

# unrwa response and services to PRS in lebanon

lebanon

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## highlights

- Approximately 45,000 Palestine refugees from Syria (PRS) are recorded with UNRWA in Lebanon (12,700 families).
- Due to a shortfall in funding, UNRWA will be forced to significantly reduce cash assistance in the coming months.
- PRS in Lebanon are becoming increasingly vulnerable, with UNRWA cash assistance representing the main source of income for 95 per cent of PRS in Lebanon.
- UNRWA Lebanon's Syria Emergency Appeal for 2015 totals US\$ 63.5 million to cover the basic humanitarian needs of PRS affected by the on-going crisis. Urgent needs include food and housing assistance, and emergency health.

## humanitarian assistance

UNRWA remains the lead coordinating agency and primary provider of aid to PRS in Lebanon. Since February 2014, the Agency has been providing PRS with cash assistance for food and housing. However, due to shortfalls in funding for PRS assistance, UNRWA will be forced to reduce its cash assistance for all eligible PRS in the coming months unless further funding is received.

This comes at a time when PRS in Lebanon are becoming increasingly vulnerable, with UNRWA cash assistance representing the main source of income for 95 per cent of PRS in Lebanon according to UNRWA post-distribution monitoring surveys.

In March 2015, 43,617 PRS were credited through UNRWA ATM cards, totalling US\$ 1.29 million in cash-for-food assistance; 12,002 PRS families received cash-for-housing assistance, totalling US\$ 1.19 million. In April 2015, UNRWA aligned its cash-for-food programme with regional standards for food assistance in Lebanon. Accordingly, PRS eligible for cash-for-food assistance received US\$ 27 per person instead of the previous US\$ 30 per person. A total of 43,545 PRS individuals were credited, totalling US\$ 1.15 million in cash-for-food assistance; 11,944 families received a total of US\$ 1.18 million in cash-for-housing assistance. Unaccompanied and separated minors receive assistance in hard cash, rather than via ATM cards, following an assessment by the UNRWA protection team. In March 2015, 51 unaccompanied and separated minors received cash assistance from the Agency. Cash assistance for the months of March and April was supported through generous contributions from WFP, DFID and the Government of Germany through KFW.

In March 2015, thanks to a US\$ 50,000 contribution from the Government of Japan towards winterization efforts, UNRWA distributed a lump sum of US\$ 40 per household to 1,237 female-headed PRS households benefiting 4,727 beneficiaries.

In April, the World Food Programme (WFP) extended its agreement with UNRWA under which WFP contributes up to 50 per cent of UNRWA cash-for-food requirement per month for PRS in Lebanon.

## protection, legal status and advice

Since May 2014, PRS have been facing increasing difficulty entering Lebanon. Lebanese government restrictions continue to disallow PRS entry into the country despite an increasingly dire situation in Syria. Entry has now been limited to a 24-hour transit visa, provided PRS present a valid ticket and visa for their country of destination or a confirmed embassy appointment in Lebanon.

PRS already residing in Lebanon are facing challenges renewing their existing residency permits, citing an inconsistent enforcement of regulations by the General Security Office (GSO). UNRWA has identified very few cases of successful renewals.

In February, the GSO issued an internal circular, valid for one month only, allowing PRS to renew their residency permits for up to three months upon payment of a US\$ 200 fee. This circular was re-issued at the beginning of April 2015 valid until the beginning of May 2015. Neither of the two circulars has been published and implementation has been inconsistent. Some PRS reported that they were issued with a departure order by the GSO despite paying the fee.

UNRWA continues to closely monitor the situation at the border through dedicated border monitor staff.

## education

PRS continue to access education at 61 UNRWA schools across Lebanon. As of April, 6,000 PRS students were enrolled in classes, representing a slight decrease from the beginning of the scholastic year. Mid-year exam results showed students were well prepared for the merging of PRS and PRL classes and the difference in achievement between PRS and PRL is minimal.

The Ministry of Education issued a circular in January 2015 that prevents all students without valid legal status in Lebanon from registering for official exams. If a decision is not taken to waive these conditions for PRS, at least 123 PRS students in grades 9 and 12 will not be able to register for the exams. UNRWA has been following this issue closely with the Ministry of Education.

In an effort to provide psychosocial support to Palestine refugee students and their families, Parents' Awareness Sessions were held in the first quarter of the year and will continue in 22 schools until June. These activities are supported by the Education Above All Foundation through the Educate a Child project. Mental health and psychosocial support activities for PRS students including teacher training, sensitisation sessions and counselling are also supported by BMZ through GIZ, UNICEF and the EU.

In April 2015, 300 PRS, PRL and Lebanese students participated in the seventh edition of the Palestiniadi games, funded by UNICEF. Students engaged with each other in a number of recreational sport activities intended to foster friendship and social inclusion at the Sibliin Training Centre in Saida. With the support of the EU, UNRWA was able to distribute sport suits to PRS and PRL students in 5th and 6th grade in March. The distribution was accompanied by sports and recreation activities for boys and girls in preparation for the Palestiniadi event.

Newly-recruited teachers continue to be trained in order to accommodate the increased number of students in UNRWA schools. In March, more than 100 PRS teachers completed an eight-week refresher course in pedagogy and active learning funded by UNICEF. These teachers are now undergoing School-Based Teacher Development training, which will run until December 2015. A graduation ceremony for these teachers took place at the end of April at the Rafidia School in Saida.

## environmental health

Environmental health conditions continue to deteriorate across Palestine refugee camps in Lebanon. The presence of PRS has put considerable strain on camp infrastructure, namely sewerage and water lines. Increased garbage and waste heighten the risk of infectious disease outbreaks in the overpopulated camps. UNRWA continues to work at upgrading water, sanitation and solid waste infrastructure.

In the Burj Shemali and Mieh Mieh camps, maintenance on the existing sewerage system is underway, and upgrades are being made to the current water supply network. Sewerage line maintenance has been completed at both Nahr el-Bared and Beddawi camps - significant progress for the north of Lebanon, where a large proportion of the PRS population resides. UNRWA has also employed 36 sanitation labourers, provided them with essential sanitation equipment and distributed more than 3,000 additional refuse bins, funded by the EU and UNICEF, to respond to increased needs in all camps.

Four hygiene promoters funded by UNICEF - three in the Central Lebanon Area and one at Wavel camp - are working with camp residents to raise awareness about personal hygiene, proper sanitation practices and conservation of water.

## health

UNRWA provides free primary health care to all PRS in Lebanon through the generous contributions of several donors. Services include medical consultations and free medication and are available at all 27 UNRWA health centres in Lebanon.

UNRWA provides financial support for Emergency Room Services at Palestine Red Crescent Society hospitals and partially covers these services at UNRWA-contracted hospitals. UNRWA further supports those suffering from critical health conditions through the Catastrophic Ailment Relief Program (CARE), which provides financial support to patients requiring costly medical procedures. PRS made a total of 23,894 visits to UNRWA health centres in March (including repeat visits) and 290 patients were admitted for secondary care. Another 11 patients were admitted for tertiary care for emergency and life-threatening conditions. In April, there were 22,811 PRS visits to UNRWA health centres, 290 sought secondary care and 12 sought tertiary care.

In partnership with UNICEF and in coordination with the Ministry of Public Health, UNRWA launched a polio vaccination campaign in March and April reaching a total of 11,609 PRS.

UNRWA recently received additional support for health services through generous contributions from DFID and OCHA for the Syria Response. Additionally, the Agency received the largest single donation to the General Fund from the Government of Japan to support core services such as primary health care and the provision of medication supporting all Palestine refugees in Lebanon.

## funding 2014-2015

The 2015 UNRWA Lebanon appeal, in line with the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan for the Syria crisis, outlines the need for US\$ 63.5 million to meet the minimum needs of up to 45,000 Palestine refugees from Syria in Lebanon suffering profound hardship as a result of the on-going crisis in Syria. This builds on UNRWA Syria response efforts, which have been on-going since the beginning of the crisis, to cover PRS needs in all sectors. Urgent donor support is required to continue cash assistance and health services for PRS in Lebanon.

DONORS	FUNDED
United States of America	\$8,800,000
Germany (Ministry for Development)	\$6,195,986
European Union (total):	\$3,791,750
EC	\$2,644,989
IFS	\$1,146,761
UK Department for International Development (DFID)	\$6,504,151
World Food Programme	\$2,580,519
UNICEF	\$3,035,868
Japan	\$2,770,000
Ireland	\$1,019,579
Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)	\$1,000,001
Italy	\$155,499

**Table:** Total contributions received and carried forward in 2014-2015

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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, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.