

UNRWA OPERATIONAL RESPONSES

Humanitarian Assistance

Ninety-five per cent of the refugees registered with UNRWA rely on its humanitarian assistance to survive. Emergency assistance comprises of food parcels, cash grants and non-food items (NFIs) targeting up to 430,000 Palestine refugees during each round. In 2016, UNRWA distributed US\$ 78,297,250 over three rounds of cash grants to an average of 412,068 Palestine refugees each round, covering six months of assistance. The UNRWA cash assistance programme remains one of the most efficient forms of assistance in areas where markets are functional, providing recipients with the flexibility and independence to decide how best to meet their own daily needs and prioritize their spending. On average, Palestine refugees spent 75 per cent of the cash they received on rent and food. In addition, 609,157 food parcels were delivered via 17 distribution points during four rounds of food assistance in 2016. Each food parcel aimed to cover one third of the daily intake of one family. UNRWA also provided approximately 417,609 blankets, 70,626 mattresses, 3,195 baby kits, 33,956 packs of adult diapers, 8,823 packs of baby diapers, 278,996 hygiene kits and 29,788 sanitary products via distribution centres and to refugees living in UNRWA-managed collective centres.

Collective shelters (IDPs)

By the end of 2016, 2,354 Palestine refugees (770 families) were residing in nine UNRWA-run collective shelters in Damascus and Rif Damascus – a decrease of 1,333 individuals since the beginning of the year. In January 2016, UNRWA was hosting 3,687 Palestine refugees (1,067 families) in 13 collective shelters, located in Damascus, Rif Damascus and Latakia. The Agency provided one hot meal per day for residents of collective shelters with central kitchens. For Palestine refugees in collective shelters that were not outfitted with a central kitchen, families received one food parcel per month.

Education

The 2015/16 academic year ended in May, with 3,864 UNRWA students sitting their grade 9 national exams and achieving a 78 per cent pass rate. On 18 September, 44,597 Palestine refugee children started the 2016/17 school year. They were welcomed by 1,860 teachers in 101 schools across Syria; an addition of two schools in comparison to the previous academic year. Forty-five UNRWA schools and 56 UNRWA-managed schools in government buildings were complemented by the Education in Emergencies (EiE) programme. UNRWA EiE includes the provision of eight safe learning spaces, self-learning materials and regular catch-up classes. During the summer of 2016, UNRWA ran its Summer Learning Programme (SLP) in 32 summer learning clubs for 10,499 students. In addition, 22 catch-up clubs were organized for up to 1,835 Palestine refugees across Syria, allowing children to engage in remedial classes, participate in recreational activities and receive psychosocial support.

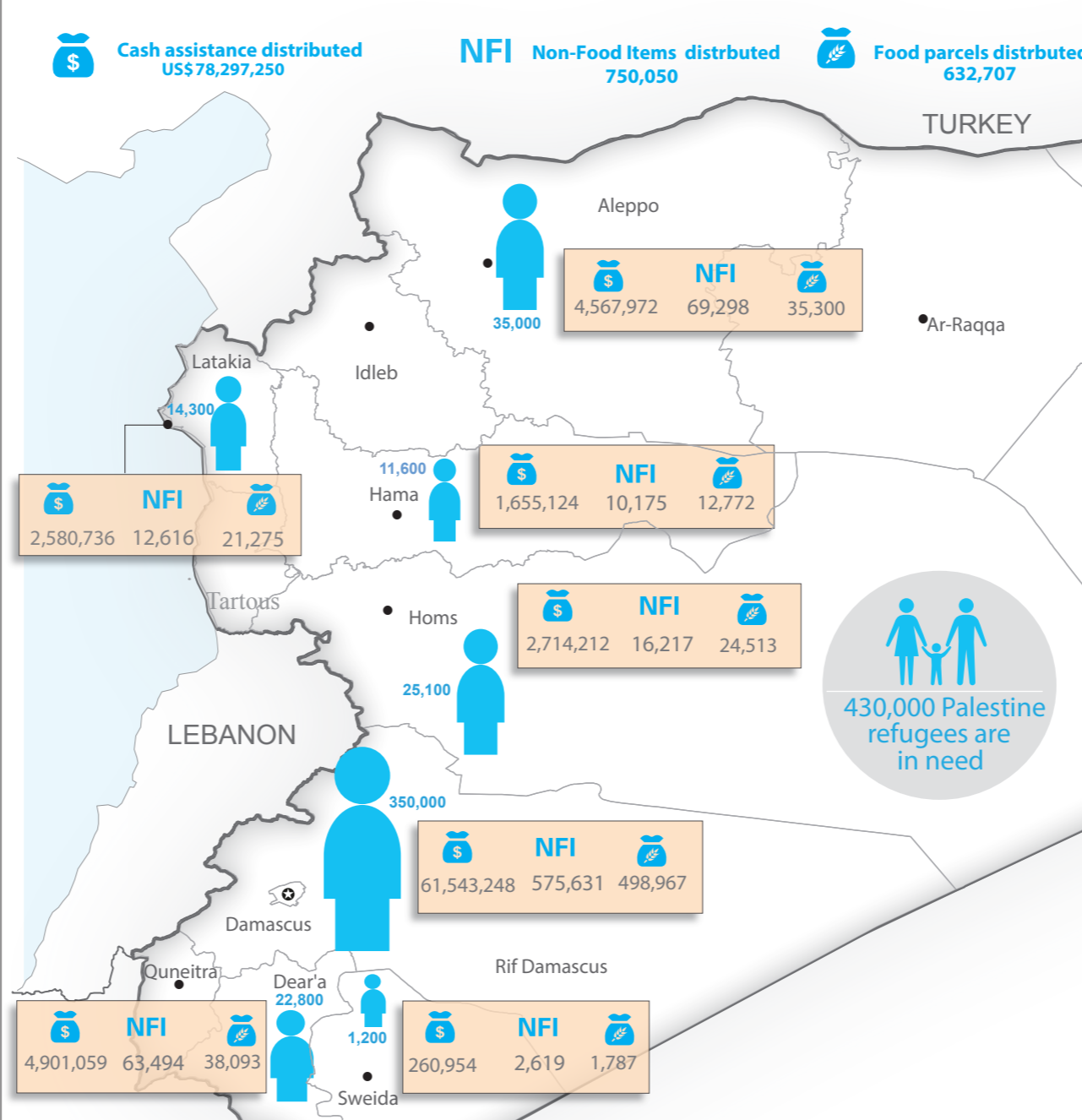
Health Care

In 2016, UNRWA employed 53 doctors and 130 nurses in its 15 health centres and 11 health points across the country. Throughout the year, the Agency's medical teams performed, on average, 79,138 health consultations per month and offered dental services through 12 health centres and three health points. UNRWA maintained its health education and awareness initiatives and, during the spring, launched a two-month healthy lifestyle awareness campaign that allowed children to learn about healthy eating habits, different types of healthy food and the importance of exercising. UNRWA also participated in a national Ministry of Health vaccination campaign conducted as part of Immunization Week, in which 11,629 polio vaccinations were administered to Palestine refugee children. To reach people in besieged and hard-to-reach areas, the Agency ran a mobile health clinic providing vital and urgent health care, targeting the Yalda/Yarmouk area in the first half of 2016.

Microfinance Department

Since its in 2003, The UNRWA Microfinance Department in Syria has distributed almost 100,889 loans worth US\$ 54,657,090. In 2016, 9,520 loans worth almost US\$ 1,932,360 were granted to 38,080 beneficiaries. The clients were mainly men (66 per cent) aged 41 and above.

The year 2016 continued to be marked by escalating **violence** across Syria, impacting Palestine refugees, especially in **Aleppo and Rif Damascus**. Since 2012, **17 UNRWA staff members have lost their lives** as a result of the conflict, including four in 2016 alone, in Khan Eshieh, Qabr Essit and Aleppo. Many more have sustained life-changing injuries. The protracted war has also had brutal consequences for civilians. UNRWA has adjusted its regular programmes to better meet the needs of the 450,000 Palestine refugees remaining in Syria, of which over 60 per cent have been internally displaced. **Humanitarian access** continued to be constrained in various places, including in Dera'a, Khan Eshieh and Yarmouk. Prior to the war, 560,000 refugees registered with UNRWA in Syria lived in a number of gatherings – both official and unofficial camps. Today, five of the 12 official/unofficial Palestine refugee camps have been either **destroyed or remain inaccessible** to the Agency. These include; Ein elTal camp in north-east Aleppo, Yarmouk in south of Damascus, Sbeineh camp 14 km south of Damascus, Khan Eshieh camp 27 km south-west of Damascus and Dera'a camp, south of Dera'a City.



Relief and Social Services and Protection

In 2016, the Department of Relief and Social Services in Syria, along with the Departments of Education and Health and the Protection Unit, identified 2,883 cases in need of protection interventions. These cases included 1,637 women, 274 men, 589 girls, 289 boys and 94 persons with disabilities. In addition to UNRWA departments engaging in the screening process, Palestine refugees can seek advice through the Agency's five Family Support Offices in Alliance, Dera'a, Homs, Latakia and Neirab camp. Last year alone, these offices assessed 5,074 legal, social and psychosocial cases.

In 2016, UNRWA managed 12 operational Women's Programme Centres (WPC) and Community-Based Organisations (CBO) across Syria. In total, 15,409 women participated in training sessions run by the WPCs and 790 women participated in capacity-building classes on how to establish small income-generating projects. Among the projects implemented this year was a sewing project in Khan Dunoun that allowed 1,600 kindergarten children to receive new uniforms. The project was a startup for new graduates and a means to provide modest incomes to marginalized women.

Engaging youth

In 2016, the UNRWA Engaging Youth project provided continuing education, career guidance, business development and life-skills training to Palestinian youth between the ages of 17 and 35. Up to 3,400 students enrolled in over 140 courses in 80 specializations. Thirty-nine per cent of the students enrolled in short-term vocational courses were young women.

Construction Projects

In 2016, UNRWA completed the reconstruction of one destroyed school in Qabr Essit, capable of accommodating 2,100 students. UNRWA also rehabilitated a community centre, a kindergarten, a distribution centre and established a new public garden in the same camp. In addition, the Agency successfully completed the construction of a water well, while the works on a second one in Khan Dunoun are ongoing.



Jan-Feb-March: In the first quarter of 2016, UNRWA distributed 138,762 family food parcels, benefiting up to 555,048 Palestine refugees via 15 distribution centres in Dera'a, the Damascus area, Hama and Latakia. A further 3,044 family food parcels were delivered to residents in collective shelters. From 17 January through 22 March, UNRWA conducted the first round of cash assistance for 2016. In total, 412,812 Palestine refugees (116,790 families) received cash via 35 distribution points in Aleppo, Damascus, Dera'a, Hama, Homs, Qamishli, Latakia and Sweida. On 2 February, UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl launched the Agency's Emergency Appeal for the Syria Regional Crisis in Amman, in the presence of the Field Directors from Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. UNRWA appealed for US\$ 414 million to meet the critical needs of Palestine refugees inside Syria and further afield throughout 2016. Access to humanitarian assistance for residents of Yarmouk, Yalda, Babila and Beit Saham resumed in February through a distribution point in Yalda. From 13 to 29 February, UNRWA distributed food parcels, blankets, and hygiene kits to civilians from the besieged and hard-to-reach. In addition, 1,100 residents received health consultations, including 80 dental consultations and polio vaccinations for 60 children under the age of five.

April-May-June: The second quarter of 2016 was marked by a sharp escalation of armed violence across the country. The situation in Aleppo deteriorated, claiming the lives of many civilians, including Palestine refugees. In Khan Eshieh camp in southern Rif Damascus, direct shelling destroyed civilian houses and several Palestine refugees were reportedly killed. On 7 April, UNRWA was forced to suspend all its distribution operations in Yalda due to intense fighting inside Yarmouk. Following almost one month of interruption, an assessment mission was conducted on 27 April. Operations resumed on 2 May, with UNRWA delivering hygiene kits and family food parcels. On 25 May, operations were again interrupted as the Agency could not guarantee the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance to the residents. UNRWA has not been able to access Yalda since. On 7 April, UNRWA successfully issued the first batch of 17 microfinance loans to Palestine refugees in Husseiniyeh. In total, 96 individuals benefited from these loans, enabling them to renovate their homes, purchase furniture and/or improve their businesses. From May through June, UNRWA completed the second round of cash assistance for 2016. A total of 415,274 Palestine refugees (118,517 families) received the equivalent of US\$ 64 each in Syrian Pounds (SYPs) via 45 distribution points in Aleppo, Damascus, Dera'a, Hama, Homs, Qamishli, Latakia and Sweida. During that same period, UNRWA also distributed 119,468 family food parcels, via 17 distribution centres, benefiting 384,956 Palestine refugees. From 3 to 26 May, approximately 45,000 students from grades 1 to 9 from 99 UNRWA schools undertook their final exams. Among these students were 162 students from Yarmouk, 47 students from Khan Eshieh and 47 Palestine refugee students from Syria displaced to Lebanon. UNRWA supported the safe passage of these students to a school located in Alliance, central Damascus, and provided them with a range of assistance, including health services, catch-up classes, food assistance and a cash stipend.

July-Aug-Sept: During the third quarter of 2016, violence in different parts of Syria resulted in further losses of civilian lives. The opposition-controlled areas of eastern Aleppo city were cut off from humanitarian assistance from 7 July onwards. Civilian infrastructure was severely affected by intense fighting, aerial bombardment and shelling. In early August, the main road to Aleppo was intermittently cut, barring access to the city, as well as to Neirab camp. Approximately 2,708 Palestine refugee families (around 9,000 individuals) still reside in Aleppo city and 4,000 families (close to 16,000 individuals) in Neirab camp. The third round of cash assistance for 2016 began on 21 August and continued until 15 November. By the end of September, 272,398 Palestine refugees (82,850 families) had received cash grants. A verification exercise was launched simultaneously to enable the Agency to identify the number of beneficiaries remaining in Syria and improve the quality and coverage of data related to its humanitarian operations across the country. The third round of food assistance was completed on 30 September, benefiting 426,681 Palestine refugees across Syria. A total of 110,707 family food parcels were distributed to 106,943 families. Beneficiaries also received 117,381 blankets and 2,137 mattresses. In addition, 649 food parcels were distributed to families residing in collective shelters, benefiting at least 2,596 individuals.

Oct-Nov-Dec: Khan Eshieh camp continued to be impacted by increasing levels of armed conflict, putting the lives of approximately 8,000 Palestine refugees and 4,000 Syrians who have been internally displaced at grave risk of death and injury. With all access roads closed, food became scarce. Access to the most basic healthcare services was also severely curtailed after the destruction of the only functional hospital in the area. Following a truce between the Government of Syria and the armed groups, UNRWA was able to regain access to the camp with vital supplies on 16 December, including food parcels, NFIs and life-saving medicines. Throughout the last quarter of 2016, the situation in eastern Aleppo worsened and Palestinian communities in western Aleppo and Neirab camp continued to be intermittently affected by the increasing violence. In preparation for the winter and potential displacement trends, UNRWA prepositioned humanitarian stocks in Aleppo and Neirab camp to respond to larger-scale movements.