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Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

1 January-31 December 2015

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Letter of transmittal

Letter dated 1 July 2016 from the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to submit to the General Assembly the annual report on the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for 2015. The report is submitted in compliance with the request contained in paragraph 21 of resolution [302 \(IV\)](#) of 8 December 1949 and with paragraph 8 of resolution [1315 \(XIII\)](#) of 12 December 1958.

As in previous years, the report describes political, economic, security and operational developments in the UNRWA fields of operations in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as significant legal matters, progress in programme reforms, the Agency's financial situation and priorities for the coming year. The report also includes a review of progress towards the achievement of human development goals, as set out in the Agency's medium-term strategy for 2010-2015.

The Advisory Commission of UNRWA, comprising 25 Member States and three observers, endorsed a draft of the present report prior to its session held in May 2016, and a letter that the Chair of the Commission addressed to me precedes the report. The ongoing engagement and constructive advice of the Commission continues to be essential to UNRWA. In accordance with usual practice, a draft of the report has also been shared with the Government of Israel.

At the time of submitting the present report, I note a general deep sense of despair and insecurity that runs through the Palestine refugee community. Confronted with hopelessness and fear, amplified by the unresolved Palestinian refugee questions, many are joining the refugee exodus within the region and into Europe, often on perilous sea journeys. However, during my trips and meetings with Palestine refugees in camps throughout the UNRWA areas of operations, I could also witness extraordinary courage, determination and strength.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, as the armed conflict entered its sixth year and intensified across multiple front lines, the widespread disregard for civilian lives has continued to result in increasing humanitarian and protection needs. In the midst of the bloodshed and destruction, the 560,000 Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA in that country are among those worst affected. Hundreds of thousands have been subjected to continued and repeated displacement, and thousands in Yarmuk and Khan al-Shih remain exposed to active conflict and violence, in conditions of unimaginable suffering.

Jordan and Lebanon have been generous in offering sanctuary to more than 1 million civilians fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic, despite the substantial burden this has placed on them. It is vital that the fundamental principle of non-refoulement be honoured with regard to Palestine refugees fleeing the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and that, in accordance with international law, they not be discriminated against. It is also critical that the international community continue to provide support to both countries.

In Gaza, as a result of the nine-year Israeli blockade, almost the entire population is dependent on aid to meet basic needs, as unemployment remains among the highest in the world. The situation has been compounded by repeated cycles of conflict that have led to heavy losses of life among civilians and psychological trauma, inflicted major damages to private and public infrastructure and severely undermined the provision of basic services. Tens of thousands of homes remain in ruins after the most recent conflict, in the summer of 2014. Reconstruction is a humanitarian imperative and must be accelerated to enable Gaza to embark on the road to recovery with the support of the international community. The psychological impact of those factors and of the major restrictions on freedom of movement are extremely severe.

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, violence and operations by Israeli security forces, access restrictions, forced displacement, demolitions and other rights violations have increased significantly since October 2015. As a result of this intensified protection crisis, the casualties and injuries that ensued and the impact of long-term occupation, Palestinian living standards and opportunities to improve them are undermined, and the demand for UNRWA services has remained high.

In 2015, UNRWA faced the most serious financial crisis in its 66-year-long history, which threatened the opening of some 700 schools in the Middle East. The extraordinary mobilization of partners allowed the Agency to bridge that gap and enabled it to sustain the schooling for 500,000 girls and boys. The 2015 shortfall shed a new light on the serious risks for the entire region of an underfunded UNRWA. The Agency's role as a contributor to a measure of dignity and stability was more clearly recognized than ever, as was the urgency of breaking the cycle of the Agency's financial instability. The current programme budget deficit for 2016 stands at \$74 million. While the Agency has engaged in far-reaching reforms, introduced stringent budget processes and controls and approved a zero-growth budget for 2016 to achieve a more stable financial footing, the accompanying and increased support from donors and partners remains essential.

In a region torn by conflict, UNRWA provides a critical lifeline to Palestine refugees. The remarkable dedication of the Agency's staff enables it to respond rapidly and effectively to ever mounting needs. They have shown extraordinary courage in continuing to work in extremely difficult circumstances, and I take this opportunity to honour fallen colleagues in Gaza, the West Bank and the Syrian Arab Republic.

In the current volatile context, it is crucial to restore hope and a political horizon for the people in the region. As a matter of dignity, it is essential to strengthen the commitment to Palestine refugees and to UNRWA.

(Signed) Pierre Krähenbühl
Commissioner-General

Letter dated 31 May 2016 from the Chair of the Advisory Commission of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East addressed to the Commissioner-General of the Agency

At its regular session, held in Amman on 30 and 31 May 2016, the Advisory Commission of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) considered your draft annual report on the Agency's activities and operations, covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2015, to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forthcoming seventy-first session.

The Commission commends UNRWA for its efforts in continuing to deliver services to Palestine refugees in all fields of operations in accordance with its mandate.

The Commission underlines the vital role that UNRWA plays in promoting regional stability until a just and lasting solution to the refugee situation is reached in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolutions [194 \(III\)](#) and [302 \(IV\)](#). The Commission notes that operating challenges continue to increase in all five fields owing to conflict and instability or their effects in neighbouring fields. The Commission commends and thanks the host authorities for their work in support of Palestine refugees, including through the facilitation of UNRWA work, and notes that UNRWA is needed now more than ever. In this context, the Commission recognizes again the enduring hardship and growing needs of Palestine refugees affected by displacement and its consequences for the past 67 years.

The Commission is extremely concerned about the increasing volatility in the region and the increasing violence, marginalization and poverty that continue to affect Palestine refugees across the five fields of operations. This makes support for UNRWA work in delivering humanitarian and development assistance vitally important. The Commission thus urges all relevant parties to grant access for humanitarian purposes to those refugee populations. The Commission calls upon all relevant parties to comply fully with their obligations under international law, including humanitarian law, as well as to respect United Nations resolutions, and to enable UNRWA to fulfil its humanitarian obligations without hindrance or additional cost. The Commission asks all relevant parties to refrain from taking any actions that jeopardize the safety, security and neutrality of UNRWA installations and staff. The Commission commends UNRWA staff for continuing their work under very dangerous and difficult conditions.

The Commission remains concerned about the level of threats and attacks against UNRWA personnel in conflict areas, in particular threats to and attacks on staff while delivering services. The Commission also remains extremely concerned about the Agency's lack of access to and information on its staff detained by certain authorities, and it reminds those authorities of their responsibilities in that regard, including those referenced in General Assembly resolution 36/232. The Commission deplores the death of UNRWA personnel as a result of conflict.

The Commission is concerned about the considerable increase in violence in the West Bank and the number of sustained injuries and deaths mentioned in the annual report of the Commissioner-General. The Commission stresses that forced displacement, the destruction of homes and economic assets, the separation barrier and the closure of the West Bank and other restrictions on movement therein, including in East Jerusalem, imposed by the Israeli authorities have a profound negative effect on the living conditions and well-being of Palestine refugees. The Commission is concerned that settler violence has continued with relative impunity, resulting in death, injuries and damages to private Palestinian property, including those of Palestine refugees. The Commission is concerned that recurrent hostilities have led to a dramatic deterioration in socioeconomic conditions, increased desperation and frustration across Gaza and a greater reliance on UNRWA services.

The Commission notes with alarm the conditions facing Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic and recognizes the additional strain on neighbouring countries resulting from the arrival of Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic — 41,000 were in Lebanon at the end of 2015 and 16,400 in Jordan. It thanks the people and the authorities in those countries for their generosity in supporting those refugees. The Commission notes the strong efforts by UNRWA to fulfil its mandate to the Palestine refugees fleeing from the Syrian Arab Republic and stresses the need for sustained efforts to help the refugees to improve their living conditions, consistent with relevant General Assembly resolutions. The Commission is concerned about the increasing demands on UNRWA and stresses the need to ensure that UNRWA services that are adequate in scope and quality are delivered to the refugees.

The Commission remains concerned about persisting funding shortfalls, in particular for the UNRWA programme budget, which undermine the Agency's efforts to promote human development and meet the refugees' needs. In this regard, the Commission notes that, in 2015, UNRWA continued to widen its donor base, strengthened its relations with existing donors and engaged with new private partners. Nonetheless, gains in resources have been countered by the market effects of foreign exchange rate fluctuation. The Commission remains concerned that multiple escalating crises increase demands on UNRWA services, while constrained resources, as well as economic conditions, continue to threaten the Agency's financial sustainability.

The Commission gives its full support to the Commissioner-General in continuing important reforms to strengthen the provision of services by UNRWA and their cost-effectiveness, taking the financial situation into account and the concerns of host countries in terms of impact on services.

The Commission notes the impressive results outlined in the annual report of the Commissioner-General in the field of education, health and protection, despite difficult circumstances and financial constraints. The Commission calls upon all parties to exert all efforts to mobilize the resources required to secure the Agency's financial stability and sustain its operations through the medium-term strategy for 2010-2015. It notes the importance of providing services without interruption, in line with the Agency's mandate.

The Commission thanks donors for their continued support to the important work and activities of UNRWA, as well as for their encouragement to other donors towards expanding the donor base.

(Signed) Ali Mustafa
Chair of the Advisory Commission

Chapter I

Contextual overview

A. Political, economic and security developments

1. Within a volatile regional environment in 2015, violence and marginalization continued to affect Palestine refugees registered across all five fields of operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA): Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Within this context and in line with its mandate derived from the General Assembly to assist and protect Palestine refugees, the Agency continued to deliver human development and humanitarian assistance in the areas of education, health, relief, social services, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance and protection.

Gaza Strip

2. Within a highly unstable political, security and socioeconomic field of operations, UNRWA continued to meet the needs of 1,311,920 registered Palestine refugees.¹ On the political stage, the Palestinian national consensus Government, formed in 2014 following an agreement on 23 April 2014 between Fatah and Hamas, faced considerable challenges and was unable to fully exercise leadership in the Gaza Strip owing to a lack of political unity. Civil servants employed by the de facto authorities continued to receive only partial salaries, a state of affairs that undermined service delivery and created tensions with Palestinian Authority employees.

3. Security remained volatile with recurring incidents, the firing of rockets and frequent unrest, including demonstrations connected to tensions in East Jerusalem and parts of the West Bank that led to at least 18 fatalities and more than 750 people injured among Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Recurrent hostilities and the blockade continued to have a severe impact on socioeconomic conditions and to fuel an increasing sense of desperation and frustration across Gaza and a greater reliance on UNRWA services.

4. The crippling Israeli blockade entered into its ninth year. The unemployment rate in Gaza in 2015 was 41 per cent,² one of the highest rates worldwide. A lack of financial means to buy food continued to cause high levels of insecurity, with the Agency increasing its food assistance caseload to almost 900,000 individuals by the end of the year, through both the social safety net programme and the occupied Palestinian territory emergency appeal.

5. While 2015 witnessed a slight easing of Israeli restrictions on the movement of goods into and out of Gaza, the impact on the economy was not tangible and exports remained a fraction of the quantities that used to leave Gaza before the blockade. In total 1,353 truckloads exited Gaza in 2015 (including 730 transferred to the West Bank), for an average of 113 truckloads per month, just 10 per cent of the monthly average during the first quarter of 2007. The Gaza reconstruction mechanism, established in September 2014 on the basis of a trilateral agreement between Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations, continued to facilitate the entry into Gaza of certain restricted building materials and machinery. However, the overall pace of reconstruction following the hostilities in July and August 2014 remained slow.

West Bank

6. In 2015, many of the 792,081 registered Palestine refugees³ in the West Bank continued to endure difficult socioeconomic conditions marked by a considerable increase in violence, administrative measures and punitive demolitions, as well as frustration with the lack of political progress towards a negotiated two-State solution. Restricted access to land, services, and markets imposed severe challenges for refugees, particularly those living or owning land in Area C and the seam zone. Economic stagnation continued to stifle Palestinian livelihoods, eroding purchasing power and prolonging the need for Palestinians to rely on humanitarian assistance.

7. In 2015, rates of unemployment among Palestine refugees remained higher than for the population as a whole, with 19.3 per cent and 18.5 per cent, respectively. Joblessness for those living in camps was higher still (25.7 per cent). Moreover, of the 30 per cent of refugees residing in camps, 29 per cent were food insecure.

8. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 170 Palestinians⁴ and 26 Israelis were killed during 2015 in attacks and clashes in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel. Eighty-three per cent (141) of the Palestinian and 85 per cent (22) of the Israeli fatalities were recorded during the last quarter of the year. Approximately 63 per cent of the Palestinians killed after 1 October 2015 were perpetrators or alleged perpetrators of attacks against Israelis, including by stabbing, car ramming and shooting. During the year, 15,377 Palestinians and 350 Israelis were reported as injured, with over 90 per cent of those injured Palestinians recorded in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.⁵

9. Israel continued to advance plans for the transfer of 46 Bedouin communities populated by a Palestine refugee majority from the West Bank to three townships. Groundwork at one of the sites, slated to accommodate the population targeted for transfer, was completed in September 2015. Measures creating a coercive environment that drive communities “at risk” from their homes continued, including through stop-work orders, demolitions, confiscations of post-demolition humanitarian assistance and settler harassment or violence. Within such an environment, free and informed consent by affected communities to any relocation was effectively rendered impossible.

10. In 2015, the Israeli authorities demolished 550 Palestinian-owned structures built without permits, displacing 807 people, including 287 Palestine refugees and further affecting 2,665 people, including 692 Palestine refugees. This was a considerable increase on the 411 refugees displaced in 2014. In addition, punitive demolition, a practice that targets the family homes of alleged perpetrators of violent attacks against Israeli civilians and security forces, continued in 2015. Illegal under international law as a form of collective punishment, punitive demolitions displaced at least 151 Palestinians, including 26 refugees, during the year.

11. The last three months of 2015 saw an increase in movement obstacles,⁶ especially in Jerusalem and the Hebron area.

Syrian Arab Republic

12. In 2015, the operational context in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to be defined by intense conflict and its dire humanitarian impact. There were many incidents in which Palestine refugees were killed or injured. UNRWA publicly demanded from all relevant parties respect for and compliance with their obligations under international law to protect Palestine refugees across the Syrian Arab Republic at all times. The needs of the 450,000 Palestine refugees who remained in the Syrian Arab Republic, out of 560,000 registered before the crisis,⁷ remained significant. Some 280,000 refugees had been internally displaced, while 110,000 had departed the country to seek safety elsewhere. As of December 2015, 14 UNRWA staff had been killed and 28 had been missing, detained, kidnapped or presumed to be detained since the beginning of the crisis.

13. The economic context was marked by significant price rises, high unemployment and inflation, essential commodity shortages and the declining value of the Syrian pound, further compounded by the continued impact of sanctions. Against this backdrop, 95 per cent of Palestine refugees were dependent on UNRWA assistance to survive.

14. Palestine refugees often had fewer coping mechanisms compared with their Syrian counterparts and their options to travel legally outside the Syrian Arab Republic were severely restricted. Some 47,000 Palestine refugees resided in conflict-affected areas and in locations that were inaccessible.

Lebanon

15. Lebanon is threatened on its own territory by several complex and interrelated destabilizing factors, including the ongoing threat of violence, political deadlock, social unrest and global political interests (see S/2015/837). In 2015, the daily life of Palestine refugees, including those from the Syrian Arab Republic, who are among the most vulnerable groups in Lebanon, continued to be dominated by poverty and debt. Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon also supported an influx of Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic who have placed additional demands on limited and ageing camp infrastructure and on UNRWA to provide basic services. UNRWA continued to advocate for the rights of Palestine refugees who are barred from exercising several syndicated professions and face restrictions on the right to own and inherit property in Lebanon. Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic continued to face both limitations on their ability to enter Lebanese territory legally and a precarious legal status within Lebanon, including limited access to crucial civil registration procedures. UNRWA continued to appeal to the Lebanese authorities to uphold the principle of non-refoulement and equal treatment of all refugees, in accordance with international standards, and to consider temporary access for Palestine refugees fleeing the war in the Syrian Arab Republic, for humanitarian reasons.

16. In 2015, nine years after its destruction, the Nahr el-Bared camp had reached the halfway stage of its reconstruction. Although it had originally been intended for the reconstruction of the old camp to be completed by mid-2011, the project has faced numerous challenges since its inception, including logistical, legal and political obstacles and, most recently, a marked decline in the level of donations from the international community for project completion.

Jordan

17. Jordan hosts 2,144,233 registered Palestine refugees,⁸ the vast majority of whom possess the Jordanian nationality, thereby enjoying socioeconomic and political benefits. A subset of approximately 150,000 Palestine refugees who fled Gaza in 1967 are largely excluded from Jordanian nationality and related benefits, such as access to public services. While Jordan has remained stable in an increasingly insecure region, successive waves of refugees from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic have placed considerable pressure on the nation’s economy and infrastructure.

18. Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic recorded with UNRWA in Jordan stood at approximately 16,400 at the end of 2015. While the number of new arrivals slowed, owing in part to the government policy of non-admission, the population continued to grow gradually during the year by 1,400 individuals. Those refugees faced limited livelihood opportunities, restrictions on employment and the threat of forcible return as a result of a lack of legal status. Eighty-three per cent struggled to meet basic needs. In contrast to other refugees fleeing the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Palestine refugees from that country were particularly vulnerable as they faced difficulties in accessing courts and civil status and registration processes, such as the issuance of birth certificates, again as a result of a lack of legal status. They were also prevented from accessing humanitarian assistance available to other refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic. UNRWA was the sole provider of health, education and emergency assistance and registration services for Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic in Jordan. The Agency continued to appeal to the Government of Jordan to uphold the principle of non-refoulement and equal treatment of all refugees, in accordance with international standards, and to consider temporary access for Palestine refugees fleeing the war in the Syrian Arab Republic, for humanitarian reasons.

B. Operational and organizational developments

19. In 2015, UNRWA was able to deliver human development and humanitarian assistance rapidly and effectively by drawing on its operational strengths, in particular its 30,000-strong workforce, the majority of whom were Palestine refugees and members of the communities that they served.

20. The Agency succeeded in educating 500,698 children, providing more than 9.1 million consultations of primary health care, social safety net assistance (including cash and food) to almost 294,000 persons, learning and skills training to 6,855 youth, and microfinance loans to more than 38,000 people. More than 36,000 shelters were either rehabilitated or constructed. Emergency humanitarian assistance was provided to more than 1.2 million refugees, primarily in the occupied Palestinian territory and the Syrian Arab Republic.

21. During 2015, UNRWA continued to foster positive institutional changes and implement comprehensive programme reforms to improve medium-term strategic planning, resource mobilization, accountability and the quality and effectiveness of services provided to Palestine refugees. The education reform brought about changes to classroom practices that improved learning outcomes. Under the health reform, the Agency-wide adoption of the family health team approach⁹ and the implementation of the health management information system “e-Health” contributed to improvements in health care. The Agency also continued to embed gender equality in its core programming and further mainstreamed an effective response to gender-based violence across all areas of operations. Significant progress was also achieved with regard to the further development of the UNRWA policy framework on protection. The Agency also enhanced operational efficiency through the introduction in April 2015 of a new enterprise resource planning system to provide an integrated information system across the areas of finance, public sector management, supply chain management and human resources.

22. In Gaza, UNRWA continued to support reconstruction efforts following destructions that had occurred during the hostilities that occurred in 2014. While the Agency estimates the cost of rebuilding the more than 140,000 damaged or destroyed Palestine refugee homes at \$720 million, only \$247 million had been pledged by the end of 2015. Within those limits, UNRWA was coordinating reconstruction efforts with other United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations and the national consensus Government to ensure an effective response. The need for accountability to the victims remained unaddressed.

23. UNRWA continued to provide humanitarian assistance to Palestine refugees in Gaza who had suffered further displacement because of the hostilities of 2014, including the repair and reconstruction of damaged homes, an activity that gradually increased during the year, following the establishment of the

Gaza reconstruction mechanism in 2014. During the first half of 2015, the 18,259 internally displaced persons residing in UNRWA collective centres¹⁰ gradually moved to alternative accommodation. While the last collective centre closed on 17 June 2015, at the end of that year, an estimated 16,000 families (almost 90,000 individuals) remained displaced as a result of the hostilities of 2014.

24. The Agency continued to invest in education by providing access to more than 250,000 students through 257 schools in Gaza, around 73.9 per cent of which continued to run on a double-shift basis.

25. In the West Bank, UNRWA provided basic education to 50,566 children and vocational and technical training to 1,773 students. In response to escalating violence during the last quarter of 2015, UNRWA enhanced programmatic interventions, including the provision of psychosocial assistance, to mitigate the effects of the current situation on children, as well as advocacy efforts calling for action to prevent a further escalation of violence. UNRWA continued to provide social safety net support to an average of 36,139 refugees throughout the year in the form of in-kind food assistance, emergency assistance through food vouchers, in partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP), and cash for work opportunities to more than 16,400 other poor households (95,077 individuals). UNRWA also partnered with WFP to provide in-kind food support for 85 vulnerable Bedouin refugee communities, totalling some 32,000 individuals. In addition, 43 health centres and health points, along with six emergency mobile health clinics, provided more than 1.4 million medical consultations throughout the West Bank.

26. In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNRWA maintained its health, education, vocational training, microfinance, youth support and social services, adapting them to the constrained circumstances of armed conflict by utilizing its comprehensive network of staff, facilities and resources. Forty-four UNRWA schools continued to operate, down from 118 before the crisis, complemented by 55 afternoon-shift schools hosted in facilities of the Ministry of Education. In total, 45,802 students were accommodated. Fifteen of the 23 UNRWA health centres remained operational, supplemented by an additional 11 health points throughout the country. As of December 2015, nine UNRWA school buildings, the Damascus Training Centre and two other UNRWA installations continued to serve as temporary accommodation for 4,795 internally displaced civilians. In the northern part of the country, home to some 50,000 Palestine refugees, including the displaced people, UNRWA maintained services and humanitarian assistance in the face of incessant armed conflict.

27. In the midst of funding shortfalls, the Agency was only able to provide refugees with three out of six rounds of cash assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic, covering just six months of needs. Food assistance covered individual nutritional requirements for only five months. For those refugees able to find employment, the average daily wage was 1,125 Syrian pounds (equivalent to \$3 in December 2015). Health, education and other public services have been severely affected by the conflict.

28. Approximately 80 per cent of Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic reside in Damascus, including in areas with restricted humanitarian access. UNRWA sustained regular and emergency operations in most parts of Damascus during 2015. Major difficulties were encountered in reaching refugee communities in Yamuk, Khan al-Shih, Qudsaya and Ramadan. UNRWA aid deliveries to Yamuk were halted in April owing to the capture of the area by extremist armed groups, while access to adjacent areas was suspended on 23 September. In July, more than 6,000 Palestine refugee families were able to return to Husayniyah after being displaced for more than two years. UNRWA successfully resumed all services in Husayniyah, reopening the health centre, the community centre and four schools serving more than 3,300 students, some of whom had missed more than two years of education. In the central area, UNRWA services to Palestine refugees in Hama, Homs and Ladhikiyah remained fully operational, with humanitarian assistance regularly supplied from Damascus.

29. A majority of the 458,369 registered Palestine refugees¹¹ in Lebanon depend on UNRWA service provision as, through either law or practice, they are effectively denied access to most public services. In addition, 41,000 Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic in Lebanon are particularly vulnerable, given border restrictions, their precarious legal status, difficulties in regularizing their stay and limited social protection services. An estimated 93 per cent of the latter refugees are highly dependent on UNRWA for a broad range of regular and humanitarian assistance.

30. In 2015, UNRWA operations in Lebanon provided critical basic services to Palestine refugees, including the provision of basic education to 38,173 students, primary health care through 27 health centres and referrals to child protection, gender-based violence and psychosocial support services. Social safety net support was provided to 61,709 poor refugees, as well as access to microcredit initiatives and vocational training opportunities for 1,100 people. UNRWA supported refugee employability through targeted vocational training and advocacy with stakeholders to promote employment. Further support was extended through the provision of potable water for camp inhabitants and the rehabilitation of 430 shelters. Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic were also supported through access to UNRWA health and education services and direct humanitarian assistance. An average of 41,882 of those refugees received cash for food assistance under an UNRWA-WFP partnership, while 11,748 families received housing assistance for six months and 10,735 received critical winterization assistance. UNRWA also supported responses to displacement caused by violent confrontations in Ayn al-Hilwah in mid-2015 and made progress in addressing challenges in the reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared camp, ensuring that at least 50 per cent of the refugees could re-establish residence. UNRWA has, as a matter of priority, continued to seek urgently needed support to finalize the construction work and assist displaced refugees.

31. In Jordan, UNRWA services continued to contribute to the human development of refugees in 2015 through the provision of basic education to some 119,606 children, including 1,468 Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic, higher education to 1,213 students and technical and vocational training for 2,246 youth. Twenty-five health centres and one local health-oriented non-governmental organization provided 1,598,989 primary health-care consultations. Social safety net support was afforded to 58,937 special hardship cases. Regular cash assistance for food and non-food items was provided to meet the critical needs of families of Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic. However, owing to funding constraints, it was not possible to offer winterization and shelter assistance. Access to microcredit initiatives was extended to 7,065 refugees. One hundred and thirty-three of the poorest refugee families benefited from shelter rehabilitation assistance.

C. Legal matters

Legal status of Palestine refugees in the Agency's areas of operations

32. The legal status of Palestine refugees in Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip remained substantially the same as that described in the report of the Commissioner-General for 2008 ([A/64/13](#), paras. 52-55).

Agency staff

33. Israeli authorities, citing security concerns, continued to restrict the freedom of movement of UNRWA personnel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Restrictions included closures of the West Bank and Gaza, the prohibition for local staff not resident in Jerusalem to travel in United Nations vehicles across the Erez crossing or the Allenby Bridge, or to drive in Israel and East Jerusalem, and time-consuming and cumbersome procedures for obtaining permits for local staff not resident in Jerusalem to enter Israel and East Jerusalem. On many occasions, permits were not granted even though procedures had been followed. On average, permits to enter East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank were not issued to 18 per cent (105 individuals) of the Agency personnel who needed them.

34. Israeli procedures at the Allenby Bridge continued to request that United Nations vehicles be submitted to a search unless an occupant thereof held an identification card issued by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, even though such searches represent a violation of the immunity of the United Nations. Those procedures particularly restricted the movement of international staff based at UNRWA headquarters in Amman, to whom the Ministry does not issue such cards.

35. Israeli procedures at the Erez crossing continued to request that United Nations vehicles be submitted to a search unless the occupants thereof included a United Nations staff member holding a diplomatic visa or was driven by an international staff member on a limited list approved by the Israeli authorities, even though such searches represent a violation of the immunity of the United Nations. Opening hours at the Erez crossing remained restricted. On 31 occasions at various checkpoints in the West Bank, including for entry into East Jerusalem, Israeli authorities demanded to search an Agency vehicle. While the majority of searches were avoided through Agency interventions, rerouting or turning back, on seven occasions searches were carried out. UNRWA protested against those searches as a violation of the immunity of the United Nations.

36. The restrictions mentioned above are inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations, the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 1946, relevant United Nations resolutions and the Comay-Michelmore Agreement of 1967, by which the Government of Israel is obligated to facilitate the task of UNRWA to the best of its ability, subject only to regulations or arrangements that may be necessitated by considerations of military security. UNRWA applied for permits for local staff to enter East Jerusalem for operational and humanitarian reasons only and without prejudice to relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolutions relating to the status of Jerusalem. Israeli authorities maintained that the restrictions were necessary to protect Israel against terrorist attacks.

37. In the West Bank, staff movement continued to be restricted and unpredictable at several checkpoints, notably those controlling access to East Jerusalem or through the West Bank barrier. In 2015, movement restrictions in the West Bank resulted in the loss of at least 75 staff days. It remained difficult to deliver Agency services in the area between the West Bank barrier and the armistice line of 1949. During 2015, Israeli authorities continued to insist that Agency and other United Nations trucks use specific commercial checkpoints to enter Jerusalem. The Agency's position remains that United Nations trucks should have unrestricted access through checkpoints in the West Bank, including those operated by the border police, in line with the long-standing practice before September 2014 and in recognition of humanitarian access needs.

38. Local staff in Gaza required permits from the Israeli authorities to transit the Erez crossing. During 2015, of 983 applications, 828 permits (84 per cent) were granted. Compared with 2014, the number of permits applied for increased by approximately 9 per cent, while the overall percentage of permit applications rejected decreased from 18 to 16 per cent.

39. In 2015, the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza was open for public use for 26 of 365 scheduled days. The ban imposed by the United Nations on duty travel for staff members travelling through Rafah remained in place, owing to the security situation in the Sinai. One staff member was allowed to cross in February 2015.

40. In Lebanon, the volatile security situation in Palestine refugee camps in the Sayda area and north Lebanon area resulted at times in movement restrictions that affected Agency staff and operations. During 2015, no significant movement restrictions were imposed on UNRWA staff by the Governments of Jordan or the State of Palestine. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the armed conflict intensified during 2015 with growing engagement and military action from a variety of actors, increasing unpredictability and the continued use of heavy weapons and weapons of indiscriminate impact. Generalized insecurity seriously affected free movement and humanitarian access. Two staff members were injured in gunfire or as a result of shelling in 2015. Numerous checkpoints remained in place, including in and around Damascus. Agency vehicles were searched at some checkpoints, in violation of the immunity of the United Nations. The Agency applied for 150 visas (residency and visit) for international personnel, including renewals, of which 13 were not granted.

41. At the end of 2015, 35 staff members were missing, detained, kidnapped or presumed to be detained: 28 were believed to be missing, detained or kidnapped by the Syrian authorities or other parties, 3 were detained by the Israeli authorities, 1 was detained by the Palestinian authorities, 1 was detained by the de facto authorities in Gaza and 2 were detained by the Jordanian authorities. Despite requests by the Agency, made in accordance with General Assembly resolution 36/232, in 2015, the Syrian authorities provided reasons for the detention of 7 staff members but did not grant the Agency access to them. The Jordanian authorities granted access to and information on 1 detained staff member.

42. The Israeli authorities continued to impose transit charges on shipments entering the Gaza Strip, forcing UNRWA to pay \$1,460,120 in 2015. In the view of the Agency, those charges constitute a direct tax from which it ought to be exempt under the 1946 Convention. In the view of Israel, the charges are a fee for services, from which there is no exemption. The Kerem Shalom crossing remained the sole crossing for UNRWA imports into Gaza. It was closed for imports for 18 of 261 scheduled operating days (6.9 per cent). The continuing closure of the Kami crossing contributed to increased expenditure, resulting from storage, palletization, sterilization, extra mileage and additional staff, amounting to some \$5.9 million, in addition to transit charges levied at the Kerem Shalom crossing.

43. As a result of the amended framework between Israel and the United Nations agreed on 4 December 2013, stricter conditions relating to Israeli security concerns continued to be imposed on UNRWA regarding the monitoring of construction material. One of the consequences was that UNRWA continued to employ an additional international staff member (in addition to using its extant international staff workforce), local staff engineers and security guards to meet the daily monitoring requirements of Israel, which amounted to more than \$1.2 million in extra staffing costs for the Agency in 2015. Starting in 2015, the Agency was also required to provide Israeli authorities with written confirmation of the monitoring by UNRWA of each project, in addition to requirements predating 2015 for documentary material to facilitate the monitoring by Israel of construction projects. In 2015 alone, additional staffing, transit and logistical costs resulting from Israeli requirements regarding access and monitoring of all Agency imports into the Gaza Strip amounted to almost \$8.6 million. That amount does not include similar access costs that private contractors have incurred for shipping construction materials into Gaza through Kerem Shalom under the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism.

44. In 2015, Israeli approval time for Agency construction projects in Gaza was noticeably reduced compared with 2013 and 2014. Coordination for certain aggregates was no longer required as at 1 November 2015. Since the addition of wood to the list of restricted items in April 2015, and to its further limitation in August 2015 to wood no thicker than 1 cm, UNRWA has not received any of the wood needed for its projects.

Agency services and premises

45. Israeli authorities continued to require standards testing for educational, electronic, medical and other items for official use. UNRWA imports goods for official use that conform to international standards and the United Nations considers that Israeli requirements are contrary to the exemption from prohibitions and restrictions on imports, under the 1946 Convention, in respect of articles imported by the United Nations for its official use. As at the end of 2015, 15 consignments destined for the West Bank were still detained, with the duration of detainment ranging between four and six years for each consignment. The total storage costs for consignments delayed during the year exceeded \$156,300.

46. Arrears of \$90.9 million due to the Agency for services and goods procured for the West Bank and Gaza are outstanding for the reimbursement of value added tax (VAT) accrued before the arrangements agreed to in 2013, as previously reported by the Commissioner-General. Outstanding VAT reimbursement in relation to the 2015 financial year amounted to \$2.66 million, while total outstandings amounted to approximately \$99.4 million as at 31 December 2015.

47. The Agency was required, as in the past, to pay port fees and other charges to the Syrian authorities, in contravention to the agreement of 1948 between the United Nations and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. In 2015, fees and charges totalling \$18,318 were paid.

48. The Agency continued to face difficulties in obtaining exemptions from customs and other governmental fees from the Customs Department of the Ministry of Finance of Jordan for the import of vehicles for official use. UNRWA considers those restrictions to be contrary to the Agency's exemption from restrictions on imports under the 1946 Convention and its bilateral agreement with Jordan of 1951. Jordan considers those charges as fees for service. Since 2012, the Drivers and Vehicles Licensing Department of the Ministry of Finance has requested payment for the inspection of and registration cards for official UNRWA vehicles, which the Agency protested against as constituting a direct tax from which it is exempt. UNRWA paid the inspection and registration card fees under protest in the absence of any government response. The Agency also faced delays in obtaining construction permits for its installations.

49. The Operations Support Officer programme continued in the West Bank, Lebanon and Gaza and was established in Jordan in early 2015. In addition, an Area Support Officer programme was established in the Syrian Arab Republic in 2015. The Operations Support Officer programme played an invaluable role in upholding the neutrality of the United Nations, including through the inspection of UNRWA installations and conducting ongoing training for staff on humanitarian principles. In the West Bank, the programme also facilitated transit for UNRWA staff, vehicles and goods through checkpoints and access to areas affected by Israeli military or security operations.

50. The 1946 Convention provides that the premises of the United Nations are inviolable. In contravention to this, the Israeli military and security forces entered UNRWA premises in the West Bank without authorization or coordination on six occasions. On at least 41 occasions, tear gas canisters, stun grenades, plastic-coated metal bullets or live ammunition used by the Israeli security forces landed in UNRWA compounds or damaged UNRWA installations, resulting in three UNRWA staff getting injured and several others suffering from tear gas inhalation. In addition, one guard was injured by a plastic-coated metal bullet while on duty outside an installation and one staff member was injured while driving to duty in a private vehicle. In Gaza, there were 117 reported incursions and other incidents that affected UNRWA installations. On 23 occasions, demonstrations or sit-ins were held at UNRWA installations. Most instances, however, related to beneficiaries entering installations, refusing to leave or disrupting or assaulting staff members.

51. In 2015, the Secretary-General released a summary of findings by the United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry regarding certain incidents that

had occurred in Gaza between 8 July and 26 August 2014. The Board of Inquiry found that all seven incidents in which UNRWA schools had either been hit or struck by projectiles or other munitions were attributable to the Israel Defense Forces. In addition, the Board of Inquiry investigated three incidents in which weapon components had been placed in three other UNRWA schools, closed for the summer break and not serving as designated emergency shelters, finding that, in two cases, unidentified armed Palestinian groups had hidden weapons in the schools. With regard to the third school, the Board of Inquiry found that it was highly likely that unidentified armed Palestinian groups had hidden weapons there as well. During the reporting period, UNRWA began implementing the recommendations of the Board of Inquiry regarding safety, security, neutrality and communication.

52. The General Staff mechanism for fact-finding assessments established by the Israel Defense Forces in 2014 continued to examine exceptional incidents that had occurred during the hostilities in Gaza, including the seven incidents affecting UNRWA schools. As of the end of 2015, the Military Advocate General had ordered criminal investigations into two of the seven incidents. UNRWA continued to advocate for accountability for violations of international law based on credible, prompt, independent, impartial and thorough investigations.

53. In the West Bank, there were seven incursions by armed Palestinians or Palestinian security forces, including three incidents during which armed Palestinians entered a UNRWA installation and four incidents during which live ammunition deployed by Palestinian security forces or armed Palestinians landed in or hit UNRWA installations. There were four misuses of UNRWA installations for unauthorized political or other events involving Palestinian factions, camp services committee members or other actors. There were additional incidents in which Palestine refugees, including members of camp services committees, prevented UNRWA staff from performing their duties, attacked staff or property or held unauthorized protests in Agency installations, primarily to protest against the criteria for eligibility for UNRWA services.

54. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the Agency has sustained conflict-related property losses in the millions of dollars since hostilities began in 2011, including in relation to at least 46 of 180 UNRWA facilities that were either damaged or destroyed and 22 vehicles that were damaged, destroyed or stolen. During 2015, there were five incidents of shelling affecting UNRWA premises, causing damage to four premises and the total destruction of one disused UNRWA school. There were also three incidents of small arms fire affecting UNRWA installations that damaged two facilities and, in one incident, injured several refugees. Damage to and the lack of safe access to UNRWA facilities made it more difficult for Palestine refugees to obtain essential services. The Agency remained unable to verify reports regarding the military use of certain UNRWA installations in that country owing to insecurity and the presence of armed groups in the areas concerned. Despite protests, the UNRWA sanitation office in Khan Dannun continued to be used by military personnel from the adjacent checkpoint.

55. In Lebanon, there were 129 days of closures of different UNRWA installations in 2015. This was mainly due to protests by discontented refugees, but also to civil unrest and armed fighting among factions. In particular, such fighting in Ein El Hilweh refugee camp from 22 to 26 August 2015 led to the closure of all UNRWA installations inside the camp until it was considered safe, on 31 August 2015. There were incursions into six UNRWA installations, five of which were used for an extended period. In addition, several installations were damaged as a result of weapons fire. The damage to installations is estimated at \$123,000. UNRWA has protested against those incidents and liaised with relevant authorities and Palestinian leaders during and after the events.

Other matters

56. On 15 February 2012, approximately \$74,000 was seized from the Agency's HSBC bank account in Jordan on the basis of an order by the Jordanian Execution Office. Despite numerous requests and protests to the Government before and after the seizure, the funds had not been returned at the end of 2015. On 4 December 2015, the Jordanian Execution Office issued an execution order in respect of an adverse judgment against UNRWA in the amount of \$24,400, in relation to a claim filed by a former UNRWA staff member.

57. \$680,000 seized by the Government of Lebanon in 2013 has yet to be returned.

58. UNRWA continued to dispute any liability for payment demanded by the Government of Lebanon in the sum of \$167.4 million for electricity consumed by Palestine refugees outside of UNRWA installations in camps in Lebanon.

59. In relation to the internal justice system, the UNRWA Dispute Tribunal, established on 1 June 2010, operates on a full-time basis and is comprised of one judge and a part-time ad litem judge. During the reporting period, the Tribunal issued 58 judgments and 128 orders, disposing of 75 cases. At the end of 2015, 57 cases were pending, of which 56 had been filed by area staff and one by an international staff member. There were also 17 appeals pending before the United Nations Appeals Tribunal.

D. Financial overview

60. With the exception of 150 international staff posts funded by the General Assembly through the United Nations regular budget, UNRWA operations are funded by voluntary contributions. The Agency receives funding through: (a) a programme budget fund that supports core operations (including recurrent staff and non-staff costs), such as education, health, camp improvement, relief and social services and microfinance programmes, and support systems and structures; (b) specific, time-bound projects with a view to improving services without increasing recurrent costs; and (c) emergency appeals for humanitarian interventions.

61. During 2015, UNRWA widened its donor base, strengthened relations with Arab donor States,¹² engaged new private partners, continued to build its presence in emerging markets¹³ and deepened relations with traditional donors.¹⁴ In 2015, Agency resource mobilization efforts yielded a total pledged amount of \$1.24 billion. While this represents a decrease from the 2014 pledge of \$1.32 billion, had exchange rates not fluctuated, 2015 funds for UNRWA would have represented the highest ever level of contributions. Arab donor States contributed substantially to the overall budget with a total pledge of \$204 million, including 9.3 per cent of the programme budget, up nearly 4 per cent from 2014.

62. Contributions from private partnerships rose from 0.2 per cent in 2011 to 1.8 per cent in 2015, a notable achievement attributable to the strong resource mobilization efforts by UNRWA national committees and contributions from a certain number of large Islamic foundations. Significant needs arose in 2015, exacerbated by the continued conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and residual needs stemming from the hostilities in Gaza in 2014. In its Syria regional crisis emergency appeal of 2015, UNRWA made an appeal for \$415 million. Many donors responded generously, although only 51 per cent of funding needs were met. In the occupied Palestinian territory, the Agency continued to provide basic humanitarian assistance through an emergency appeal for \$414 million, 47 per cent of which had been funded by the end of 2015.

63. According to unaudited financial statements, the Agency expended \$1,333.8 million in 2015. The largest expenditure was \$766.7 million, under the unrestricted regular budget, accounting for 55.4 per cent of total expenditure, while restricted fund activities, emergency activities and projects accounted for 1.3 per cent, 30.3 per cent and 12.4 per cent of total expenditure, respectively.¹⁵ Education remained the largest programme funded from the programme budget, with an expenditure of \$437.4 million, or 57.05 per cent of the total unrestricted programme budget.

64. The overall ability of UNRWA to respond to challenges that arose during the reporting period was threatened by a \$101 million funding shortfall that risked a delay in the opening of all UNRWA schools for the 2015/16 school year. Through the generosity of numerous donor partners, this risk was averted. Inadequate funding forced the Agency to implement further austerity measures, including the terminations of consultants' contracts, reductions in travel and the suspension of capital expenditure.

Table 1
Actual expenditure by field of operations and programme, 2015
(Thousands of United States dollars)

Programme budget	Gaza	Jordan	Lebanon	Syrian Arab Republic	West Bank	Headquarters	Total							
	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)							
Education	205 284.66	26.78	94 578.05	12.34	47 282.92	6.37	19 813.15	2.58	67 809.28	8.84	2 624.82	0.34	437 392.88	57.05
Health	26 897.71	3.51	22 613.59	2.95	27 145.25	3.54	6 374.41	0.83	27 436.56	3.58	745.22	0.10	111 232.74	14.51
Infrastructure	11 896.68	1.55	5 002.35	0.65	5 846.80	0.76	1 078.84	0.14	6 255.58	0.82	1 502.14	0.20	31 586.57	4.12
Relief and social services	14 411.78	1.88	7 295.07	0.95	8 748.90	1.14	2 331.35	0.30	8 702.72	1.14	1 070.08	0.14	42 559.90	5.55
Executive and support	39 326.73	5.13	9 955.17	1.30	12 431.17	1.62	6 319.17	0.82	23 763.16	3.10	52 137.51	6.80	143 932.91	18.77
Grand total	297 817.56	38.84	139 444.41	18.19	101 455.04	13.23	35 916.92	4.68	133 971.30	17.47	58 079.76	7.58	766 685.00	100.00

All funding streams	Gaza	Jordan	Lebanon	Syrian Arab Republic	West Bank	Headquarters	Total							
	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)							
Education programme	249 291.27	17.79	104 412.81	7.48	58 878.19	4.22	36 126.15	2.59	75 817.35	5.43	3 961.40	0.28	528 487.17	37.78
Health programme	47 073.66	3.37	23 346.98	1.67	35 558.35	2.55	10 703.42	0.77	34 899.70	2.50	1 677.70	0.12	153 259.80	10.98
Infrastructure and camp improvement programme	23 833.15	1.71	5 193.02	0.37	25 576.89	1.83	1 724.15	0.12	8 950.44	0.64	1 657.56	0.12	66 935.21	4.79
Relief and social services programme	217 229.12	15.56	18 700.08	1.34	43 072.20	3.08	118 140.01	8.46	20 965.25	1.50	1 417.65	0.10	419 524.32	30.05
Executive and support programme	89 660.83	6.33	11 554.36	0.83	19 305.99	1.38	22 209.85	1.57	36 738.77	2.48	57 555.61	3.80	237 025.42	16.40
Grand total	627 088.84	44.76	163 287.26	11.69	182 391.64	13.06	188 983.58	13.51	177 371.51	12.55	66 269.91	4.43	1 485 231.92	100.00

Table 2
Actual expenditure by strategic goal
(Thousands of United States dollars)

Programme budget	Gaza	Jordan	Lebanon	Syrian Arab Republic	West Bank	Headquarters	Total							
	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)							
A long and healthy life	48 324.51	6.30	27 132.75	3.54	32 295.04	4.21	7 211.82	0.94	32 422.70	4.23	1 591.23	0.21	148 978.04	19.43
Acquired knowledge and skills	183 646.33	24.21	88 308.40	11.32	43 512.38	5.68	17 864.39	2.33	61 646.80	8.04	2 623.41	0.34	399 601.92	52.12
A decent standard of living	22 742.26	2.97	12 584.18	1.64	12 108.42	1.58	3 512.08	0.46	14 140.39	1.84	1 533.56	0.20	66 620.89	8.69
Human rights enjoyed to the fullest	1 888.85	0.25	980.55	0.13	474.40	0.06	659.47	0.09	1 195.70	0.16	194.07	0.03	5 393.03	0.70
Management and operational effectiveness	39 215.60	5.11	10 438.34	1.36	13 064.81	1.70	6 668.96	0.87	24 565.71	3.20	52 137.51	6.80	146 091.13	19.05
Grand total	297 817.56	38.84	139 444.41	18.19	101 455.04	13.23	35 916.92	4.68	133 971.30	17.47	58 079.76	7.58	766 685.00	100.00

All funding streams	Gaza	Jordan	Lebanon	Syrian Arab Republic	West Bank	Headquarters	Total							
	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)							
A long and healthy life	87 141.27	6.20	32 323.63	2.30	37 699.97	2.68	24 387.10	1.74	35 721.38	2.54	7 130.13	0.51	224 423.68	15.97
Acquired knowledge and skills	192 598.22	13.71	91 095.65	6.48	43 960.49	3.13	21 207.09	1.51	63 765.89	4.54	3 018.03	0.21	415 645.37	29.58
A decent standard of living	67 630.61	4.81	17 889.41	1.27	20 262.69	1.44	18 345.45	1.31	19 190.32	1.37	2 669.30	0.19	143 987.78	10.39
Human rights enjoyed to the fullest	19 318.34	1.37	1 730.61	0.12	14 643.06	1.04	5 277.58	0.38	9 696.79	0.69	1 126.34	0.08	51 794.93	3.69

All funding streams	Gaza	Jordan	Lebanon	Syrian Arab Republic	West Bank	Headquarters	Total							
	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)	(Percentage)							
Management and operational effectiveness	260 399.59	18.53	20 167.95	1.44	65 823.43	4.68	119 686.36	8.52	48 996.92	3.49	52 305.91	3.72	567 380.16	40.38
Grand total	627 088.04	44.63	163 287.26	11.61	182 391.63	12.98	188 983.58	13.44	177 371.51	12.55	66 269.91	4.72	1 485 231.92	100.00

Chapter II

Subprogramme review presented within the framework of the human development goals of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

65. In 2015, UNRWA continued to follow the framework set out in its medium-term strategy for 2010-2015. The strategy provides direction for the Agency on the basis of 15 strategic objectives, each of which contributes to one or more of four human development goals: a long and healthy life; acquired knowledge and skills; a decent standard of living; and human rights enjoyed to the fullest.

A. Goal 1

A long and healthy life

66. In 2015, UNRWA continued to deliver primary health care to Palestine refugees through 143 health centres. Despite gains with regard to average daily medical consultations, antenatal care and antibiotic prescription rates, non-communicable diseases contributed to a mounting burden of diseases, which are costly to treat and manage. In response, UNRWA introduced new tests, medicines and public awareness initiatives to promote the prevention and management of non-communicable diseases. In addition, the Agency made progress in rolling out health reforms, including the family health team approach and a health management

information system (“e-Health”). By the end of 2015, 115 of the 117 UNRWA health centres (excluding the Syrian Arab Republic) had successfully implemented the family health team reform, while 80 health centres were implementing e-Health. Improvements in health centre organization, patient waiting times and patient-staff satisfaction were evident, in addition to decreases in health centre staff workloads.

67. In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNRWA prioritized the provision of essential, life-saving care. Relative stability in Damascus allowed the Agency to commence to implement the family health team reform in six health centres, with the expected introduction of e-Health in 2016. The conflict continued to place an additional burden on surrounding fields of UNRWA operation, in particular Lebanon, where the situation necessitated the hiring of additional health-care staff to manage the increased number of Palestine refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic.

68. UNRWA also engaged in improving the overall public health environment through the rehabilitation of water supply, sewerage and drainage systems in priority areas, in appropriate cooperation with local authorities and without prejudice to the Agency’s position concerning the responsibility of host authorities to administer the camps.

Strategic objective 1
To ensure universal access to quality, comprehensive primary health care

Expected accomplishment	Indicator of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit of measure	Percentage
Universal access to good-quality, comprehensive primary health care	Antibiotic prescription rate	Baseline (2015)	26.0
		Target (2015)	25.0
		Actual (2015)	24.7 ^a

^a Including the Syrian Arab Republic.

Strategic objective 2
To protect and promote family health

Expected accomplishment	Indicator of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit of measure	Percentage
Sustained protection and promotion of family health	Infant mortality rate	Baseline (2015)	22
		Target (2015)	18
		Actual (2015)	18 ^a

^a Excluding the Syrian Arab Republic.

Strategic objective 3
To prevent and control diseases

Expected accomplishment	Indicators of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit of measure	Percentage
Improved alignment of communicable disease prevalence with host authorities	(a) Immunization coverage rate against vaccine-preventable diseases	Baseline (2015)	99.5
		Target (2015)	99.5
		Actual (2015)	99.3 ^a
	(b) Percentage of shelters formally connected to the public water network	Baseline (2015)	99.9
		Target (2015)	99.9
		Actual (2015)	100 ^b
	(c) Percentage of shelters formally connected to the public sewerage network	Baseline (2015)	84.0
		Target (2015)	87.2
		Actual (2015)	87.3 ^b

^a Including the Syrian Arab Republic.

^b Excluding the Syrian Arab Republic.

Outputs

- Provision of 9,191,921 medical consultations to Palestine refugees, almost 60 per cent of which were provided to females
- 1,051,195 consultations provided in the Syrian Arab Republic, despite the conflict
- The rate of women attending four antenatal care visits increased to 90.2 per cent, compared with 86.8 per cent in 2014
- 245,682 patients suffering from a non-communicable disease were assisted in UNRWA health centres in 2015, a 6.3 per cent increase compared with 2014
- Subsidies were provided to 108,088 hospitalization patients for secondary or tertiary health care
- Almost 100 per cent of refugee homes (excluding the Syrian Arab Republic) are connected to a water network (water quality remains a concern), and 87.3 per cent to a sewage network
- The average rate of daily medical consultations per doctor declined across most areas of UNRWA operation in 2015 from 95 in 2014 to 86 in 2015
- 10 health centres were either renovated or in the process of being renovated to improve the health-care environment

B. Goal 2

Acquired knowledge and skills

69. UNRWA operates 692 elementary and preparatory schools across its five fields of operations, providing free basic education to more than half a million refugee children. Literacy rates among Palestine refugees compare well with regional and global levels, and there has been gender balance in enrolment since the 1960s. Education reforms launched in 2011 sought to transform classroom practices towards enhanced student learning and addressed policy, organizational structure and capacity development.

70. Progress was made ensuring inclusivity of all children and emphasizing critical learning processes and key values, in line with the World Programme for Human Rights Education. This was achieved through the interrelated elements of the reform, including professional development for education staff.

71. Construction was completed or was ongoing for 42 new schools or extensions, with designs being developed for a further 29 schools and extensions.

Strategic objective 4
To ensure universal access to and coverage of basic education

Expected accomplishment	Indicators of achievement	Measurement		
		Unit of measure	Ratio	
Universal access and coverage of basic education	(a) Dropout rate for elementary schools	Male	Baseline (2015)	3.38
			Target (2015)	2.40
			Actual (2015)	1.95 ^a
	Female	Baseline (2015)	1.78	
		Target (2015)	1.40	
		Actual (2015)	0.96 ^a	
	Measurement			
	Expected accomplishment	Indicators of achievement	Unit of measure	Ratio
		(b) Dropout rate for preparatory schools	Male	Baseline (2015)
			Target (2015)	5.50
			Actual (2015)	3.55 ^a
Female		Baseline (2015)	2.99	
		Target (2015)	4.70	
		Actual (2015)	2.92 ^a	

^a Excluding the Syrian Arab Republic.

Strategic objective 5
To enhance educational quality and outcomes against set standards

Expected accomplishment	Indicator of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit of measure	Percentage
Improved monitoring of good-quality education delivery	Percentage change in the mean score obtained by students on the monitoring learning achievement test ^a	Baseline (2015)	3
		Target (2015)	–
		Actual (2015)	–

^a The monitoring learning achievement test was last conducted in 2013 and is next slated for 2016. Consequently, there are no data to report for 2015.

Strategic objective 6
To improve access to educational opportunities for learners with special educational needs

Expected accomplishment	Indicator of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit of measure	Percentage
Improved assessment and referral of special educational needs students	Percentage of all children enrolled in UNRWA schools identified as having a special education need	Baseline (2015)	3.70
		Target (2015)	2.90
		Actual (2015)	1.88 ^a

^a Excluding the Syrian Arab Republic.

Outputs

- General education provided to 500,698 Palestine refugee children
- Across key education reform indicators: (a) student survival rates in the basic education cycle are at the highest that they have been in the past five years; (b) Agency-wide cumulative dropout rates for elementary boys and girls and preparatory boys are at the lowest that they have been in the past five years; and (c) the coefficient of internal efficiency¹⁶ is at its highest since the reform began, which means that the UNRWA education system has become more efficient with more students graduating on time
- The reform has led to numerous achievements, from a clearly articulated direction provided through Agency-wide policies (such as the Teacher Policy, the Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance Policy and the Inclusive Education Policy) to the strategies guiding the implementation of those policies (the Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance Teacher's Toolkit, the Inclusive Education Teacher's Toolkit, the Common Monitoring Framework, the Research Strategy, the Curriculum Framework and the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Strategy). Within this clearly articulated direction, much has been achieved to strengthen the capacity of teachers, school principals and other key education staff to deliver good-quality education. This was made possible through key professional development programmes, such as Leading for the Future and Core Knowledge, Skills and Competences for Strategic Support Staff, and School-Based Teacher Development, programmes I and II. Austerity measures in 2015 led to larger class sizes in UNRWA schools for the 2015/16 school year. The Agency is monitoring the situation, as it is likely that, if the measures continue to be necessary, they will have a negative impact on the performance of the education system and gains made through the reform may be lost
- The innovative education in emergencies approach has enabled children in the Syrian Arab Republic to continue their education and supported those that transitioned to UNRWA schools in Jordan and Lebanon
- 42 schools or extensions were rehabilitated or in the process of being rehabilitated

C. Goal 3

A decent standard of living

72. UNRWA aims to achieve the human development goal of ensuring that Palestine refugees enjoy a decent standard of living through interventions by its relief and social services programme, microfinance programme and infrastructure and camp improvement programme, in collaboration with host countries and national and international partners.

73. Of 255,445 Palestine refugees who received assistance under the social safety net programme in 2015, 147,087, or 58 per cent, were identified as abjectly poor under a proxy means testing formula that assesses essential characteristics to identify and prioritize the poorest of the poor.¹⁷ Of the 147,087 recipients, 54 per cent were women, 38 per cent had a registered disability and 37 per cent lived in camps.

74. The Department of Relief and Social Services preserved 5,716,134 refugee records through the refugee registration information system and is taking steps towards

incorporating emergency and protection elements into its programming.

75. The education programme contributes to this human development goal by increasing employability through its technical and vocational education and training programme. In 2015, Agency-wide employment rates for 2014 graduates improved considerably, owing to updated courses, enhanced instructor capacity, strengthened private sector partnerships, graduate referral systems and advocacy, improved follow-up and tracking of graduates, and enhanced employer involvement.

76. The microfinance programme financed 38,193 loans valued at \$37.89 million in 2015. Programme implementation remained a challenge in the Syrian Arab Republic and Gaza, owing to the restricted movement of people and supplies, limited business opportunities and high rates of unemployment.

77. Interventions under the infrastructure and camp improvement programme prioritized families classified as absolutely or abjectly poor in Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank. In addition, work was initiated on 83 facilities, including schools, health centres and vocational training and community development centres, of which 52 were completed, while work on solid waste disposal, drainage and water and sewerage systems was carried out to prevent the spread of diseases, without prejudice to the Agency's position concerning the responsibility of host authorities to administer the camps. In Gaza, under emergency assistance, more than 36,000 families benefited from UNRWA shelter repair, construction and reconstruction programming. In Nahr el-Bared, Lebanon, 833 shelters were rehabilitated.

Strategic objective 7
To reduce abject poverty

Expected accomplishment	Indicator of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit of measure	Percentage
<i>All fields of operations</i>			
Increased ability of abjectly poor individuals to meet their basic food needs	Percentage of abjectly poor among beneficiaries of the UNRWA social safety net	Baseline (2015)	55.3
		Target (2015)	45.5
		Actual (2015)	57.6 ^a

^a Excluding the Syrian Arab Republic.

Output

- An average of 290,967 individuals received quarterly food aid and cash subsidies (Gaza and the Syrian Arab Republic only received food aid). By focusing on the abjectly poor, the social safety net programme continued to prioritize the needs of the poorest of the poor

Strategic objective 8
To mitigate the immediate effects of emergencies on individuals

Expected accomplishment	Indicator of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit of measure	Number
Reduce impact of family financial crisis	Number of Palestine refugees provided with cash or food assistance	Baseline (2015)	1 363 118
		Target (2015)	1 475 600
		Actual (2015)	1 372 245

Output

- Under emergency funding, food assistance was provided to 801,265 persons in Gaza, 48,596 in the West Bank, 466,502 in the Syrian Arab Republic, 41,882 in Lebanon and 13,600 in Jordan. In addition, job opportunities were provided to 24,092 refugees across the occupied Palestinian territory

Strategic objective 9
To provide inclusive financial services and access to credit

Expected accomplishment	Indicators of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit of measure	Number (in millions of United States dollars)
Increased provision of financial services	(a) Number of loans disbursed	Baseline (2015)	28 469
		Target (2015)	44 824
		Actual (2015)	38 193 ^a
	(b) Value of loans disbursed	Baseline (2015)	33 659 273
		Target (2015)	47 665 035
		Actual (2015)	37 898 797 ^a

^a Excluding Lebanon, as an inhospitable regulatory environment does not allow the programme to operate.

Outputs

- 13,189 loans, valued at \$17.2 million (more than 45 per cent of total loans), were extended to Palestine refugees
- 14,859 loans, valued at \$11,478,475, were disbursed to women, of which 4,948 were extended to women refugees (valued at \$4,579,534). For the overall programme, this marked a 14.3 per cent growth in outreach compared with 2014
- 11,188 loans, valued at \$10,813,409, were disbursed to youth, of which 3,351 (\$3,745,157), or 30 per cent, were extended to young refugees

Strategic objective 10
To improve employability

<i>Expected accomplishment</i>	<i>Indicators of achievement</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	
		<i>Unit of measure</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Improved market responsiveness of educational science facilities and vocational training centres	(a) Employment rates for male graduates within 12 months of graduation	Baseline (2015)	72.1
		Target (2015)	87.8
		Actual (2015)	80.14 ^a
	(b) Employment rates for female graduates within 12 months of graduation	Baseline (2015)	62.94
		Target (2015)	71.3
		Actual (2015)	77.26 ^b

^a The value including the Syrian Arab Republic is 79.66

^b The value including Syrian Arab Republic is 76.06.

Outputs

- Training in technical and vocational skills was provided to 7,234 students, of whom 42.8 per cent were women
- In 2015, Agency-wide employment rates for both male and female graduates of technical and vocational education and training increased. For males, the employment rate increased by approximately 8 per cent, while for females it increased from 62.94 to 77.26 per cent (excluding the Syrian Arab Republic)
- An improved electronic placement and career guidance electronic system was implemented to provide the programme with more accurate and timely statistical information with regard to graduate employment, among other data

Strategic objective 11
To improve the urban environment through sustainable camp development and upgrading of substandard infrastructure and accommodation

<i>Expected accomplishment</i>	<i>Indicator of achievement</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	
		<i>Unit of measure</i>	<i>Number</i>
Sustained camp development and upgraded substandard infrastructure and accommodation	Number of refugee families living in substandard shelters that have improved living conditions (excluding emergency shelters in Gaza)	Baseline (2015)	1 341
		Target (2015)	10 889
		Actual (2015)	1 040 ^a

^a Excluding the Syrian Arab Republic.

Outputs

- 1,040 families benefited from rehabilitated shelters (excluding emergency cases)
- 1 camp improvement plan developed and a further two in progress
- Work was initiated on 83 facilities, of which 52 were completed

D. Goal 4

Human rights enjoyed to the fullest

78. UNRWA aims to ensure that Palestine refugees enjoy human rights to the fullest extent possible, internally by providing protection in and through its service delivery, and externally by promoting greater respect for international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law. Palestine refugees face major protection challenges owing to, in particular, the lack of a just and durable solution to their plight, the ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, almost 50 years of occupation in the occupied Palestinian territory, an upsurge of violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the blockade in Gaza and a precarious legal status in some host countries.

79. In 2015, UNRWA made further progress in developing the Agency's protection framework and function. In order to integrate the different aspects of the Agency's protection work, preparations were undertaken to establish a Protection Division at headquarters, in early 2016. Protection/Operations Support Officer teams were also established in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, with the result that all UNRWA field offices now have dedicated protection staff for the first time in the Agency's history.

80. Building on the existing protection policy at UNRWA, a child protection framework was developed and efforts were undertaken to strengthen a case management approach, including through the piloting of a protection information management system and the development of guidelines and tools.

81. Reviews conducted to measure the implementation rate of protection audits recommendations made in 2014 recorded a 49 per cent overall rate of compliance with UNRWA protection standards. As a result of those reviews, it was also found that, overall, 74 per cent of the recommendations were either partially or fully implemented.

82. UNRWA continued to consolidate its multisectoral approach to prevent and respond to gender-based violence with referral systems further developed across the Agency. The main services accessed were psychosocial support and legal aid. The Agency also continued to work on reducing the gender gaps and addressing gender-related vulnerabilities in the services provided to refugees. In Gaza, for example, women's access to housing rights improved by having wives co-sign with their husbands before the handover of a housing unit.

83. UNRWA worked to integrate a disability dimension in its programming. The improved accessibility of UNRWA facilities for persons with disabilities was a priority, with guidance developed on accessibility for schools and health centres. Recommendations were also made on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in poverty and relief assistance.

84. To promote greater respect for Palestine refugee rights, UNRWA continued to document alleged violations of international law and raise identified concerns with relevant duty bearers through private and public advocacy. In 2015, advocacy interventions with relevant authorities elicited a 36 per cent positive response rate. This outcome should, however, be viewed in the context of a worsening protection situation in many fields of operations, which has made this work more challenging.

85. UNRWA continued to engage with the international human rights system, providing inputs to a range of United Nations human rights mechanisms and reports of the Secretary-General relevant to Palestine refugees. UNRWA also engaged with a number of European Union human rights institutions and helped to facilitate the participation of refugees to present their protection concerns at a high-level United Nations conference, in New York, to mark the celebration of "UNRWA at 65: sustaining human development and protecting rights of Palestine refugees".

Strategic objective 12

To ensure service delivery meets the protection needs of beneficiaries, including vulnerable groups

Expected accomplishment	Indicators of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit of measure	Percentage
Improved conformity of service delivery to international standards, in particular protection standards	(a) Degree of compliance with UNRWA protection standards	Baseline (2015)	47
		Target (2015)	60
		Actual (2015)	49
	(b) Percentage of education staff who successfully completed the human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance training programme	Baseline (2015)	–
		Target (2015)	2 500
		Actual (2015)	–

Strategic objective 13

To safeguard and advance the rights of Palestine refugees by promoting respect for human rights, international humanitarian law and international refugee law

Expected accomplishment	Indicator of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit of measure	Percentage
Improved programmes and policies regarding protection	Percentage of protection issues eliciting positive responses from authorities	Baseline (2015)	40.0
		Target (2015)	44.8
		Actual (2015)	36.0

Outputs

- 4,866 UNRWA staff trained on protection
- 5,006 protection cases identified in 2015, with 85 per cent responded to
- 3,411 gender-based violence survivors identified, who accessed 5,301 services
- 1,046 child protection cases identified and responded to
- Legal counselling and advisory services provided to 12,058 refugees
- 574 advocacy interventions conducted
- 469 protection incidents of alleged violations of international law documented
- 574 advocacy interventions organized and 40 formal letters submitted to duty bearers
- 7 submissions to United Nations human rights mechanisms

Strategic objective 14

To strengthen refugee capacity to formulate and implement sustainable social services in their communities

Expected accomplishment	Indicator of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit of measure	Percentage
Refugees' capacity to formulate and implement sustainable social services in their communities	Number of partnerships established with UNRWA community-based organizations ^a	Baseline (2013)	–
		Target (2014)	14
		Actual (2014)	7

^a This indicator replaces "Percentage of community-based organizations improving their level of performance in financial management, service delivery and governance", upon which UNRWA no longer reports.

Output

- A combined 36 partnerships were established in Gaza, Lebanon and the West Bank to implement projects serving the poor and vulnerable, empowering women and, ultimately, making a positive impact on the lives of refugees

Strategic objective 15

To ensure Palestine refugee registration and eligibility for UNRWA services are carried out in accordance with relevant international standards

Expected accomplishment	Indicator of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit of measure	Percentage
Improved access to registration	Percentage of new applicants meeting UNRWA standards	Baseline (2015)	90
		Target (2015)	100
		Actual (2015)	91.7 ^a

^a Including the Syrian Arab Republic.

Output

- The refugee registration information system continued to facilitate the application of the UNRWA consolidated eligibility and registration instructions and significantly improved the ability of UNRWA to monitor transactions and processes and, ultimately, serve refugees in a more dignified and efficient way

Endnote

86. UNRWA was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution [302 \(IV\)](#) of December 1949. The Agency is a subsidiary body of the Assembly and became operational on 1 May 1950, responding to the needs of about 750,000 Palestine refugees. It is one of the largest United Nations programmes, with a population of 5.24 million registered Palestine refugees under its mandate at the end of 2015, and around 30,000 staff. Palestine refugees are defined as "persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period of 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict" and include descendants through the male line.

87. The mission of the Agency is to assist Palestine refugees in achieving their full potential in human development until a durable and just solution is found to the refugee issue. The Agency fulfils its humanitarian and human development mandate by providing protection and essential services to Palestine refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Its services include basic and, in Lebanon, secondary education, comprehensive primary health care, emergency relief, social interventions, microfinance, shelter and infrastructural support.

1 The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) serves an additional 76,748 “other registered persons” in the Gaza Strip, a term which refers to those who, at the time of original registration, did not satisfy all of the UNRWA Palestine refugee criteria but were determined to have suffered significant loss or endured significant hardship for reasons related to the conflict of 1948 in Palestine, and those who belong to the families of other registered persons.

2 State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Press release on the results of the labour force survey in Palestine, 2015* (Ramallah, 25 February 2016).

3 UNRWA serves an additional 178,552 other registered persons in the West Bank.

4 Fatalities included 49 refugees, 42 of which were killed during the last quarter of 2015.

5 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs press release, “170 Palestinians and 26 Israelis killed in 2015”, 30 December 2015, available from <http://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/170-palestinians-and-26-israelis-killed-2015-enarhe>.

6 Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Humanitarian Bulletin, November 2015, available from

https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2014_12_11_english.pdf.

7 Excluding the additional 70,035 other registered persons served by UNRWA in the Syrian Arab Republic.

8 UNRWA serves an additional 103,535 other registered persons in Jordan.

9 A person-centred approach to the delivery of primary health care.

10 Figure as of January 2015.

11 UNRWA serves an additional 46,007 other registered persons in Lebanon.

12 Sixteen Arab bilateral donor States and Arab non-governmental organizations.

13 Nineteen countries, including Brazil, China, India, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Thailand and various South-East Asian and South American countries.

14 Members of the UNRWA Advisory Commission in January 2010 (17 countries and the European Union).

15 These subtotals amounted to 99.4 per cent, the remainder being dedicated to microfinance programming.

16 Internal efficiency is the ideal number of years to graduate a child from the system expressed as a percentage of the actual number of years required.

17 An additional 35,522 benefited under the social safety net programme in the Syrian Arab Republic. However, owing to the emergency situation, poverty levels could not be assessed through the proxy means testing formula.
