



## Strategic Response to Gaza 2014 Hostilities

### Towards restoring dignity and development for Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip

#### Introduction

UNRWA is seeking US\$ 1.6 billion<sup>[1]</sup> for emergency relief, early recovery and reconstruction priorities in the Gaza Strip. This includes US\$ 1.1 billion, as referenced in the State of Palestine National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza, envisioned for an initial two year period, and an additional US\$ 500 million for longer-term infrastructure development in the camps. Interventions will focus on shelter and infrastructure repair and rehabilitation, as well as providing for the most urgent needs of the 1.2 million Palestine refugees UNRWA serves in Gaza. UNRWA is playing a leading role in addressing the devastation caused by the recent conflict, and the pervasive effects of the Israeli-imposed blockade. The Agency is working in close cooperation with the international community, and in coordination with stakeholders in the region including the Palestinian Government of National Consensus, to move forward with the recovery and reconstruction response.

The work ahead remains critical, as is the urgency of its implementation. UNRWA, which has a proven capacity to implement post-conflict recovery and reconstruction in the Gaza Strip, is committed to getting assistance swiftly and directly to the affected population. The estimated 77,000 refugees who are left without a home are among those most urgently in need of transitional shelter assistance until they can return to their homes. Around 240,000 refugee children will remain a focus in rebuilding communities, especially among those suffering long-term injuries, and children who have been orphaned. The UNRWA response will also focus on vulnerable women, including those who have been widowed, and opportunities for families who have lost their livelihoods.

UNRWA is the largest UN organization in the Gaza Strip, and the only UN agency that undertakes direct implementation. It is mandated to provide assistance and protection to Palestine refugees, who constitute over 70 per cent of the population in the Gaza Strip, and has over 12,000 experienced staff as well as established mechanisms for expanded operational capacity. UNRWA is therefore uniquely positioned to respond in emergency situations.

UNRWA expenditure in 2013 surpassed US\$ 423 million, which was equivalent to 15 per cent of the Gaza GDP. In 2013, UNRWA operations accounted for 8.1 per cent of all employment in the Gaza Strip and contributed to reducing the unemployment rate by 5.5 percentage points. Since the second intifada in 2000, UNRWA operations have injected more than US\$ 1 billion in the form of relief assistance, including food, cash and cash for work, and between 2011 and 2013 spent approximately US\$ 375 million in construction projects – including the completion of 30 schools in 2013 alone – despite protracted delays caused by lengthy approval and coordination processes with the Israeli authorities.

Throughout the conflict, and owing to the dedication and bravery of its staff, UNRWA provided humanitarian assistance to over 290,000 displaced who took shelter in 91 of 156 UNRWA school buildings. In addition to, and despite these enormous challenges, UNRWA was able to ensure continued delivery of core services, such as the operation of health centres, food distribution to over 830,000 refugees, and WASH services in the camps where over 40 per cent of Gaza's 1.2 million refugees live. The over US\$ 190 million received in pledges and valuable in-kind donations against its US\$ 295.4 million Flash Appeal enabled UNRWA to respond with much-needed assistance during the height of the hostilities, and to launch initial early recovery efforts with the holding of the 26 August ceasefire.

The UNRWA Flash Appeal presented needs, interventions and funding requirements for emergency relief through the end of 2014. In this document, the Agency presents an overview of needs, response and funding requirements to respond more comprehensively to the impact of the hostilities for 2015 and beyond. The forthcoming 2015 UNRWA Emergency Appeal will capture the enduring humanitarian interventions of the protracted crisis in Gaza and the increased needs caused by the summer hostilities. Reconstruction and development requirements to address refugee needs and contribute to a larger reconstruction and economic rejuvenation are likely to extend into a three to five year period.

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[1] Of which, approximately US\$ 200 million has already been received, through the UNRWA Gaza Flash Appeal, to respond to the emergency needs and early recovery in Gaza.