

UNRWA RAISES AWARENESS ABOUT BREAST CANCER AND THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY DETECTION AMONG PALESTINE REFUGEE WOMEN IN GAZA

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On 1 March, as part of the UNRWA Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign, over 50 Palestine refugee women gathered at Al-Amal Association for Persons with Disabilities in Rafah, southern Gaza, to learn more about and discuss breast cancer and early detection.

The session was 1 of over 100 planned awareness and outreach sessions being conducted through the UNRWA health programme between mid-February and mid-March 2016. Sessions are being held in the 21 UNRWA health centres across Gaza, but also in UNRWA-supported community-based organizations, such as rehabilitation centres and women's programme centres, often located in remote areas.

The session at Al-Amal Association was designed for deaf women. It was led by UNRWA senior nurse Jamalata Abu Hilal and translated into sign language by staff from Al-Amal.

"Three years ago, my brother's wife died from breast cancer. Since then, I continuously raise awareness among women in the community of how they can better protect themselves from it through early detection," explained Ms. Jamalata. "I hope that all women who participate in these awareness sessions will themselves go and function as messengers for other women whom we could not reach directly; the information must be transferred to everyone," she added.

During the session, Jamalata explained to the women in detail of the importance of regular check-ups and screenings to detect potential breast cancer at an early stage, how women can check themselves, and to what extent family medical history can impact the chance of getting breast cancer. The senior nurse also advised the women on where they can go to seek help and professional advice.

"This disease is very dangerous, and I am glad I learned how to better protect myself," commented 24-year-old participant Raghda Hashem, who said she was informed about breast cancer for the first time in her life.

After the session, UNRWA health staff also distributed breast cancer awareness brochures to all women for further information and offered free check-ups to all participating women.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

UNRWA is confronted with an increased demand for services resulting from a growth in the number of registered Palestine refugees, the extent of their vulnerability and their deepening poverty. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions and financial support has been outpaced by the growth in needs. As a result, the UNRWA Programme Budget, which supports the delivery of core essential services, operates with a large shortfall, projected for 2016 to stand at US\$ 81 million. UNRWA emergency programmes and key projects, also operating with large shortfalls, are funded through separate funding portals.

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip achieve their full human development potential, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. UNRWA services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, and microfinance.

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