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# UNRWA

## Emergency Appeal 2008



*UNRWA food distribution in Gaza, January 2009*

Progress Report

Thirty Fourth Progress Report: January – June 2008

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## Emergency appeal progress report January – June 2008

### Introduction

The first half of 2008 saw further deterioration in living conditions across much of the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), despite the resumption of negotiations between the parties to the conflict following the November 2007 Annapolis Conference and their stated determination to conclude a comprehensive peace agreement by the end of the year.

The Gaza Strip remained subject to a tight Israeli blockade, resulting in unprecedented levels of poverty and unemployment, degradation of already stuttering public services and the continued paralysis of the formal private sector. Provision of basic services, including education and health care, was further undermined by ongoing internal Palestinian political divisions. In the West Bank, hopes of recovery were stifled by deteriorating access conditions, as evidenced by increased numbers of Israeli checkpoints and obstacles to movement, notwithstanding improvements in some areas.

Levels of violence, both Israeli-Palestinian and internal, also remained high, particularly in Gaza, whilst a growing pattern of internal displacement was recorded in the West Bank, due to the continued construction of the Barrier, expansion of settlements, house demolitions, eviction orders and permit restrictions.

The Palestinian economy showed no signs of recovery from the international embargo that was lifted in mid-2007. Real Gross Domestic Product for 2007 was virtually unchanged from 2006, itself a year of severe economic regression; preliminary data for the first half of 2008 from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) points to further economic contraction. Unemployment levels in both Gaza and West Bank, already high by regional and international standards, continued to climb. Using the broad definition of employment<sup>1</sup>, 30.2% of the oPt labour force was unemployed between January – June 2008. Rates were higher in Gaza (42.3%) than in the West Bank (24.45%) and exceeded those recorded during the parallel period in 2007<sup>2</sup>.

Across the oPt as a whole, refugees continued to bear the brunt of the unemployment crisis, with levels of joblessness that averaged 5.5% higher than for non-refugee Palestinians between January and June 2008. PCBS data also indicated that unemployment remained higher in camps than in urban or rural areas.

The protracted socio-economic malaise was reflected in national poverty data for 2007, released during the reporting period<sup>3</sup>. The results of the PCBS expenditure and consumption survey for 2007 indicated further increases in the number of poor Palestinian households, with around 1.3 million Palestinians below the consumption poverty line and therefore lacking the some of the material requirements for a minimally dignified life. An estimated 30.3% of Palestinian households and 35.4% of individuals were below the poverty line on a post-assistance basis. Around one in five households was living in deep poverty, unable to meet basic needs of food, clothing and housing, despite large scale and well targeted

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<sup>1</sup> This includes: a) all employed persons, whether fully or under employed; b) all unemployed persons actively seeking employment; and c) all the discouraged unemployed, i.e. those able and willing to work but not seeking employment due to a conviction that no job will be found

<sup>2</sup> Unemployment rates for the first half of 2007 stood at 33.85% in Gaza and 23.45% in the West Bank.

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed analysis of Palestinian living levels during 2007, see *Prolonged Crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory: Socio-economic developments in 2007*, UNRWA July 2008, available at [www.unrwa.org](http://www.unrwa.org), and *PCBS: Press Release on Poverty and Living Conditions in 2007*, available at [www.pcbs.gov.ps](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps).

assistance programmes<sup>4</sup>. In Gaza, poverty continued to rise, affecting more than 50% of the population, whilst rates in the West Bank decreased, although data points to a rising incidence of refugee poverty there during 2007.

Vulnerable Palestinian households came under further pressure as a result of rapid rises in fuel and food commodity prices during the first half of the year. According to PCBS, the consumer price index for food increased by 28% in Gaza and 21.4% in the West Bank between July 2007 and June 2008, forcing increased numbers of Palestinians to seek relief assistance, including from UNRWA. The Agency faced a spike in demand for food assistance in early 2008 in the West Bank and revised its food rolls accordingly. Meanwhile, a rapid food security survey conducted jointly by FAO, UNRWA and WFP in April 2008 pointed to further declines in food security levels. Findings showed that rates of food insecurity amongst Palestinian households had risen from 36% in 2006 to 38% in 2008, with an additional 14% of households identified as being at risk.

The Israeli-enforced blockade on Gaza led to further reductions in imports of essential supplies to Gaza's 1.4 million residents, including food, fuel and medical supplies. This exacerbated an already fragile situation and led to a major fuel crisis, as well as high inflation and widespread shortages of goods. Residents faced daily power cuts and rationing of supplies, whilst water and health providers were often forced to rely on back-up generators. Unable to treat sewage, the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility estimated that each day around 70 million litres of untreated and partially treated sewage was entering the sea, prompting fears of a public health emergency. Many elective and non-emergency surgeries at Gaza hospitals were also put on hold, whilst for its part, UNRWA was forced to suspend its food and environmental health operations for four days during the reporting period.

There was also an escalation in Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the first half of 2008, particularly in Gaza, where IDF military operations, including incursions and air attacks intensified, as did Palestinian rocket fire. Between January – June, OCHA estimate that 422 Palestinians in the oPt were killed in direct conflict related incidents, including 75 children, whilst a further 1,405 Palestinians were injured, including 287 children. There was an almost threefold increase in Palestinian conflict related deaths compared to the parallel period in 2007 and a 50% reduction in injuries. During the same period, 25 Israelis were killed in conflict related incidents and a further 194 injured<sup>5</sup>. In addition, 44 Palestinians were killed in internal fighting and 247 injured, far fewer than during the parallel period in 2007.

Around 80% of all Palestinian deaths and 60% of injuries were in Gaza, although levels of violence dropped considerably towards the end of the reporting period after Palestinian factions in Gaza agreed on a *tahdiyeh*, or temporary ceasefire, with Israel, which also prompted a slight relaxation of restrictions on imports. Overall, however, the closure regime remained largely unchanged.

**UNRWA revised its 2008 Emergency Appeal budget from \$237m to \$262m as part of the CAP Mid-Year Review process, in response to rapid escalation in food and operational costs. By the end of June 2008 the Agency had received pledges for \$145.8 million, or 56% of total financial requirements for the 2008 revised Emergency Appeal.**

<sup>4</sup> See PCBS and World Bank *Deep Palestinian Poverty in the Midst of Economic Crisis* (Ramallah and Jerusalem: October 2004).

<sup>5</sup> For more details, see OCHA *Protection of Civilians database*, available at [www.ochaopt.org](http://www.ochaopt.org).

## Emergency food assistance

**Aim: to alleviate problems of constrained economic or physical access to adequate nutrition amongst refugees**

Objectives January – June 2008

Gaza: Delivery of 2.5 rounds of food aid to 139,000 families (approx. 700,000 persons), covering an estimated 61% of recommended daily needs, and introduction of school feeding to 198,000 students at UNRWA schools

West Bank: Delivery of two rounds of food assistance to 30,000 families (approx. 135,000 persons), covering an estimated 35% of recommended daily needs

Report on activities:

In **Gaza**, UNRWA delivered two rounds of food assistance during the first half of 2008. The Agency reduced its beneficiary caseload from 160,925 families (805,000 persons) for the first round to 118,098 families (546,000 persons) for the second as those in receipt of regular Palestinian Authority salaries were removed from the rolls. The reduction was greater than initially envisaged under the EA, due to improved sharing of information with partners and better screening of beneficiaries against lists of employees, including PA and NGOs. The resulting cost savings partially offset the impact of rising food commodity prices.

The size of the food parcel varied according to family size, with different rations for families of 1-2 persons, 3-4 persons, 5-6 persons, 7-8 persons, 9-10 persons, 11-12 persons and 13+ persons. Parcels covered an estimated 50% of daily calorific needs over the reporting period.

Due to funding shortfalls, UNRWA was only able to introduce the school feeding programme, through which students receive daily nutritious snacks, in 113 of the 214 UNRWA schools in Gaza, with an estimated 110,000 pupils assisted. Priority was given to the worst performing schools and those in the poorest areas of Gaza.

Gaza's main commercial crossing point with Israel, Karni, remained closed to container traffic throughout the reporting period<sup>6</sup>. Humanitarian cargo entered via alternative crossings at Sufa and Kerem Shalom, which do not have adequate facilities to handle container traffic. All container shipments had to be palletized at port prior to transport to the Gaza Strip, leading to considerable additional costs. During the first half of 2008, additional costs incurred by UNRWA as a result of the closure of Karni were estimated at around US\$ 1million.

In the **West Bank**, rapid rises in food commodity prices led to increased demand for food assistance from UNRWA. As a result, the Agency was forced to expand its caseload from a planned 30,000 families to 70,500 families, whilst in parallel reducing the amount of food provided to each beneficiary. By the end of the reporting period, 33,402 families had received one round of assistance, as part of a distribution round that began in April and was due to end in August. The start of the distribution round was delayed due to underfunding and negotiations with camp committees and community representatives over proposed changes to UNRWA's assistance plans. Distributions were only able to proceed when these

<sup>6</sup> The crossing was closed to container traffic on 12 June 2007 and has not reopened since Hamas's takeover of Gaza. The conveyor belt at the crossing has operated, allowing the passage of wheat and animal feed.

differences were resolved and on receipt of US\$2.5 million from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund.

Families inside camps were prioritized. Families of 1-3 persons received one parcel, whilst those with four members and above received two parcels. In addition, families of seven persons and above received an NIS 200 subsidy. Parcels covered an average of 23% of daily needs for a three month period for families inside camps. Outside camps, families of 1 – 6 persons received one parcel and families of seven and above received two parcels, with parcels covering an estimated 14% of daily needs. Access problems continued to prevent UNRWA from reaching Barta'a village in the West Bank (population ~4,000 persons); several requests to the IDF for entry were refused, forcing beneficiaries to collect the food from a neighbouring village.

In both fields, food parcels included flour, rice, sugar, oil and powdered milk. In Gaza luncheon meat was also provided, whilst lentils and chickpeas were distributed in the West Bank.

Food assistance was delivered during the reporting period as per the table below:

<b>Dates of Food Rounds</b>	<b>Number of Parcels delivered</b>	<b>Number of families targeted</b>	<b>Estimated Number of individuals benefiting</b>	<b>Tons of food Delivered</b>
<b>Gaza</b>				
2 – 3 January	669	669	3,345	41.3
16 January – 25 March	160,925	160,925	804,625	14,745
1 April – 3 June	118,098	118,098	545,796	10,826
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>279,692</b>	<b>160,925</b>	<b>804,625</b>	<b>25,612.3</b>
<b>West Bank</b>				
January – March	84	34	239	4
22 April – 30 June	49,322	33,402	165,959	2,555
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49,406</b>	<b>33,402</b>	<b>165,959</b>	<b>2,559</b>

During the first half of 2008 UNRWA delivered food assistance to over 194,000 registered refugee families. Since the start of emergency operations in late 2000, UNRWA has delivered around 4.8 million food parcels in Gaza and over 3.2 million in the West Bank.

## **Emergency employment programmes**

### **a. Direct hire**

**Aim: to alleviate economic hardship at the household level for refugee families without a breadwinner through the provision of temporary work opportunities**

Objectives January – June 2008

Gaza: the creation of 1,752,600 work days for 20,700 job holders (contract duration 3 – 12 months)

West Bank: the creation of 880,000 work days for 21,200 job holders (contract duration one month and three months)

Report on activity:

In **Gaza**, UNRWA hired 11,768 refugees to work on its Job Creation Programme between January and June 2008. In total, over 17,000 contracts were active during the reporting period, with JCP workers supporting over 51,000 dependants<sup>7</sup>. Almost 30% of all active contracts were held by women, whilst 2,591 contract holders were registered as Special Hardship Cases (SHCs) and 40 workers were disabled. 10,509 contracts were active at the end of the reporting period.

In total, 878,620 work days were created through unskilled, skilled and professional placements and graduate training schemes. Workers were placed inside UNRWA installations and with external partners, including NGOs and municipalities, and private sector companies for the graduate training component of the programme. Around 40% of all job opportunity days were in unskilled positions, with around 20% in skilled positions and 10% in professional posts. Just under 20% of all job opportunity days were for unemployed graduates and apprentices from universities and technical training colleges. Subsidies ranged from \$260 - \$500 per month, depending on the nature of the work.

Continued funding shortfalls prevented UNRWA from expanding its job creation programme to meet increased demand for assistance. Consequently, the programme fell short of targets for the first half of the year.

In the **West Bank**, 18,422 persons were hired during the first half of 2008, supporting over 120,000 dependants. Job holders worked in UNRWA installations and with municipalities and village councils in a range of unskilled and manual positions. Activities were ongoing in all 19 refugee camps in the West Bank and with 164 municipalities and village councils. Labourers working in UNRWA installations, who accounted for around a quarter of all persons hired, were rotated on a quarterly basis, whilst those employed in municipalities and village councils were supported for one month. In both cases, monthly salaries were \$360/labourer. 4,117 contracts were active at the end of the reporting period.

Overall, 634,860 job days were created. Females held 35% of all positions. In line with eligibility criteria in the West Bank, no SHCs were assisted.

Summary of work created:

	<b>TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>NATURE OF WORK</b>	<b>OF</b>	<b>JOB OPPORTUNITY DAYS PROVIDED</b>
<b>GAZA</b>	<i>Short term employment</i>	<i>Unskilled</i>		466,978
		<i>Skilled</i>		210,067
		<i>Professional</i>		9,344
	<i>Graduate work experience</i>	<i>GTP</i>		192,231
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>				878,620
<b>WEST BANK</b>	<i>Inside UNRWA</i>	<i>Unskilled</i>		296,337
	<i>Outside UNRWA</i>	<i>Unskilled</i>		338,523
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>				634,860
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>1,513,480</b>

By the end of June 2008, UNRWA had created over 14,500,000 days of employment under its job creation programme, since its inception in January 2001.

<sup>7</sup> The total number of people hired refers to the number of persons whose JCP contract began during the reporting period, whilst the number of active contracts reflects the total number of persons working on the programme during the reporting period, regardless of the start date of their contract (i.e. contract start date may precede the start of the reporting period).

**b. Indirect hire (West Bank only)**

**Aim: to relieve economic hardship at the household level for families without a breadwinner through provision of temporary work opportunities, whilst improving living conditions through development of infrastructure and revitalisation of the local economy**

Objectives January – June 2008

West Bank: the creation of 20,000 workdays for 1,350 labourers (based on monthly and fortnightly rotations)

Due to lack of funding, UNRWA did not implement any indirect hire activities in the West Bank during the first half of 2008.

**Emergency cash assistance**

**Aim: to mitigate the impact of increasing poverty amongst Palestine refugee families through the provision of cash subsidies**

Objectives January – June 2008

Gaza: Distribution of cash grants of \$10,135,000 to 38,500 households

West Bank: Distribution of cash grants of \$9,000,000 to up to 30,000 households

UNRWA's emergency cash assistance programme is designed to help the most vulnerable refugee families to meet their basic needs. The scope of these needs includes protecting access to education, health care and a healthy diet alongside purchases of other essential non-food items, including utility bills and support towards provision of post-injury care. In Gaza, the programme extends to payment of relocation fees to families whose homes have been damaged or destroyed during IDF military operations.

Report on activities:

In **Gaza**, due to underfunding cash assistance activities were effectively limited to payment of emergency relocation fees to homeless families. In total 3,211 families were assisted under this component of the programme during the first half of the year. The average size of each quarterly grant was around \$300. The Agency also distributed NIS100 to 93,000 SHC with emergency appeal funds during the reporting period (approximately \$2.7m in total), in light of the increased vulnerability of the poorest refugees in Gaza.

In-kind assistance (blankets, mattresses, mats and kitchen kits) was distributed to two families made homeless between January and June.

In the **West Bank**, 17,558 families received cash assistance grants, the vast majority (17,085 families) for loss of income, with the remainder supported for damage to basic household goods (343) and a small number for other needs. In total, \$6.3m was disbursed to an estimated 98,000 individuals, with grants averaging around \$360.

No in-kind assistance was provided in the West Bank during the reporting period.

Since UNRWA's emergency operations in the oPt began in late 2000, over \$80 million has been issued in emergency cash assistance.

### **Temporary shelter and shelter repair (Gaza only)**

**Aim: To provide temporary shelter and shelter repair to refugees whose shelters are damaged during the course of IDF military operations or natural disasters or as a result of other non-conflict related emergencies**

Objectives January – June 2008

To fund shelter repairs for 2,500 refugee families whose homes have been damaged

Report on activities:

Due to shortages of construction materials on the local market - as a result of the ongoing blockade - UNRWA was only able to complete repairs to 96 moderately damaged shelters during the reporting period, through cash grants to affected families. Repairs to a further 24 shelters were ongoing. The total value of works completed was \$354,800.

### **Emergency health**

**Aim: to guarantee access to primary health care services for Palestine refugees in the oPt, mitigating the impact of closures and responding to increased demand for services**

Objectives January – June 2008

Both fields: To procure additional medical supplies and equipment in response to continued increases in demand for services due to the ongoing crisis

West Bank: To operate five mobile health clinics offering a wide range of free services to refugees living in isolated areas and those most affected by movement restrictions and the Barrier

To provide subsidized hospital care to refugees living in isolated areas through contracts with six hospitals

Report on activities:

Demand for UNRWA health services remained high in the West Bank during the reporting period and continued to increase in Gaza, consistent with trends observed since the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in January 2006. In Gaza, the number of consultations was seven percent higher than during the same period in 2007 and around 28% higher than in 2006, whilst in the West Bank, the increase over 2007 and 2006 was 2% and 20% respectively.

In **both fields**, in-kind and cash contributions covered necessary medical supplies and equipment.

In the **West Bank**, the operation of five mobile clinics continued, providing a range of curative and preventive services to refugees and non-refugees living in 60 different locations

in Barrier-affected areas. A range of treatments for communicable and non-communicable illnesses were offered, including diabetes, anaemia, osteo-arthritis, parasitic infections and infectious diseases. First aid was also provided to Palestinians wounded in *intifada*-related incidents. In total, mobile health teams conducted 707 visits and saw 75,318 patients.

In response to continued denial of access to Barta'a enclave, UNRWA shifted curative and preventive services to the nearby Beer El Basha village, where facilities were provided free of charge to the local community.

UNRWA continued to support subsidized secondary and tertiary care under the emergency health programme in the West Bank, through contracts with 12 hospitals. 18 patients were assisted under the emergency programme during the first half of 2008, with total expenditure of around \$9,000.

### **Emergency environmental health**

**Aim: to ensure access to adequate water and sanitation services for refugee communities in camps and surrounding areas and prevent public health catastrophes**

Objectives January – June 2008

Both fields: To provide emergency assistance to municipalities and other service providers to ensure continued public health services, such as water treatment, sewerage and waste water removal

The financial crisis facing the Palestinian Authority has left many water institutions unable to replenish fuel stocks and supplies vital for the management of ongoing operations, including treatment plants, waste disposal and sewage systems and pest control. Persistent underfunding of investment and maintenance needs and repeated damage to networks during IDF incursions has increased the risk of public health emergencies. In Gaza, the situation has been exacerbated by restrictions on the entry of essential supplies and Israel's decision to cut electricity supplies.

Since 2006 UNRWA has included an environmental health component in its emergency appeal to enable it to respond quickly to appeals for assistance from municipalities and utility service providers, to ensure the ongoing delivery of essential environmental health services and mitigate possible public and environmental health risks.

Report on activities:

In **Gaza**, during the reporting period, UNRWA donated 512,000 litres of diesel to 24 municipalities and two Solid Waste Management Councils (SWMCs) for solid waste activities, at a cost of USD715,444.

The Agency also provided support to other service providers, as follows:

- 19,800 litres of fuel to hospitals to allow them to continue operating life support equipment and operating theatres during power cuts;
- 43,000 litres of fuel to a range of actors (municipalities, SWMCs and Community-Based Organisations) for sewage pumping and debris removal, clearing of temporary solid waste sites and water supply activities;
- 9,000 litres of fuel for mosquito control activities;

- Raising a contract for \$5,000 for Beit Hanoun Municipality for clearance of demolished houses in Beit Hanoun area;
- Procurement of sanitation tools worth \$48,590 for municipalities across Gaza.

No funds were available for emergency environmental health activities in the **West Bank** during the reporting period.

### **Support to Community Based Organizations (Gaza Strip only)**

**Aim: to provide emergency support to Community Based Organisations to ensure the continued provision of essential services and activities**

Objectives January – June 2008

To provide emergency financial support through grants to community-based organizations in Gaza that offer services to vulnerable groups of refugees, including children and youth, the disabled, elderly and women

Report on activities:

Building on the success of Summer Games 2007 – the largest youth recreational initiative to have taken place in Gaza to date – UNRWA launched a second Summer Games on 21 June 2008, targeting around 250,000 children in a range of activities over a 10 week period. The expanded programme of support in 2008 came in direct response to requests from children and their parents, based on extensive community outreach and feedback during the second half of 2007 and early 2008.

In preparing for the events, UNRWA continued to rely on local partners with long-standing expertise in community based interventions, including:

- Sharek Youth Forum (beach activities for 30,000 children);
- The Canaan Institute (arts and crafts workshops for over 100,000 children and training for UNRWA staff and location managers, in order to ensure standardized work and outputs);
- Theatre Day Productions, the General Union of Cultural Centres and the Palestine Athletics Federation (music, drama and sports activities as part of a 'Young Talent' programme for gifted children).

### **Community mental health (Gaza only)**

**Aim: to assist refugee household coping mechanisms by addressing the psycho-social distress caused to refugees by the prevailing violence and economic hardship, with a particular focus on refugee children and youth**

Objectives January – June 2008

Gaza: To provide counseling and mental health support to vulnerable refugees through individual and group counseling and mental health awareness activities.

Throughout the reporting period, 189 specially-recruited and trained counselors provided a range of counseling and support services to refugees across Gaza, including group and

individual counseling, referrals and home visits. Counselors worked from UNRWA schools, health centres and social service centres and CBOs inside and outside camps to mitigate the effect of the prevailing violence on the refugee population, with a particular focus on children, youth and their families.

In total, 9,191 refugees benefited from such support during the first half of 2008, 4,283 refugees through group counseling, 1,062 through individual sessions and 4,908 through home visits. Counseling sessions resulted in 42 referrals for further treatment.

Mental health awareness activities were organized for 188,618 refugee students and 27,503 adults. Campaigns sought to overcome the prevailing social stigma and foster self-care amongst the most vulnerable. Issues covered included behavioural problems, discipline and managing stress.

Life skills activities, which provide children with essential skills to help them adapt to daily life stressors, were piloted in the first three grades at 15 schools. Overall, 2,025 students received such support.

Staff of the Community Mental Health Programme in Gaza responded to two major emergency situations affecting the refugee population, as follows:

- following an explosion in Bureij camp in February, in which eight persons were killed, including five children, and dozens injured, CMHP counselors worked with 314 affected children over a two month period. Reassessments at the end of the treatment indicated improvements in almost two-thirds of those assisted.
- in response to an IDF incursion into Northern Gaza in March, CMHP counselors worked with over 900 students showing signs of trauma over a two month period. Subsequent reassessments indicated improvements in 70% of those affected.

### **Children and youth assistance project (West Bank)**

**Aim: to enhance the well-being of refugee children and youth in the West bank by combating violence, supporting the development of construction coping mechanisms and improving their psycho-educative situation**

Objectives January – June 2008

West Bank: To provide counseling and mental health support to children and youth in the West Bank, through individual and group counseling sessions, life-skills workshops, recreational and awareness raising activities and training for UNRWA and CBO staff

The child and youth assistance project seeks to integrate the ongoing community mental health programme with new activities in the domains of education and social services, including training and the development of rights awareness amongst children.

During the reporting period, funding was only received for the community mental health component of the intervention, with activities focusing on group and individual counseling sessions, life-skills training and mental health awareness campaigns.

In total, 2,133 persons received counseling, including 1,621 through individual sessions and 512 through group sessions. 115 UNRWA counselors were active in schools, clinics and community centres. Beneficiaries included children, youth, mothers and the elderly.

Awareness raising activities reached 4,409 persons, and focused on a range of issues, including adolescence and friendship, leisure activities, violence and sex education. Life-skills workshops were attended by over 100,000 children and youth.

## **Operations Support Officer programme**

**Aim: to reinforce UNRWA's education, health and relief social services programme in the context of the continuing crisis in the oPt**

Objectives January – June 2008

Both fields: To improve delivery of UNRWA's humanitarian assistance through regular and systematic monitoring of refugee living conditions, provision of logistical support and facilitation of access to humanitarian aid convoys and development of emergency response mechanisms

To ensure the integrity and neutrality of the Agency's installations and programmes

To monitor problems affecting the human dignity, physical safety, welfare and protection of Palestine refugees and other persons of concern to UNRWA

Report on activities:

Across the oPt, Operations Support Officer teams continued to monitor changing humanitarian conditions and support efficient and effective service delivery across core UNRWA programmes.

In **Gaza**, OSOs supported the implementation of a number of Gaza Field Office priority initiatives, as follows:

OSOs continued to provide operational support to the Schools of Excellence initiative by helping UNRWA's education department to organize consultations between head teachers and other teaching staff, parents and community representatives to discuss the outcome of recent exams and further action required to improve the teaching and learning process. Agreed follow up actions included the distribution of stationary and introduction of evening learning sessions in certain schools. OSOs supported the implementation of these projects through monitoring visits and community outreach meetings with parent councils and student parliaments in Agency schools.

OSOs supported the introduction of the Gaza Field Office's gender initiative, Equality in Action, which aims to improve the lives of Gaza women by addressing identified needs. Priorities for action include: tackling rises rates of abuse; maximizing employment opportunities for women; building capacity in workers' organizations; creating space for girls and women to engage in social and recreational activities; supporting the development of a radio station for women; and implementing UNRWA's agency wide gender mainstreaming strategy.

OSOs were also involved in the preparations for the 2008 Summer Games programme and continued to support inter-agency efforts to improve data collection on humanitarian issues, through the development of a standard set of indicators and measures to ensure more coordinated and effective advocacy on deteriorating circumstances in Gaza.

OSOs undertook 40 formal inspections of the Agency's 210 installations during the reporting period, whilst 190 installations were visited on an informal basis. In addition, a number of visits were paid to schools, health centres, relief offices and distribution centres in the context of ongoing reform initiatives.

In the **West Bank**, core OSO functions continued, including facilitating the delivery of food and medical assistance and negotiating the passage of UNRWA personnel, supplies and vehicles through checkpoints, and monitoring other access related issues. OSOS reported on problems affecting the general welfare of the population and supported necessary follow up, to ensure that the Agency's programmes continued to respond adequately and efficiently to service needs. Particular focus was given to communities affected by the Barrier, displaced persons, Bedouin communities and camp dwellers.

OSOs also collected and analysed data on humanitarian issues, in close coordination with humanitarian partners.

OSOs intervened with Israeli military and police agencies to safeguard the immunities and privileges that UNRWA enjoys under humanitarian law and facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance and protection activities. During the reporting period, OSOs also coordinated the development of UNRWA emergency response planning in the West Bank to ensure preparedness to respond in the event of a disaster or acute crisis.

In the West Bank OSOs conducted 450 formal inspections of UNRWA installations and a larger number of informal inspections.

### **Emergency capacity**

**Aims: to strengthen UNRWA's capacity to manage and deliver emergency operations and services, including improved coordination, monitoring, preparedness and contingency planning**

Objectives January – June 2008

Both fields: To reinforce planning, management and monitoring / evaluation of emergency activities through dedicated capacity at field and HQ level, in order to ensure that UNRWA is able to efficiently and effectively respond to increased demand for emergency assistance

To maintain consistent and coordinated planning and implementation of emergency programmes in the two fields, in accordance with UNRWA's programme activities in other areas of UNRWA's work

Report on activities:

In **Gaza**, the emergency capacity component of the appeal continued to allow UNRWA to effectively manage a large scale emergency programme by addressing critical staff and non-staff gaps.

The delivery of emergency assistance was enhanced through the development of an integrated emergency programme for the field, which consolidates all emergency activities under one functional unit and which will allow for improved efficiency, monitoring and accountability.

In response to the deterioration of the security situation and breakdown in law and order evident in Gaza, provision for enhanced security arrangements continued, notably through the employment of close protection personnel to mitigate assessed operational risks.

In the **West Bank**, capacity components of the appeal covered essential area staff posts in departments supporting the implementation of emergency programme activities, including finance, administration and procurement and logistics. Funding was not available to establish a monitoring and evaluation unit.

### **Obstacles encountered:**

#### *Security situation*

In Gaza, the first half of 2008 was characterized by a reduction in inter-factional violence but continued conflict with Israel. The improvement of the internal security situation allowed for increased movement of staff and improved delivery of services within Gaza generally. Due to IDF activities near UNRWA schools, warehouses and health facilities, Agency operations were occasionally interrupted.

#### *Access restrictions*

Ongoing economic restrictions against Gaza and rocket fire into Israel translated into a further tightening of the access regime, leading to major fuel shortages and rampant inflation. Gaza's main commercial and passenger crossing points remained closed to Palestinian goods and people. Alternative passages were opened for transfers of humanitarian supplies but these operated sporadically and with limited capacity. During January and February 2008, imports were restricted to a trickle of basic food and medical supplies, resulting in shortages of a number of essential items, including paper for school books.

Restrictions on fuel imports forced UNRWA to suspend food and environmental health operations for four days during the reporting period.

In the West Bank, access restrictions deteriorated during the reporting period. UNRWA staff members recorded 547 access incidents in the first half of 2008, compared to 226 in the last six months of 2007. There was a marked worsening of the access situation for entry of goods and personnel to Jerusalem, which accounted for around 90% of all reported incidents.

The number of staff hours lost increased five fold over the previous reporting period and reached 11,335 hours. This was due to the introduction of more stringent checking procedures by the Israeli Passages Authority, which provide for individual and vehicle searches, in contravention of the UN Convention on Privileges and Immunities. The overall number of access incidents decreased during the second quarter of the year, following sustained advocacy with member states and Israeli officials. UNRWA staff also increasingly used alternative checkpoints – often after long detours – to avoid access restrictions in certain locations. .

UNRWA access to the seam zone remained severely restricted, negatively impacting on the Agency's ability to provide assistance to vulnerable communities in these areas. In the Ba'arta enclave in the northern West Bank, delivery of UNRWA services has come to a virtual halt due to the lack of consideration by the Government of Israel for UN Privileges and Immunities. An attempt to enter the enclave on 30 June with a food distribution and mobile

health team was denied following a request to search Palestinian staff, which the Agency refused. The food distribution took place on the West Bank side of the Barrier, whilst the health team proceeded to other West Bank locations.

Annexes:

- A. UNRWA emergency activities fact sheet, January – June 2008.
- B. Spreadsheet: pledges and contributions received, all appeals, as of 30 June 2008.
- C. Spreadsheet: expenditure report, 2008 Emergency Appeal; combined expenditure report, other appeals.

**UNRWA Emergency Activities Fact Sheet**  
January - June 2008

<b>Category</b>	<b>Gaza Strip</b>	<b>West Bank</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Emergency Food Aid</b>			
Parcels Delivered	279,692	49,406	329,098
Families Targeted	160,925	33,402	194,327
Est. Number of Individuals Benefitting	804,625	165,959	970,584
Tons of Food Delivered	25,612	2,559.00	28,171
<b>Emergency Employment Creation</b>			
<b>Direct Hire</b>			
Persons Hired	11,768	18,422	30,190
Contracts active at end of reporting period	10,509	4,117	14,626
Job Days Provided	878,620	634,860	1,513,480
Dependants Supported	51,874	121,261	173,135
<b>Indirect Hire</b>			
Construction Job Days Generated	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Cash and In-kind Assistance</b>			
Number of families assisted	3,211	17,558	20,769
Number of individuals assisted	19,412	98,267	117,679
Mass cash distributions	93,000	n/a	93,000
Total value of cash distributed / US\$	3,800,000	6,300,000	10,100,000
<b>Emergency Shelter repair</b>			
Number of shelters repaired	96	n/a	96
<b>Emergency Health Services</b>			
<b>Mobile Clinics</b>			
Number of Clinics	n/a	5	5
Patients Served	n/a	75,318	75,318
<b>Hospitalization</b>			
Patients Served	n/a	18	18
<b>Environmental Health</b>			
Assistance to public health providers	583,800 litres of fuel	n/a	583,800
<b>Support to CBOs</b>			
Number of beneficiaries	250,000	n/a	250,000
<b>Community Mental Health</b>			
Number of counsellors	189	115	304
Number of beneficiaries of group sessions	4,283	512	4,795
Number of beneficiaries of individual sessions	1,062	1,621	2,683
Number of beneficiaries of home visits	4,908	n/a	4,908
Number of beneficiaries of awareness activities	216,121	4,409	220,530
Number of beneficiaries of life skills training	2,025	105,596	107,621
<b>Emergency Operations Support</b>			
Operations Support Officers (OSO)	6	10	16
OSO National Staff	6	12	18