

UNRWA

Report on Emergency Activities In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, April-June 2003



UNRWA Refugee Children in Rafah Camp, Southern Gaza

Progress Report

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21st Report on UNRWA Emergency Activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Covering Agency Emergency Activities, April-June 2003

Introduction

On 29 April, the Palestinian Legislative Council voted in a new government headed for the first time by a prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas. Following the swearing-in of the new prime minister, the Quartet released the Road Map, a document outlining a process to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and bring a Palestinian state into existence by 2005. On 29 June, Palestinian militant organisations began a three-month cessation of attacks against Israelis. In response, the Israeli army withdrew from areas of the Gaza Strip and Bethlehem.

The publication of the road map and the subsequent political process provide some signs of hope that the protracted conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis might be peacefully resolved. Along with the PA and other interested organisations, UNRWA is now engaged in planning for medium and longer-term projects in addition to its emergency activities. Agency capacities include the development of infrastructure and re-housing.

Yet, while the political climate may have changed, realities on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have not. A total of 180 Palestinians were killed during the reporting period, 132 in the Gaza Strip (including five UNRWA school children) and 48 in the West Bank. Israel's "separation wall" completely encircles the town of Qalqilia, and is now hundreds of kilometres in length. A report from the University of Geneva found that, excluding Jerusalem, 69% of all Palestinians in the oPt live under the World Bank-defined poverty line.

The Israeli army re-invaded and sealed Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza for six weeks and continued major operations in Rafah and Khan Younis in southern Gaza. The IDF demolished more Palestinian homes in May than in any previous month in the 33-month-old conflict. A total of 244 houses were completely demolished during the reporting period, 112 in the Gaza Strip in the month of May alone. Over 10,000 Palestinians have now lost their homes to Israeli demolition since September 2000.

Unfortunately, due to funding shortfalls in UNRWA's 2003 Appeals, funds were drastically cut from re-housing. In the Gaza Strip, only \$75,000 of the \$8 million required for shelter reconstruction and repair was allotted in the first six months of 2003. With these funds, the Agency purchased tents, blankets and mattresses for those made homeless. The Agency received pledges of only 40% of required funds under the January-June 2003 Appeal.

On 6 June, UNRWA issued an Emergency Appeal for the second half of 2003 for \$102.9 million. Included in the appeal is a request for \$21.5 million to allow for the repair and reconstruction of damaged and destroyed refugee shelters in Gaza. Over \$32 million of the Appeal is earmarked for food. Launching the Appeal in Geneva, UNRWA's Commissioner-General, Peter Hansen, stressed "If the international community wishes to encourage peace in the region, it must continue working to ease the plight of the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank."

Emergency Employment Creation

Unemployment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip remains at crisis levels. Recent reports indicate that 53% of the workforce is unemployed.¹ UNRWA is the largest employer in the West Bank and Gaza Strip after the Palestinian Authority. It has implemented \$72 million in emergency job creation projects since October 2000 and has recently identified needs for a further \$62 million to generate badly needed temporary job opportunities.

Provision of funding towards the Agency's emergency employment programme is one of the most efficient avenues for addressing unemployment and poverty in the oPt. The scope of the Agency enables it to stimulate the depressed economy at a wider level than other development organisations. At the same time, job creation improves the quality of UNRWA services, by strengthening or expanding the physical infrastructure of its schools, clinics and other facilities.



a. Direct hire

UNRWA's direct hire activities contribute to poverty alleviation in the oPt. According to World Bank figures, a monthly average of 198,000 Palestinians have been out of work since the last quarter of 2000. Over the same period, UNRWA has eased the plight of unemployed workers by hiring over 41,000 workers on temporary contracts.

Direct hire includes a range of professional and support posts throughout UNRWA installations: for instance, teachers in schools, medical staff in health centres, and administrative and support staff in field offices and headquarters. Between April and June, UNRWA hired a total of 5,078 people; 1,369 in the West Bank and 3,709 in the Gaza Strip. These workers were hired for a total of 394,456 job days.

Over three-quarters of the Palestinians hired through this programme were in the Gaza Strip where poverty is more pronounced than in the West Bank. Direct hire is important not only for those who receive daily wages; it also assists their families. A total of 37,332 dependants were supported by UNRWA's direct hire programme between April and June. Since the beginning of UNRWA's emergency activities, the Agency has provided 3.2 million job days through direct hire activities, approximately 12 six-day weeks of employment per worker hired.

¹ Clare Short MP, UK Secretary of State for International Development "The Humanitarian Situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip," Ministerial statement of 29 April 2003. Estimates of unemployment in the oPt by various aid agencies and donors (World Bank, EU, USAID etc) vary according to definition between 37% and 65%.

b. Indirect Hire

The figures noted in this section reflect ongoing indirect hire projects funded by previous appeals. **No funding was available for the extension of any indirect hire projects under the January-June 2003 Appeal in either the West Bank or Gaza Strip.** Many of the projects detailed are substantially completed or nearing completion. Without additional funding of the July-December Appeal, the Agency will progressively lay off Palestinian workers as projects come to a close.

Several **construction projects** are still being implemented in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A total of 35,007 job days were generated out of these projects between April and June, 20,427 in the Gaza Strip and 14,580 in the West Bank. In Gaza, work continued on the construction of four schools in Bureij and Jabaliya Camps, Qarrara village, and the town of Beit Lahya. With the exception of the school in Jabaliya, work on these projects will be completed by the end of the summer with consequent layoffs. In the West Bank, work on 32 classrooms and 18 specialised rooms at six UNRWA schools was completed between April and June. The Agency also built a health centre in Kalandia Camp. Eleven construction projects, including the construction of a school in Al-Fara'a Camp, continued during the reporting period.

Emergency **infrastructure projects** continued to generate jobs and reconstruct daily life in the camps. Projects include the building of roads, sidewalks, retaining walls and sewers. Two of the four ongoing projects in the Gaza Strip in Jabaliya Camp and Beach Camp were completed during the reporting period. Road and alley work continues in two Jabaliya Camp projects. A total of 24,000m² of roads and alleys were paved in Gaza during the reporting period. In the West Bank, 62,514m² of concrete pathways, 7,947m of drains and 3,390m² of retaining walls were constructed between April and June 2003. Additionally, the West Bank Field Office implements a number of maintenance projects, which generated 2,357 job days during the reporting period.

Since 2000, UNRWA has generated nearly 500,000 job days through indirect hire projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Emergency Food Aid

UNRWA has the largest food aid programme with the lowest cost per calorie in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The food aid program has expended \$81 million since October 2000, providing nearly 3 million food parcels of varying sizes to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Agency continues to procure and distribute food to approximately 1.1 million Palestinians. The cost to the Agency of the food basket is less than half of the cost on the local market.



A total of 387,173 food parcels were delivered in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the reporting period. These food parcels benefited 252,023 families with 25,479 tons of food. In the Gaza Strip, stringent security procedures employed by the

Israeli authorities continued to cause disruption to food aid delivery. No food was delivered to Al-Mawasi or Dugit during the reporting period as a result of Israeli denials of entry. Similar delays were experienced in the West Bank due to closures and curfews.

UNRWA provides extra support to families in crisis, especially those who have lost their homes due to military demolition or natural disasters. In Gaza, 257 parcels of food were distributed to families whose homes were destroyed, while in the West Bank, 1,343 additional parcels of tinned goods were provided to these families in need.

Due to funding shortfalls, only half of the Agency's capacity to distribute food is currently being utilised. With available funding, only four rounds, out of a total of eight required, will be implemented in 2003 in the Gaza Strip. While both fields have maintained reserve food stocks to cushion variations in the availability of funds, these will soon run out. In Gaza all reserve food stocks will be gone by the end of the August food round, and in the West Bank by the end of September. The West Bank is adjusting the volume provided for autumn distributions so that available funding for food aid will cover distribution until the end of the year. Already, owing to the shortage of stocks, 12,969 families in the West Bank did not receive chickpeas in May.

Emergency Relief and Social Assistance

a. Cash and In-Kind Assistance

Since the beginning of UNRWA's Emergency Appeals in 2000, the Agency has distributed nearly \$22 million in relief and social assistance programmes to families in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Agency provides cash and in-kind assistance to those who have lost their source of income and are unable to meet urgent expenses. Grants enable families to buy basic items such as food or meet urgent utility or school expenses.

UNRWA's cash assistance program benefited 5,958 families comprising 36,431 individuals between April and June. A majority of these grants were given to households that have not had any source of income for many months. Cash assistance was also provided to families without a breadwinner and those requiring relocation due to home demolition.

In the first half of 2003, cash assistance was cut from \$3.8 million to \$950,000 in the Gaza Strip. **Of the \$3.3 million required in the West Bank, only \$2,600 was available at the end of the Appeal period for the coming months.**

UNRWA provides in-kind assistance to families who have lost their homes or have been forced to relocate. UNRWA provided 216 tents, 1,449 blankets, 1,415 mattresses, 518 mats, and 263 kitchen kits to homeless families between April and June.

b. Post-Injury Physical and Social Needs Assistance

UNRWA provides physiotherapy and staff visits, as well as prosthetics and home adaptations for those suffering emergency-related injuries. Emergency funding

supported UNRWA clinical care to 587 disabled people between April and June, either through scheduled visits in UNRWA clinics or through home visits by UNRWA staff. Funding also provided 40 prosthetic devices for the injured including splints and braces, crutches, hearing aids and medical beds. The Agency ensures that along with the provision of prosthetic devices, occupational therapists train beneficiaries in how to use them. In the West Bank, the homes of 80 disabled people have been surveyed, to determine the kinds of modifications required and the cost involved.

Emergency Shelter-Repair and Reconstruction

During the first two years of the conflict, the average number of homes demolished in Gaza was 32 per month. Since the start of 2003 that average has risen to 72. The publication of the "Road Map" to peace has so far had no impact on reducing the number of monthly home demolitions. On 22 June, Peter Hansen, UNRWA's Commissioner-General commented, "It is the unfortunate lot of many Palestinians that the loss of their homes to the maws of Israeli military bulldozers or powerful explosive charges is now so commonplace that it fails to make the grade as news."

Due to funding shortfalls, the Agency has not been able to build or rebuild new homes for the 1,241 refugee families from the Gaza Strip so far identified as being eligible for re-housing. **With the funds available under the January-June 2003 Appeal, the Agency was able only to purchase tents, blankets and mattresses for those made homeless.**



Funding made available under previous appeals continued to support the implementation of **shelter reconstruction**. In the Gaza Strip, 138 dwelling units for 142 families have been completed since October 2000. A total of 39 dwelling units were completed between April and June. Work on a further 151 dwelling units for 156 families was undertaken during the reporting period.

Infrastructure work continued for the Gaza rehousing projects. A total of 7,060 m² of paved areas, 313 metres of water lines and 396 metres of sewage works, in addition to the construction of an electricity grid were substantially completed in Deir Al-Balah. Construction of the electricity grid in Khan Younis is more than half-completed, and work is continuing on 32,380m² of paving, 110 m³ in drainage works and 2,230 metres of water lines. Other planned activities for paving, drainage, water lines and sewerage are underway.

In the West Bank, UNRWA gives grants to families to rebuild demolished homes and fix major structural damage. Between April and June, the Agency provided 66 grant instalments, 60 for houses that are being rebuilt and six for homes with major structural damage. In addition to the rehousing project in Jenin (see separate section below), 147 houses require rebuilding and 129 need repair for major structural damage in the West Bank.

UNRWA financed 1,318 **shelter repairs** between April and June, 492 in the Gaza Strip and 826 in the West Bank. Repair work in the Gaza Strip is contracted to local construction companies, while in the West Bank, families applying for repair grants to undertake their own repair work. Repair funds assisted 1,366 families comprising 6,931 individuals: 4,170 in the West Bank and 2,761 in the Gaza Strip.²

Emergency Health Services

Health-related needs continue to increase as a result of the ongoing crisis. During the reporting period, 322 supplementary **medical staff** were hired, 149 in the Gaza Strip and 173 in the West Bank. These staff included physicians, nurses, midwives, pharmacists and various support staff. Additional **medical supplies** were procured between April and June, including anti-inflammatory and analgesic drugs, dressings and first aid supplies, and antibiotics.

Israeli military activities continue to damage the state of **environmental health** in the oPt. An UNRWA assessment of the six-week occupation of Beit Hanoun revealed extensive damage to sewage lines and contamination of water wells. In the Gaza Strip -in addition to the sewerage work in Deir Al-Balah and Khan Younis Camps reported above - environmental health activities included awareness campaigns, maintenance of public spaces and a two-shift camp cleanliness programme throughout the Strip's refugee camps. In the West Bank, UNRWA awarded nine contracts to private companies providing waste removal services to supplement services disrupted by Israeli-imposed closures. The companies disposed of 220 truckloads of solid waste. UNRWA also replaced 1,740 metres of corroded water pipes in five West Bank camps.

UNRWA provided refugees who are unable to reach hospitals with **hospital care** in accessible locations. The hospitalisation contracts signed with service providers in the West Bank continued through the period at Al-Razi Hospital in Jenin, the Palestinian Red Crescent Hospital in Al-Bireh and the Specialist Hospital in Nablus. Between April and June, UNRWA settled bills in the West Bank for 1,480 patients.

Three **mobile health teams** were active during the reporting period. Two additional teams started working in June. Currently, two teams work in the regions around Hebron, two are in the vicinity of Nablus and one is in the Jerusalem area. Three four-wheel-drive vehicles were made available to the teams, allowing them to enter previously inaccessible areas. The three clinics that operated between April and June treated a total of 4,465 patients, primarily addressing acute illnesses and chronic ailments like hypertension, diabetes and coronary disease.

UNRWA's **emergency psychological counselling** (outside of the educational psychosocial counselling) continued during the reporting period. In the Gaza Strip, there were 3,002 group guidance and counselling sessions serving over 46,000 people. Activities are carried out at the Agency's health centres, schools and community-based centres in the camps. The programme targeted 1,123 Gaza refugees for individual counselling. In the West Bank, the psychological counselling

² Please note that figures in this section do not include repairs undertaken in Jenin Camp. See the section on Jenin below.

programme targeted the elderly, newly married couples, mothers with children suffering from bedwetting and the disabled. The programme provided individual counselling for 493 adults and children and group counselling for 1,536 beneficiaries in 79 group counselling sessions.

Education

The ability of refugee children in the oPt to receive an education is constantly threatened by closures, curfews and disruptions. In particular, UNRWA aims to help those students who are unable to attend classes with **remedial education** in Arabic and mathematics. During the reporting period, a total of 47,056 students were enrolled in remedial classes supported by emergency funding. Nevertheless, the ability of students to score well in these courses has been seriously eroded. In the West Bank for example, only 58.4 percent of eighth-grade students passed their Arabic exam this school year and fewer than half (49.3 percent) of sixth grade students passed their examination in mathematics.

UNRWA provides **educational psycho-social support** as a part of emergency programming. There were 4,293 group-counselling sessions, 4,579 individual-counselling sessions, 60 workshops and 1,785 parent meetings held between April and June. In the Gaza Strip, workshops were held on trauma, crisis management, human rights, tolerance and conflict resolution. In the West Bank, workshops included stress management, adolescent health, and communication skills.

In Gaza, aside from remedial education and educational psycho-social support, no **other emergency educational activities** were held due to lack of funds. In the West Bank, two vocational training courses in computer skills began and a course in graphic design was completed. The West Bank offered extra-curricular programmes in arts & crafts, drama, music, dance, computer training and creative writing to almost six thousand pupils.

Jenin Rehabilitation Project

With approximately 90 percent of the repairs to 419 dwellings that had sustained major structural damage completed, the first phase of the Jenin Rehabilitation Project is nearing completion. Phase I will be completed with improvements to between 60 and 70 dwellings of some of the poorest residents of the camp. Work is now beginning on the hundreds of housing units that need to be rebuilt in the devastated centre of the camp.

The first invitation to tender for housing reconstruction went out on 12 May. The tender was for housing on the northern edge of the destroyed portion of the camp. Construction began on 16 June. In all, nine dwellings and one commercial store will be built under this tender. The project issued a second tender for the reconstruction of another four dwellings on the western edge of the destroyed portion of the camp, and construction began on 30 June. Bids on a third tender were under evaluation at the end of June. A fourth tender was issued on 30 June.

Because the area of each dwelling to be reconstructed will be based on the size of the family and the area of their home that was destroyed, engineering designs can

not be completed until the families agree to the size and location of their new dwellings. The identities and sizes of the families who had occupied 63 destroyed buildings on the edges of the devastated centre of the refugee camp have been long known, and their new dwellings will be constructed on the plots of land of their former homes. For these reasons, the first dwellings to be reconstructed will be theirs.

Discussions with community representatives on the public facilities to be constructed began during the reporting period. Facilities that are under consideration include a new elementary school, an UNRWA women's programme centre, an addition to a mosque and a community centre.

Dwellings damaged or destroyed after the April 2002 invasion (not covered by the current pledge) are a source of tension in the refugee camp. With winter only four months away, many face the prospect of a second winter in poor living conditions.

Monitoring and Reporting

Operations Support Officers (OSOs) continued to facilitate the transfer of food, medicines and other forms of humanitarian aid to different areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the reporting period. They also worked to monitor UNRWA privileges and immunities regarding installations, staff and vehicles.



The Gaza Strip

In the Gaza Strip, the OSO program primarily assisted UNRWA staff in gaining access into areas under closure, enabling the Agency to provide essential services. Activities undertaken during the period included:

- Gaza's four international OSOs assisted by four local staff worked throughout the six-week occupation of Beit Hanoun to ensure, at times, minimal walking access to the town. During the period, the OSOs monitored developments, eventually producing a preliminary damage assessment, "Report on IDF Operations in Beit Hanoun 15 May to 29 June 2003." Total damages to infrastructure, housing and agriculture are estimated at over \$86 million.
- OSO officers worked on providing Agency services to Dugit and Al Mawasi, which have either been completely stopped or seriously disrupted for more than a year due to access restrictions imposed by the Israeli Authorities.
- OSOs visited 85 percent of UNRWA installations at random during the reporting period. They found no evidence of political or military misuse of Agency installations.
- UNRWA's international staff without diplomatic visas was barred entry and exit to the Gaza Strip for three weeks in May.

West Bank

In the West Bank, OSO teams continued to escort convoys to areas where tensions were running high and assist in Agency logistics and movement. They have been instrumental in negotiating passage of staff travelling to and from the Field Office through checkpoints around Jerusalem. Some daily actions reported included:

- Hebron, 10 April 2003: The OSO team collected contractors' bids on tenders delivered it to the Field Office in Jerusalem for evaluation.
- Tulkaram, 16 April 2003: During a curfew on the town, the OSO team escorted an Agency food convoy through the roadblock and securely stored its cargo.
- Huwwara Checkpoint near Nablus, 12 June 2003: With the checkpoint closed, the OSO team negotiated the safe passage an Agency food aid truck to Balata Camp.
- Huwwara checkpoint, 17 June 2003: The team successfully negotiated the release of an Agency sanitation worker that had been detained by the Israeli army.

Obstacles Encountered

The prolonged incursion in Beit Hanoun caused a major disruption to UNRWA educational, medical and social relief operations in the area. Access to the town was often reduced to travel by foot. Various UNRWA installations were damaged, but this was minor in comparison to the structural damage inflicted on the town's infrastructure, agriculture, buildings and factory complexes. Ten factory complexes destroyed during the incursions, nine of which belonged to UNRWA-registered refugees. UNRWA's OSO teams estimated total damages in the town at \$86 million.

Closures and curfews continued to disrupt UNRWA's services in the West Bank. When the school year officially ended, students in only 74 of the 95 UNRWA schools met the minimum attendance requirements, and consequently the school year for the remaining schools was extended into the summer. At the end of April, only 68 percent of UNRWA's area staff were given permits by the Israeli authorities to travel to work in the Agency's Field Office in Jerusalem. This had increased to 78 percent by the end of the reporting period, as a result of eased restrictions.

The Agency continues to face a number of chronic access problems that affect its daily work. These include restrictions that are irregularly imposed on the entry of certain construction materials and restricted and irregular opening hours at various checkpoints, resulting in considerable delays for staff members, UNRWA students, and necessary materials for Agency operations.

Annexes:

- A. UNRWA Emergency Activities Fact Sheet
- B. Spreadsheets: pledges and contributions received, all appeals, as of 31 March.
- C. Spreadsheets: expenditure report, 2003 Emergency Appeal;
Combined expenditure report, earlier appeals.

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