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**Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency
for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
Programme budget 2016-2017**



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Note

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Chapter I

Introduction

1. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established within the United Nations system as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly in its resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949. Since starting operations in 1950, UNRWA has adapted and enhanced its programmes to meet the increasingly complex needs of Palestine refugees and to provide them with a measure of protection and stability amid chronic conflict in the region, within available resources. It stands ready to continue to do so during the biennium 2016 - 2017 in accordance with the triennial mandate that it receives from the Assembly.

2. In August 2015, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA submitted to the Secretary-General a special report on the current financial crisis ([see A/70/272](#)) setting

out the dramatic dimensions of the funding shortfall, the efforts undertaken to secure funding and the measures taken to maintain critical Agency services. In the special report, he proposed that a process be established, on the basis of consultations with appropriate stakeholders, to continue exploring actively measures that would result in a decisive change towards more sustainable funding of UNRWA operations with a view to enabling the Agency to continue to provide adequate levels of assistance and protection to Palestine refugees in accordance with its mandate. In the context of the biennial budget and the Agency's medium-term strategy for the period 2016-2021, it is essential that the budget be adequately and predictably funded.

3. The mission of UNRWA is to help Palestine refugees to achieve their full potential in human development under the difficult circumstances in which they live, consistent with internationally agreed goals and standards. The Agency fulfils that mission by providing a variety of essential services, within the framework of international standards, to Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. The mandate of the Agency, which derives from the General Assembly, extends at present to providing education; health care; relief and social services; microfinance and emergency assistance to Palestine refugees; infrastructure and camp improvement within Palestine refugee camps; and protection.

4. UNRWA is well regarded as a pioneer in public service delivery in both stable and fragile contexts. In 2014, the Agency succeeded in educating more than 490,000 children. UNRWA provides access to primary health-care services to families, reaching 3.68 million individuals through well over 9.5 million consultations annually, and contributes towards health outcomes for Palestine refugees that are in line with host countries in areas such as infant and maternal mortality. In 2014, the Agency provided social safety net assistance to 294,000 persons and had a positive impact on the lives of 730,000 people through inclusive and participatory infrastructure and camp improvement interventions. The UNRWA microfinance programme has developed into one of the stronger institutions of its type in the region, delivering, from 1991 to 2010, more than 225,000 loans totalling almost \$257 million, and was internationally recognized in 2011 for excellence in social performance reporting. Furthermore, UNRWA has a well-established record of responding rapidly and effectively to emergencies, including in promoting protection, for example, following the hostilities in the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2014 and previously, during the ongoing Syrian conflict, during the two intifadas in the occupied Palestinian territory and during the Lebanese civil war, to name just a few.

5. UNRWA provides direct services through a workforce of 30,000 staff members, primarily Palestine refugees themselves. The workforce includes 22,000 education staff, 3,300 health-care staff, 1,100 sanitation labourers and 300 social workers, working in some 1,135 locations, including schools, health centres, and technical and vocational training centres, across its five fields of operation.