



strategic plan 2023-28



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About UNRWA

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 with a mandate to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to registered Palestine refugees in the Agency's area of operations, namely the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. Thousands of Palestine refugees who lost both their homes and livelihoods because of the 1948 conflict have remained displaced and in need of significant support for over seventy years. UNRWA helps them achieve their full potential in human development through the quality services it provides in education, health care, relief and social services, protection, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.

Cover photo: The Fares family are amongst the more than 18,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria receiving unconditional cash assistance from UNRWA in Jordan. © 2020 UNRWA Photo by Lubna Hashem

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acronyms and abbreviations

2030 Agenda	2030 agenda for sustainable development	oPt	occupied palestinian territory
AAP	accountability to affected populations	PHC	primary health care
CERI	consolidated eligibility and registration instructions	PMTF	proxy-means testing formula
CIP	camp improvement plan	PRS	palestinian refugees from syria
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019	PSEA	protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
CSO	civil society organization	PSS	psychosocial support
CTA	critical thinking approach	RRIS	refugee registration information system
DIOS	department of internal oversight services	SDGs	sustainable development goals
DLP	digital learning platform	SEA	sexual exploitation and abuse
EiE	education in emergencies	SOP	standard operating procedure
EMR	electronic medical record	SRHR	sexual and reproductive health and rights
ESCWA	united nations economic and social commission for western asia	SSNP	social safety net programme
ESMF	environmental and social management framework	SWM	solid waste management
FHT	family health team	TVET	technical and vocational education and training
GBV	gender-based violence	UN	united nations
GEEW	gender equality and the empowerment of women	UNDIS	united nations disability inclusion strategy
GES	gender equality strategy 2016-22	UNFPA	united nations population fund
HRCRT	human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance	UN GA	united nations general assembly
ICT	information and communications technology	UNICC	united nations international computing centre
ICT4E	information and communications technology for education	UNICEF	united nations children's fund
IHL	international humanitarian law	UNRB	united nations regular budget
MCH	maternal and child health	UNRWA	united nations relief and works agency for palestine refugees in the near east
MHPSS	mental health and psychosocial support	UN-SWAP	united nations system-wide action plan on gender equality and the empowerment of women
MIL	media and information literacy	VTC	vocational training centre
MTS	medium term strategy 2016-22	WHO	world health organization
NCD	non-communicable disease		

commissioner-general's foreword



As UNRWA moves into the 2023–28 strategy period, it will commemorate the 75th anniversary of its existence. In 1949 the United Nations General Assembly established UNRWA to provide what was then envisaged as temporary relief and assistance to newly displaced Palestine refugees until a just and

lasting solution to their plight. Today, this solution has yet to materialize, and Palestine refugees continue to rely on UNRWA for their basic human needs.

As we approach this bitter milestone, decades of UNRWA's achievements represent one of the most successful human development projects in the Middle East contributing to the rights, dignity and well-being of millions of Palestine refugees. Throughout its existence, UNRWA has been an unshakable pillar of stability in one of the world's most volatile regions affected by conflicts, humanitarian crises, human suffering, economic strife and political instability.

As we move into the next six-year strategic term, we are operating in the context of an unprecedented socio-economic collapse in Lebanon, an unending blockade of Gaza making the place unlivable, an unparalleled humanitarian catastrophe in Syria, an alarming escalation of violence and instability in the West Bank, including East-Jerusalem, and an increasingly difficult economic situation in Jordan.

Both in the region and throughout the world, we are moving into the aftermath phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Years of economic development have been wiped out. Years of education have been lost. More Palestine refugees than ever before have been pushed back into poverty, left with UNRWA as their sole lifeline.

Shifting geopolitical priorities and regional dynamics, coupled with the emergence of new humanitarian crises over the last decade have deprioritized the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Coupled with record inflation, high energy costs, and disrupted supply chains mean that generous funding has not kept pace with growing needs and the rising cost of delivery.

In this context, and despite chronic underfunding of its core budget, UNRWA has shown resilience, flexibility and innovation in sustaining education, healthcare, emergency relief and hope for a better future for so many members of what is today a community of almost 5.9 million registered Palestine refugees.

The Strategic Plan 2023-28 represents a roadmap for how the Agency will remain resilient in its support to Palestine refugees in this difficult environment.

The Strategic Plan builds on the core pillars of the UNRWA mandate. Its strategic priorities are to protect Palestine refugees through the realization of their rights under international law; ensure they can lead healthy lives and complete quality, inclusive and equitable education; give them access to livelihood opportunities; alleviate poverty amongst the most vulnerable; and ensure they are able to meet their basic human needs of shelter, water and sanitation.

The strategic plan also incorporates key reforms and modernization initiatives that will allow the Agency to improve the quality and accessibility of its services, protect them from external shocks and enable Palestine refugees to thrive in a rapidly shifting context. It will confirm the Agency's position as one of the world's most effective and efficient humanitarian and human development organizations.

These initiatives include ramping up digitalization, continuing with a range of management reforms, robust risk management, seeking sustainable funding models, strengthening oversight measures, and increasing meaningful involvement of Palestine refugee populations in the programme management cycle.

Additionally, cross-cutting emphases on environmental sustainability, gender equality and women's empowerment, needs of persons with disabilities, and strategic investment in youth and adolescents will strengthen the implementation of our priorities.

The Strategic Plan represents UNRWA's firm commitment to fully implement the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly, to increase operational efficiency, to bolster accountability and transparency, to reaffirm alignment with UN values and humanitarian principles, and to effectively respond to the evolving needs of Palestine refugees in an ever-more complicated operational context.

A collective global effort will be needed to ensure the successful implementation of this strategy. The recent decision of the General Assembly to extend the mandate of the Agency until 2026 is an important step toward this goal. It represents the nearly universal global consensus on the importance and merit of UNRWA's service to Palestine refugees.

However, this decision needs to be backed by sufficient, sustained and predictable funding to enable UNRWA to continue delivering its public-sector like services.

For too long, the Agency has been functioning with an annual deficit and carryover of substantial liabilities from one year to the other. This is happening despite having introduced several successive zero-growth annual budgets through far-reaching cost control and austerity measures. Failing to underpin the mandate with sustainable funding risks further eroding the globally recognized quality of our services and increasing the feeling of abandonment among Palestine refugees.

As we move forward, I count on Member States, including donors, Host countries and other partners, to strengthen their engagement with the Agency to ensure a successful implementation of the Strategic Plan 2023-28. This will require political will and collective efforts to find sustainable funding solutions. It will also require a series of

one-time investments to restore assets depleted by years of austerity, achieve our modernization and environmental goals and invest in our fundraising capacity to broaden the donor base and explore innovative funding avenues. It will also require the full enjoyment by all Palestine refugees of their most basic rights, including the right to work and to adequate housing. This is the only way we can live up to our commitment to uphold Palestine refugees' rights and well-being until a solution to their plight is found.

Philippe Lazzarini
Commissioner-General



Children take part in a summer school at the UNRWA Sur Baher School, West Bank. © 2021 UNRWA Photo by Kazem Abu Khalaf

executive summary

1. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA or “the Agency”) was established in 1949 as a subsidiary organ of the United Nations (UN) to assist and protect Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The UN General Assembly (UN GA) has repeatedly renewed UNRWA’s mandate, most recently in December 2022, acknowledging in the process that, given the continuing needs of Palestine refugees and pending a just and lasting solution to the plight of the Palestinian people, the functioning of UNRWA remains essential.
2. The Agency’s mission is to help Palestine refugees achieve their full potential in human development under the difficult circumstances in which they live. UNRWA works towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Palestine refugees. Its programmes foster human capital and nurture peaceful development, consistent with UN principles and values, supporting the stability of a region buffeted by crisis and facing multiple complex and overlapping development challenges.
3. This Strategic Plan, which covers the period 2023–28, articulates UNRWA’s ambition to deliver services that address the evolving human development and protection needs of Palestine refugees. It provides the principles and priorities that will guide the Agency’s work over this period, as part of a drive to modernize operations and management practices and broaden opportunities for Palestine refugees. The plan captures lessons learned from the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and major programmatic and management reforms of recent years, as well as internal reflection and recommendations from external evaluations. It incorporates ongoing exploration of opportunities for innovation across programmes and operations, and for new models of resource mobilization.
4. In discharging its mandate, UNRWA will continue to abide by and uphold UN principles and values, in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law. The Agency will also continue to prioritize measures that foster greater trust and



School children celebrate the inauguration of a new UNRWA school in Beit Ula, West Bank. © 2022 UNRWA Photo by Lucrezia Vittori

respectful relationships in the workplace. Collectively, this will make UNRWA more inclusive, transparent and accountable.

5. Digitalization is key to UNRWA's modernization, supporting improved quality of programmes through enhanced integration, increased efficiency and greater Palestine refugee access to services and information, including in times of crisis. The further digitalization of key human resources, financial and procurement processes will promote greater accountability and transparency. Digitalization also offers new avenues for skills enhancement and employment; failure to equip Palestine refugees to benefit from both would further marginalize an already vulnerable population and undermine their economic potential.
6. To deliver on the objectives in the Strategic Plan, UNRWA will implement an ambitious approach to fundraising. In the coming years, the Agency aims to maximize resources by broadening the donor base, harnessing the potential of digital, Islamic philanthropic, thematic and individual giving and expanding the number of national committees. Fundraising and outreach plans for the first half of the strategic period will be reflected in the forthcoming Resource Mobilization and Outreach Strategy 2023–25.
7. In consultation with Palestine refugee communities, host authorities and international partners, UNRWA has identified seven objectives for the period 2023–28.
8. **First**, the Agency will ensure that Palestine refugees are protected through the realization of their rights under international law. This will be achieved through a number of complementary approaches, namely: providing services in a safe and dignified manner; meeting the protection needs of vulnerable and at-risk Palestine refugees through preventative and remedial action; and engaging duty bearers to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of Palestine refugees. In addition, UNRWA will make its programmes more gender sensitive so that the services it provides are equitable, ensuring that all Palestine refugees – women, men, girls and boys – can fulfil their needs and enjoy their rights.
9. **Second**, the Agency will continue to provide Palestine refugees with universal, non-discriminatory access to quality primary health services and targeted access to secondary and tertiary care. UNRWA will address maternal health needs through pre-conception, antenatal and post-natal care and family planning services. The Agency will also remain focussed on the provision of vaccination, growth monitoring and nutrition and high quality child healthcare services. Further, surveillance and cost effective health promotion, prevention and response interventions will: (i) address the growing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCD); (ii) promote mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS); and (iii) manage communicable diseases and infection control. In addition, access to quality health care will be improved through maintaining the supply of essential medicines, ensuring appropriate staffing levels in all health centres and providing hospitalization services for those most in need.
10. **Third**, UNRWA will continue to offer quality, inclusive and equitable education to Palestine refugees, strengthening student learning and wellbeing. The COVID-19 pandemic caused major disruption to school systems around the world, including at UNRWA. Monitoring of student performance in Agency schools points to significant learning losses in all fields; tackling this is one of the major challenges facing the UNRWA education system in the coming years. The Agency will also ensure that its systems and structures are resilient in the face of potential shocks and crises, guided by its approach to Education in Emergencies (EiE)¹.
11. Learning outcomes and critical thinking skills will be enhanced through technology, including media and information literacy (MIL) for teachers and students. UNRWA will further embed a culture of peace through the continued implementation of human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance (HRCRT) programming and school parliaments. Throughout, student wellbeing will be promoted through the continued provision of psychosocial support (PSS) and efforts to address violence in schools. The Agency will also seek additional resources to reduce the number of schools operating on a double-shift basis, absorb pupil increases and improve school infrastructure. This will help improve quality, equity and inclusion, creating an environment which is conducive to learning and accessible to all, including students with disabilities.
12. **Fourth**, the Agency will strengthen the livelihood capacities of Palestine refugees to pursue income generation and work opportunities. UNRWA will improve the relevance of its technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to labour market needs and develop more market-relevant curricula. Microfinance loan products will promote livelihood opportunities while Palestine refugees involved in camp improvement interventions will benefit from skills development in negotiation, communications, project planning and conflict resolution. UNRWA will also improve income generation and work opportunities through the creation of jobs linked to Agency construction and shelter rehabilitation works. Advocacy with host authorities and other economic actors will be stepped up to promote Palestine refugee access to employment and their right to work.
13. **Fifth**, UNRWA will alleviate poverty amongst the most vulnerable Palestine refugees, especially in fields of

operation affected by humanitarian crises. The Agency will complete several reform tracks initiated during the Medium Term Strategy (MTS) 2016-22, including: (i) the identification and refinement of vulnerability criteria used to target cash assistance; (ii) better alignment between UNRWA emergency and social safety net programme (SSNP) interventions; (iii) exploring opportunities to align Agency assistance with the social protection programmes of host authorities and other UN entities; (iv) better alignment of UNRWA cash assistance to household expenditure needs; and (v) alignment of all cash and food beneficiary distribution lists with the Agency registration system, and the introduction of a compliance framework and a beneficiary eligibility review process. In addition, UNRWA will expand access to TVET for the most vulnerable, especially those enrolled in the SSNP, helping them gain skills to generate an income, become self-reliant and break the cycle of poverty.

14. **Sixth**, the Agency will ensure that Palestine refugees are able to meet their basic human needs of shelter, water and sanitation. Shelter assistance will target the most vulnerable to ensure that all are able to live in conditions that meet minimum acceptable safety and health standards. UNRWA will also prioritize interventions addressing water supply and distribution networks and sewage and water drainage systems in camps that suffer from inadequate infrastructure. Working in partnership with Palestine refugees, the Agency will continue to integrate protection and environmental sustainability measures across the design, construction and maintenance of facilities and camp improvement works.
15. UNRWA will implement its mandate in an effective and responsible manner. This will involve working towards a predictable, sustainable and diversified funding base, effectively managing security risks and strengthening enterprise risk management. In addition, human resources and procurement systems, structures and processes will be reinforced, a renewed focus will be placed on staff wellbeing, alternative dispute resolution will be promoted through the Office of the Ombudsman and the Secretary-General's system-wide Strategy on Gender Parity will be advanced. Independent audit, evaluation and investigation functions will enhance accountability, integrity, transparency and learning. Accountability to affected populations (AAP) will form a cornerstone of quality service provision to ensure the meaningful participation of Palestine refugees at different stages of the programme management cycle. UNRWA will also continue to take robust action against breaches of UN standards of conduct, values and humanitarian principles.
16. Key thematic imperatives are reflected across multiple objectives in this Strategic Plan. The Agency is committed to ensuring that its systems, structures, processes and programmes are **gender-sensitive** and meet the needs of **persons with disabilities**. Throughout the strategic period, UNRWA will also marshal the strength of its programmes to advance environmental sustainability, establishing approaches and mechanisms to identify, internalize and mainstream environmental best practice in and through Agency service delivery. Finally, the Agency will pay particular attention to the specific and growing needs of **youth and adolescents** across its programmes.
17. Collaborating across a reinvigorated UN system and beyond for stronger collective results, the Strategic Plan 2023-28 supports transformative change aimed at the achievement of the SDGs. The plan contributes to the achievement of all 17 goals, but directly contributes to: Goal 1 (no poverty); Goal 2 (zero hunger); Goal 3 (good health and wellbeing); Goal 4 (quality education); Goal 5 (gender equality); Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation); Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy); Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth); Goal 10 (reduced inequalities); Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities); Goal 13 (climate action); Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions); and Goal 17 (partnerships for the goals).
18. To complement this Strategic Plan, UNRWA has issued a **Capital Investment Plan**² that sets out a series of one-time investments needed to restore depleted assets and modernize programmes and operations, in particular in the areas of digitalization, environmental sustainability and fundraising and public outreach. A Resource Mobilization and Outreach Strategy, currently being finalized, will mobilize the necessary support to deliver on the objectives and priorities in this Strategic Plan.

























	gaza			jordan			lebanon			syria			west bank			hq
 Health	 staff	964	 staff	671	 staff	299	 staff	431	 staff	659						
	 health care facilities	22	 health care facilities	25	 health care facilities	27	 health care facilities	23	 health care facilities	43						
	 served persons	890,541	 served persons	443,252	 served persons	150,229	 served persons	191,253	 served persons	251,461						
 Education	 staff	9,443	 staff	4,557	 staff	1,786	 staff	1,876	 staff	2,215						
	 pupils	290,288	 pupils	119,781	 pupils	39,144	 pupils	49,431	 pupils	46,066						
	 schools	278	 schools	161	 schools	65	 schools	102	 schools	96						
 Relief & social services	 staff	316	 staff	99	 staff	117	 staff	87	 staff	164						
	 social workers	68	 social workers	24	 social workers	45	 social workers	26	 social workers	48						
	 cash and food aid recipients	1,136,351	 cash and food aid recipients	77,753	 cash and food aid recipients	113,881	 cash and food aid recipients	417,807	 cash and food aid recipients	135,819						
 Infrastructure & camp improvement	 sanitation labourers	500	 sanitation labourers	297	 sanitation labourers	285	 sanitation labourers	124	 sanitation labourers	183						
	 shelters rehabilitated	427	 shelters rehabilitated	0	 shelters rehabilitated	591	 shelters rehabilitated	0	 shelters rehabilitated	31						
	 staff	11,889 → 53%	 staff	5,963 → 47%	 staff	2,929 → 46%	 staff	3,018 → 53%	 staff	3,708 → 50%						
															 staff 525	

Figure 1: UNRWA operations profile per field and headquarters, 2021

Source: UNRWA statistics bulletin



A Palestinian boy in front of an apartment block damaged during hostilities in Gaza City, Gaza. © 2021 UNRWA Photo by Mohamed Hinnawi

chapter 1: context analysis

19. The Middle East is contending with multiple overlapping challenges, rooted in prolonged social and political instability and amplified by global economic, environmental and health shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on countries across the region, wiping out years of human development gains.³ It has compounded existing inequalities and socio-economic difficulties, with the poor and most vulnerable often disproportionately affected.⁴ The war in Ukraine has resulted in further setbacks, precipitating major increases in fuel, food and basic living costs and placing further strain on governments already struggling to meet the needs of young - and growing - populations (see figure 2, below).
 20. These conditions create an extremely adverse environment for development in the region, including in all fields of UNRWA operation. Pending a just, lasting and comprehensive resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the question of Palestine refugees, the UN – including UNRWA - will remain actively involved with relevant stakeholders to support efforts towards peace, consistent with its broader, permanent responsibility for the question of Palestine.
- ## 1.1 fields of operation
21. Over the period 2023–28, living conditions for Palestine refugees are expected to remain extremely precarious and unstable, with a high risk of further catastrophic shocks. Reliance on UNRWA's protection, human development and humanitarian assistance is unlikely to diminish.
 22. 2023 marks the 17th year of the land, sea and air blockade of the **Gaza Strip**, which is considered illegal under international law as a form of collective punishment. The 2.2 million inhabitants of Gaza, of whom around two-thirds are Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA, have endured four intense conflicts over this period, which have caused major trauma, loss of life and destruction of property and infrastructure. This has contributed to an unprecedented and essentially permanent humanitarian emergency.⁵
 23. Unless actions are taken to lift the blockade, conditions will become increasingly unliveable,⁶ with safe water, regular electricity and a proper sewage system beyond the reach of most of the population. The economy will remain in a state of near collapse and unemployment levels amongst the highest in the world at a time when more young people than ever are entering the labour market. Lack of opportunities in a young and growing population will result in increasing impoverishment and very high demand on UNRWA for basic and humanitarian services. Environmental concerns in Gaza will also become increasingly acute, due to rising temperatures, scarcity of water resources and rainfall, desertification and rising sea levels.
 24. An alarming share of the population of Gaza displays symptoms of severe distress as a consequence of the blockade, the COVID-19 pandemic and repeated cycles of violence. Research indicates that mental health has dramatically deteriorated in recent years. Over 800,000 children in Gaza have only known life under blockade,⁷ and four in five report that they live with depression, grief and fear.⁸ This has major immediate and longer term consequences for their wellbeing as well as individual and societal development.
 25. In the occupied **West Bank, including East Jerusalem**, the impact of the protracted Israeli occupation is felt on a daily basis by almost 900,000 Palestine refugees and the wider population. Restrictions on Palestinian movement and access to land, resources, services and employment – enforced via a complex system of constraints - will likely continue to contribute to economic stagnation and hamper normal life and economic development, especially in Area C.⁹
 26. Recent years have been marked by a deterioration in the security situation across the West Bank, including widespread violence and risk to life for Palestinians, armed incursions into refugee camps, use of live fire against civilians and settler violence. Displacement, demolition and forced transfer remain constant threats. The exposure of Palestine refugees to conflict-related violence has detrimental impacts on their physical and mental health, as well as broader societal consequences.
 27. The difficult financial situation faced by the Palestinian Authority and the prolonged socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 have increased the vulnerability of Palestinians, with refugees among the most impacted. Residents of refugee camps have continued to experience increases in food insecurity, unemployment and poverty, compared to other locations in the West Bank.
 28. Palestine refugees in the West Bank are also confronted with natural resource scarcity and increasing degradation of the environment and water resources. The situation is compounded by the fragile political situation and the occupation,¹⁰ including the expansion of Israeli settlements.
 29. With entrenched movement and access restrictions compounded by the fragile economic situation, Palestine refugees are expected to continue suffering

- high rates of unemployment and food insecurity, likely leading to a higher incidence of poverty and increased vulnerabilities in the coming years.
30. The conflict in **Syria**, said to be the worst humanitarian crisis of the 21st century, will enter its 13th year in 2023, with nationwide and long-term impacts, including for the 438,000 Palestine refugees estimated to remain in the country. Despite various international efforts, no significant progress has been made towards a political solution, and prospects for peace during the period 2023–28 remain uncertain.
 31. Under these circumstances, Palestine refugees will continue to face an extremely difficult situation, with conditions exacerbated by high inflation, the devaluation of the Syrian currency, COVID-19 and the conflict in Ukraine. The country is also facing a serious cholera outbreak, caused by damages to water and sanitation infrastructure. Protection concerns and vulnerabilities are likely to be further aggravated, threatening social cohesion, and encouraging more widespread adoption of harmful coping mechanisms. Key risks include psychosocial trauma and distress, increased rates of gender-based violence (GBV), child protection concerns and discrimination.
 32. Overall, it is estimated that 60 per cent of the Palestine refugee population have been displaced since the start of the war, with 40 per cent in protracted displacement. Some populations are now returning to Yarmouk, Ein El Tal and Deraa refugee camps and whilst basic services are being rehabilitated in these areas, progress remains slow.
 33. UNRWA's operations will need to focus on a mixture of humanitarian assistance, regular services and reconstruction/recovery interventions, with the balance dependent on the trajectory of the conflict over the strategic period. In the event of a cessation in hostilities, development and recovery needs amongst refugees will be high. This will see increased demand for shelter rehabilitation and reconstruction and repair of UNRWA assets, requiring extra-budgetary resources.
 34. **Jordan** is expected to continue hosting the largest number of Palestine refugees in the region (over 2.3 million in 2022), including around 19,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS), who will need access to UNRWA services and assistance. Demand will remain highest amongst Palestine refugees living in camps, including for shelter and infrastructure, and amongst around 180,000 ex-Gazans.¹¹ Unlike the vast majority of Palestine refugees who have been granted Jordanian citizenship, this group lacks access to health insurance, pay foreigners' rates for higher education and face restrictions, despite some recent easing,¹² on their rights to work and own property.
 35. Absent a resolution of the Syria conflict, PRS in Jordan will continue to face severe protection risks. These are most acute for the estimated nine per cent of PRS without legal status in the country,¹³ who face restricted access to the labour market, courts, civil status and registration and humanitarian assistance that is available to the non-PRS Syrian refugee population, and around 450¹⁴ placed at King Abdullah Park, a refugee camp in a closed government facility.
 36. Overall, socio-economic conditions for Palestine refugees in Jordan are likely to remain difficult, resulting in continued high unemployment,¹⁵ increased joblessness amongst the young and low levels of labour market participation, particularly amongst females.¹⁶ Improvements in living conditions will be conditioned by Jordan's ability to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and weather the impacts of rising international commodity prices, global supply chain bottlenecks and negative spill overs from the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
 37. In **Lebanon**, recent years have seen a drastic deterioration in the ability of all Palestine refugees to meet their basic needs. Social unrest which began in October 2019, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic and the Beirut Port explosion of August 2020, has driven the country into a dire economic crisis. Prices of basic necessities, including electricity, fuel, medication and food, have soared. The first cases of cholera in more than three decades were reported in October 2022, and the outbreak had spread across much of the country by the end of the year.
 38. Palestine refugees in Lebanon, who are estimated to number up to 300,000,¹⁷ remain extremely vulnerable, due to challenges they face at the legal, administrative and security levels. The deteriorating economic situation will continue to exacerbate the impact of long-term limits on their employment opportunities. Despite considerable advancements in Lebanese labour laws since 2005, including a special provision for Palestinian refugees as a specific entity, their right to work remains subject to both formal and informal restrictions. They continue to face significant barriers to fully practicing 39 syndicated professions and significant changes to these in the short to medium term are unlikely. They also face a ban on owning property, as well as restrictions on freedom of movement. PRS confront additional barriers as they often lack the social networks to access housing and employment opportunities and struggle to register life events and access civil documentation.
 39. As the economic crisis continues, key socio-economic indicators have declined further. Poverty levels amongst Palestine refugees are estimated to have risen from 73 per cent in July 2021 to 93 per cent in September 2022,¹⁸ with similar decreases in the

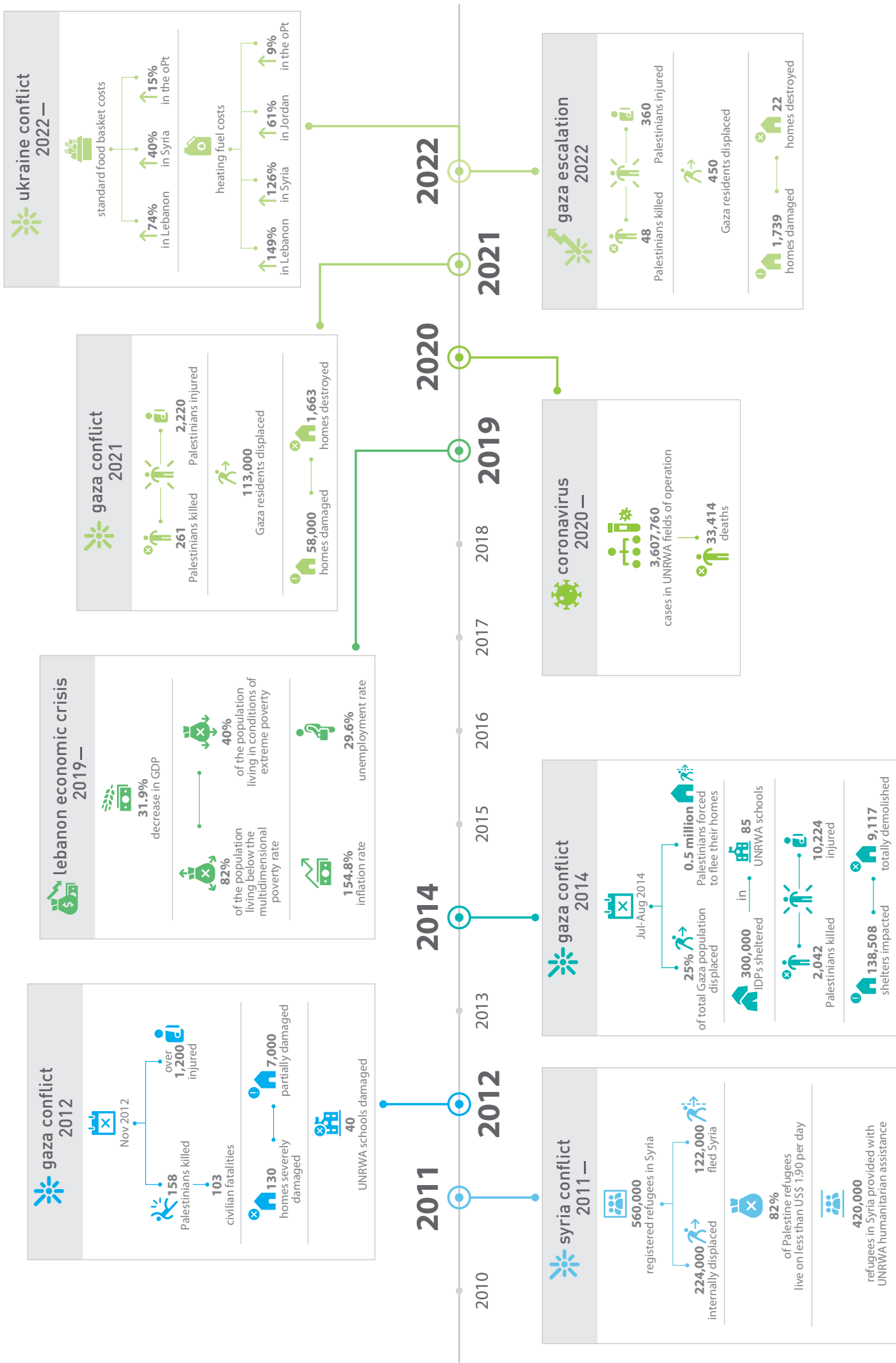


Figure 2: timeline of key events affecting Palestine refugees since 2010
Source: UNRWA data, 2010-22

quality and quantity of food consumed.¹⁹ These trends can be expected to continue in the coming period.

40. Traditional coping mechanisms are under further strain, with increased risk of protection concerns. This includes child marriage and labour, indebtedness and unsustainable borrowing. The stress of the situation is also driving an increase in violence against children, intimate partner violence, and violence in the community as interpersonal disputes erupt into shootings and broader unrest.
41. In the face of these multiple challenges, onward movement by regular or irregular means stand as a last resort coping mechanism for many Palestinians, particularly youth. While previously only a very small number of Palestinian refugees are known to have attempted to reach Europe by boat, this significantly increased during 2022.²⁰ In such conditions, demand for assistance from UNRWA will remain high, in particular relief assistance, protection and livelihoods.

1.2 population projections and service demands

42. As at the middle of 2022, 5.84 million women, men and children were registered as Palestine refugees with UNRWA (see figure 3 overleaf). A further 744,000 persons were also registered with the Agency as eligible to receive services only under the other categories listed in the UNRWA Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI) of 2009.²¹ The total registered population is expected to increase to 6.7 million by the end of 2023 and could exceed 7.3 million by 2028.
43. This implies slightly slower rates of growth of the total Palestine refugee population than in recent years, as a result of declining fertility rates in all fields. Rates of growth will vary from field to field, remaining highest in Gaza, West Bank and Jordan. Consistent with declining fertility levels in all fields, the share of children relative to other age groups will drop slightly. There will be increases in the working age population, coupled with continued growth in the number of youth – particularly in Gaza – alongside slight increases in the share of elderly. Migration – outward and within fields – will likely continue, with the trajectory of the Syria conflict and conditions inside Lebanon important determinants of population trends in those fields.
44. Compared to other global regions, and consistent with the Middle East overall, Palestine refugees remain a relatively young population. In 2022, 17.2 per cent of the total population registered with UNRWA was aged between 15 and 24, compared to around 16 per cent for the world as a whole. The number of persons registered with UNRWA has grown extremely rapidly in recent decades, driven by high fertility and improvements in health and longevity. Notwithstanding the onset of fertility decline, these conditions will provide the momentum for continued population growth in the future.
45. UNRWA's planning and budgeting processes distinguish between those registered with UNRWA as Palestine refugees or who, for other reasons are eligible to receive Agency services and those who use these services in any given year. The latter will remain the basis for planning and budgeting.
46. Demand for services amongst Palestine refugees is expected to remain high in the period 2023-28. Enrolment in UNRWA schools is likely to increase, but at a slower rate than under the 2016-22 MTS, with growth in the student population in Gaza offset by expected reductions in the West Bank and Jordan. In Syria and Lebanon, projections are more difficult due to prevailing conditions but enrolment is anticipated to increase slightly.
47. As regards health, the burden of NCDs will remain heavy in all fields, with demand for mother and childcare likely to be static – increases in Gaza will be offset by slight reductions in other fields (see figure 5 on page 30). Demand for MHPSS amongst Palestine refugees is also likely to increase, due to the impacts of COVID-19, conflict and socio-economic distress.
48. The number of Palestine refugees dependent on UNRWA for social welfare and emergency assistance will remain high for as long as current political and economic situations prevail. Within these parameters, the Agency will need to determine the potential caseload for the SSNP based on vulnerability criteria and may need to review how it supports PRS in Lebanon and Jordan, if displacement persists.

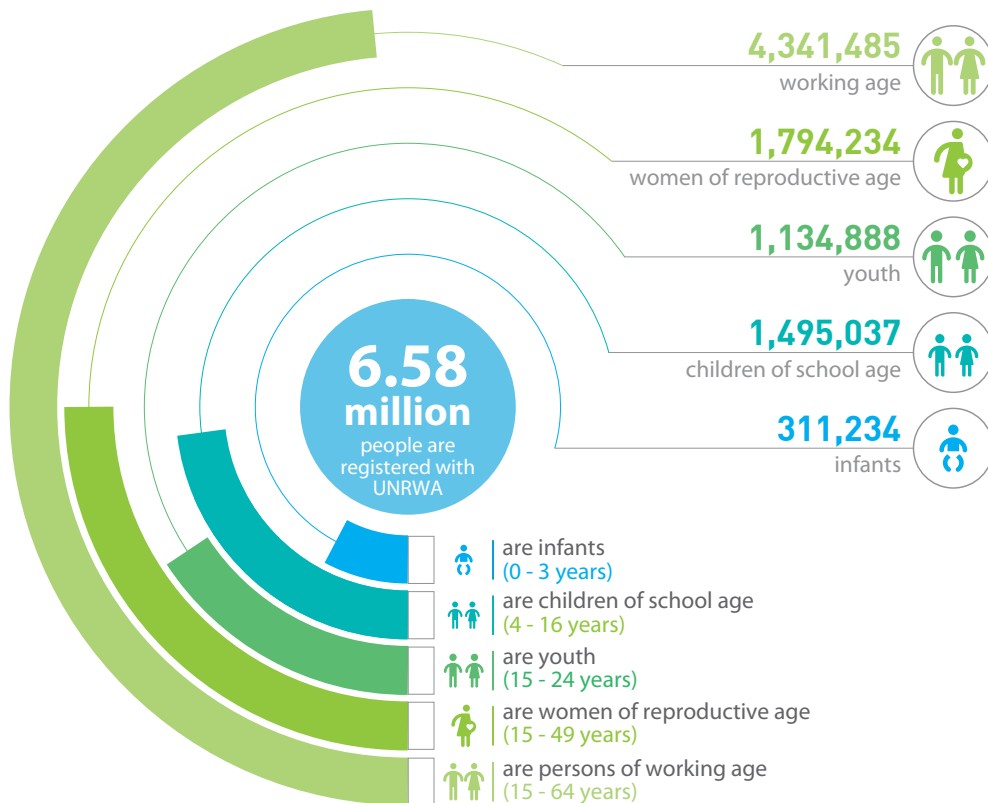


Figure 3: demographic profile of the population registered with UNRWA, June 2022

Source: UNRWA Refugee Registration Information System (RRIS), 2022



A young Palestinian refugee from Syria with her mother in Amman, Jordan. © 2021 UNRWA Photo by Sally al-Akhras

chapter 2: global and development context

49. The UNRWA Strategic Plan 2023-28 is situated within a global development context guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), including the SDGs, multinational, national and local responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, a comprehensive UN reform agenda to ensure that the organisation is fit for purpose, and recommendations under the Secretary-General's report on "Our Common Agenda".²²
50. UNRWA's commitment to the 2030 Agenda is mainstreamed throughout this plan, based on the recognition that advancing sustainable development for Palestine refugees requires multi-dimensional action spanning poverty alleviation, respect for human rights, access to quality health and educational services, reduced inequality, economic growth and environmental sustainability.
51. UNRWA's response to COVID-19 aligns closely with UN system strategies, including the Secretary-General's call to action in the report, "Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-economic Impacts of COVID-19".²³
52. The UN reform agenda aims to enhance organisational contributions to sustainable development, ensure more effective capacities to tackle conflict and sustain peace and improve the internal management and overall ability of the UN to deliver. This three track approach addresses fragmentation and bureaucratization that cause gaps, the duplication of efforts and resource drainage. It also promotes enhanced efficiencies and cohesive action towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda.²⁴
53. Alongside the UN reform agenda, over the 2023-28 strategic period, several global trends will inform the UNRWA imperative to enhance service quality. These include digital transformation and efforts to reach universal connectivity as a human right²⁵ as a means to accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs, as well as the emergence and scaling up of innovative financing models, often based on public/private partnerships to reach the furthest behind and most vulnerable.
54. As was the case for governments, businesses, schools and health services around the world, during the COVID-19 pandemic, UNRWA was forced to adapt its service delivery models and implement digital workarounds. This has accelerated a shift to digital solutions for service delivery; however, a host of vulnerable groups and individuals have been lost in a digital divide. Unequal access to low cost and emergent digital technologies and a reduced capacity to make use of these technologies has created an uneven circulation of benefits, and those unable to connect are most likely to be left behind.
55. UNRWA recognises the need for a comprehensive and holistic approach to digital inclusion for Palestine refugees and the development of a shared vision on digital cooperation and a digital future is being prioritized. As the Agency emerges from the COVID-19 crisis and seeks to lay the foundation for more inclusive, resilient and sustainable economies, it is committed to addressing these inequalities to avoid entrenching the digital divide.
56. The reinvigoration of the UN system, coupled with the Funding Compact for the SDGs,²⁶ provide the impetus for a strengthened partnership between UNRWA and its donors. In addition, the Secretary General's data strategy²⁷ and innovation agenda²⁸ will continue to inform UNRWA's modernization, digitalization and innovation efforts.
57. UNRWA is also committed to enhancing environmental sustainability in its operations and the broader Palestine refugee community. Sustainable development is inextricably linked to the right to a healthy environment. In the implementation of the Strategic Plan, the Agency will ensure that its operations contribute to protecting the environment and do not have a negative impact on the climate.
58. The UNRWA Strategic Plan 2023-28 is designed to be flexible and to adapt, as needed, to effectively deliver on mandated UNRWA commitments to Palestine refugees. Where necessary, the Agency will regularly update programme implementation arrangements to reflect the repositioning of the UN system to deliver the 2030 Agenda.

chapter 3: a collective responsibility

59. On 29 November 1947, the UN GA adopted the UN Partition Plan for Palestine as Resolution 181 (II).²⁹ Subsequent to the partition of Mandatory Palestine,³⁰ UNRWA was created to provide assistance and protection for Palestine refugees, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. This was - and firmly remains - the expression of the collective will of the international community, as reflected in the UN self-characterization of its "permanent responsibility for the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all of its aspects in accordance with international law...".³¹ Palestine refugees may be a political question; however, they are first and foremost human beings entitled to live in conditions of dignity and equality.
60. UNRWA is currently confronted with an increased demand for services, as documented above. The Agency's almost complete reliance on voluntary contributions has put it in a mode of cyclical financial crisis, where the predictable and timely delivery of core essential services and special programmes are jeopardized, and the most vulnerable face the greatest risk of being left behind.
61. Strengthening the financial viability of UNRWA is a collective responsibility among all stakeholders to ensure continuity of services and the protection of Palestine refugees through realization of their rights. Until a just and lasting solution is found to the plight of Palestine refugees, effective and efficient Agency operations count on:
 - UNRWA staff and management to develop and implement strategic operational and financial plans in accordance with the Strategic Plan 2023-28.
 - Host countries to continue to show generosity and support towards Palestine refugees and to protect their rights.
 - Donors to remain committed to ensuring that UNRWA can deliver vital services in accordance with its UN GA mandate. In this regard, the Agency's financial resources should be commensurate with the mandate conferred on it and the responsibilities it discharges for the benefit of Palestine refugees.
62. This collective responsibility offers the best prospect of bringing Palestine refugees closer to a better future, closer to their aspirations as a community and which offers them the best prospect to retain the dignity that is their right as human beings. To discharge its mandate and effectively serve Palestine refugees, UNRWA needs:
 - Co-ownership of the Agency's strategic direction, supported by predictable, sufficient, and sustainable funding to its Programme Budget.
 - Advocacy with Member States, regional organizations, global and thematic funds, and other entities that could provide additional political and funding support.
 - Political support, including through public responses to attacks against its integrity and attempts to undermine its operations.
 - Active engagement, feedback and guidance from Member States, to advise and assist the Commissioner-General on UNRWA's planning, implementation and evaluation of its programmes, namely through the Advisory Commission and its Sub-Committee.
 - Sufficient and sustained funding to other entities that partner with the Agency to provide dedicated/specific expertise to UNRWA's programming that increases the quality and breadth of services to refugees.
63. To enable this support, UNRWA is committed to a regular, transparent and in-depth dialogue, notably through the Advisory Commission and its Sub-Committee and other forums bringing together host and donor countries, as required. UNRWA will continue to provide comprehensive, clear and detailed information about its operations; its understanding of the context and needs of Palestine refugees; and decisions the Agency makes to discharge its mandate.
64. UNRWA plays a pivotal role in providing services, dignity and protection to a highly vulnerable Palestine refugee population, and in ensuring stability in the region. For this to be maintained, a collective approach is required with buy-in by all stakeholders. The form of that collective approach remains to be determined; however, the necessity of the approach does not.



Children play during UNRWA food distribution to the Bedouin community in Al-Mu'arajat, Jericho. © 2021 UNRWA Photo

chapter 4: the impetus for modernization

65. UNRWA's modernization is essential for three reasons. First, it is designed to improve services and broaden opportunities for Palestine refugees. Digitalization, as one dimension of modernization, offers new avenues for skills enhancement and employment; failure to equip Palestine refugees to benefit from both would further marginalize an already vulnerable population and undermine its economic potential.
66. Modernization will also enable UNRWA to increase the quality and accessibility of its services. Particularly in times of crisis, digital technologies can be critical for maintaining services and for engagement with refugees. This must be matched with efforts to ensure all Palestine refugees are able to access services, including women and girls, older persons, persons with disabilities and those living in remote and conflict-affected locations.
67. Finally, modernization will maintain UNRWA's status as a highly cost efficient organization (see text box below) while generating further efficiencies that have the potential to reduce budgetary pressures on the Agency over time. It will also enable continuous improvement in UNRWA's accountability and transparency practices towards beneficiaries and the international community.
68. Modernizing UNRWA will take various forms. It includes the further use of digital technologies to increase the value of UNRWA's services to refugees, but extends beyond the use of new technologies, to management practices and organisational culture.
69. It is also about providing the necessary enabling platform for efficient and effective operations, notably by restoring the Agency's depleted assets, equipment and infrastructure, and investing in capacity building of its staff. Further, it is about new or renewed partnerships, through which, expertise from other actors improve and complement UNRWA programming.

UNRWA and efficiency: an external perspective

UNRWA aims to maximise the impact of its financial and human resources for the benefit of Palestine refugees. The Agency's drive to achieve value for money throughout its operations has taken on critical importance due to increased need amongst Palestine refugees without commensurate growth in financial resources.

The Agency reviews the efficiency of its programmes on an ongoing basis to ensure that it maximizes the delivery of outputs at minimal cost. A World Bank and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees report, published in January 2021, highlighted that in the West Bank, Gaza and Jordan, UNRWA school children scored an average of a quarter of a standard deviation higher in international assessments than their counterparts in public schools, implying an advantage of almost a year of learning. The report also noted that this outcome was achieved at lower unit costs than public education systems in these fields of operation.³³ UNRWA costs for the delivery of education services compare favourably with a selection of lower-middle, upper-middle and high income countries.

4.1 management and governance

70. UNRWA's management priorities for 2023-28 build on recent reforms to make the Agency more accountable, inclusive, transparent and agile, in order to better support programme delivery and strengthen strategic and policy functions.
71. This will be achieved through:
 - **Strengthened governance and management structures:** UNRWA has established a new senior management structure to make decision-making processes more coherent, efficient, inclusive and transparent. An Executive Advisory Group regularly advises the Commissioner-General in taking decisions on issues of strategic and operational consequence

across the Agency, supported by a larger Senior Management Team. UNRWA is currently reviewing the relevance and effectiveness of its internal governance mechanisms and will revise Organizational Directives accordingly. The Agency is also strengthening its risk management practices, enabling teams to better identify, plan for, mitigate and treat risks as a means to improve the quality and effectiveness of programmes and support services across the Agency.

▪ **Broader 'agency' in UNRWA's work, through meaningful participation of staff and Palestine refugee communities:** the Agency intends to further incorporate and broaden the voices of beneficiaries and staff in its programming, seeking ways to enhance their agency in the life of UNRWA. To this end, it will

reinforce its communications strategy with staff and beneficiaries, e.g., through dedicated resources in its communications department.

■ **Efficient and effective decision-making processes:**

UNRWA is reviewing the delegated authority framework to enable more transparent and efficient decision-making processes that strengthen delivery, reduce transaction costs, and that create more efficient oversight and accountability mechanisms throughout the Agency.

■ **Systematic adherence to UN values and principles:**

maintaining the highest standards of respect and integrity is key to creating an ethical, inclusive and empowering workplace. UNRWA will ensure its core values are integrated into all staff-related processes and the UN values and principles that underpin our work is reflected in the design and implementation of programmes and in the conduct of all staff.

■ **Improved organizational culture and ethics:**

building on work undertaken in recent years, including the establishment of a Women's Advisory Forum, the Agency will prioritize measures to foster greater trustful and respectful relationships in the workplace across all levels of the Agency. This will include the establishment and strengthening of staff feedback mechanisms that contribute to the development of policies and initiatives that enhance the UNRWA organizational culture and support a healthy work-life balance. It will also include strengthening the recently established Office of the Ombudsman and launching annual Leadership Dialogues, embracing a full top-down and bottom-up approach. The latter, which will begin in 2023, are designed to provide Agency staff with an opportunity to discuss ethical topics of importance to their work.³²



A doctor at the UNRWA Al-Nuzha Health Centre demonstrates to a patient how to use the Agency's e-NCD mobile application, Amman, Jordan. © 2020 UNRWA Photo by George Awwad

digital transformation

Improving service delivery through digitalization is key to UNRWA's modernization. For this to succeed, it must be accompanied by a wider effort to harness and manage the associated potential and risks across the Agency. Led and coordinated by UNRWA's Information Management and Technology Department, this wider effort has several dimensions.

The UNRWA Digital Transformation Strategy is designed to deliver digital services for Palestine refugees. This is the core pillar, and it will strengthen the quality of service delivery for Palestine refugees by ensuring greater integration of programmes, faster delivery of services, and increased access of refugees to information. It will also support the greater inclusion of vulnerable Palestine refugees in UNRWA services, enabled by digital tools and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Operational excellence efforts will address UNRWA's internal processes. By digitalizing a number of business processes, for example in the areas of human resources and financial reporting, UNRWA can become more efficient, increase its accountability and promote further transparency.



The strategy will also support the External Relations and Communications Department in the use of new digital tools to expand partnerships and strengthen advocacy. UNRWA is working with several partners to realize this ambition, under a workstream of **digital partnerships and advocacy**. Within the UN, the UN International Computing Centre will continue to provide valuable digital business services, from security tools to hosting platforms. UNRWA will also continue to benefit from advice provided by the Info-tech Research Group and under partnerships with digital market leaders to provide more efficient and secure digital services.

Throughout, a culture shift will need to be supported. This will require a focus on **championing and managing change**, to ensure that innovative digital solutions are identified, and tested, related anxieties addressed and obstacles overcome in a spirit of inclusion and participation.

Finally, the introduction and expansion of digital solutions expose UNRWA to additional risks, such as security breaches or digital exclusion. These risks will be addressed as part of UNRWA's strengthened approach to **risk management**.

chapter 5: strategic priorities and programmatic response

overview

72. For more than 70 years, UNRWA has contributed significantly to the human development and protection of Palestine refugees, fostering human capital and nurturing peaceful development, consistent with UN principles and values. This has been achieved through innovative and ground-breaking programmes which have delivered transformational development outcomes. UNRWA's services are widely acknowledged for their contributions to regional stability and conditions conducive for peace, in spite of the failure of successive efforts to find a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Israeli – Palestinian conflict.
73. Since the Agency's establishment, its services have adjusted and evolved in response to changing needs and circumstances. Recent years have been characterized by extreme turbulence and uncertainty – in the region and beyond – that have had major impacts on Palestine refugees and UNRWA. Amongst other things, these have seen wide fluctuations in funding available to UNRWA at a time of increasing Palestine refugee needs, protection risks, and demands on the Agency.
74. Despite this uncertainty, under the 2016–22 MTS, UNRWA was successful in strengthening its service delivery and key management and operational support functions. Important reforms in health and education were completed, further consolidated and embedded, whilst new reforms were introduced, in the areas of microfinance and relief and social services. The Agency advanced its protection agenda significantly through the development of tools, policies and the establishment of a protection division at HQ, reflecting the centrality of protection to UNRWA's mission and services. Strategic management functions were also bolstered, in the areas of results management, planning, accountability, transparency, governance and safeguarding (protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and sexual harassment).
75. As a result, and despite challenging financial circumstances, UNRWA was able to achieve – and in many cases exceed – performance targets for its education and health programmes throughout much of the 2016–22 MTS period. Progress was anchored in the strong systems that the Agency has developed over several decades, which enabled service delivery to continue during the COVID-19 pandemic and – in some fields – ongoing conflict. This came at a cost, in the form of ever larger class sizes in UNRWA schools and increasing numbers of front-line personnel on temporary contracts. Educational progress in the first four years of the MTS was upended by COVID-19: there is evidence of severe learning loss amongst Palestine refugee pupils in 2020 and 2021 as a result of pandemic-related disruptions to schooling.
76. In other areas, performance fell short, particularly in protection, livelihoods and relief assistance. This can be attributed in large part to the Agency's financial situation: due to funding shortfalls, UNRWA was unable to increase the caseload of its SSNP or the value of assistance provided to the poorest refugees, despite deteriorating socio-economic conditions and rising living costs. Protection activities and staffing were hit hard by a loss in funding from the Agency's largest donor between 2018 and 2020, at a time when protection threats in many fields were increasing. In relation to livelihoods, the Agency was unable to make the necessary investments in its TVET programming or expand partnerships sufficiently to address rising unemployment, particularly amongst Palestine refugee youth. The performance of UNRWA's microfinance programme was also badly impacted by COVID-19 related shocks, which led to the downward revision of many targets that are only now starting to recover.
77. Concerted efforts to stabilize the Agency's finances have yielded some tangible results, most notably through the approval, in 2021 and 2022, of additional international posts funded by the UN Regular Budget (UNRB) in key strategic functions such as fundraising, communications, internal oversight, protection and humanitarian principles. The UN GA is also considering additional increases in UNRB support to UNRWA beyond international positions, related to executive and administrative management functions of the Agency.³⁴ Notwithstanding these steps, the financial challenges faced in recent years are likely to persist in the coming years.
78. UNRWA's strategy for the period 2023–28 is grounded in the mandate granted by the UN GA and situated within the global development framework of Agenda 2030 and other UN system wide priorities, including principles of partnership which are designed to reduce needs, risks and vulnerabilities. It is also guided by organisational reflection and learning. This includes as relates to performance under the 2016–22 MTS, changes in the Agency's operating environment and protracted financial crises.

79. The objectives overleaf translate the Agency's mandate into concrete deliverables for the period 2023–28. They reflect a commitment to further strengthen the Agency's rights-based approach to programming and advocacy, emphasizing the shared responsibilities of the international community to

ensure that Palestine refugees are able to fully enjoy universal human rights and are not left behind. Adherence to and respect for humanitarian principles will continue to shape every aspect of UNRWA's operations,³⁵ and will be systematically mainstreamed under the Strategic Plan.



A student at UNRWA Hebron Boys' School participates in a campaign against bullying, West Bank. © 2020 UNRWA
Photo by Marwan Baghdadi

Palestine refugees achieve their human development potential

01



Palestine refugees are protected through the realization of their rights under international law

03



Palestine refugees complete inclusive and equitable quality basic education

02

Palestine refugees lead healthy lives



04

Palestine refugees have improved livelihood opportunities



05



the most vulnerable Palestine refugees have access to effective social assistance

06

Palestine refugees are able to meet their basic human needs of shelter, water and sanitation



07

UNRWA's mandate is implemented effectively and responsibly



thematic imperatives: Gender, Disability, Youth, Environment



80. The principle of **universal access** to basic health and education services remains central to UNRWA's approach, alongside an understanding that the specific needs of some communities and groups require additional, targeted support. This is a result of their inability to enjoy their social and economic rights, or due to vulnerabilities linked to poverty, age, gender or disability. The Strategic Plan recognizes the interconnectedness of these needs and the interdependencies between many of the SDGs.
81. This also requires better linkages between the Agency's **human development and humanitarian programming**. In recent years, the lines between different UNRWA funding portals – Programme Budget, Emergency Appeal and Projects – have blurred. In 2020 and 2021, around one-third of total Agency expenditure came outside the Programme Budget, mostly for relief activities in Gaza, Syria and Lebanon.
82. Regular and emergency services are often being delivered to the same populations using the same systems and assets but under different funding modalities. This is most visible for relief assistance but equally important in other areas ranging from MHPSS and the delivery of EiE to the use of UNRWA schools and installations as temporary shelters for refugees fleeing conflict and disaster. Repeated cycles of conflict in Gaza and the experience of COVID-19 have demonstrated that UNRWA's core programme infrastructure – front line staff, installations and management information systems – are critical for the delivery of life saving relief in times of crisis.
83. A more coherent conceptualization of programming across different funding streams is needed, in view of the high risk of future catastrophic events, the pressures on UNRWA's finances and the increasing complexity of the Agency's operating environment.
84. In the coming strategic period, UNRWA will **modernize its services and operations**, to ensure it is equipped to meet the evolving needs of refugees and Member State expectations, effectively and efficiently. This will be achieved through and beyond digitalization; digital solutions will be used – where appropriate, for reasons of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity – to maintain Palestine refugee access to quality services and ensure that young people in particular acquire the skills they need to participate in modern societies and economies.
85. The Agency will also prioritize **the modernization of its management practices and organizational culture**. This is with a view to: (i) strengthening governance and management structures; (ii) increasing staff participation, notably amongst females and young people; (iii) enhancing engagement mechanisms with refugee communities; and (iv) further building an organizational culture and associated working mechanisms centered around the highest standards of ethical behaviour, inclusion, empowerment and integrity.
86. As part of efforts to modernize management practices, **the Agency Risk Management approach, systems and tools** will be enhanced to create a stronger risk culture. This will be based on a comprehensive and ongoing assessment of risk factors that impact UNRWA's ability to plan and deliver services and engage with external stakeholders. UNRWA's digitalization efforts will also upgrade the Agency's risk management capabilities and systems in several ways, including through improved data protection and information sharing protocols and faster and more reliable generation of risk indicators to support risk analysis and management. The former will be guided by the 2021 UNRWA Data Protection and Disclosure Policy, which will go through a review in line with updated international standards to enable its full implementation and roll out, and system wide practice in this area.
87. UNRWA will also intensify efforts to **broaden its donor base** and harness the potential of digital, Islamic philanthropic and individual giving platforms. It will seek to access global, regional and thematic sources of funding, including through development outcome mechanisms and other innovative instruments already in use in the region.
88. Key thematic imperatives are reflected across multiple objectives in this Strategic Plan. This includes a commitment to **environmental sustainability**. UNRWA seeks to ensure that its operations are delivered in an environmentally sustainable way, and has a key role to play in minimizing the negative environmental impact of its operations and in raising awareness within Palestine refugee communities.
89. The present strategy also outlines the Agency's intention in gender and disability to expand and invest in its renewed and enhanced **protection function**, embedded within a human rights-based approach. This will enable the effective implementation of UNRWA's commitments under its protection strategy and policy framework, including the revised **Disability Policy** (2022) and an updated **Gender Equality Strategy**, which is to be developed in 2023. Recognizing the specific and growing needs of young Palestine refugees, the Strategic Plan seeks to refocus and strengthen UNRWA's work in this area, to build capacities for youth and adolescent participation, positioning them to make effective contributions to their community and wider society.

objective 1: Palestine refugees are protected through the realization of their rights under international law



context

90. The protection of Palestine refugees lies at the core of UNRWA's mandate. The Agency recognizes that Palestine refugees are best protected through the realization of their human rights, including to health, education, food, water, shelter, culture and non-discrimination. Whilst the primary responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil these rights lies with States, UNRWA plays a key role, both as a provider of core public services and as an advocate on behalf of the Palestine refugee population.
91. For UNRWA, protection is about putting Palestine refugees at the centre of its work and ensuring that no one is left behind, using its mandate, resources and authority to directly support Palestine refugees and to encourage and support others who are responsible for protection to play their part. With expanded support to its protection function, the Agency will be better equipped not only to prevent and address the growing protection risks and needs of Palestine refugees, but also to achieve its broader vision that every Palestine refugee lives in dignity and enjoys the best possible standards of human development.

current operations

92. Under the 2016-22 MTS, UNRWA strengthened its protection role at field and HQ level. The Agency addressed new and ongoing protection concerns through the mainstreaming of protection across programmes, the delivery of specific preventative and remedial protection services and by advocating for the rights of Palestine refugees under international law.
93. UNRWA promoted the safe, equal and dignified access to services by all Palestine refugees, including men, women, girls, boys and older persons, with and without disabilities. The Agency achieved significant results in relation to staff capacity development on key protection issues, including the PSEA, GBV, child protection, the systematic identification of disability, addressing violence against children, and safe identification and referral. A Gender Equality Strategy 2016-22 (GES) was implemented in tandem with the 2016-22 MTS, promoting a 'dual-track' approach focused on gender mainstreaming at both the organizational and programmatic levels alongside the

implementation of individual field office gender action plans. The Agency Disability Policy was also updated in 2022³⁶ to align with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) and recent developments in global disability mainstreaming standards.

94. In the relief and social services programme, the Agency is completing and consolidating social work reform efforts that began in 2019 in a phased manner across all fields of operation. The entire UNRWA social services workforce (249 social workers and supervisors) has now been certified as professional social workers. They are trained to carry out case work and case management with individuals as well as families, depending on context and needs. Attention is given to issues of GBV, child protection and disability as well as the management of other social issues such as depression, grief and substance abuse. The social work reform has also included the establishment of a case management system and database (PRIMERO) used by social workers, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). As part of this, internal and external referral mechanisms, including partner identification and engagement, have been consolidated.
95. Throughout the period covered by the 2016–22 MTS, UNRWA remained a strong advocate for the rights of Palestine refugees under international law. The Agency has consistently raised key concerns around protection and compliance with international law through targeted interventions with duty bearers and other external stakeholders. This has included advocacy related to the impact of conflict, occupation and violence affecting Palestine refugees in many fields; freedom of movement concerns, including issues of humanitarian access; the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, particularly on the most vulnerable; legal documentation and other barriers to accessing services; and continued concerns around the excessive use of force, evictions and demolitions, and settler violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. UNRWA, through its Department of Legal Affairs, also engaged with and contributed to UN international human rights mechanisms to provide information and case studies on key protection and international law concerns and human rights violations affecting Palestine refugees in its fields of operation.
96. UNRWA retains responsibility for registering Palestine refugees and others eligible for its services. Individual registration records are organised under family ledgers and constitute the backbone for the management of all Agency services; the associated documentation materials are also an important archive of Palestine refugee history.

97. At the end of 2021, the Agency was maintaining active files of around 5.8 million registered Palestine refugees and 0.7 million other service eligible persons in its RRIS. The registration process is voluntary; life events, such as marriages, births, transfers and deaths, are recorded any time registered persons supply the Agency with relevant documents and request to update their family registration card. In line with the UNRWA Digital Transformation Strategy, the Agency has recently embarked on a modernisation of its RRIS to further safeguard Palestine refugee records and their rights, while also enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and accountability of service provision to those eligible and in need of such services.

needs

98. Palestine refugees are facing a profound human development and protection crisis due to the ongoing occupation in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), the blockade of Gaza, conflict in Syria, and significant instability, conflict and violence across many UNRWA's fields of operation. Palestine refugees represent one of the largest refugee populations in the world. Many are unable to live a life in dignity due to their precarious legal status, restricted access to civil documentation, and/or a lack of enjoyment of rights, including in some instances, to work and basic services. The vulnerability of women, children and persons with disabilities to abuse, exploitation, and exclusion is also on the rise; individuals and groups already at risk of exclusion were first and hardest hit by the global economic and

social repercussions of COVID-19, forcing many to resort to negative coping mechanisms.

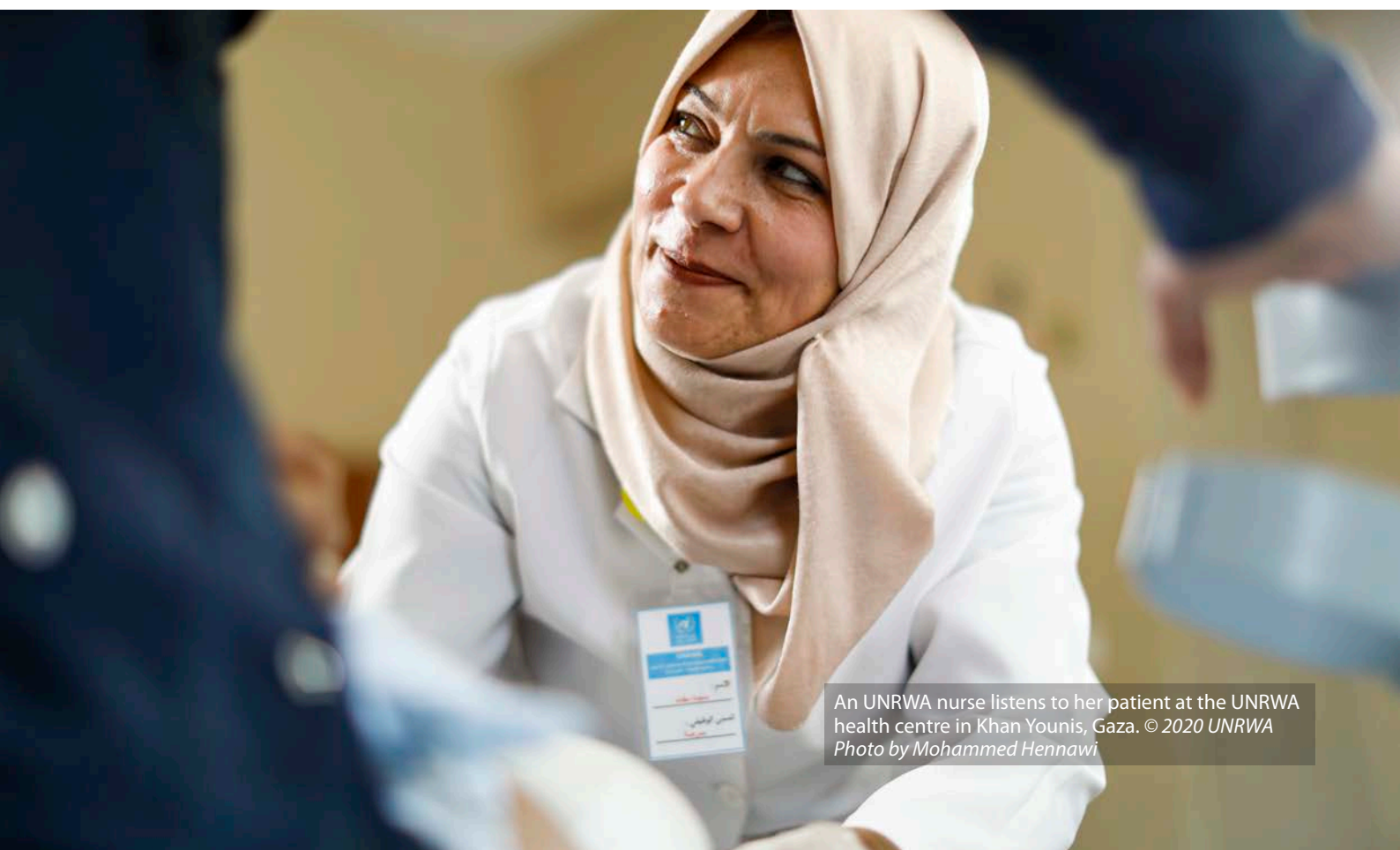
priorities

99. In 2021, the Agency adopted a new Protection Strategic Framework to inform the design and implementation of its protection function in upcoming years. The Framework reaffirms the Agency's commitment to strengthen protection efforts, using three complementary approaches: (i) protection mainstreaming; (ii) protection programming; and (iii) protection advocacy and engagement with duty bearers. These three pillars are underpinned by a strong data-driven focus.

100. UNRWA has significant protection aspirations and, in order to achieve desired outcomes in an effective and sustainable manner, will require relevant high-level support, skills and resources. Through strengthened investment in UNRWA's protection approach, according to the needs identified and outlined in the Protection Strategic Framework, the Agency will progressively implement the activities and programming envisioned under each of these three complementary approaches:

outcome 1: Palestine refugees have access to UNRWA services in safety and dignity

101. UNRWA will strive to place Palestine refugees at the centre of the decision-making processes that affect their lives so that services are people-centered



An UNRWA nurse listens to her patient at the UNRWA health centre in Khan Younis, Gaza. © 2020 UNRWA
Photo by Mohammed Hennawi

and delivered in a safe, dignified, accountable and accessible manner that promotes and respects their rights. This will be achieved through the effective application and mainstreaming of protection and humanitarian principles, and by ensuring that programmes advance the principle of **do no harm**, applying an intersectional lens to vulnerability and risk so that no refugees are left behind.

102. The Agency will systematically mainstream cross-cutting protection issues that contribute to risk and vulnerability, including gender, disability and age, across all its systems, processes, methodologies, programming and service delivery. With regard to UNRWA systems and processes, the Agency commits to: (i) improve and harmonize the collection, analysis and use of data to monitor access, identify risk, strengthen understanding of vulnerabilities and inform programming; (ii) enhance the meaningful engagement of typically marginalized groups to capture their interests and barriers; (iii) establish clear mechanisms for AAP; and (iv) establish and operationalize safe internal and external referral pathways. All tools, data systems and analysis will place particular emphasis on the intersectionality of vulnerability factors, such as disability, age, gender, socio-economic status and legal status. This will ensure that those most at risk are identified and assisted as a priority.

103. Informed by the regular collection and analysis of disaggregated data across programmes, UNRWA will deepen its understanding of existing and emerging protection risks faced by Palestine refugees. The Agency will ensure that those who are most at-risk benefit from available services through enhanced targeting; effective communication on services; and the removal of physical, logistical, environmental, social/cultural and attitudinal barriers. UNRWA will expand and strengthen existing protection mainstreaming and AAP coordination mechanisms at both Field and HQ levels to ensure challenges identified in service delivery are jointly discussed and effectively addressed. This includes through the development of a unified feedback, complaints and reporting mechanism, and the use of biennial Protection Alignment Review exercises to assess the adequacy of these mechanisms.

104. UNRWA aims to use beneficiary feedback to identify recurring concerns and programme-specific gaps, particularly in terms of access, safety and dignity in service delivery. Programmes will be adapted, or new interventions will be developed, to address the barriers identified.

105. In addition, the Agency will conclude the modernization of its RRIS, through:

- an **e-UNRWA platform** which will allow Palestine refugees to register from anywhere, ensuring that the right to register is promoted irrespective of the need for UNRWA services. The platform will facilitate online reporting of life events, both within and outside UNRWA fields of operation, and will also be used for the secure communication and transfer of digital documentation;

- a **digital identity verification process** to minimize risks of identify fraud and safeguard services to those eligible and in need. This will support better planning and programming, including accurate and accountable distribution lists where large scale assistance programmes are provided or needed. On successful confirmation of identity, an electronic individual service card will be issued with a QR code for easy authentication at service provision points. Verified parents and custodians of children under 18 years will also be automatically issued their children's individual service cards; and

- an **e-archive** for the preservation and accessibility of historic Palestine refugee family files. Historic Palestine refugee family files date back to the 1950 UNRWA census across its fields of operation. They document family composition, place of origin in pre-1948 Palestine, and the circumstances surrounding their displacement. The preservation and accessibility of these files are integral to the protection of Palestine refugee rights under international law and may contribute to constructive engagement towards a just and durable solution to their plight. The establishment of an e-Archive will involve a systematic review and accurate classification of all documents in these files. It will retrace family trees spanning up to five generations and clearly link currently registered Palestine refugees to their ancestors displaced in 1948. Provision will be made for those Palestine refugees interested in viewing their family trees and digitised documents pertaining to their family history, considering the Agency's ethical responsibilities in addressing implied trauma management requirements on a case-by-case basis, and implementing a firm information security framework.

outcome 2: the protection needs of vulnerable and at-risk Palestine refugees are met through preventative and remedial action

106. Central to the implementation of the UNRWA Protection Strategic Framework is a strengthened system for monitoring and documentation of incidents and trends at the community level. This will

help the Agency identify protection risks, threats and gaps in response, and allow for better evidence-based approaches.

107. Analysis of data and information will help to inform programmatic responses, enabling the Agency to effectively engage with duty bearers on protection matters. Developing a methodologically rigorous and responsive monitoring system capable of identifying trends across UNRWA will require additional resources and strengthened data systems and technical expertise.
108. UNRWA will also seek to enhance its engagement with Palestine refugee communities on protection issues through consultation and participation to prevent or reduce their exposure to protection risks and threats, such as child labour and GBV. Existing prevention mechanisms will be strengthened where possible.
109. Social work reform efforts will continue, notably with regard to certification and skills enhancement among social workers and supervisors. Coaching and mentoring will be maintained and extended to address social and psychological protection risks. In support of these priorities, the Agency will consolidate internal and external referral mechanisms, including partner identification and engagement, using the PRIMERO case management system and database, which will monitor and track cases and thus inform intervention effectiveness and impact. Taking a rights-based approach, UNRWA will strive to ensure that Palestine refugees have access to available relevant services, whether through its own programmes and/or through a strengthened referral system to external partners, including host governments.
110. Further expansion of individual and family-based casework and management to explore opportunities in peer-support and community work will be undertaken in collaboration with partners, including community-based organizations. This aims to create spaces for discussing social issues more broadly, raising awareness and acceptance in support of further interventions.

outcome 3: duty bearers respect, protect and fulfil the rights of Palestine refugees under international law

111. UNRWA promotes the rights of Palestine refugees under international law through monitoring and reporting on violations of human rights, IHL and international refugee law, and by engaging in private and public advocacy. This forms a core component of UNRWA's international law and protection mandate and complements the assistance the Agency provides to Palestine refugees.

112. All international advocacy (including protection-based advocacy) undertaken by UNRWA will be evidence-based and unbiased, to ensure that the rights of Palestine refugees are respected, promoted and fulfilled by duty bearers under international law. This will require a strengthened protection monitoring and documentation system that will: (i) enable timely analysis of protection risks and trends; (ii) prioritise factual and impartial reporting; and (iii) tailor engagement to reflect different operating contexts, including relevant legislative and policy frameworks and practices.
113. Particular emphasis will be placed on effective engagement with duty bearers to bring about impactful and meaningful change for Palestine refugees. The Agency will actively seek opportunities to constructively engage with duty bearers to support them in meeting their international obligations with the aim of building a stronger protective environment for Palestine refugees at all levels, geared towards the realization of their rights in a holistic manner. UNRWA will look to strengthen its information and knowledge exchange, seek to meaningfully contribute to policy dialogue, and explore capacity building opportunities on protection issues with duty bearers in all fields. The Agency will also strengthen its engagement with influencing actors to raise awareness and build consensus on human rights solutions for Palestine refugees, and coordinate with other like-minded agencies where opportunities exist.
114. UNRWA will continue to engage the international human rights system on key international law and protection issues and trends affecting Palestine refugees, in accordance with its 2011 Framework for Effective Engagement with the International Human Rights System, to raise awareness and seek action to effect change. In implementing its international advocacy work (including protection), UNRWA will strive to provide a platform for Palestine refugees to raise their concerns directly with duty bearers and other relevant decision-makers.

outcome 4: Palestine refugee women and girls are empowered and have access to services that contribute to gender equality

115. UNRWA is committed to promoting the fundamental right of equality amongst the sexes and eliminating all forms of discrimination, violence and exploitation against women, girls, men and boys. The Agency will advance gender equality by ensuring that its services are equally accessible to and inclusive of Palestine refugee women and girls, and directly address their needs and priorities. This includes for vulnerable groups such as female-headed households and women with disabilities. The Agency will strengthen

its services to empower women and girls to take control of their lives and participate in all stages of the programme cycle through enhanced accountability measures and gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation.

116. UNRWA will continue to offer a holistic range of gender programming, including: (i) comprehensive information and services on reproductive health rights, maternal health and the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases; (ii) an expanded clinical care service for GBV survivors and targeted MHPSS; and (iii) skills development and livelihood support for women and girls. The Agency will also promote gender-responsive education services that contribute to narrowing the gender digital divide and the elimination of violence against girls.
117. Advocacy will be strengthened with duty bearers to ensure that the safety of women and girls is improved in UNRWA's area of operations, and that concrete actions are taken to address rights violations and eliminate all forms of discrimination. Concurrently, communities will be mobilized to prevent, mitigate and respond to gender-based discrimination, violence and exploitation. Community mobilization will be geared towards supporting women and girls to understand and demand their rights and raising awareness about gender-related protection risks. This will be achieved through engagement with and support to women-led groups and community-based

structures, striving also for the full participation of boys and men.

118. Particular attention will be placed on GBV. UNRWA will enhance the capacity of its workforce in this area, focusing on equipping staff with knowledge and skills to challenge negative perceptions, generate high quality data and engage in evidence-based advocacy. Sensitization training will be designed and implemented for key programme staff to create a common understanding of the different forms of GBV and improve the knowledge of high-risk individuals and groups. Staff will be equipped with the skills to protect themselves and respond to risks through programmatic interventions in communities and by raising concerns internally. This formalized training will be initiated, designed and implemented as part of a cross-departmental one-year project on **Strengthening Protection for Palestine Refugee Survivors of GBV**. Longer term investment is needed to ensure transformational change amongst UNRWA staff.
119. UNRWA will track progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment through a composite indicator that measures gender responsive programming across different services. This includes girls' retention rate in schools, equity of vaccination services for both sexes, rate of modern contraceptive use among women, graduation rate and employment among female youth, and improvement in women's income and livelihoods.



Students play games during a summer camp at the UNRWA Al Bahrain Elementary Boys' School, Gaza. © 2021 UNRWA
Photo by Mohamed Hinnawi

objective 2: Palestine refugees lead healthy lives



context

120. UNRWA plays a critical role in protecting and promoting the right to health for Palestine refugees, as a pre-requisite for human development. Over the strategic period, the Agency will ensure universal, non-discriminatory access to primary health care (PHC) services for Palestine refugees and targeted secondary and tertiary care.

121. The Agency remains focused on the overall health and wellbeing of Palestine refugees. Key service areas include infant and childcare, maternal care, care of patients suffering from communicable and NCDs, MHPSS, and the provision of essential medication and life-saving hospitalization coverage. Plans are grounded in recent reforms and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. The family health team (FHT) approach will remain the basis for service delivery, supported by digital transformation initiatives, including a new electronic medical record (EMR) system, as well as enhanced care for the most vulnerable, such as those with mental health concerns and GBV survivors. The response also addresses the need for a stable health workforce in UNRWA.

current operations

122. UNRWA has provided PHC services to Palestine refugees since 1950 through a strategic partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO). The Agency has made a significant contribution to Palestine refugee health outcomes, particularly in the areas of maternal and child health (MCH) and communicable diseases. Since the 1990s, the burden of disease has shifted to NCDs, including mental health, and UNRWA health services have evolved accordingly. More recently, these services have been adjusted in response to disruptions associated with numerous financial and non-financial challenges. Notable amongst these is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has added considerable pressure to already overstretched health systems across the region.

123. Agency services have proven resilient to shocks, through measures to protect high risk patients, including the home delivery of medicines, triage at health centres, the launch of an e-NCD mobile application and the use of telemedicine for remote primary healthcare consultations. In 2021, seven million medical consultations were provided at 140

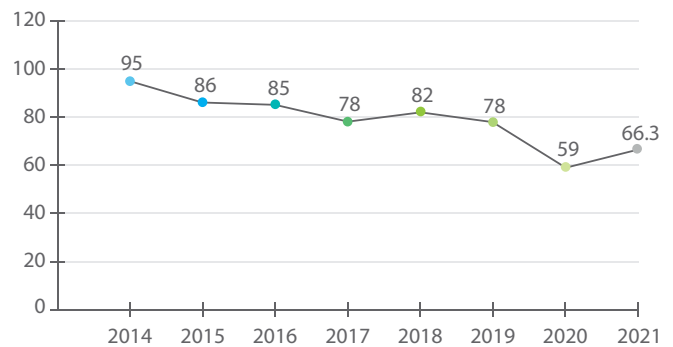


Figure 4: average daily medical consultations per UNRWA doctor, 2014-21. Source: UNRWA e-health system, 2022

health centres across the Agency's fields of operation, with a workforce of over 3,000 staff.³⁷

124. FHT reforms have generated improvements in efficiency and quality, with the average number of daily medical consultations per doctor decreasing from 95.0 in 2014 to 66.3 in 2021 (figure 5).

125. Technology has played a key role in reforms. A cloud-based EMR (e-health) system is in place in all health centres bar one in Syria and two smartphone applications³⁸ have been developed. These allow refugees to access relevant health information remotely. During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNRWA introduced telemedicine services in Gaza, Jordan, West Bank and Syria. It has remained a convenient and reliable method of medical consultation, accounting for 844,518 consultations in 2021, or around 12 per cent of all consultations. This compares to 325,811 telemedicine consultations in 2020 and is indicative of increased demand and population acceptance.

126. Reflecting changes in the health status of Palestine refugees and aggravated by the difficult conditions in which they live, MHPSS is now at the core of UNRWA health services. The Agency adopted the WHO's mental health strategy (mhGAP) in 2016, and all health centre staff are now trained. Medical officers refer patients with more severe mental health issues to psychosocial counsellors available in some health centres / fields or to externally contracted specialists.

127. UNRWA also provides access to hospital care at discounted rates in governmental, private and non-governmental organization hospitals. Eligibility is determined by access to alternative services, the medical urgency of the case and the economic status of patients. To control costs and protect access to hospital care for the most vulnerable, reforms were introduced in 2016, including ongoing monitoring of referrals and expenditure and the use of a comprehensive electronic Hospitalization Management System in Lebanon.

128. Partnerships play a major role in delivery of health services. Collaboration with host authority Ministries of Health is pivotal for delivery of specialized secondary and tertiary care services and for national immunization campaigns and supply of vaccines. The WHO is a key partner providing technical support and guidance in health systems, NCD, MCH, mental health, health information and other key service delivery areas. UNRWA's partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has focused on strengthening of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services and the provision of family planning commodities. UNRWA also collaborates with international, national and local civil society organizations (CSO) for research, referrals and to use services provided by these entities. Long term agreements were signed during the 2016–22 MTS with private sector entities (hospitals in all five fields and local and international vendors) to strengthen the medical supply chain and secondary and tertiary care for Palestine refugees. Collaboration was also strengthened with academic and research institutions resulting in dozens of conference abstracts and publications in peer reviewed journals.

needs

129. Recent years have seen an alarming rise in NCD prevalence in UNRWA's fields of operation, linked to sedentary lifestyles and behaviours. NCDs are now the main cause of death amongst Palestine refugees. By the end of 2021, almost 300,000 Palestine refugees

were reported to have diabetes mellitus, hypertension or both, with prevalence rates of 15.9 per cent and 23.7 per cent respectively amongst patients above 40 years.

130. The increased burden of NCDs, including mental health, translates into higher health care costs. It underscores the need for well-tested and cost-effective prevention services, including health, education, health promotion, regular screening for early diagnosis, and high-quality treatment and management.

131. Mental health is a growing concern globally and there is also a high prevalence of mental health problems and psychological distress among Palestine refugees, aggravated by political instability, the occupation, increased violence and COVID-19. Children, adolescents and survivors of GBV are particularly vulnerable. The number of GBV cases presenting at health centres and for other Agency services is also rising, with existing gender inequalities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. GBV is often underreported, and therefore the increase in numbers still does not reflect the full extent of the problem.

132. In 2021, UNRWA screened 76,477 Palestine refugees for mental health related issues, of which 15,366 (20.1 per cent) were identified as positive according to the WHO standard questionnaire. In other words, one in five Palestine refugees assessed needed psychological or mental health assistance, care and follow up.

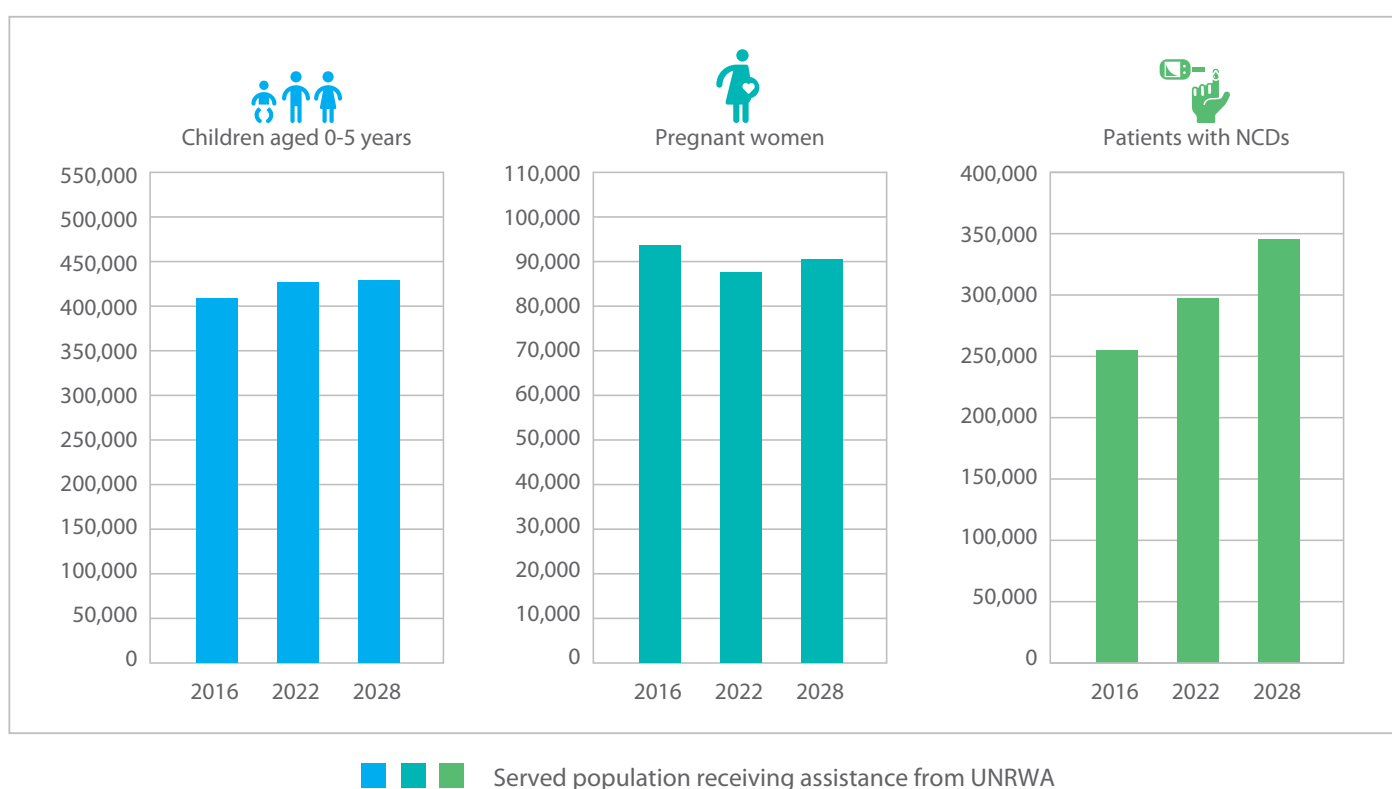


Figure 5: historic and projected caseloads for selected UNRWA healthcare services, 2016-28

Source: UNRWA e-health system (for historic data), 2022

133. To ensure high-quality health service provision and to meet the above-mentioned health needs, UNRWA health services must be sufficiently staffed. Analysis of the existing health staffing situation using WHO norms has indicated that staff face an extremely high workload, with almost all cadres understaffed. To meet SDG targets and Palestine refugees' health needs - ensuring provision of quality health services - more health staff are required. The Agency has costed these additional needs, based on forecasted demand for services in the coming years, and is exploring all possibilities to respond to health staffing needs in the current financial situation.

134. The physical environment in health centres also has an impact on the quality of patient care. Many Agency health centres have suffered due to underfunding, increasing demographic pressures and, in some cases, conflict. In many instances, old, deteriorated buildings are being used which do not comply with protection requirements, including safety, accessibility or gender considerations, and do not incorporate environmental or greening practices. UNRWA was able to construct or reconstruct a number of health centres under the 2016–22 MTS. This resulted in improved accessibility

for refugees and staff, including persons with disabilities, and enhanced safety measures linked to strengthened structural integrity as well as the gender and spatial requirements of the FHT approach. The percentage of UNRWA health centres meeting protection design standards³⁹ has increased from 30 per cent in 2016 to 75 per cent at the end of 2021.

priorities

135. UNRWA will continue to provide universally accessible quality PHC. The Agency will revitalize the FHT approach to maximize its impact, informed by the findings of a 2021 evaluation,⁴⁰ and ensure that hospital services are available to those most in need.

outcome 1: maternal and child health of Palestine refugees is improved

136. Maternal health needs will be addressed through the systematic delivery of pre-conception, ante- and post-natal care and family planning services. In addition to continuing the Family Medicine diploma, the Agency also plans to introduce a professional diploma in PHC that will be available for nursing staff in all five fields.



A newborn baby receives a check-up at the UNRWA Shaboura Health Centre in Rafah, Gaza. © UNRWA Photo by Khalil Adwan

Through a nine month on-the-job training course, nurses will develop the clinical and managerial skills needed for service quality improvement. The diploma is provided by the Jordanian Nursing Council and accredited by the Al Hussain Bin Talal University and Jordan Higher Education Commission. It is accepted in all UNRWA fields of operation. This effort will improve the skills of the largest staffing cohort within UNRWA health services and have a positive impact on the quality of services.

137. GBV services will be enhanced through staff capacity building and screening of patients and referrals. Existing UNRWA technical instructions for the medical care of GBV survivors will be revised, and all relevant staff in the health programme, as well as health tutors in the education department, will be trained. Health staff will be trained on the clinical management of rape and sensitization to GBV. On-the-job supervision and mentoring by area, field and HQ supervisory staff will also be conducted to ensure the quality of care.
138. GBV screening will be further strengthened by introducing a new integrated assessment tool in all health centres. Performance indicators associated with the Strategic Plan will be used to measure the adequacy of service delivery to GBV survivors who disclose their experiences to UNRWA health workers. Internal coordination and referrals across health, education and protection will be strengthened, as will linkages with external stakeholders such as the WHO, UNFPA, host authorities and other service providers for referrals in all fields. These actions will improve inter-sectoral collaboration and service quality.
139. UNRWA will remain focused on the provision of vaccinations, growth monitoring and nutrition, and high quality child healthcare services. Cross programmatic collaboration will be strengthened, particularly in the area of school health as an entry point for the screening of childhood diseases and growth-related problems. This includes oral health, nutrition, eye care and hearing related problems that adversely affect learning. The Agency will also continue to carry out preventative screenings for vision and hearing to ensure these impediments to full educational and quality of life attainment are addressed.
140. Health tutors in schools will be trained on key health subjects such as hygiene, healthy lifestyles and SRHR, including in relation to GBV. Information materials on SRHR will be developed to improve refugee awareness and monitoring. The Agency will seek enhanced cooperation with host ministries and UN agencies, including WHO and UNFPA, to improve MCH and SRHR service quality. Nurses in all fields will be trained on SRHR and training on GBV will be provided to front line health staff, including field nursing and family health officers and staff in other departments.

outcome 2: improved status of NCDs and mental health

141. UNRWA will apply a three-pronged strategy to target NCDs: (i) disease surveillance; (ii) health promotion and prevention; and (iii) cost-effective interventions for NCD management. Preventive services will focus on school health activities including situation analysis (school health surveys), training of health tutors, promoting healthy eating and the identification of risk factors among a young population. For patients with NCDs, attention will be given to regular check-ups and yearly follow ups, improving compliance and achieving good control rates.
142. MHPSS programming will be reinforced, particularly in the areas of child and adolescent mental health, suicide prevention and GBV. Counsellors at health centres will work closely with UNRWA social workers and school counsellors to ensure a coordinated approach to mental health needs. Cases identified by social workers or education staff needing medical intervention will be referred to health centres or externally for further management and feedback.
143. To enhance mental health reporting and analysis, a fully computerized mental health module will be included in the planned transformation of the UNRWA EMR system by 2025. The new system will also include a patient portal that will enable Palestine refugees to access their records, schedule or re-schedule appointments, interact with service providers (teleconsultations) and review their prescriptions, lab results and other relevant information. This effort will further improve access to UNRWA health services.
144. The Agency will build partnerships with academia and service providers to improve the quality of NCD and MHPSS services and strengthen existing collaborations with the WHO and World Diabetes Foundation.

outcome 3: improved status of communicable diseases and infection prevention and control

145. A strong surveillance and response capacity is needed to tackle communicable diseases. COVID-19 is an ongoing priority and will be addressed through improved infection prevention and control efforts, provision of personal protective equipment to health service providers, updating guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOP) for UNRWA installations and service providers and awareness raising for beneficiaries and staff.
146. The Agency will participate in immunization campaigns and strengthen surveillance of emerging and re-emerging diseases in close collaboration with the relevant authorities. In coordination with host country Ministries of Health, UNRWA will also ensure the continued supply of vaccines and exchange of information.

outcome 4: Palestine refugees have improved access to quality health services

147. Essential medicines will be maintained in all UNRWA health centres. The medical supply chain system will be strengthened through the introduction of revised SOPs and technical instructions, training of pharmacists on good storage and dispensing practices and the introduction of a new monitoring mechanism. This will be supported by improvements in the EMR system.
148. Health staffing norms and standards will be further rolled out, based on the WHO's Workload Indicators of Staffing Need methodology.⁴¹ Norms have already been applied for medical officers, clerks and cleaners and will be expanded to cover all cadres of staff working in UNRWA health centres. This includes nurses, laboratory technicians, pharmacists and dentists, funds permitting, to ensure fully staffed FHT health centres across all fields of operations.
149. Under its hospitalization programme, the Agency will ensure that limited resources are directed to those most in need. The Hospitalization Management System used in Lebanon will be expanded to all other fields of operation to better monitor and analyze hospitalization data and take timely corrective action, where necessary, to contain expenditure. UNRWA will also strengthen the management of Qalqilya hospital in the West Bank through training, the revision of SOPs and introduction of the EMR system, in an effort to improve service quality. Medical and managerial procedures will be updated in accordance with global standards and best practices and staff will be trained on the new SOPs. EMR standardization is critical to ensure quality of health services and to improve the understanding of disease trends, treatment practices and use of medications and other resources.
150. UNRWA encourages the provision of health care in partnership with others. In the area of PHC, partnerships will be strengthened with Ministries of Health and UN agencies (for routine immunization and family planning commodities) as well as international partners such as the WHO for technical advice and updating of technical instructions in line with global best practices. In addition, UNRWA will foster partnerships with academia for research in key areas such as NCDs, communicable diseases, mental health and health systems. UNRWA will also strengthen partnerships with specialised hospitals and CSOs for the referral of complicated cases.
151. The Agency will continue to reconstruct and upgrade facilities to ensure the efficient and cost-effective delivery of health services for all users, including improvements in physical access for patients with disabilities. Established design standards for gender, safety, and environmental sustainability will be incorporated into all works, reflecting user needs and preferences to the extent possible.



A Palestine refugee patient receives a blood test from an UNRWA mobile clinic in Nabi Samuel village, West Bank. © 2021 UNRWA Photo

objective 3: Palestine refugees complete inclusive and equitable quality basic education



context

152. Education is central to the human development process. It has personal and interpersonal dimensions, contributing to individual empowerment and the overall good of society. The right to education is a basic element of the international human rights framework and is enshrined in national legislation in almost all nations as well as in SDG 4 on quality education for all.

153. UNRWA will continue to provide inclusive and equitable quality education to Palestine refugees in line with four dimensions of quality: (i) relevance, i.e., education that meets the needs of the community; (ii) effectiveness, i.e., education that results in learning; (iii) efficiency, i.e., optimal value for investment; and (iv) wellbeing and inclusion.

154. A quality education system is one which is well prepared and more able to respond to – and ultimately recover from – crises. Through innovative approaches with existing and new structures, UNRWA has continued to deliver quality education during times of conflict and other crises including COVID-19. This will remain a core operating principle, rooted in the Agency's EiE approach and response to the pandemic.

current operations

155. UNRWA delivers basic education to almost 550,000 Palestine refugee children at 702 schools at no cost to students. The Agency provides nine years of primary and preparatory education in all fields (up to 10th grade in Jordan) and secondary schooling in Lebanon. Students in UNRWA schools follow host authority curricula, which the Agency complements with its own materials on human rights.

156. Education is the Agency's single largest programme, accounting for 46 per cent of total expenditure and 70 per cent of all staff in 2021.⁴² Recent years have seen continued increases in pupil enrolment in UNRWA schools, up from 515,000 in 2016 to more than 545,000 in 2022. Gaza has remained the engine of growth in UNRWA's school system, due to high birth rates and prevailing socio-economic conditions. Other fields have seen stable – and in some cases – reducing pupil numbers over the 2016–22 MTS period.

157. Due to austerity measures, in recent years, additional pupils have been absorbed without any overall

increase in the number of teachers, resulting in ever larger class sizes. UNRWA strives to ensure class sizes of between 25 – 40 pupils; however, as of the 2021–22 school year, 53 per cent of classes in UNRWA schools accommodated more than 40 pupils, up from 38 per cent in 2015–16 (see figure 6, below).

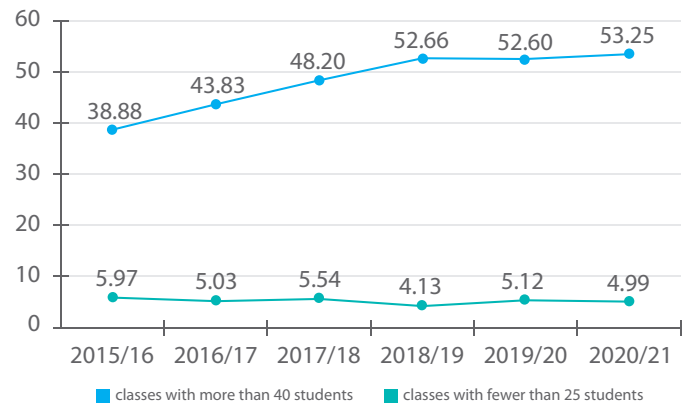


Figure 6: trends in class sizes in UNRWA schools, 2015-21

Source: UNRWA education management information system, 2021

158. Measures have been put in place to further professionalize teachers and enrich curricula to enhance pupils' competences and life skills, ensuring equal opportunities and outcomes for boys and girls and strengthening disability programming. This includes through teacher training on the "Teacher Centred Approach" / "Critical Thinking Approach" (CTA) which is designed to enable teachers to facilitate critical thinking and meaningful classroom discussions about issues that could be seen as non-neutral or gender-biased. Through its EiE approach, renowned in the region and beyond, UNRWA helps ensure that Palestine refugee children can continue to access quality education and learning opportunities, even in times of crisis and conflict.

159. Early in 2020, COVID-19 forced schools to close worldwide and UNRWA schools were no exception. The Agency drew on the strong, resilient system it put in place through the 2011–16 education reform, as well as its EiE programming, to ensure continuity of learning, including through its digital learning platform⁴³ (DLP) to facilitate access to self-learning materials.

160. In April 2021, the Agency-wide DLP was launched, where curated digital resources were uploaded and made accessible to teachers and students. UNRWA subsequently partnered with Microsoft, enabling the education community to benefit from the Microsoft for Education platform and developed an Information and Communications Technology for Education (ICT4E) Strategy that is currently deployed, mainly

through pilot components, in selected fields. UNRWA is recognized by Microsoft as an education institute, which affords access to email accounts free of charge for staff, or in some cases with major discounts, and technical support. The implementation of the ICT4E Strategy will help to enrich the quality of teaching and learning, strengthen MIL and make the UNRWA education system more resilient to future shocks.

161. Learning from COVID-19, UNRWA has developed additional tools to support education in times of crisis, including a School Health Strategy and expanded provision for PSS, as well as a focus on child safety.

needs

162. The physical environment in which children learn is an important enabler for quality, inclusive and equitable education and can have a profound impact on student and educator outcomes. For students, school design can affect health, access for those with disabilities, behaviour and overall learning performance. For educators, the physical environment can affect commitment, motivation and retention rates.
163. Over the past several years, UNRWA premises have suffered from under-resourcing and increasing demographic pressure. In some fields, they have incurred further deterioration due to conflict. Many school buildings are old and often dilapidated, some are not physically accessible for persons with disabilities and/or lack gender sensitive features.
164. More than half of all schools operate on a double-shift basis and many from rented facilities. These are typically former residential premises rather than purpose built schools and as such lack the physical spaces, lighting and ventilation needed to create an environment which is conducive to learning.⁴⁴ In addition, they often do not incorporate environmental or greening practices, resulting in missed opportunities in water, energy and material conservation.
165. Through gradual, effective and cost-efficient design and upgrades of new and existing UNRWA school premises, the percentage of schools meeting UNRWA facilities protection design standards increased from 23 per cent in 2016 to around 50 per cent by the end of 2021. The physical accessibility of schools to all Palestine refugees and staff has improved and enhanced safety measures have been introduced, including strengthened structural integrity and fire safety measures. Specific gender-related requirements have also been implemented, including the separation of lower grades from upper grades and the construction of internal toilets.
166. The Agency has continued to meet, and in many cases exceed, key outcome targets related to student

repetition and survival rates and was performing quite well on student performance indicators until the onset of COVID-19. UNRWA data on learning loss and associated factors during the pandemic points to significant learning loss in all fields of operation, consistent with global patterns. Remedial plans are being developed to address these losses, based largely on the findings of 2021 surveys on learning outcomes, which will be repeated biennially over the course of the 2023–28 Strategic Plan.

167. Additional specific needs include increased PSS services, with over a quarter of students entering Grade 1 in Gaza displaying symptoms of severe trauma, and devices and connectivity to ensure the successful implementation of the ICT4E Strategy.

priorities

168. During 2023-28, UNRWA will continue to offer high quality educational services, strengthening the conditions for improved student learning and enhancing wellbeing and inclusion, whilst adapting to constraints such as COVID-19 and repeated cycles of conflict and unrest, ensuring that services remain relevant, effective and efficient.

outcome 1: Palestine refugee girls' and boys' learning outcomes and critical thinking skills are improved

169. The Agency will roll-out its ICT4E Strategy and further focus on establishing a culture of peace in its schools. UNRWA will provide training for teachers to support the integration of information and communications technology (ICT) in their pedagogical practices. MIL skills will also be developed among teachers and students as part of the digital transformation of education. This may be extended to global citizenship education and education for sustainable development, if funding and capacity are available. To build a culture of peace, UNRWA will continue to implement its HRCRT education programme and strengthen its school parliaments.
170. The Agency will also strengthen its in-service teacher training programmes,⁴⁵ including on the CTA, take on board lessons from regular studies of student performance and factors impacting on learning⁴⁶ and harness elements of its ICT4E Strategy. This includes through the roll out of devices and strengthening connectivity across all fields.
171. The Education Management Information System will also be updated to further ensure that support evidence-based decision-making is possible and the Class Formation process – a key cost driver - will be reviewed and further strengthened.

outcome 2: Palestine refugee girls and boys learn in an environment that is safe and inclusive, with their wellbeing ensured

172. The Agency will support student wellbeing and inclusion, through its school health strategy, continued efforts to address violence in schools and strengthened PSS services. Efforts will be made to increase counselling support, from current norms of one counsellor for every 3,000 children to one counsellor for every 800 children.
173. The Agency will continue to invest in infrastructure by mobilising resources to reduce the number of schools operating on double-shifts, absorb pupil increases and improve the infrastructure of existing schools. This will help facilitate quality, equity and inclusive education and provide a conducive learning environment with accessibility for all, including those with disabilities.
174. UNRWA commits to ensuring that all new and upgraded purpose-built schools⁴⁷ are physically

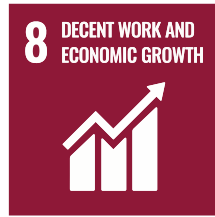
accessible to all pupils and staff, including persons with disabilities, considering safety requirements, as well as specific gender requirements. This will help to provide environments that reduce the likelihood of violence affecting children and allow students and staff to participate in curricular and extracurricular activities.

175. All of these efforts will be underpinned by a renewed drive for establishing and reinvigorating partnerships. The Agency will work with existing partners such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNICEF and Norwegian Refugee Council and also seek new partners, including in the private sector, as well as the World Bank and Global Partnership for Education. Partnerships will be critical to sustain investments in ICT and to support the expansion of MHPSS services. The Education Expert Advisory Group, which was established in early 2022, will also be used to develop and deepen partnerships.



Students celebrate the start of the new school year at the UNRWA Jabalia Elementary Co-ed School "A", Gaza.
© 2020 UNRWA Photo by Khalil Adwan

objective 4: Palestine refugees have improved livelihood opportunities



context

176. Livelihoods comprise everything that people need to secure a means of living. This includes their skills, knowledge, health and ability to work, as well as the social, legal, natural, physical and financial resources at their disposal. A person's ability to secure and sustain a livelihood is also shaped by myriad political, social, economic and environmental factors, ranging from macroeconomic policy and labour markets to gender norms, land ownership policies and legal and/or physical constraints to accessing markets and professions. These contextual factors can change over time, either undermining or contributing to an individual's fundamental right to work and the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work.

current operations

177. UNRWA promotes livelihoods amongst Palestine refugees in a number of ways: (i) direct interventions through its programmes, including TVET, microfinance, temporary cash for work programmes, the IT Service Centre in Gaza and youth and adolescent programming in Lebanon; (ii) indirectly, by employing Palestine refugees in its own operations, including in construction and infrastructure projects; and (iii) advocacy with host governments and local economic actors to promote and support Palestine refugee access to employment.

178. **TVET** empowers Palestine refugee youth by providing them with the skills and knowledge needed to find work. The Agency runs eight TVET centres with around 8,000 students enrolled on an annual basis. They provide a range of courses, i.e., short term courses, one- and two-year trade courses for students who have completed preparatory (9 – 10th grade) and two-year semi-professional courses for students who have completed secondary (12th grade) schooling.

179. UNRWA also runs **two teacher training** faculties – in Jordan and the West Bank – which provide degree level training for Palestine refugee students, with over 2,000 students currently enrolled. Employment rates for both programmes are high, reaching 89.5 per cent and 83.6 per cent for male and female graduates respectively in 2021.

180. UNRWA's **microfinance programme** operates in all fields of operation except Lebanon. It provides

inclusive financial services that help create and sustain jobs, decrease unemployment, reduce poverty, economically empower women and youth and provide income-generating and asset-building opportunities for Palestine refugees and other proximate poor and marginal groups. Women and youth are prioritized as loan recipients. Reforms introduced under the 2016–22 MTS have resulted in: (i) increased outreach to marginal groups, through the introduction of new business and consumer loan products in Syria; and (ii) the opening of a new branch office in Jordan and new credit units in Syria, bringing the branch office network to 23 offices.⁴⁸ Between 2016 and 2021, the programme issued over 200,000 loans valued at more than US\$ 187 million, fully covering its costs,⁴⁹ except in 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19.

181. The UNRWA Job Creation Programme in Gaza, funded under the Emergency Appeal, helps to temporarily ease the impact of widespread poverty and protracted conflict by providing short-term employment opportunities to Palestine refugees, prioritizing youth, women, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

182. The IT Service Centre, established in 2019 with the vision of empowering the digital generation of Palestine refugees, has become the largest IT employer in Gaza with more than 100 highly skilled IT staff working on projects for UNRWA and other UN organizations via a partnership with the United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC).

183. UNRWA construction activities also have important positive impacts on local economies by driving community demand for construction materials while generating employment opportunities for camp residents and reviving local camp economies. Camp improvement interventions created an estimated 2,500 full-time equivalent jobs each year under the 2016–22 MTS. With positions concentrated in the construction sector, skilled and unskilled opportunities have been primarily provided to men, although the introduction of a self-help approach for shelter rehabilitation has helped address this imbalance.

needs

184. Employment conditions remain extremely difficult for Palestine refugees and have deteriorated over the course of the 2016–22 MTS, particularly in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza. Lebanon and Syria have been beset by deep and protracted economic crises, with Palestine refugees in both fields facing widespread unemployment, the loss of assets and livelihoods, shortages of fuel and electricity and relentless increases in basic living costs. Levels of joblessness

in Gaza have exceeded 45 per cent each year since 2018 – amongst the highest recorded anywhere in the world – and have languished at 15 per cent in the West Bank. High unemployment rates have also persisted in Jordan, reaching 23.3 per cent in 2021. This compares to average unemployment rates of 10.5 per cent for the Middle East North Africa region in 2021.⁵⁰

185. A key challenge facing economies is the creation of sufficient jobs to absorb increasing numbers of new entrants to the labour market. Across UNRWA fields of operation, different structural barriers inhibit Palestine refugee integration into labour markets. Refugees in camps are particularly vulnerable to unemployment and have limited access to market-relevant skills. In Lebanon, Palestine refugees face additional barriers to employment and remain banned from a number of syndicated professions. Mirroring trends across the region, rates of labour force participation amongst women are extremely low. These trends are likely to persist during the 2023–28 strategic period.

priorities

186. Under this objective, UNRWA will work towards two outcomes: (i) improving the livelihood capacities of

Palestine refugees; and (ii) strengthening Palestine refugee income generation and work opportunities. The Agency will expand its work on livelihoods and employability, with a focus on youth and women. The UNRWA Digital Transformation Strategy and environmental sustainability commitments provide specific opportunities for employment generation and the basis for the introduction of new loan products. The Agency will also seek to bolster partnerships with host countries, donors, UN agencies, CSOs, International Financial Institutions and the private sector, for example through the development of new courses at TVET centres and the use of fintech⁵¹ innovations for microfinance.

187. UNRWA's programming will be informed by an organization-wide vision on adolescent and youth programming which will be finalized in 2023. This will build on the recent experiences of progress made in Lebanon and will be grounded in "learning to earning" principles and best practice in ensuring that young people have equitable access to the skills, innovative technologies and global networks that allow them to meaningfully participate in social and economic spheres on the local and regional levels, and beyond.



The technical and vocational education and training programme empowers Palestine refugee youth by providing the skills and knowledge needed for the labour market, Damascus Training Centre. © 2020 UNRWA Photo

188. The Agency will also strengthen its provision of livelihoods services for disadvantaged groups, including women and persons with disabilities. Support for Palestine refugees enrolled on the SSNP will also be expanded, as reported under Objective 6, below.
189. A dedicated microfinance strategy will be developed for Syria, as a way to maintain programme operations given the collapse in the Syrian currency and its negative impact on programme capital.

outcome 1: Palestine refugees' livelihood capacities improved

190. The **TVET programme** will enhance the relevance of its courses to labour market needs and develop more market-relevant curricula, which are regularly updated with a strong focus on life and entrepreneurship skills as well as placement and career guidance. Linkages between training centres and employers will be strengthened to actively involve them in shaping courses, identifying skills mismatch and facilitating the transition from education to employment. Work is underway to design a framework for institutionalizing linkages between Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) and the labour market to secure better livelihood opportunities for refugee youth. Long-term partnerships with private companies for apprenticeship programmes, on the job training and dual TVET learning (combining teaching and apprenticeships) will also be explored.
191. Courses will be introduced in two key growth areas, i.e., the green economy (renewable and solar energy) and digital technology (e-commerce, digital marketing). A new online learning platform will be introduced through Microsoft 365 for Education to strengthen access for the most vulnerable, as reported under Objective 5, below.
192. In the spirit of entrepreneurship, UNRWA will further explore cost-sharing options with potential employers, which may be located outside of the region. Other income generating activities in training centres will be explored in partnership with donors. The Agency will also consider expanding sales of students' services and products. This will be designed in such a way to provide a safe and equipped space for students to harness their skills and the VTCs with a means of sustainability.
193. UNRWA also has several partnerships in place that provide **scholarships** for UNRWA graduates based on merit and other factors. The Agency intends to maintain these initiatives during the period 2023-28.
194. In the early stages of the next Strategic Plan, UNRWA will review its teacher training facilities in Jordan and West Bank to assess their contribution to the strategic objectives of the Agency and wider livelihoods

programming. The findings of this review will inform priorities over the coming years.

195. Through its **microfinance programme**, UNRWA will provide Palestine refugees and other marginal groups with livelihood improvement opportunities that contribute to improved living conditions through consumer and housing loans. These will be available to working class and low income households to help constitute assets or pay for education, health care and unexpected one-time outlays, such as weddings and funerals. Housing loans will be offered to families with no access to mortgage facilities, helping them to improve, expand or acquire housing. Dedicated products will be retained for Palestine refugee families in Syria, including those returning to Husseiniyeh and Sbeineh and Yarmouk camps. The value of these loans is below that used in other fields and interest rates are also lower, through subsidies from other loan products provided by UNRWA. The Agency will also work to rebrand its existing consumption loans, expanding outreach to target clients who need funds to overcome unforeseen economic shocks.
196. Skills development for refugees involved in the preparation and implementation of camp improvement plans (CIP) will continue on issues such as negotiation skills, communications, project planning and development and conflict resolution. Such initiatives will be expanded based on the availability of project funding.

outcome 2: Palestine refugees' income generation and work opportunities improved

197. UNRWA will offer inclusive business improvement opportunities that contribute to income generation in support of livelihood opportunities for micro-enterprise owners and their households, including youth and women. Such business opportunities will be provided under four existing loan products:
- Microenterprise credit loans, to help small businesses build up and maintain reserves of working capital.
 - Microenterprise credit plus loans, for mature microenterprises which are seeking to expand their capital and increase their workforce.
 - Women's household credit loans, to help female entrepreneurs build up businesses and household assets. These loans sustain enterprises as well as household expenditures on education, health and basic needs.
 - Palestine refugee business loan products, to provide start up and business development support to microentrepreneurs in Syria, including returnee families to the areas listed above.
198. The microfinance programme will also develop a range of modern financial services that meet the

diverse needs of small business owners and micro-entrepreneurs. Their investments will sustain economic activity and empower refugees and other poor and marginalized groups to chart their own development. Green financing loan products will be developed to reduce adverse impacts on the environment and achieve the triple bottom line of financial, social and environmental performance. Existing loan products will also be adjusted to serve the digital and gig economies and to meet e-commerce needs.

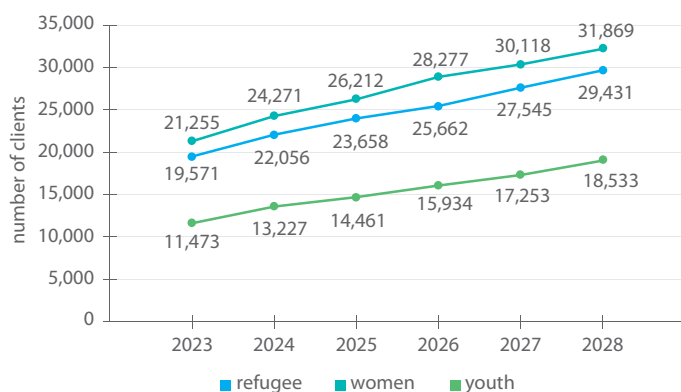


Figure 7: projected UNRWA microfinance loans to key target groups, 2023–28

Source: UNRWA microfinance department, 2022

199. Alongside product development, the Agency will open nine new branch offices in the West Bank, Jordan and Syria to meet client demand and maintain the department as one of the leading microfinance providers in the region, with a leading edge in providing targeted and demand driven services.

200. Through fintech, UNRWA's Microfinance Department will digitalize its internal processes, business models and client interactions with the programme, to increase its efficacy and become more agile and responsive to the client needs. This will also help improve access to previously excluded individuals and micro and small business practitioners, whilst expanding geographical coverage.

201. Staff capacities will be developed and new and flexible incentive schemes will be introduced to enhance productivity and competitiveness. Loan prices will also be adjusted based on thoughtful cost analysis, considering the triple bottom line referred to above. Throughout, the programme will continue focusing on youth and women to help mitigate high levels of unemployment among youth entrepreneurs by offering financing for business development and startups.

202. Further employment opportunities will be provided through the creation of jobs linked to the Agency's construction and shelter reconstruction/rehabilitation works. Where possible, UNRWA will seek to increase the proportion of Palestine refugees involved in such interventions, which has the potential to generate more than 3,000 full-time equivalent jobs each year. Cash for work programming will also continue, funded by Emergency Appeal and project funds, in Gaza and Lebanon respectively, helping to temporarily alleviate extremely high levels of joblessness in these fields, particularly amongst women and youth.

203. Through its IT Service Centre, UNRWA will enhance its existing partnership with the UNICC to provide IT resource augmentation services to the entire UN family. This will create further employment opportunities, especially for women and youth.

204. Key to UNRWA's success under this outcome is advocacy with host governments and economic actors to promote and support Palestine refugee access to employment opportunities and their right to work. This includes in relation to formal legal barriers faced by Palestine refugees in Lebanon. Advocacy will also focus on greater inclusion for marginal groups, to support persons with disabilities and for the employment of women in non-traditional roles. Opportunities for expanding advocacy through partnerships, for example with CSOs or other UN agencies, will also be explored.



The UNRWA Damascus Training Centre provides young Palestine refugees with a wide array of trade and professional training courses to prepare them for the labour market, Syria. © 2022 UNRWA Photo

objective 5: the most vulnerable Palestine refugees have access to effective social assistance



context

205. Social assistance systems are critical for helping the most vulnerable individuals and families meet basic needs, manage risks and cope with shocks and crises. They also allow families to support and invest in the health, wellbeing and education of themselves and their children. UNRWA has a critical role to play in providing social assistance to Palestine refugees, particularly in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria, due to the significantly depressed economic situation.
206. Poverty rates exceed 80 per cent in these three fields, suggesting that assistance should be provided to the majority of the population to alleviate severe pressures on household economies. Multiplier effects of providing near universal assistance offers relief for wider populations, including hosts who may be equally affected, and can contribute to market stability.
207. UNRWA will continue to provide predominantly cash based assistance to refugees needing social assistance, with food distribution continuing in Gaza and Syria due to prevailing market conditions, linked to the availability and price of basic commodities.

current operations

208. Between 2020–22, UNRWA provided food and cash assistance to more than two million Palestine refugees, or over a third of all those registered with the Agency. Support has been provided under two interventions: (i) an SSNP that contributes to poverty mitigation, funded by the Programme Budget, which reached almost 400,000 beneficiaries in 2021; and (ii) emergency related programmes funded under Emergency Appeals for victims of humanitarian crisis, through which around 1.7m Palestine refugees were assisted in the same year. The vast majority of beneficiaries of emergency assistance are in Gaza and Syria.
209. In Jordan and the West Bank, the SSNP targets Palestine refugees using a proxy-means testing formula (PMTF), which has been in place since 2011. In Syria and Gaza, due to exceptionally high levels of poverty where application of a PMTF becomes inaccurate, the programme is based on categorical targeting. In Lebanon, where poverty levels among Palestine refugees are in excess of 80 per cent, the application

of the PMTF will be reviewed with the aim of replacing it with a more appropriate mechanism likely linked to categorical targeting.

210. Despite deteriorating socio-economic conditions across all fields, persistent resource constraints have prevented the Agency from expanding its support under the SSNP. Further, the aspiration of the SSNP to cover a visibly large number of persons in need has meant that limited resources have been stretched to be able to show coverage. This has come at the detriment of the transfer value, which is limited to between USD 80 and USD 130 annually per person and thus remained insufficient to address poverty or food insecurity.
211. The SSNP has also proven to be of limited use in emergency/displacement contexts, which have accounted for the vast majority of Agency social assistance expenditure for many years, as noted above. This is due to resource constraints and the time intensiveness of the assessment process combined with sometimes inaccessible locations of recipient populations. Meanwhile, the parallel application of the PMTF by host governments and UNRWA in some fields (Jordan and the West Bank) has created issues of inconsistency in targeting without addressing overlaps in beneficiary lists.

needs

212. According to rapid surveys conducted by UNRWA in 2021 and 2022,⁵² poverty rates amongst Palestine refugees have increased to 81.5 per cent in Gaza, 83 per cent in Syria and 93 per cent in Lebanon.⁵³ The most recent poverty data for Jordan (15.7 per cent) and West Bank (14 per cent) dates from 2019 and 2016-17 respectively and it is likely that rates have increased considerably since then, primarily as a result of COVID-19.
213. Rising food and fuel prices have impacted all UNRWA fields of operation, due to their high dependence on imports of basic food commodities. The situation is further exacerbated by the high share of disposable income spent on food in these fields (32 per cent of total household expenditure in Gaza, 39 per cent in Lebanon and 48 per cent in Syria)⁵⁴, high levels of currency depreciation in Lebanon and Syria and increasing energy prices in all fields.
214. According to UNRWA data, food insecurity levels reached new highs in 2021-22, with 78 per cent of families reducing their number of daily meals in Gaza, 57 per cent in Syria and 58 per cent in Lebanon. In 2021, the cost of the food basket increased by 351 per cent in Lebanon and 97 per cent in Syria.⁵⁵

215. Where poverty levels are continuously increasing and reaching near universal levels, the overwhelming majority of the population is impacted by economic and social distress. In Syria, employment is no safeguard from poverty – there is a large contingent of working poor, due to extreme loss in the purchasing power of salaries as a result of the devaluation of the local currency; in Gaza, the lack of a productive economic sector and viable market make income generation elusive. Lebanon is on a path towards a similar scenario given the combination of the pandemic and severe economic, financial and political crises, which disproportionately affect Palestine refugees, an already severely marginalized population.

216. In such contexts, those persons and families that have been experiencing high dependency levels prior to deteriorating situations will be further exposed to hardship as social transfers that may have been made to them through communal or family ties, including remittances, are no longer sustainable. For families in these circumstances, the sustainability and effectiveness of the SSNP becomes even more critical for their survival. At the same time, other populations that had previously not shown any or low dependency levels are being cast into socio-economic distress and also require assistance.

priorities

outcome 1: poverty amongst Palestine refugees is alleviated

217. Several reform tracks have been initiated during the 2016–22 MTS period and will be completed during 2023–28. These include:

- Identification and refinement of vulnerability criteria for the targeting of cash assistance. In fields with very high poverty levels, the shift away from a poverty-based targeting system for relief interventions, based on identified vulnerable categories amongst the Palestine refugee population (high dependency ratio within a family and long-term support needs), funded through the UNRWA Programme Budget, will continue.⁵⁶ Targeting should ideally be based on demographically available data from UNRWA's registration system, including female headed households, families with disabled members and families with children under five.

- Better alignment between emergency and SSNP interventions. In contexts with very high vulnerability levels, the SSNP will continue to be accompanied by a universal ultra-basic assistance floor for all registered Palestine refugees. This will be determined by immediate needs triggered by a socio-economic crisis and supported through Emergency Appeal funding (Gaza, Syria and possibly Lebanon). In fields with relatively low and modest poverty levels, the SSNP will be applied with an additional poverty assessment filter. This will ensure the more effective use of resources in addressing the social and economic exclusion of the most vulnerable.

- Exploration of opportunities for alignment with host government social protection programmes and other UN agencies where and as appropriate in terms of transfer value and targeting approach.

- Better alignment of UNRWA's cash assistance transfer levels with specific household expenditure needs.

- Alignment of all cash and food beneficiary distribution lists with the RRIS and the introduction of a compliance framework and review process of beneficiary lists according to eligibility criteria.

218. A review of cash assistance programmes in light of refugee expenditure patterns on hospitalisation costs will also be undertaken to inform policy directions towards an integrated social protection approach to cash assistance and subsidies. This will be implemented by the relief and social services and health departments and supported by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) social protection division.

219. The Agency will also continue to expand access to TVET for the most vulnerable, especially those enrolled in the SSNP programme, helping them gain skills to generate an income, become self-reliant and break the cycle of poverty. Around one in three students in UNRWA TVET centres were enrolled in the SSNP during the 2021–22 academic year, up from one in four in 2015–16. UNRWA will look to increase this proportion further under this plan.



A Palestine refugee utilizes the food assistance provided by UNRWA, Gaza. © 2020 UNRWA Photo by Mohammed Hennawi

objective 6: Palestine refugees are able to meet their basic human needs of shelter, water and sanitation



context

220. Adequate housing, access to safe water and sanitation are basic needs that are fundamental to human dignity. Adequate housing encompasses individual Palestine refugee shelters and homes as well as the overall built environment in which refugees live. This includes basic environmental infrastructure and utilities, such as water supply and sanitation, waste management and electricity services. UNRWA interventions to improve housing also support environmental sustainability commitments enshrined in global frameworks, most notably the Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

current operations

221. UNRWA contributes to the basic needs of Palestine refugees through its shelter rehabilitation and reconstruction interventions, CIPs and environmental services. These are centred in the 58 official camps where Palestine refugees reside in the five fields of Agency operation, as well as in unofficial camps in Jordan and Syria and in some areas adjacent to camps. In times of conflict, shelter rehabilitation and reconstruction are provided inside and outside camps. UNRWA does not administer or manage camps but supports public services within them, where needed, appropriate and possible.

222. At the individual and family level, UNRWA assesses and rehabilitates substandard shelters. This includes homes with asbestos roofing, poor ventilation and dampness and shelters that are overcrowded or unsuitable for persons with special needs. The Agency also repairs and reconstructs homes destroyed during emergencies, including conflicts. Between 2016–21, a total of 4,000 homes were rehabilitated with project funds; a further 18,000 homes damaged or destroyed in conflicts – primarily in Gaza and Nahr El-Bared, Lebanon, were also reconstructed or rehabilitated. Across the board, progress has remained slow and challenging. This is due to the limited availability of project funds and the unavailability of or lack of access to construction materials linked to COVID-19 restrictions, as well as lengthy host authority procedures in some fields. As a result, tens of thousands of refugee families continue to live in inadequate homes.

223. More comprehensive camp improvement planning takes place through a participatory approach whereby community members lead the process and identify priorities. Since 2007, the Agency has completed CIPs in ten camps across four fields of operation. These have resulted in the construction of public spaces and recreational areas, upgrading of environmental infrastructure, greening initiatives and improvements to urban economic space and road networks.

224. UNRWA's environmental services encompass water, wastewater, storm water and solid waste management (SWM). This includes the planning, design, construction and maintenance of water supply networks. Almost all shelters in official camps⁵⁷ are connected to water supplies and over 90 per cent to official sewerage networks. However, in many camps, the quality and quantity of water is inadequate, whilst in others, open sewers remain, presenting major public health risks.

225. UNRWA has taken many steps to combat climate change in relation to its own operations and its impact on refugees' living environment. Greening technologies and renewables are incorporated into construction works, including solar panels, photovoltaic cells, energy efficient equipment, solar water heaters and water harvesting systems. Energy efficient design features are also integrated into construction and maintenance works, such as double walling and double glazing. The Agency is committed to environmental sustainability and minimizing the risk of negative environmental effects due to its construction and rehabilitation works. The UNRWA Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) establishes clear procedures, methodologies and systematic processes for the environmental and social management of all construction and maintenance projects. UNRWA also promotes environmentally friendly technologies in its works such as solar panels, water harvesting and energy efficient design.

needs

226. Conditions in the 58 official camps where Palestine refugees live have deteriorated considerably. Over a period of more than 70 years, they have developed

into complex and diverse living environments and are amongst the most congested urban environments anywhere on the planet. Camps are characterized by high concentrations of poverty, with residents typically enduring higher levels of poverty and worse health and education outcomes than non-camp refugees.

227. Addressing these needs remains challenging. Urban planning and integrated infrastructure development in camps have largely been non-existent or at best

haphazard. Each field of operation and even individual camps hold very specific characteristics such as political contexts, refugees' needs and host authority legal frameworks. With urbanization continuing at a rapid pace, many refugee camps are approaching a tipping point. In the future, any planning or architectural interventions may become increasingly difficult and costly, if not addressed urgently.

228. There is also a critical need for investment to improve shelters, public spaces, social facilities, environmental



UNRWA-sponsored camp improvement works take place in Aqbat Jabr refugee camp, Jericho, West Bank. © 2021 UNRWA Photo

infrastructure, sanitation services and SWM across all fields. This includes for the over 40,000 refugee families assessed to be living in sub-standard shelters. Whilst most families made homeless following the destruction of Nahr El Bared have now been rehoused, 959 shelters have yet to be rebuilt. In Gaza, repairs to 59,000 shelters and reconstruction of a further 331 are outstanding following recent conflicts. No reliable estimates of the extent of shelter damage and destruction in Syria are available.

priorities

outcome 1: Palestine refugees residing in camps live in adequate and safe shelters

229. UNRWA will continue to target the most vulnerable families for shelter rehabilitation, based on criteria that include safety, health, socioeconomic status and vulnerability. The Agency will seek funds to rehabilitate around 40,000 substandard shelters and to complete reconstruction of shelters destroyed in Nahr El Bared and by recent conflicts in Gaza. UNRWA has not yet formulated a plan for the rehabilitation of damaged shelters in Syria but is currently supporting a small number of vulnerable cases on a self-help basis.
230. Interventions include shelter reconstruction, extension and repair, as well as adaptation for special needs. The Agency will ensure that the needs of families are considered in design works and implementation, including as relating to privacy, dignity, gender, special needs of persons with disabilities and social concerns.
231. UNRWA will extend use of the self-help approach for construction and rehabilitation to all fields, supporting and empowering families to implement shelter works themselves, enhancing their sense of ownership and building their individual and collective capacities. This approach will typically be used for individual shelters and not for major rehousing projects.
232. During the implementation of this strategic plan, special appeals will be issued for any new conflict related shelter damage or destruction.

outcome 2: Palestine refugees residing in camps live in healthy and environmentally sustainable conditions

233. Between 2023 and 2028, UNRWA will target two camps per field for comprehensive improvement through new CIPs. Working in partnership with refugees, the Agency will continue to integrate protection measures, including gender, disability inclusion and child protection across the design,

construction and maintenance of facilities and camp improvement works, such as the renovation of public spaces. ICIP will continue to build the capacity of its staff in such matters. The Agency will also follow up on the sustainable implementation of current CIPs. Progress in this area will depend on the availability of project funds.

234. CIPs also need to consider issues of civil rights, camp governance and service delivery issues. As part of this strategic plan, UNRWA will look to develop a more integrated approach, including these elements alongside infrastructure and a focus on participatory planning.
235. The Agency will explore opportunities for more effective and efficient SWM, including through: (i) implementing its SWM Framework and Field SWM strategies developed in line with host government strategies; (ii) adopting SWM best practice at the camp level; and (iii) strengthening Palestine refugee awareness in the aforementioned areas. The Agency will also look to extend sewage network coverage to 100 per cent of shelters using project funds.⁵⁸
236. UNRWA is committed to mainstreaming and integrating its Environmental Sustainability Policy and ESMF into all planning, design, environmental infrastructure works and construction and rehabilitation practices. Here, the focus will be on energy efficiency, conserving natural resources and interacting with the planet responsibly in support health and wellbeing, now and in the future. Central to this is the implementation of a wheeling station project in Jordan that will provide approximately 70 per cent of UNRWA's electricity consumption needs in that field.
237. Depending on the success of this initiative, the Agency will study the feasibility of rolling-out similar projects in other fields, in coordination with host governments. UNRWA will also ensure that new infrastructure initiatives consider ease of and access to water and sanitation services. This includes through rehabilitating, upgrading, extending and/or reconstructing networks and the possible introduction of rainwater harvesting systems and other water saving/collection systems.
238. UNRWA will prioritize interventions based on available project funds and accordingly, will implement works in camps that suffer from severely deteriorated environmental infrastructure. The Agency will also seek to expand partnerships to maintain Palestine refugee access to quality services, building on a pilot engagement with UN-HABITAT in Syria, focused on training, capacity building and fundraising for camp improvement works.

objective 7: UNRWA's mandate is implemented effectively and responsibly



239. UNRWA's management priorities for 2023–28 build on recent reforms, including the 2019–21 Management Initiatives, aimed at making the Agency more accountable, inclusive, transparent and agile, to better support programme delivery and strengthen strategic and policy functions. This section outlines how the Agency will modernize its management practices and organizational culture, including the strengthening of governance structures, adherence to UN values and principles, inclusion and environmental sustainability.
240. In late 2022, the Agency engaged a Director of Strategic Positioning and Change to provide senior-level guidance to the Commissioner-General on change management efforts and to lead and coordinate modernization initiatives across the Agency. Within the scope of management priorities under the Strategic Plan, this new position will help create a long-term vision and plan of interconnected initiatives that will modernize, in the broadest sense, Agency management.

outcome 1: UNRWA operations are delivered effectively, efficiently and safely

241. UNRWA will work towards a predictable, sustainable and diversified funding base that ensures sufficient resources to deliver on the Agency's mandate. Two dimensions will guide UNRWA's approach: (i) deepening and broadening long term public and private partnerships based on trust, mutual accountability and transparency; and (ii) increasing the use of digital tools to develop new partnerships. With the re-merging of the Agency's communications and resource mobilization functions within a single department, public advocacy and campaigning will be closely coordinated in support of fundraising efforts.
242. With traditional donors, **resource mobilization efforts** will focus on: (i) maintaining and increasing funding; (ii) enhancing predictability through multi-year agreements and the early disbursement of contributions; (iii) pursuing new funding streams and instruments; and (iv) increasing quality and flexibility in donor contributions, consistent with Grand Bargain commitments related to earmarking and multi-year funding. Increased flexibility will allow the Agency to prioritize its spending to reduce the risk of disruptions to critical services. New private partnerships and

synergies between the public and private sectors will also be explored.

243. Efforts to broaden and deepen the public sector donor base will continue, including in regions such as South East Asia and Latin America. Partners in the Middle East North Africa region will remain a priority, especially those that have signaled interest in resuming or increasing their support.
244. The Agency aims to create a stronger and more global "UNRWA brand" that reflects the successes and transformative impacts of the Agency's programmes, particularly education, in an effort to counter increasingly politicized attacks from detractors. This will be achieved through: (i) proactive engagement of parliaments, civil society, think tanks, academia and public figures; (ii) alignment of advocacy and fundraising campaigns; and (iii) the establishment of an UNRWA presence in key donor capitals outside of the region to consolidate and sharpen outreach and resource mobilization in select countries.
245. UNRWA will also explore global and thematic funds, including the Joint SDG Fund and the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund, to determine potential returns on investment. With the aim of operationalizing crucial funding avenues identified in the 2017 UN Secretary General report on the Operations of UNRWA,⁵⁹ the Agency will continue to closely coordinate action with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to activate the Development Waqf Fund in Support of Palestine Refugees (Islamic Endowment Fund created in 2019). Joint OIC-UNRWA outreach and engagement over the first half of the strategic cycle will help reach a decision about the viability of the Waqf and, if not conclusive, to close it through an OIC resolution.
246. In line with best humanitarian and UN practice, Agency private sector partnerships will be restructured and pursued along the pillars of: (i) digital fundraising; (ii) Islamic philanthropic giving; and (iii) private sector giving, through foundations, corporations and high net worth individuals. This will require time, specific expertise and dedicated human and financial resources and reliance on innovative digital outreach and communication, the use of online platforms and mobile apps, constant tracking and cultivation. UNRWA will pursue this with the aim of raising US\$ 68 million per year from private entities and individuals by 2028, or between six and seven per cent of forecasted Programme Budget income. Performance will be monitored using the most relevant performance indicators for the sector.
247. A Resource Mobilization and Outreach Strategy is under finalization to accompany the strategic plan

and will set out objectives, priorities and targets in each of the areas outlined above.

248. The **safety and security** of Agency personnel is critical to UNRWA's ability to operate, particularly in fields impacted by conflict, where many – most notably the Agency's 28,000 area staff - are on the front line of service delivery. To effectively manage security risks and respond to emerging threats, UNRWA will integrate best practice into internal security risk management processes, through the systematic application of UN security management risk methodologies. This will allow the Agency to ensure that programmes are delivered within accepted levels of security risk and that senior management are able to make risk informed decisions.
249. More broadly, to better manage complex geo-political, conflict-related, humanitarian, operational, financial, environmental and reputational risks, UNRWA will strengthen its **enterprise risk management** capacity and systems. This will be done with a view to developing a more comprehensive risk assessment and profile as a basis for better understanding of the current context, immediate priorities and longer term needs, as assessed against risks. This is part of creating a stronger risk culture within the Agency. Guided by the results of a 2022 comprehensive maturity assessment of Agency's risk management framework, this will be accomplished through enhanced risk awareness and robust internal controls and decision-making processes that further facilitate the systematic identification, assessment, mitigation and treatment of risk.
250. With 28,000 staff representing UNRWA's primary asset and 80 per cent of its expenditure, it is critical that the Agency has the right talent in the right places and at the right time to achieve its goals and objectives. Throughout the 2023-28 strategic period, the Agency will streamline and reinforce its **human resources** systems, structures and processes, focusing on organizational design, talent acquisition, career development and workforce/succession planning.
251. Building on the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman in 2022, the Agency will continue to strengthen conflict resolution mechanisms available to managers and staff and enhance mediation practices. Similarly, the Agency will also look to further bolster its internal justice and accountability frameworks, including in terms of disciplinary process to continue to ensure accountability for failing to uphold UN standards of conduct, including humanitarian principles.
252. Under the 2016-22 MTS, a Wellbeing Programme was introduced to address a critical gap in support to front line staff. In 2020 and 2021, 4,300 guards, drivers, and sanitation labourers were trained. The programme has recently been expanded to cover health centre cleaners and school attendants. Wellbeing activities will be maintained under the 2023-28 Strategic Plan and are a priority for project funding. UNRWA will also roll out a Leadership Dialogue initiative, to provide staff with the opportunity to raise issues of ethical importance to their work. Building on efforts that started with the 2019 Management Initiatives, the Agency will continue to analyse and propose



UNRWA staff distribute food assistance to Palestine refugees in El-Shouka, Gaza. © 2020 UNRWA Photo by Khalil Adwan.

solutions to systemic issues that affect staff and the smooth running of the organisation.

253. The Agency will continue to advance the Secretary-General's system-wide Strategy on Gender Parity, including through cooperation with other UN agencies for UN Mutual Recognition of Rosters and the development of departmental action plans for offices falling behind on gender targets. A Women's Advisory Forum, which was introduced in 2022, will play a key role in advising the Commissioner-General on policy changes and initiatives that will contribute to a working environment and culture that respects and promotes diversity and inclusion.
254. In recent years, the Agency has invested in its workforce and succession planning capacity to help managers proactively plan workforce supply and demand, within available resources. Staff salaries are adjusted in line with UNRWA's pay policy and, in parallel, the Agency is exploring the possibility of adopting further occupational salary scales (in addition to the existing salary scales for Health and Microfinance staff), to ensure greater efficiency in compensation management. To further facilitate operational efficiencies and monitoring, personnel dashboards and data analytics will be elaborated and transactions relating to staff allowances will be automated. The progressive, staged implementation of a "fit for purpose" human resources structure review will further enhance the delivery of professional, efficient and client-oriented services. In an effort to protect services, the Agency commits to further efforts to limit growth in the workforce, including through opportunities offered by modernization and digitalization to reduce transaction costs and paper-based functions, whilst also ensuring that sufficient staff are in place to ensure the delivery of quality services. The latter will involve the development of new and updated staffing norms in key programme areas.
255. It is imperative that UNRWA achieves best value for money in **procuring goods and services**, and works in a fair, ethical and transparent manner. The Agency will seek to implement these principles through: (i) the institution of sustainable procurement to enhance environmental protection and promote social progress (e.g., fair labour conditions, workplace safety, gender equality and disability inclusion), economic development and resource efficiency, improving the quality of products and services over their lifecycle. UNRWA will also encourage UN vendors to comply with sustainable procurement requirements as an integral part of bidding processes; (ii) the digitalization of manually implemented procurement actions, to promote sustainability and enhance security while increasing transparency and ensuring value for money; (iii) strengthening internal procurement and stock

handling and distribution procedures, including in the areas of warehousing and property management; and (iv) deepening cooperation with other UN entities to, inter alia, obtain volume discounts and achieve process or operational efficiencies to the greatest extent practicable.

outcome 2: UNRWA operations are transparent and accountable

256. UNRWA's Department of Internal Oversight Services (DIOS) conducts **independent audit, evaluation and investigation functions** that support enhanced Agency accountability, integrity, transparency and learning. The Director of DIOS exercises operational independence in the conduct of his/her duties and has the authority to initiate, carry out and report on any action which s/he considers necessary to fulfil the responsibilities for internal oversight functions.
257. During the 2023-28 strategic period, DIOS will work in high-risk areas, focusing on: (i) internal audit dedicated to strengthened risk management, governance and internal controls through audit and advisory services in key areas. In addition, audit coverage will be enhanced in key IT areas, including enterprise resource planning, data protection and information governance and management; (ii) evaluations that strengthen accountability, learning and evidence-based decision making with a focus on improving the coverage and strategic relevance, quality, practice and methods of evaluation, whilst further enhancing the culture and capacity for independent evaluations (see annex 2); and (iii) fair and objective investigations of serious allegations of misconduct, including in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), fraud and corruption. This will be coupled with enhanced support for field investigations offices, including through the provision of technical advice and guidance on investigation methodologies, training and the monitoring of field office investigations. DIOS will also collaborate with the Ethics Office as well as the Departments of Legal Affairs and Human Resources to support the prevention of misconduct, including sexual misconduct, neutrality breaches, fraud and corruption.
258. **AAP** is a cornerstone of quality service provision to meet changing Palestine refugee needs and deliver more sustainable development outcomes. At the UNRWA field and programme levels, a number of formal and informal mechanisms, standards and practices are in place to ensure the meaningful participation of Palestine refugees at various stages in the programme management cycle. To further empower Palestine refugee participation in support of enhanced Agency accountability, UNRWA is committed to the further development and use of structures and processes that facilitate: (i) information

gathering and sharing, consultation and the participation of the most vulnerable to ensure that the Agency is responsive to all Palestine refugee needs; (ii) safeguarding, including in relation to PSEA; (iii) the delivery of UNRWA programming in accordance with humanitarian principles; and (iv) the systematic engagement of Palestine refugee communities at set points during the annual programme cycle and as part of any change management processes.

259. Key components include:

- Improved systematization of and access to confidential and well understood mechanisms to solicit suggestions, feedback and complaints with a view to improving programming, understanding community perceptions, promoting beneficiary empowerment and assisting in detecting misconduct.
- Promoting a culture of zero-tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse and other misconduct and creating a safe environment for reporting and complaints that allows for anonymity.
- Regular analysis of programme data and ensuring that programme evaluations explore and address accessibility of services as well as the implementation of planned measures to address barriers.
- Development of monitoring and evaluation tools to measure whether gender and disability and inclusion initiatives support equal access for all groups, with a focus on women and girls (with and without disabilities), and effectively address safety risks.

260. UNRWA will continue to engage its inter-governmental **Advisory Commission**, to enhance the ways in which

the Agency interacts with this body and its Sub-Committee, with a focus on: (i) improving its role as a platform for open, constructive dialogue to better assist UNRWA senior management in delivering on the Agency's mandate; and (ii) engendering a deeper sense of collective responsibility and commitment to preserve UNRWA's agility and operational response for continued service delivery to Palestine refugees. UNRWA will engage, as appropriate, with Advisory Commission Members and Observers in the process to review and revise the Commission's Rules of Procedure.

outcome 3: UNRWA operations are socially and environmentally sustainable

261. UNRWA is committed to **promoting the rights** of all Palestine refugees – women, men, girls and boys – in its services and advocacy interventions, including by ensuring that Agency-wide policies, systems and processes are **gender-sensitive**. Early on in the next strategic period, the GES 2016-22 will be updated to reflect key strategic priorities – within UNRWA and through service delivery – and ensure alignment with international gender frameworks, norms and standards, including the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW) that will further gender mainstreaming and measurability into all major institutional functions of the Agency.⁶⁰ Commitment to monitoring of and progress on gender equality is also reflected in the indicator framework attached to this Strategic Plan, which includes increased disaggregation of performance data by sex.



UNRWA Commissioner-General, Philippe Lazzarini, listens to students during a visit to Yarmouk camp, Syria. © 2020 UNRWA
Photo by Taghrid Mohammed

262. UNRWA will make organisational practices and programme implementation more gender-sensitive, ensure that service provision is equitable and inclusive for all Palestine refugees and promote gender equality through its public and private advocacy with duty bearers and other relevant actors. In doing so, a key priority will be to facilitate the engagement of men and boys on gender equality issues.
263. The Agency will promote gender equality and women's empowerment internally, through four key drivers: (i) a strengthened gender architecture and coordinating mechanisms; (ii) appropriate allocation and monitoring of financial resources for gender mainstreaming; (iii) leadership in bringing about changes to the Agency's organisational culture and operations; and (iv) enhanced accountability through gender mainstreaming in audit and evaluation. A Women Advisory Forum, established in 2022 and consisting of the Commissioner-General together with senior management and seven female UNRWA staff who each represent and lead constituent groups for a Field or Headquarters, will be a key body for the Commissioner-General and the Agency as a whole to advance in these areas. Members of the forum advise the Commissioner-General and senior management on effective ways to promote a safe, respectful, empowering and inclusive workplace, focusing specifically on:
- UNRWA's Organizational Culture Change Initiative
 - Improving the overall workplace environment for meaningful participation and women's representation at all levels
 - Initiatives targeting and empowering the female workforce
 - Preventing violence and harassment affecting women
264. Individual programmes and departments are accountable for mainstreaming gender across operations and service delivery, with technical support and oversight provided by the Protection Division. Priorities related to gender equality within UNRWA's systems, operations and structures – such as the Women Advisory Forum, issues related to hiring practices, and female representation in senior positions – will be coordinated by the Protection Division and the Executive Office, with the active involvement of Human Resources and the Ethics Office.
265. Palestine **refugees with disabilities** form a particularly vulnerable group within the broader population and require specialized attention to ensure their needs are accommodated across the spectrum of Agency programming. Throughout the strategic period, UNRWA will address barriers to the full enjoyment of the rights of Palestine refugees with disabilities, including through advocacy with duty bearers.
266. In line with the UNRWA Disability Policy (2022), and with the objective of strengthening systems, structures, methodologies and processes to better mainstream disability inclusion Agency-wide, UNRWA will: (i) work in alignment with the UNDIS to accelerate disability inclusion. Agency performance in this regard will be monitored under the UNDIS accountability framework on an annual basis; (ii) upgrade and harmonize its data systems and identification tools regarding disability, in line with global standards; (iii) ensure the systematic identification of disability through outreach and community engagement; (iv) meaningfully consult persons with disabilities; (v) work to strengthen disability inclusion in Agency planning and budgeting cycles, including through dedicated budget lines in support of reasonable accommodation to meet the needs of persons with disabilities; and (vi) support adapted service delivery modalities.
267. UNRWA has a key role to play in addressing **environmental sustainability** in Palestine refugee communities and an obligation to minimize the negative environmental impact of its own operations. UNRWA's environmental sustainability policy (2022) reflects the commitments, principles, implementation accountabilities and structures for environmental sustainability that will allow the Agency to achieve tangible and measurable results during the 2023-28 strategic period. Throughout, UNRWA will seek to strengthen environmental sustainability partnerships across Agency fields of operation, including with Palestine refugees, host governments, the donor community, other UN entities, civil society and the private sector. Monitoring of progress will occur on a regular basis against performance indicators housed in the Agency's results-based monitoring system.
268. The Agency will marshal the strength of its protection, health, education, relief and social services, microfinance, infrastructure and camp improvement and emergency programming to advance environmental sustainability, establishing approaches and mechanisms to identify, internalize and mainstream environmental best practice in and through service delivery. The Agency will also encourage its staff and personnel to set an example in their own actions and, through frontline service provision, will promote sound environmental sustainability principles within the Palestine refugee community.
269. Data collected will be reported to external stakeholders as part of the Annual Operational Report and through UN system-wide reporting mechanisms on environmental sustainability.



In conjunction with a local Women's Programme Association, UNRWA supports environmental sustainability projects in Burj Barajneh Camp, Lebanon. © 2022 UNRWA Photo by Dima Farran

chapter 6: financial requirements

270. The estimated resources required to deliver on this strategy are outlined below. These are indicative figures which may need to be further adjusted during

the implementation of the strategy, linked to progress in meeting different strategic goals and contextual developments.

	2023				2024				2025			
	PB	EA	PROJ	TOTAL	PB	EA	PROJ	TOTAL	PB	EA	PROJ	TOTAL
Objective 1	7	11	13	31	7	11	14	32	8	11	12	31
Objective 2	133	66	19	218	138	66	9	213	143	66	5	214
Objective 3	463	46	56	565	481	46	52	579	499	46	22	567
Objective 4	27	3	5	35	28	3	5	36	29	3	4	36
Objective 5	49	588	1	638	51	588	2	641	53	588	2	643
Objective 6	29	40	126	195	30	40	129	199	31	40	56	127
Objective 7	140	27	43	210	145	27	52	224	151	27	48	226
TOTAL	848	781	263	1,892	880	781	263	1,924	914	781	149	1,844
Gaza	332	311	98	741	345	311	94	750	358	311	24	693
Jordan	151	29	22	202	157	29	23	209	163	29	18	210
Lebanon	114	160	34	308	118	160	37	315	123	160	20	303
Syria	64	247	16	327	66	247	16	329	69	247	11	327
West Bank	131	33	24	188	136	33	24	193	141	33	23	197
HQ	56	1	69	126	58	1	69	128	60	1	53	114
TOTAL	848	781	263	1,892	880	781	263	1,924	914	781	149	1,844
Education	495	49	16	560	514	49	17	580	533	49	12	594
Health	137	66	19	222	142	66	9	217	148	66	6	220
RSSP	60	588	7	655	62	588	8	658	65	588	4	657
Infrastructure	37	40	189	266	38	40	191	269	40	40	93	173
Protection	3	11	7	21	4	11	10	25	4	11	8	23
Microfinance	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Management	116	27	24	167	120	27	27	174	124	27	25	176
Total	848	781	263	1,892	880	781	263	1,924	914	781	149	1,844

	2026				2027				2028			
	PB	EA	PROJ	TOTAL	PB	EA	PROJ	TOTAL	PB	EA	PROJ	TOTAL
Objective 1	8	11	10	29	8	11	10	29	9	11	10	30
Objective 2	150	66	8	224	158	66	8	232	166	66	8	240
Objective 3	524	46	23	593	550	46	23	619	577	46	23	646
Objective 4	31	3	4	38	32	3	4	39	34	3	4	41
Objective 5	55	588	2	645	58	588	2	648	61	588	2	651
Objective 6	33	40	61	134	34	40	61	135	36	40	61	137
Objective 7	158	27	29	214	166	27	29	222	175	27	29	231
Total	959	781	137	1,877	1,006	781	137	1,924	1,058	781	137	1,976
Gaza	376	311	36	723	394	311	36	741	415	311	36	762
Jordan	171	29	12	212	179	29	12	220	188	29	12	229
Lebanon	129	160	20	309	135	160	20	315	142	160	20	322
Syria	72	247	11	330	76	247	11	334	80	247	11	338
West Bank	148	33	20	201	156	33	20	209	163	33	20	216
HQ	63	1	38	102	66	1	38	105	70	1	38	109
Total	959	781	137	1,877	1,006	781	137	1,924	1,058	781	137	1,976
Education	560	49	9	618	587	49	9	645	618	49	9	676
Health	155	66	8	229	163	66	8	237	171	66	8	245
RSSP	68	588	3	659	72	588	3	663	75	588	3	666
Infrastructure	42	40	89	171	44	40	89	173	46	40	89	175
Protection	4	11	8	23	4	11	8	23	5	11	8	24
Microfinance	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Management	130	27	19	176	136	27	19	182	143	27	19	189
Total	959	781	137	1,877	1,006	781	137	1,924	1,058	781	137	1,976

Table 1: projected expenditure by objective, field, programme and funding stream in million (US\$)



Students celebrate with their teacher on the first day of the 2020/21 school year at the UNRWA Khan Younis Elementary Girls School, Gaza. © 2020 UNRWA Photo by Khalil Adwan

271. UNRWA's activities are funded through three complementary portals, i.e., the Programme Budget, Emergency Appeals and Projects.

272. The Programme Budget supports core services, including recurrent staffing and non-staff costs, for basic education, health, infrastructure and camp improvement and relief and social services, as well as management and support services. In excess of 80 per cent of the Programme Budget is spent on salaries, chiefly for education (e.g., teachers, school principals, instructors), health (e.g., doctors, nurses, midwives, pharmacists) and relief and social services (e.g., social workers, relief workers, registration staff), in addition to other programme and support functions.

273. Emergency Appeals are humanitarian responses to ongoing crises, including protracted and rapid onset emergencies.

274. Projects fund specific, time bound activities, such as construction works (post-conflict and linked to population growth), as well as reform activities and technical assistance.

275. As part of its requirements for projects and to accompany the UNRWA Strategic Plan, UNRWA has issued a Capital Investment Plan covering the period 2023-25. This is designed to deliver on UNRWA's modernization ambitions and address years of

underinvestment that is now having a negative impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of daily operations. The Capital Investment Plan will address pressing up front funding needs in the following four areas: (i) maintaining and renewing physical assets to tackle the most urgent large-scale installation maintenance, and the replacement of the Agency's vehicle fleet; (ii) digital transformation to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of UNRWA's business processes and service delivery; (iii) investments to support the Agency's environmental commitments and the implementation of its environmental sustainability policy; and (iv) enhancing fundraising capacity and public outreach to help the Agency strengthen and diversify its fundraising efforts and increase income.

276. The financial requirements for the costing of the Programme Budget reflect natural increases in costs. Budgets are not needs-based but represent the cost of delivering quality services to Palestine refugees whilst accommodating increases in demand in priority areas. This requires modest investments, notably concerning norms for front line staff and, in the outer years of the plan, recurrent costs of digitalization initiatives and environmental commitments. The key assumptions informing financial requirements in the Strategic Plan 2023-28 are as follows:

key financial assumptions

Palestine refugee needs	<p>Palestine refugee reliance on UNRWA will increase due to population growth and continued difficult socio-economic conditions, with the greatest increases likely in Gaza, albeit at a slower rate than during the period 2016 – 2022.</p> <p>Education: Agency wide, the number of pupils is expected to increase by around 20 – 25,000 between 2022 and 2028, with growth in Gaza offset by stable enrolment and some reduction in other fields.</p> <p>Health: the burden of NCD will remain high in all fields, with demand for mother and child health care likely to be static. Demand for mental health and psycho-social support will remain high.</p> <p>Relief and Social Services: The number of Palestine refugees dependent on UNRWA for social welfare and emergency assistance (around one-third of the total registered population) will remain high for as long as current political and economic situations prevail. UNRWA will respond through a combination of Emergency Appeal and Programme Budget funded cash and food assistance.</p>
Average annual increases in staff costs	<p>UNRWA's pay policy dictates that the Agency pay its staff salaries that are comparable with host government counterparts. The need to adjust staff salaries during the period 2023–28 will depend on changes made by host governments. For planning purposes it is assumed that growth in staff salaries will not exceed three per cent per year.</p> <p>Costings assume some growth in the teaching workforce in Gaza (50–70 additional teachers per year) to accommodate increases in student numbers. Provision is also made for additional health, education and relief and social services staff in line with service quality norms. These will be phased in over several years. This includes the regularization of some positions currently funded under the Emergency Appeals.</p>
Exchange rates	Overall movement in exchange rates will remain steady vis-a-vis 2022 levels.
Resource mobilization	The funding environment will remain extremely competitive, hence the need for an increase in assessed contributions to stabilize the Agency's finances, as part of a wider Resource Mobilization and Outread Strategy which will accompany the Strategic Plan.
Humanitarian programming	Emergency Appeals will continue to be developed on a needs-basis, with the Agency looking to move away from an annual planning cycle towards a multi-year approach. A final decision will be taken based on the recommendations of an ongoing external evaluation. Emergency Appeal caseloads for 2022 form the basis of planning figures for the years 2023–28.
Commodity prices	The impact of volatile commodity prices on Agency operations will result in some increases in non-staff costs, including medical supplies, hospitalization and utilities, including fuel for waste management services.
Priority projects	Overall costs for projects will remain relatively stable, with slight reductions following the completion of Nahr El Bared reconstruction and the roll out of the capital investment plan, which covers the period 2023–25.

Table 2: key financial assumptions

277. Total costs for the Programme Budget are projected to increase by approximately three per cent each year for the period 2023–25, rising to five per cent per year from 2026–28. The increase in the second

half of the strategic period reflects recurrent costs linked to digitalization and modernization initiatives following the completion of the Capital Investment Plan as well as the further roll out of staffing norms

in key programmes on a phased basis. If insufficient funding is received for the Capital Investment Plan, UNRWA may need to introduce these costs into the Programme Budget.

278. Investments in support of staffing norms will be introduced on a phased basis over multiple years, to help manage annual cost increases. These investments are required to deliver on UNRWA's commitments to ensure quality, relevant and effective services to Palestine refugees. Some efficiency gains are expected in the medium term, for example linked to investments in greening and environmental sustainability, but these are not expected to yield major cost savings during the strategic period.

279. Over the course of the 2016-22 MTS, UNRWA implemented concrete measures to become more efficient and effective in a host of reform areas including family health, hospitalization, the procurement of medicine, class formation (student number ceiling/non-teaching periods) and the transition from food distributions to e-cards in the West Bank, Lebanon and Jordan. These efforts will continue under the Strategic Plan 2023-28, whereby UNRWA will review the efficiency of its programmes on an ongoing basis to ensure that it maximizes the delivery of outputs at minimal cost. This will enable the Agency to become even more cost-efficient and cost-effective while delivering high-quality core services to Palestine refugees.



Students on the first week of school at UNRWA Jabalia Elementary Co-ed School "A". © 2020 UNRWA Photo by Khalil Adwan

chapter 7: impacts of underfunding

280. This strategic plan sets out ambitious targets and goals to meet the evolving human development, protection and humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees in UNRWA's fields of operation. It is based on an assessment of the resources the Agency estimates

it can mobilize through strengthened fundraising, outreach and communications. Failure to raise the required funds will have wide ranging impacts on Palestine refugees, in the immediate and longer term. These consequences will be felt at different levels, as outlined below.









	inputs	outputs
 basic education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inability to hire additional staff to meet enrolment needs ■ Inability to construct new schools / classrooms or replace rented schools ■ Inability to keep teaching skills and methods current ■ Insufficient funding for specialized support ■ Shortages in equipment, materials and stationery ■ Inability to hire additional school counsellors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Larger class sizes ■ More double and triple-shift schools ■ More teachers on temporary contracts ■ Less support for special educational needs ■ Less support for children's psychosocial needs ■ Reduced staff motivation and well-being ■ Reduced training opportunities and increased risk of teachers reverting to less effective teaching and learning approaches
 TVET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inability to update courses ■ Inability to modernize equipment, maintain or renovate workshops ■ Inability to respond to increasing demand for training places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reduced relevance of TVET
 health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inability to hire required doctors and health staff against the health staffing norm ■ Inability to maintain buffer stocks of medicines and medical supplies ■ Inability to construct or renovate health centres ■ Inability to procure medical equipment ■ Reduced funding for hospitalization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Shorter doctor / patient consultation times ■ More doctor consultations per day ■ Inadequate and increasingly crowded health centres ■ Less screening and treatment for NCD's, including mental health ■ Reduced capacity for surveillance against pandemics and disease outbreaks ■ Fewer women receiving antenatal and postnatal care ■ Increased risk of stockouts of essential drugs ■ Inability to meet patient hospitalization needs ■ Reduced support to children with vision and hearing impairments
 relief & social services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inability to invest in the SSNP programme ■ Inability to hire additional social workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fewer poor Palestine refugees receiving relief assistance ■ Smaller share of the poverty gap bridged ■ Increased workload for social workers ■ Inability to meet demand for social services
 infrastructure and camp improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Insufficient number of sanitation labourers ■ Inability to maintain waste management equipment ■ Insufficient funding for comprehensive camp improvement ■ Insufficient funding for shelter rehabilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reduced sanitation and waste management services ■ Less reliable environmental infrastructure ■ Fewer camp improvement projects ■ Fewer families benefiting from shelter rehabilitation
 protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Insufficient protection staff in fields of operation, including on humanitarian principles/neutrality ■ Reliance on temporary staff contracts for core protection and humanitarian principles activities ■ Insufficient funding to meet protection needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inability to properly document protection risks and trends ■ Inability to progress on sensitive protection issues that require consistent and sustained effort ■ Reduced protection services ■ Inability to conduct quarterly integrated assessments of installations or address neutrality/protection issues identified ■ Reduced ability to prevent and respond to neutrality issues and allegations that arise (apart from installation-related issues) ■ Protection alignment review recommendations not addressed ■ Inability to coordinate and provide technical support on protection issues in the agency
 emergency assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Insufficient funding for emergency assistance programmes ■ Insufficient funding for the coordination and management of emergency assistance programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inability to meet emergency food, cash, health, education, protection and psychosocial needs
 overall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased share of staff on temporary contracts ■ Inability to replace fleet and equipment and maintain installations ■ Increased administrative burden ■ Inability to pay salaries in a consistent and timely manner ■ Reduced funding for evaluations ■ Inability to respond to emerging needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Installations are progressively not fit for purpose ■ Reduced staff motivation

Figure 8: the implications of underfunding

Source: UNRWA, 2022

outcomes

impacts

- Higher risk of student drop-out and grade repetition
- Decline in student pass rates
- Deterioration of student wellbeing and mental health
- Increased risk of violations of humanitarian principles in schools
- Weaker implementation of the UNRWA inclusive education policy

- Reduced employability of TVET graduates

- Worsening health outcomes amongst patients
- Reduced access for persons with disabilities, elderly and vulnerable patients to health centres
- Less effective preventative care, requiring more expensive treatment options
- Increased risk of disease outbreaks
- Increased risk of maternal mortality and poor child health
- Increased burden on host countries' public healthcare systems

- Increased poverty and food insecurity
- Increased risk of harm, behavioural and social issues amongst refugees

- Increased risk of disease outbreaks in refugee camps
- Increased risk of service interruptions
- Worse living conditions for the most vulnerable
- Fewer opportunities for skills development employment
- Weaker camp-based economies

- Absence of protection analysis across all fields of operation
- Ineffective private and public engagement with duty bearers on protection concerns
- Uncoordinated and unsafe engagement with people who have experienced protection threats and violence
- Reduced access to UNRWA services for the most vulnerable Palestine refugees, including children, persons with disabilities, and survivors of GBV
- Inability to meet the critical legal protection needs of Palestine refugees
- Refugees and staff exposed to greater protection risks, heightening their vulnerability to irreversible and lasting harm
- Increased risk of misuse of UNRWA installations
- Accessibility and safety needs of beneficiaries in UNRWA installations and services unmet
- Fewer opportunities for meaningful participation of beneficiaries in UNRWA service provision

- Increased poverty and food insecurity
- Emergency health, mental health, psycho-social support and protection needs unmet
- Increased unemployment amongst Palestine refugees
- Increased risk of disruption to regular programmes supported by Emergency Appeals

- Reduced service quality
- Increased inefficiency
- Increased safety and security risks for staff and refugees
- Increased risk of strike action
- Limited learning and reflection

- Most vulnerable left behind
- Higher unemployment
- Increased reliance on UNRWA social transfers
- Life expectancy stagnates / declines
- Increased disease burden on families and communities
- Increased reliance on negative coping strategies
- Increased vulnerability of refugee youth to destabilizing influences
- Reduced contribution of Palestine refugees to host countries
- Negative impact on societal growth and development
- Less donor confidence and political support for UNRWA

annex 1: common monitoring matrix 2023-28

Indicator Name		Dept.	Field/HQ	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation Tags				Corresponding SDG Target	Agency Wide	
					Field	Gender	Disability	Other		Provisional 2023 Baseline ⁶¹	2028 Target
1.1.a	Outcome	Protection	Field	%	X				5.1, 5.2, 5.5, 10.2	52.85	63.00
	Agency-wide degree of alignment with protection standards across all aspects of programming										
1.1.1.a	Output	Protection	Field	%	X				5.1, 5.2, 5.5, 10.2	60.78	85.00
	Percentage of Agency-wide protection mainstreaming recommendations from internal protection alignment reviews fully implemented										
1.1.1.b	Output	Protection	Field	%	X					New ⁶²	30.00
	Percentage of recurrent issues identified through integrated assessments										
1.1.1.c	Output	Protection	HQ	#					10.2, 17.18	New	6.00
	Number of UNRWA data systems adapted to integrate age, sex and disability disaggregations in line with global protection standards										
1.1.2.a	Output	RSSD	Field	#	X				16.9	519,062	N/A
	Number of registration transactions performed										
1.1.2.b	Output	RSSD	Field	%	X				16.9	New	80.00
	Percentage of registration transactions performed online										
1.2.1.a	Output	RSSD	Field	#	X	X	X	X	3.5, 5.2, 5.3, 16.2	1,708	7,660
	Number of individuals provided with social work interventions through case management										
1.2.1.b	Output	RSSD	Field	%	X	X	X	X	3.5, 5.2, 5.3, 16.2	New	TBD
	Percentage of social work interventions that address critical and high-risk individuals										
1.2.2.a	Output	Protection	Field	#	X				5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5, 8.5, 10.2, 16.1, 16.2, 16.7, 16.b	New	TBD
	Number of community-based protection organizations supported by UNRWA										
1.2.2.b	Output	Protection	Field	#	X	X	X		5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5, 8.5, 10.2, 16.1, 16.2, 16.7, 16.b	New	TBD
	Number of Palestine refugees actively participating in UNRWA-supported community-based protection organizations										
1.3.1.a	Output	Protection	Field	#	X				1.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5, 8.5, 8.8, 10.2, 10.3, 16.1, 16.3, 16.b	New	N/A
	Number of protection advocacy interventions targeting duty bearers										
1.3.2.a	Output	Protection	Field	#	X				1.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5, 8.5, 8.8, 10.2, 10.3, 16.1, 16.3, 16.b	New	N/A
	Number of protection advocacy interventions targeting external actors										
1.3.2.b	Output	DLA	HQ	#					1.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5, 8.5, 8.8, 10.2, 10.3, 16.1, 16.3, 16.b	10	15
	Number of submissions to the international human rights system										
1.4.a	Outcome	Protection	HQ	%					3.7, 4.1, 4.4, 4.5, 5.5, 5.6, 5.c, 8.5, 8.6, 10.1, 10.2, 10.3	New	TBD
	Gender equality and women's empowerment index score										

Indicator Name		Dept.	Field/HQ	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation Tags				Corresponding SDG Target	Agency Wide	
					Field	Gender	Disability	Other		Provisional 2023 Baseline	2028 Target
2.1a	Outcome	Health	Field	%	X		X		3.7	New	3650
2.1b	Outcome	Health	HQ	Per 100,000 live births	X				3.1	49.00	20.00
2.1c	Outcome	Health	Field	Per 1,000 live births	X	X			3.2	New	TBD
2.1.1a	Output	Health	Field	%	X				3.1	New	77.60
2.1.1b	Output	Health	Field	%	X				3.1	77.59	82.40
2.1.2a	Output	Health	Field	%	X			X	3.7, 5.6	New	TBD
2.1.3a	Output	Health	Field	%	X				3.2	91.92	97.60
2.1.4a	Output	Health	Field	%	X	X			2.2	98.91	95.00
2.1.4b	Output	Health	Field	%	X	X			3.8	New	TBD
2.1.4c	Output	Health	Field	%	X	X			2.2	New	100
2.2a	Outcome	Health	Field	%	X	X	X		3.4	26.56	27.80
2.2.1a	Output	Health	Field	%	X	X			3.4	13.86	14.30
2.2.1b	Output	Health	Field	%	X				3.4	70.90	73.10
2.2.2a	Output	Health	Field	%	X	X	X		3.4	20.10	21.30
2.2.2b	Output	Health	Field	%	X	X	X		3.4	99.00	95.00

Indicator Name		Dept.	Field/HQ	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation Tags				Corresponding SDG Target	Agency Wide	
					Field	Gender	Disability	Other		Provisional 2023 Baseline	2028 Target
23a	Outcome	Number of vaccine preventable disease outbreaks	Health	Field	#						
					X				3.3, 3.8, 3.b	0	0
23.1.a	Output	Percentage of children 18 months old that received all booster vaccines	Health	Field	%						
					X	X			3.3, 3.8, 3.b	98.98	95.00
24a	Outcome	Average consultation time per doctor	Health	Field	#						
					X				3.8	2.90	5.00
24.b	Outcome	Average number of daily medical consultations per doctor	Health	Field	#						
					X	X			3.8	66.30	6240
24.c	Outcome	Degree of user satisfaction with newly constructed or renovated health centres	ICID	Field	%						
					X	X	X		3.8	New	TBD
24.d	Outcome	Degree to which health services are in alignment with UNRWA protection standards	Health	Field	%						
					X				3.8	55.17	6300
24.1.a	Output	Percentage of health centres with no stock out of 12 tracer medicines	Health	Field	%						
					X				3.8, 3.b	92.14	100
24.2.a	Output	Antibiotic prescription rate	Health	Field	%						
					X				3.8	22.99	25.00
24.2.b	Output	Percentage of health centres staffed by medical officers as per the approved Agency norms	Health	Field	%						
					X				3.c	New	100
24.3.a	Output	Percentage of SSNP-eligible patients accessing hospitalization services per UNRWA defined criteria	Health	Field	%						
					X	X			3.8	2840	2930
24.4.a	Output	Percentage of health centres meeting UNRWA facilities protection design standards	ICID	Field	%						
					X				3.8	New	TBD
24.4.b	Output	Percentage of GBV survivors identified out of the total number of women screened for MHPSS	Health	Field	%						
					X		X		5.2	New	TBD
24.4.c	Output	Percentage of protection mainstreaming recommendations from internal protection alignment reviews fully implemented	Health	Field	%						
					X				3.8	61.54	85.00

Indicator Name		Dept.	Field/HQ	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation Tags				Corresponding SDG Target	Agency Wide	
					Field	Gender	Disability	Other		Provisional 2023 Baseline	2028 Target
3.1a	Outcome	Education	Field	#	X				4.1	0.94	0.95
3.1b	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4.1, 4.5	28.30	70.10
3.1c	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4.1, 4.5	22.00	32.85
3.1d	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4.1, 4.5	31.00	63.50
3.1e	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4.1, 4.5	16.20	64.06
3.1f	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4.1, 4.5	24.50	57.88
3.1g	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4.1, 4.5	23.90	29.99
3.1h	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4.1, 4.5	28.80	51.82
3.1i	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4.1, 4.5	13.60	38.04
3.1j	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X				4.1, 4.5	New	TBD
3.1.1a	Output	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4.1, 4.5	0.70	0.66
3.1.1b	Output	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4.1, 4.5	2.92	2.75
3.1.2a	Output	Education	Field	%	X	X			4.c	New	TBD
3.1.2b	Output	Education	Field	%	X	X			4.c	New	TBD
3.1.3a	Output	Education	Field	%	X				4.c	5.35	5.97
3.1.3b	Output	Education	Field	%	X				4.c	54.06	38.88
3.2a	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4.1, 4.5	0.97	0.77

Indicator Name		Dept.	Field/HQ	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation Tags				Corresponding SDG Target	Agency Wide	
					Field	Gender	Disability	Other		Provisional 2023 Baseline	2028 Target
3.2b	Outcome	Cumulative drop-out rate – preparatory	Education	Field	%	X	X	X	4.1, 4.5	288	239
3.2c	Outcome	Survival rate to the end of basic education	Education	Field	%	X	X	X	4.1, 4.5	95.61	96.66
3.2d	Outcome	Degree to which schools are violence free	Education	Field	%	X			4.7, 4.a	2.14	2.33
3.2e	Outcome	Prevalence of human rights culture and practices	Education	Field	%	X			4.7	44.46	48.91
3.2f	Outcome	Degree to which inclusive approaches are embedded in educational practice	Education	Field	%	X			4.5, 4.7	37.90	41.69
3.2g	Outcome	Degree to which education services are in alignment with UNRWA protection standards	Education	Field	%	X			4.1, 4.5, 4.a	58.95	63.00
3.2h	Outcome	Degree of user satisfaction with newly constructed or renovated schools	ICID	Field	%	X	X	X	4.a	New	TBD
3.2i	Outcome	Degree to which schools meet healthy criteria	Education	Field	%	X			4.a	2.92	3.17
3.2.1a	Output	Degree to which students identified with psychosocial needs are supported	Education	Field	%	X	X	X	3.4, 4.5	New	TBD
3.2.1b	Output	Percentage of students with disabilities receiving support meeting their needs	Education	Field	%	X	X		4.5, 4.a.	55.91	70.47
3.2.2a	Output	Percentage of students who report feeling safe at UNRWA schools – elementary	Education	Field	%	X	X	X	16.2	New	TBD
3.2.2b	Output	Percentage of students who report feeling safe at UNRWA schools – preparatory	Education	Field	%	X	X	X	16.2	New	TBD
3.2.2c	Output	Percentage of protection mainstreaming recommendations from internal protection alignment reviews fully implemented	Education	Field	%	X			4.5, 4.7, 4.a	75.00	85.00
3.2.2d	Output	Percentage of schools meeting UNRWA facilities protection design standards	ICID	Field	%	X			4.a	New	TBD
3.2.2e	Output	Percentage of education staff who received Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance training	Education	Field	%	X	X		4.7	48.15	100
3.2.3a	Output	Percentage of textbooks reviewed using the UNRWA Curriculum Framework or Rapid Review	Education	Field	%	X			4.7	New	100

Indicator Name		Dept.	Field/HQ	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation Tags				Corresponding SDG Target		Agency Wide	
					Field	Gender	Disability	Other			Provisional 2023 Baseline	2028 Target
4.1.a	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4,4, 8,5, 8,6		7832	80.70
4.1.b	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4,4, 8,5, 8,6		78.98	80.97
4.1.c	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X				4,4, 8,5, 8,6		203	2.15
4.1.d	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4,4, 8,5, 8,6		88.17	90.40
4.1.e	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X				4,4, 8,5, 8,6		New	TBD
4.1.f	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		43		New	TBD
4.1.g	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		43		New	TBD
4.1.h	Outcome	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4,3, 4b		94.74	100
4.1.1.a	Output	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4,3, 8,6		33.88	34.39
4.1.1.b	Output	Education	Field	%	X				45		New	TBD
4.1.1.c	Output	ICID	Field	%	X				4a		New	TBD
4.1.2.a	Output	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4,3, 8,6		33.64	37.88
4.1.3.a	Output	ICID	Field	#	X				4,4, 13,3		853	1,300
4.2.a	Outcome	Micro-finance	Field	#	X	X			8,1, 8,5, 10,1		New	TBD
4.2.b	Outcome	Micro-finance	Field	%	X	X			8,1, 8,5, 10,1		New	TBD
4.2.c	Outcome	Micro-finance	Field	%	X	X			10.1		55.00	84.00
4.2.1.a	Output	Micro-finance	Field	%	X	X			1,4, 8,5, 8,10, 10,1		44.61	47.00
4.2.1.b	Output	Micro-finance	Field	%	X				1,4, 8,5, 8,10, 10,1		47.61	50.00

Indicator Name		Dept.	Field/HQ	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation Tags				Corresponding SDG Target	AgencyWide	
					Field	Gender	Disability	Other		Provisional 2023 Baseline	2028 Target
421c	Output	Percentage of loans disbursed to youth	Micro-finance	Field	%	X	X		1,4, 8.5, 8.10, 10.1	25.17	30.00
421d	Output	Percentage of loans disbursed to persons with disabilities	Micro-finance	Field	%	X	X		1,4, 8.5, 8.10, 10.1	New	TBD
421e	Output	Operational self-sustainability ratio	Micro-finance	Field	%	X			8.10	107	130
421f	Output	Percentage of portfolio at risk for 30 or more days	Micro-finance	Field	%	X			8.10	599	3.00
422a	Output	Number of full-time equivalents generated through infrastructure and camp improvement works	ICID	Field	#	X			8.5, 10.1	2,040	2,420

Indicator Name		Dept.	Field/HQ	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation Tags				Corresponding SDG Target		Agency Wide	
					Field	Gender	Disability	Other			Provisional 2023 Baseline	2028 Target
5.1a	Outcome	RSSD	Field	%	X				1.1, 1.2		22.58	2000
5.1b	Outcome	RSSD	Field	%	X				1.3, 2.1		48.26	63.00
5.1.1a	Output	RSSD	Field	%	X	X	X		1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1		1643	1643
5.1.1.b	Output	RSSD	Field level by HQ	%	X				1.3, 2.1		New	TBD
24.3.a	Output	Health	Field	%	X	X			3.8		28.40	29.30
4.1.1.a	Output	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4.3, 8.6		33.88	34.39
4.1.2.a	Output	Education	Field	%	X	X	X		4.3, 8.6		33.64	37.88
5.1.4.a	Output	RSSD	Field	%	X				1.3, 2.1		59.26	85.00

Indicator Name		Dept.	Field/HQ	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation Tags				Corresponding SDG Target	Agency Wide	
					Field	Gender	Disability	Other		Provisional 2023 Baseline	2028 Target
6.1a	Outcome	Degree of Palestine refugees' satisfaction with newly repaired or reconstructed shelters	ICID	Field	%	X			11.1	New	TBD
6.1.1a	Output	Percentage of substandard shelters repaired or reconstructed	ICID	Field	%	X			11.1, 11.c, 13.1	14.38	18.39
6.1.1b	Output	Percentage of repaired or reconstructed shelters meeting UNRWA protection principles	ICID	Field	%	X			11.1	92.69	92.00
6.2a	Outcome	Camp index score of refugees' living conditions	ICID	Field	#	X			10.2, 11.3, 11.7	6.4	6.5
6.2b	Outcome	Social impact score of rehabilitated shelters	ICID	Field	%	X			3.4, 3.9, 10.2, 11.1, 13.1, 16.2	New	7500
6.2c	Outcome	Number of waterborne diseases outbreaks among Palestine refugees	ICID	Field	#	X			3.3	1	0
6.2d	Outcome	Degree to which infrastructure and camp improvement services are in alignment with UNRWA protection standards	ICID	Field	%	X			10.2, 11.1, 11.3, 11.7	44.29	63.00
6.2.1a	Output	Percentage of shelters connected to a water supply network - basic level	ICID	Field	%	X			3.9, 6.1, 6.b	74.35	83.11
6.2.2a	Output	Percentage of shelters connected to an official sewerage network	ICID	Field	%	X			3.9, 6.2, 6.b	93.90	96.03
6.2.3a	Output	Percentage of solid waste collected and disposed of on a regular basis	ICID	Field	%	X			6.2, 6.b, 11.6	92.96	96.80
6.2.4a	Output	Percentage of infrastructure and camp improvement construction activities implemented in compliance with the UNRWA Environmental and Social Management Framework standards	ICID	Field	%	X			11.3, 11.6	New	55.00
6.2.4b	Output	Percentage of protection mainstreaming recommendations from internal protection alignment reviews fully implemented	ICID	Field	%	X			10.2, 11.1, 11.3, 11.7	42.85	85.00

Indicator Name		Dept.	Field/HQ	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation Tags				Corresponding SDG Target	Agency Wide	
					Field	Gender	Disability	Other		Provisional 2023 Baseline	2028 Target
7.1a	Outcome	Staff attrition rate – Area staff	Human Resources	Field level by HQ	%	X	X			New	TBD
7.1b	Outcome	Staff attrition rate – International staff	Human Resources	Field level by HQ	%	X	X			New	TBD
7.1c	Outcome	Percentage of Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network indicators assessed as meeting or exceeding requirements or as satisfactory or highly satisfactory	Planning	HQ	%					New	100
7.1d	Outcome	Number of programmes not implemented due to unacceptable security risk	DSRM	HQ	#					New	0
7.1.1a	Output	Percentage of UNRWA personnel, premises and assets compliant with identified security risk management measures	DSRM	Field	%	X				New	100
7.1.2a	Output	Vacancy rate – Area staff	Human Resources	Field level by HQ	%	X				New	TBD
7.1.2b	Output	Vacancy rate – International staff	Human Resources	Field level by HQ	%	X				New	TBD
7.1.2c	Output	Percentage of vacant positions filled within 120 days	Human Resources	Field level by HQ	%	X				New	80.00
7.1.2d	Output	Percentage of performance evaluation reviews completed on time	Human Resources	Field	%	X				New	100
7.1.3a	Output	Average number of vendors participating in UNRWA formal tenders	CSSD	Field level by HQ	#	X				4.1	7
7.1.3b	Output	Percentage of UNRWA vehicle fleet beyond the useful life limit	CSSD	Field level by HQ	%	X				54	45.00
7.1.4a	Output	Percentage of projects completed within the agreed time and budget	Planning	Field level by HQ	%	X				94.26	100
7.1.4b	Output	Percentage of indicator actuals reported in the Results Based Management system within the agreed timeframe	Planning	Field level by HQ	%	X				94.33	100
7.2.1a	Output	Implementation rate of DIOS audit recommendations	DIOS	HQ	%				16.6	New	80.00
7.2.1b	Output	Implementation rate of DIOS evaluation recommendations	DIOS	HQ	%				16.6	New	80.00

Indicator Name		Dept.	Field/HQ	Unit of Measure	Disaggregation Tags				Corresponding SDG Target		Agency Wide	
					Field	Gender	Disability	Other			Provisional 2023 Baseline	2028 Target
721c	Output	Implementation rate of UN Board of Auditors' recommendations	Finance	HQ	%					16.6	57.45	57.45
722a	Output	Average time taken for the issuance of an investigation report	DIOS	HQ	#					16.6	236	180
722b	Output	Percentage of sexual exploitation and abuse cases where an investigation has commenced within three months	DIOS	HQ	%					16.6	New	100
731a	Output	Percentage of UN Strategy for Sustainability Management indicators assessed as meeting or exceeding requirements	Planning	HQ	%					6.3, 6.4, 7.2, 7b, 12.2, 12.5, 12.7, 13.1, 13.3	New	TBD
732a	Output	Percentage of UN-SWAP indicators assessed as meeting or exceeding requirements	Protection	HQ	%					5.5, 5.c, 10.2, 10.3	68.75	81.00
732b	Output	Percentage of senior Area posts held by women	Human Resources	Field level by HQ	%					5.5	32.09	36.50
732c	Output	Percentage of senior International posts held by women	Human Resources	Field level by HQ	%	X				5.5	38.33	41.50
733a	Output	Percentage of UN Disability Inclusion Strategy indicators assessed as meeting or exceeding requirements	Protection	HQ	%					10.2, 10.3	6.67	50.00

Table 3: common monitoring matrix 2023-28

annex 2: evaluation plan

Strategic Plan Objective		2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
1	Palestine refugees are protected through the realization of their rights under international law	Evaluation of Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2022	Social Work Reform				
2	Palestine refugees lead healthy lives			Mental Health Strategy and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support		e-Health transition Electronic Medical Records	
3	Palestine refugees complete inclusive and equitable quality basic education	Education Reform			ICT for Education (ICT4E) Strategy		
4	Palestine refugees have improved livelihood opportunities		Technical and Vocational Education			Microfinance	
5	The most vulnerable Palestine refugees have access to effective social assistance systems	Finalization of 2022 Emergency Appeal Evaluation		Social Safety Net Programmes			
6	Palestine refugees are able to meet their basic human needs of shelter, water and sanitation		Infrastructure and Camp Improvement				Environmental and Social Management Framework
7	UNRWA's mandate is implemented effectively and responsibly			Resource Mobilization Strategy 2023-2025 Mid-term Evaluation of Strategic Plan 2023-2028			Strategic Plan 2023-2028
Synthesis Meta-analysis		Synthesis report of 2016-2022 central and decentralized evaluations					

Table 4: evaluation plan 2023-28

annex 3: operationalizing the strategic plan

Throughout the period 2023–28 UNRWA will use an annual cycle for operational planning. An Agency Annual Operational Plan will be prepared each year, focusing on the specific activities and initiatives that will be implemented over the course of the year to deliver on priorities in this Strategic Plan. This will be aligned with the annual budgeting and planning process, resource mobilization plans, reporting cycle, internal oversight plans and performance management cycle for staff. Risk assessments will be updated annually as part of the annual planning process, and risk management and mitigation plans prepared to address major risks.

In 2023, UNRWA will review the continued preparation of annual Emergency Appeals, based on an ongoing evaluation, and determine whether to transition to multi-year humanitarian planning, in line with the approach of the inter-agency appeals in many of the Agency's fields of operation.

Independent assessments completed by DIOS, including results from the six-year evaluation plan (Annex 2) and internal audit reviews will support accountability, learning and decision making. The six-year evaluation plan aspires to ensure coverage across each objective of the Strategic Plan, while allowing for flexibility to address urgent, emergent needs. The Evaluation Division of DIOS is committed to providing relevant and utilization focused evaluations and completing at least two centralized evaluations annually, including mid-term and final evaluations in 2025 and 2028 specifically on the Strategic Plan and its implementation and results. The selection of evaluation subjects was

informed through stakeholder consultation and criteria based analysis outlined in the 2022 UNRWA Evaluation Policy.

Monitoring of performance and expenditure against this Strategic Plan, and annual operational plan targets, will take place on a quarterly basis. Internal results reviews will be held every six months, involving all fields and HQ departments. The following external reports on UNRWA activities will be generated:

- An annual report from the Commissioner General to the UN GA on the work of the organization;
- An annual report from the Agency to the UN GA on programme performance and plans;
- Annual reporting to donors against a sub-set of indicators in the Strategic Plan, as agreed with members of the Advisory Commission Sub-Committee, will be prepared on an annual basis with the draft report issued by the end of the first quarter of each year. This will also include annual reporting on performance targets in the Resource Mobilization and Outreach Strategy and Emergency Appeals;
- Mid-year reporting on Emergency Appeals;
- Annual report of the DIOS;
- Annual report of the Ethics Office;
- Annual report of the Department of Health; and
- Annual disability inclusion report.

annex 4: enterprise risks

UNRWA operates in a high risk environment and it is anticipated that the overall risk profile faced by the Agency will not improve over the period 2023 - 28.

There are several risks that could prevent the Agency from achieving the objectives in this plan. The most significant risk categories include the following:

- **Contextual risks** relating to the Agency's often volatile operating environment, characterized in some fields by blockade, occupation, armed conflict, socio-economic crisis and civil unrest. There is a high risk of renewed conflict and the further degradation of public infrastructure in some fields. This translates into increased vulnerability amongst the Palestine refugee population and rising immediate and longer term needs.
- **Geo-political risks**, as relating to changes in donor policy towards UNRWA or towards domestic and social policy in one of UNRWA's fields of operation. The Agency's ability to meet Palestine refugee needs could also be undermined by the prevailing global economic environment, threats to multilateralism and politically motivated attacks against the Agency.
- **Risks of underfunding** across any of the Agency's funding portals, due to competing donor priorities and financial constraints in donor countries, or losses in monetary value due to exchange rate fluctuations / currency devaluation.
- **Programmatic risks** associated with any of the services delivered by UNRWA, including the non-attainment of Strategic Plan 2023-28 performance targets and the failure to realize or sustain the benefits of planned and ongoing reforms. This includes efforts linked to digitalization and modernization.
- **Fiduciary risks**, including where funds are not used for intended purposes or are not properly accounted for and as relating to the health, safety and security of UNRWA personnel.

- **Financial risks** relating to a sustained and persistent increase in international food and fuel prices due to global market shortages, as exacerbated by the conflict in Ukraine, that will result in further cost increases for both international and local procurement.
- **Supply chain risks**, as highlighted by the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on essential supplies and services.
- **Safeguarding risks**, including those relating to SEA and incidents of violence against children, particularly during episodes of civil unrest, increased conflict or deterioration of socio-economic conditions in any of UNRWA's fields.
- **Risks related to humanitarian principles**, and adherence to such principles, such as real or perceived breaches of neutrality, ethics or integrity by UNRWA personnel.

UNRWA has and will continue to take action on several fronts to ensure that the necessary systems, structures, people and processes are in place to achieve Strategic Plan objectives and effectively prepare for and manage the multifaceted challenges presented by the range of risk categories listed above. Such action includes a flexible management structure, robust long term, annual and contingency planning and monitoring processes and ensuring that resources and authority are granted to those responsible and accountable for achieving results. Additional efforts will focus on organisational culture change through advocacy, communication, fit-for-purpose training and the further integration of risk considerations in programme design and implementation. As the Agency further strengthens its Enterprise Risk Management systems, tools and processes, strategic risks that impact delivery of the objectives in this plan will be systematically assessed and updated.

endnotes

- 1 [What We Do | UNRWA](#) – education in emergencies.
- 2 UNRWA Capital Investment Plan. UNRWA. (2022). <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/strategy-policy/unrwa-capital-investment-plan>
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- 35 UN GA resolution 46/182, Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations, (1991), Retrieved 02 December 2022, from <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/582/70/IMG/NR058270.pdf?OpenElement> which spells out that humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality. See also UN GA resolution 58/114, Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (2003), retrieved 02 December 2022, from <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/501/42/PDF/N0350142.pdf?OpenElement> which reaffirms the principles of neutrality, humanity and impartiality and recognizes independence as an additional principle of humanitarian assistance.
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- 37 The annual number of patient visits averaged around 8.5m until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.
- 38 E-MCH application for care of mothers during pregnancy and after childbirth and care of newborns, including immunization and follow up appointment. E-NCD application for patients suffering from NCDs.
- 39 Protection design standards are established to ensure that UNRWA installations, including schools and health centres, are designed and constructed to be physically accessible, safe and consider specific gender needs. Physical accessibility standards ensure that Palestine refugees and staff who provide services to refugees, including persons with disabilities regardless of their impairment (including physical, mental, intellectual, sensory or otherwise) can take advantage of all services and opportunities offered. They also aim at providing an environment which allows for the freedom of movement and use of a space with no obstacles, with dignity and the highest possible levels of independence. Safety standards include strengthened structural integrity and improved fire safety. Gender considerations include, for example, the separation of lower grades from upper grades and replacing external toilet units with internal toilets.
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- 44 In total, 13.2 per cent (93) of UNRWA schools use rented premises in Jordan (53), Lebanon (21), West Bank (12), Gaza (4) and Syria (3).
- 45 These programmes include the Newly Appointed Teacher programme and the School Based Teacher Development programmes I and II.
- 46 An Agency-wide Assessment of Learning Outcomes – Study of Associated Factors was completed in 2021 and is expected to be repeated on two-yearly intervals, i.e., in 2023, 2025 and 2027.
- 47 Excluding rented schools.
- 48 The number of branch offices is expected to increase to 29 by the end of 2028, with the opening of three new branches / units planned in West Bank and Jordan.
- 49 The operational self-sufficiency rate ranged from 107 – 146 per cent.
- 50 Unemployment, total (% of total labour force) (modelled ILO estimate). Data. (2022). Retrieved 02 December 2022, from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS>
- 51 Fintech pertains to the use of technology to improve and automate traditional forms of financial services.
- 52 Socio-economic surveys to identify vulnerabilities and high-frequency crisis monitoring of key socio-economic variables for trend analysis are now being carried out in all UNRWA field offices (in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) statistics division).
- 53 UNRWA High frequency crisis monitoring surveys: Lebanon: September 2022 (national poverty line 2011 adjusted for inflation); Syria:

May 2021 (below US\$ 1.9 per day); Gaza: November 2021 with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) (national poverty line 2011 adjusted for inflation)

54 Ibid.

55 WFP, Regional market analysis. (2022). Retrieved 02 December 2022, from https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000136993/download/?_ga=2.86640988.514567755.1649578660-753957072.1649578660

56 This shift is designed to ensure more effective and efficient programming in a resource constrained environment where the Agency is unable to adjust its assistance in response to changing needs.

57 Not including camps damaged during the conflict in Syria.

58 Excluding areas in Syria damaged during conflict, an estimated US\$ 13 million would be required to achieve 100 per cent connectivity to sewage networks.

59 Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East Report of the Secretary-General. (2017). Retrieved 02 December 2022, from [sg_report_english.pdf\(unrwa.org\)](sg_report_english.pdf(unrwa.org))

60 Relevant lessons from the implementation of the GES have been reviewed and incorporated into the Strategic Plan based on an informal analysis of the main lessons learned, feedback from UNRWA fields and departments and from the annual UN-SWAP GEEW assessment process.

61 Please note that provisional 2023 baselines, where available, refer to 2021 actuals or the most recent data available as at the time of writing. This data will be updated on the basis of 2022 results.

62 'New' denotes an indicator not previously measured by UNRWA. The 2023 actual will form the baseline.



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