern Gaza who illegally tried to cross into Israel. The person was injured. On the same day, two Palestinian families of 11 persons (two men, two women, seven children) tried to enter into Israel from southern Gaza; they were arrested by Israeli troops. On 3 September, Israeli forces fired towards a group of Palestinian young people who were approaching the security fence; an 11-year old child was injured. On 6 September, Israeli troops arrested two Palestinians who allegedly illegally tried to cross into Israel from central Gaza.

On 1 September, militants fired two rockets towards Israel; the rockets dropped short. On 4 September, militants fired six test rockets towards the sea.

On 2 September, stray bullets fired from northern Gaza hit three Israeli houses in the settlement of Nativ Haasara located near the security fence with Gaza. On 3 September, the Israeli air force fired two missiles targeting a Hamas training site in northern Gaza. On the same day, two Israeli tanks and three bulldozers entered approximately 250 metres into central Gaza and conducted a clearing and excavation operation.

On 8 September four bulldozers entered approximately 50 meters into central Gaza and Israeli troops conducted a clearing and excavation operation.

In total, for the month of August the United Nations Safety and Security Division (UNSSD) reported 24 security fence fire incidents, 2 air strikes by the Israeli army, 25 rocket launches, and 18 Israeli naval fire incidents.

#### FUNDING NEEDS

Thanks to generous donors, UNRWA has overcome its immediate and most serious financial crisis and was able to partially bridge the US\$ 101 million deficit in its General Fund; to date, [approximately US\\$ 78.9 million has been confirmed by donors](#).

In response to the unprecedented needs faced by the Palestine refugees, and the continuous financial shortages and unstable financial footing of the Agency, UNRWA is currently exploring options for additional funding, but is also implementing a series of austerity measures aimed at decreasing costs where possible while preserving essential services to refugees.

US\$ 227 million has been pledged in support of UNRWA's emergency shelter programme, for which an estimated US\$ 720 million is required. This leaves a current shortfall of US\$ 493 million.

As presented in UNRWA's oP Emergency Appeal, the Agency is seeking US\$ 366.6 million for its 2015 emergency operations in Gaza, including US\$ 127 million for emergency shelter, repair and collective centre management, US\$ 105.6 million for emergency food assistance, and US\$ 68.6 million for emergency cash-for-work. More information can be found [here](#).

#### CROSSINGS

- The Rafah Crossing was closed from 1 to 7 September. It was open on 8 September in one direction for Palestinian pilgrims.
- The Erez crossing was open for National ID holders (humanitarian cases, medical cases, merchants and UN staff) and for international staff from 1 to 3 September and from 6 to 8 September. On 4 September, Erez crossing was open for pedestrians only. It was closed on 5 September.
- Kerem Shalom was open from 1 to 3 and 6 to 8 September. It was closed on 4 and 5 September.