



syria regional crisis response january – december 2014

Executive Summary

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is uniquely placed to make a real difference in the lives of Palestine refugees affected across the region by the armed conflict in Syria. Since its establishment in 1949, and through successive upheavals and conflicts, UNRWA has kept faith with Palestinians, ensuring that they receive protection, assistance and essential services within a historically volatile operational context. Over the course of decades, the Agency has developed an unmatched range of humanitarian and development facilities across the region, from schools and health clinics to centres for youth and women's programmes. These are managed by staff whose expertise in humanitarian service and presence within Palestine refugee communities give UNRWA an exceptional edge among humanitarian actors.

The strength of the UNRWA regional response lies in its ability to adapt creatively to volatile contexts, enabling it to bring its considerable humanitarian assets to bear on securing the well-being, protection and resilience of Palestine refugees.

Without faltering in its programmes of services and assistance to a population of some 5 million Palestine refugees across the region, and despite chronic financial constraints, UNRWA will continue to address the growing humanitarian needs of affected Palestine refugees, not only inside Syria, but also in Lebanon, Jordan and Gaza. Many have sought safety in Egypt, Turkey and further afield. While these countries are beyond the UNRWA areas of operations, the Agency is actively advocating for refugees there to receive the support they need. Assisting Palestinians in Egypt presents particular challenges and UNRWA continues to engage the Egyptian authorities in order to address protection issues and expand the scope of emergency assistance being provided to Palestinians from Syria.

Over the next year, from 1 January to 31 December 2014, UNRWA will provide urgent humanitarian assistance to up to 440,000 Palestine refugees affected by conflict in Syria, as many as 80,000 to 100,000 Palestine refugees from Syria (FRS) in Lebanon, up to 20,000 FRS in Jordan and up to 1,200 FRS in Gaza. The number of people in need is rapidly approaching the total population of 540,000 Palestine refugees registered in Syria.¹

The scale of the Syria conflict and its devastating humanitarian consequences continue to outstrip forecasts and planning scenarios. The two UNRWA 2013 regional crisis plans appealed for critical humanitarian assistance in the form of food, cash, household/winter items, education and health services in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan for a total of US\$ 290,800,000. Many donors responded generously, funding 72 per cent of the appeal to date, and the considerable results achieved are detailed according to strategic objectives in the six-monthly report of September provided to donors. Another report will be issued after the end of 2013. In the last period, despite extraordinary challenges, UNRWA made critical improvements to its regional emergency operations, including in delivery of assistance, for example by moving to more efficient cash transfer mechanisms, by refining needs assessments and targeting techniques and by regularizing field contingency planning.

Inside Syria, UNRWA has adapted its services to ensure that they are sustainable and effective in conditions of armed conflict. These services include primary education, primary health care, social services, infrastructure services in refugee camps, programmes for women and youth and microfinance. Alongside humanitarian response activities, the regional UNRWA network of existing services, directly offered by its 13,000 area staff in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, continues to provide a critical framework of stability for families and communities, improving prospects for effective post-conflict recovery.

For the coming period, UNRWA requires US\$ 417.4 million, of which US\$ 310 million will be programmed inside Syria, US\$ 90.4 million in Lebanon and US\$ 14.6 million in Jordan.²

US\$ 2.4 million is required for regional management and emergency response outside of the purview of these three field offices, including cash assistance for FRS families in Gaza.

This is a conservative reckoning of what is required to address the most basic requirements of a community unravelling and in acute distress.³

Amid increasing insecurity and uncertainty, UNRWA emergency and regular programming combine to make a vital contribution to the resilience of Palestine refugees and their communities.

Endnotes

¹ Movement of Palestine refugees is difficult to estimate over a 12-month period. These estimates and associated budgets will be revisited during the midterm review at the end of June. In Syria, registration numbers have been rising as Palestine refugees in Syria update their files with UNRWA.

² The Syria content of this plan is contained in the updated Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) January–December 2014, and the Lebanon content is presented in the United Nations Regional Response Plan (RRP), January–December 2014. The UNRWA Jordan response does not appear in the RRP Jordan chapter. The Agency's Jordan budget is instead included in the regional component of the RRP.

³ This plan will be reviewed at the end of June 2014, midway through implementation, in line with similar plans for the SHARP and RRP.