
UNRWA RESTARTS POVERTY ASSESSMENT HOME VISITS

[الأونروا تستأنف الزيارات المنزلية لتقييم الفقر](#)

01 June 2015

On 31 May, UNRWA restarted poverty assessment home visits in Gaza after a year-long interruption, during which the Agency engaged in intensive efforts to improve the quality, fairness and speed of the process, which serves to determine eligibility for food assistance and other poverty-targeted services. During this time, UNRWA also conducted an outreach campaign to communities in the Gaza Strip to inform them of the process. Feedback from community leaders, human rights groups, ministry staff and other targeted groups on the reforms has been positive. Restarting the assessment was delayed due to the summer 2014 conflict.

"Poverty is multidimensional and is influenced by interwoven factors. Building on the experience accumulated over five years of implementation of the Poverty Survey, the poverty assessment system will ensure that our food assistance continues to be provided to those who need it most," said UNRWA Relief and Social Services Programme chief Asem Abu-Shawish.

The reformed Poverty Assessment System (PAS) method improves speed and accuracy through the use of new technology in the form of tablet-based data collection. PAS is also ensuring stronger quality assurance procedures; the introduction of a robust appeal mechanism; it has become fairer and more gender equal by allowing vulnerable women who do not hold their own refugee registration card number to be assessed and obtain food in their own name; and is ensuring that families facing economic shocks can reapply quickly for an assessment. In addition, "all concerned staff has passed intensive capacity-building sessions to enable a unified understanding and application of the instructions," Mr. Abu-Shawish said.

Determining eligibility for food assistance using PAS is a routine process for UNRWA to ensure food continues to be provided to those who need it most. PAS is not related to the Agency's funding situation. UNRWA will serve all those who are assessed as eligible for food assistance and there is no maximum number of food aid beneficiaries. Currently almost 868,000 Palestine refugees depend on food aid from UNRWA – half of Gaza's 1.76 million total population and 65 per cent of registered refugees.

[Click here](#) to read the Poverty Assessment System (PAS) Fact Sheet.

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 more than US\$ 106 million.

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