
UNRWA THANKS ISLAMIC RELIEF USA FOR STRONG SUPPORT

17 April 2015

UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl expressed sincere appreciation to Islamic Relief USA (IRUSA) Chief Executive Officer Anwar Ahmed Khan on March 17 for their recent contributions totaling US\$ 3 million. These funds will help improve the lives of Palestine refugees living in the Gaza Strip in the wake of the 2014 summer conflict.

This meeting was also to commemorate the dynamic partnership between UNRWA and IRUSA to support approximately five million Palestine refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. The relationship with IRUSA is an example of UNRWA initiatives to expand its private sector partnerships.

Highlighting this partnership, Mr. Krähenbühl said: "We are very grateful to have IRUSA as a committed and creative partner, especially in the past three years, where they provided timely and significant financial contributions in support of projects in Gaza and in Syria. Their support for our work during the 2014 summer crisis had a major impact for Palestine refugees living in very difficult circumstances."

The first of these grants is a six-month initiative to improve the provision of primary health care in collective centres in Gaza. The US\$ 500,000 grant from IRUSA will allow UNRWA to assist internally-displaced persons staying at UNRWA collective centres by providing essential drugs to treat patients who were injured in the 2014 conflict in Gaza. It also provides assistance in addressing chronic illnesses and psychological trauma. This initiative in support of UNRWA collective centres began in February 2015 and will continue until August 2015.

The second grant aims to ensure a clean environment in collective centres by providing access to sufficient potable and non-potable water for displaced persons living in UNRWA collective centres. The US\$ 500,000 IRUSA grant supplies reliable water access in an area affected by potable and non-potable water scarcity.

In order to address the traumatic effects of war on children, IRUSA partnered with UNRWA to provide US\$ 1,000,000 for activities in the Gaza Strip. The project, which began in January 2015 and will continue until January 2016, aims to bring psychosocial support to children between the ages of 6 and 15 attending UNRWA schools. It will enhance the capability of UNRWA school counsellors and supervisors to work with children, particularly those with disabilities.

To support the Palestine refugee children orphaned by the 2014 conflict in Gaza, IRUSA contributed US\$ 1,000,000 to provide 1,000 orphans with a package of assistance consisting of a monthly allowance, clothing for those most in need, and recreational activities over a period of 12 months. The project will also organize monthly awareness sessions for orphan custodians as well as vocational training support for 100 orphans over 16 years old.

The IRUSA-UNRWA partnership allows UNRWA to provide additional services to some very vulnerable people. Emphasizing the role of the private sector, Mr. Krähenbühl said: "We appreciate IRUSA's confidence in UNRWA. Their support has been tremendous. We appreciate their strong solidarity with Palestine refugees. We look forward to further developing our ongoing strong partnership."

Praising the importance of the UNRWA-IRUSA partnership, Mr. Khan said: "We appreciate our partnership with UNRWA to help those in need, and hope that we will both leverage our collaboration to help in new ways and reach more people."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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

Financial support to UNRWA has not kept pace with an increased demand for services caused by growing numbers of registered refugees, expanding need, and deepening poverty. As a result, the Agency's General Fund (GF), supporting UNRWA's core activities and 97 per cent reliant on voluntary contributions, has begun each year with a large projected deficit. Currently the deficit stands at US\$ 100 million.

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