
Launching of the diabetes clinical audit report

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STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER-GENERAL, MARGOT ELLIS

[إطلاق التقرير الخالص بنتائج الدراسة المسحية لمرض السكري](#)

Amman

The health of Palestine refugees remains a key priority for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). For over six decades, UNRWA has provided quality health services to our beneficiaries through our primary health care centres in five fields of operations, including Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The disease profile of communities at the global level is changing. Currently, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) comprise a major cause of death and disability for people around the world, and unfortunately, Palestine refugees are not an exception.

Since 1992, UNRWA has been providing NCD care for diabetes and hypertension through the Agency's primary health care centres. Over 114,000 Palestine refugee diabetic patients were registered with UNRWA health centres in 2011 in the five fields of operations, and the numbers are steadily increasing by 3-5 per cent every year.

Recently, UNRWA started implementing health-care reform by introducing the Family Health Team (FHT) approach, which is a family- and person-centred approach to providing comprehensive primary health care at UNRWA health centres. This approach is essential for chronic, lifestyle-related conditions like diabetes. Most importantly, the approach improves efficiency of health care while focusing on the specific needs of refugee patients.

In order to address different challenges and assess the quality of diabetes care in UNRWA, the Agency performed a diabetes clinical audit in collaboration with the World Diabetes Foundation (WDF). This is the first step of a three-year project generously supported by the Foundation.

The report shows us that the prevalence of risk factors amongst our diabetes patients is unacceptable, with 90 per cent of diabetes cases involving obesity and 20 per cent of cases involving smokers (34.1 per cent males and 11.3 per cent females). Compared with similar populations around the world, this rate is dangerously high.

The findings of the diabetes clinical audit report that we are launching today will be used to define a strategy to improve technical and managerial capacity within UNRWA health services, and to increase diabetes awareness among Palestine refugees. Our ultimate aim is to save more lives and to protect all diabetic refugees from complications that may lead to disability.

Today you will hear from a very brave girl who wants to share her story of the challenges that she faces in dealing with diabetes. I would like to acknowledge the courage of Randa Abu Izz and thank her for joining UNRWA initiatives to raise awareness on diabetes. In addition, I would like to thank comedians Hasan and Rania for supporting UNRWA and the entire Department of Health, led by Dr. Seita, in its campaign for diabetes awareness. This is an excellent example of cooperation with communities on a subject that touches all of our lives. Thank you.

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\$ 65 million.

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