



# evaluation of the unrwa medium term strategy 2016-2022

department of internal oversight  
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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 livelihood 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 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.

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## Acronyms

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| AAP      | Accountability to Affected Populations  |
| AdCom    | Advisory Commission   |
| AOR      | Annual Operational Report   |
| CG       | Commissioner-General  |
| CMM      | Common Monitoring Matrix  |
| DIOS     | UNRWA Department of Internal Oversight Services   |
| EA       | Emergency Appeal  |
| ERD      | External Relations Department   |
| ERG      | Evaluation Reference Group  |
| ExCom    | Executive Committee   |
| FGD      | Focus Group Discussion  |
| GAPAR    | General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees   |
| GBV      | Gender-Based Violence   |
| IASC     | Inter-Agency Standing Committee   |
| ICIP     | Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme   |
| KII      | Key Informant interview   |
| MHPSS    | Mental Health and Psychosocial Services   |
| MOPAN    | Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network                                  |
| MTS      | Medium Term Strategy  |
| NCD      | Non-Communicable Diseases   |
| OECD-DAC | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee |
| OIOS     | United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services                                      |
| PB       | Programme Budget  |
| PSEA     | Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse   |
| QA       | Quality Assurance   |
| RBM      | Results-Based Monitoring  |
| SDGs     | Sustainable Development Goals   |
| SSNP     | Social Safety Net Programme   |
| SubCom   | Sub-Committee of the Advisory Commission  |
| ToC      | Theory of Change  |
| TVET     | Technical and Vocational Education and Training   |
| UNESCO   | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization                          |
| UNGA     | United Nations General Assembly   |
| UNICEF   | United Nations Children’s Fund  |
| UNHCR    | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees   |
| UNRWA    | United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East            |
| UN-SWAP  | UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women                |
| WFP      | World Food Programme  |
| WHO      | World Health Organization   |

## Executive Summary

### Background and Context

1. UNRWA is facing a range of significant challenges. These include a chronic funding crisis, the unique political context in which the Agency operates, very different and volatile operating environments – Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the West Bank - and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This independent evaluation of the UNRWA Medium Term Strategy (MTS) 2016–2022 - the document that outlines the Agency's strategic vision for its programmes and operations and lays out a set of Strategic Outcomes designed to meet the needs of Palestine refugees – has come at a crucial time. The Agency is in the process of developing its next strategy and also preparing for an international conference, co-chaired by the governments of Sweden and Jordan.
2. The evaluation has a threefold purpose: to provide accountability to the Agency's internal and external stakeholders, to generate evidence-based insights and learning, and to inform the development of a successor strategy to the current MTS.
3. The evaluation focuses on the Agency's implementation of the MTS between 2016 and 2020, covering all five fields of operation and all of its programme areas as well as the organizational structures, systems and processes that support the achievement of the MTS's Strategic Outcomes.

### Methodology

4. The evaluation had a utilization-focused, participatory and gender-sensitive approach that maximized close engagement with UNRWA and the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) throughout.
5. The evaluation team adopted a mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis. Given the breadth of coverage of the evaluation and the considerable volume of data that was gathered, it used an Excel-based evidence assessment framework to ensure a structured, systematic and transparent approach to evidence collation and analysis.

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#### Key evidence sources:

- 196 semi-structured key informant interviews • 49 phone interviews with Palestine refugees
  - 770 responses to online survey • Review of a library of 553 documents • UNRWA quantitative data
- 

### Key Findings

#### External and Internal Relevance of the MTS

6. In 2013, UNRWA secured buy-in from Advisory Commission (AdCom) members for seven key principles that helped it to manage different priorities and laid the foundation for the MTS. The Strategic Outcomes in the MTS are sufficiently broad that they have remained applicable even though the contexts in which UNRWA is operating have changed significantly.
7. The Common Monitoring Matrix (CMM) indicators have been particularly useful for programme staff and for reporting results under the MTS. Given that UNRWA does not report against all the CMM indicators (in agreement with donors), there is scope to focus down the large number of indicators. UNRWA staff also identified the need to find better ways to assess and report on the quality of services.
8. Although UNRWA had finalized the MTS by the time that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) came into effect, it contributes to 11 of the 17 SDGs and there is broad alignment between the CMM indicators and SDG targets. The MTS presents the Agency's financial needs by Strategic Outcome as well as three funding streams – the programme budget (PB), Emergency Appeal (EA) and projects.
9. UNRWA has systems in place to understand the relationship between all its operations, irrespective of funding source, resulting in reliable information for reporting and decision making. Due to funding shortfalls for the PB, it is pragmatic about using the other funding streams in a complementary way to meet the needs of Palestine refugees. Each field office has its own combination of funding streams.
10. UNRWA analyzed and reflected Palestine refugee needs in the MTS. While it provides health and education services on a universal basis, it conducts needs assessments to target the assistance provided through programmes such as relief and social services and infrastructure and camp improvement. However, the chronic funding crisis has limited UNRWA's ability to respond fully to the needs identified in the MTS and

on an ongoing basis. Funding shortfalls have also made it challenging for UNRWA to implement the ‘Leave No One Behind’ agenda.

11. UNRWA has broadly implemented AdCom recommendations and provides a detailed written response on this. AdCom members repeatedly make the same or similar recommendations on issues of national interest. The Agency’s financial situation and resource mobilization have also been a consistent theme since May 2016. These call for more sustainable and predictable funding but, ultimately, UNRWA depends heavily on the voluntary contributions of Member States.

#### UNRWA’s Contribution, Role and Comparative Advantage

12. UNRWA is able to work seamlessly across humanitarian and development activities, making it an exemplar for other UN agencies. The triple (humanitarian-development-peace) nexus is still an evolving concept, but the Agency’s programmes contribute to stability and conditions for peace in the volatile contexts in which it operates. This is through the provision of basic and social services and livelihood opportunities that most Palestine refugees would not be able to access otherwise.
13. Around 90 per cent of UNRWA expenditure is on the provision of education, health and relief and social services, the basic services envisaged in the MTS to implement the UNRWA mandate. It has built up its comparative advantage by providing services in these areas over the 70 years of its existence. The majority of donors felt that UNRWA is best placed to decide what services to provide and where, but some donors have argued that it should stop some services. There has been considerable focus on the Agency’s provision of solid waste management services (though this represents less than 2 per cent of its total expenditure and would deliver limited efficiency gains).
14. When trying to make decisions about its services, UNRWA is often caught between the opposing and sometimes entrenched positions of its different stakeholders. For Palestine refugees, UNRWA and its services have a symbolic meaning beyond the assistance provided. Host governments also resist change because they are reluctant to take over responsibility for UNRWA activities. UNRWA staff fear the loss of jobs on which they and their families rely.

#### Funding and Resource Mobilization

15. The financing and funding models supporting UNRWA operations are inadequate, with over 90 per cent of Agency funding provided on a voluntary basis and with traditional donors providing a significant portion of its income (around 83 per cent in 2020). The voluntary contributions are based largely on factors beyond the Agency’s control – changes in donor funding priorities and politics – and there was a 23 per cent fall in income between 2016 and 2020.
16. Faced with decreasing income and rising costs, UNRWA reduced its expenditure by 15 per cent but it still carried forward unpaid liabilities from 2020. It has exhausted its reserves, leaving it with few options for managing cash flow when donor contributions are late. While donors have tried to comply with the Secretary-General’s call for multiyear commitments and disbursements early in the year, they are constrained by their national budget and political systems. In light of these financial challenges, there is universal agreement that the funding model is not working but no one could identify feasible alternative models.
17. UNRWA has made efforts to diversify its funding base to try to address its funding shortfalls. However, the results have been variable, with the Agency securing over 20 per cent of its income from these sources in 2019 but only 6 per cent in 2020. Therefore, this is unlikely to resolve the endemic underfunding, at least in the short term. It is also challenging that project funding for some resource mobilization staffing posts was ending in May/June 2021. Ideally these posts would be funded from the UNRWA PB, but funding shortages have prevented this.
18. As noted above, UNRWA has responded to its chronic funding crisis by cutting expenditure. The variety of measures taken include increasing vacancy rates, reducing the number of frontline staff providing services, hiring staff on cheaper daily wage contracts even for long-term positions, and cutting PB investment in information technology and in maintaining vehicles and premises.
19. As a result, there was a strong view that ‘there is no more fat left to trim’. Although portrayed as ‘efficiency gains’, the funding cuts are making the Agency inefficient, particularly when senior managers have to spend considerable time and effort mobilizing the last few per cent of annual funding requirements instead of



managing the expenditure of around \$1 billion per year in an effective manner.

20. UNRWA has managed to maintain PB expenditure across its programmes but total expenditure on activities contributing to SO 1 (protection and human rights) fell by 74 per cent. Total relief and social services programme expenditure has also decreased (due to a decrease in EA income and expenditure) but the number of refugees receiving cash and food assistance increased in 2020.
21. There was a perception amongst Palestine refugees and UNRWA staff that funding shortfalls were affecting service quality although UNRWA does not have specific ways to assess this. Palestine refugee interviewees expressed different levels of satisfaction with the quality of UNRWA services but highlighted that the amount of cash or food assistance they received was very limited compared to their needs (in some cases, cash distributed every three months only covered needs for three weeks).

#### Structures, Systems and Processes

22. UNRWA has well-designed, consistently applied planning and coordination processes that ensure that the MTS guides operational plans, and that field office and programme operational plans are coherent. UNRWA also has robust monitoring systems. UNRWA strengthened its processes during the MTS implementation period. The Agency has clear structures to ensure coherence between headquarters and field offices, both within programmes and on the management side.
23. However, UNRWA staff felt that it would be helpful to have more mechanisms for communication and collaboration between peer groups across field offices. Staff also raised a concern during interviews and the online survey that decision making had become overly centralized.
24. The Agency's major reforms to the education and health programmes begun prior to the current MTS but it initiated reform of the relief and social services programme in the MTS implementation period (for example, moving from food distribution to cash assistance in three fields of operation). A key challenge with introducing change is resistance from various stakeholder groups. In particular, Palestine refugees identify UNRWA and its services with their status and right to return so they regard any change or reduction in services as an existential threat.<sup>1</sup>
25. The ERG requested a specific question on the UNRWA evaluation function. This has been under-resourced since at least 2015, when there was a peer review. The Commissioner-General is responsible for ensuring adequate resourcing but given the Agency's chronic financial crisis, the function has remained under-funded, limiting its ability to deliver on its mandate to manage and conduct central evaluations and independent assessments, and to commission complex evaluations.
26. It is easier to finance project evaluations directly through project budgets but the Evaluation Division's capacity to provide technical leadership and support to these evaluations has been limited due to a lack of human and financial resources. UNRWA has relied on its Results-Based Monitoring (RBM) system to assess the implementation of the MTS. In particular, interviewees highlighted the annual results review as a good opportunity to discuss progress and challenges but again, the Agency has had limited funding to follow up on problems identified.

#### MTS Process Commitments and Cross-cutting Issues

27. The evaluation focused on a selected number of the process commitments in the MTS – Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), staffing, synergies across programme areas, and partnership. As part of its AAP commitments, UNRWA has complaints and feedback mechanisms in place and also structures to represent refugee concerns. However, some refugee interviewees noted that they had not received responses to their complaints.
28. UNRWA staff have continued to deliver services to Palestine refugees despite a range of challenges, including COVID-19. Many reported having to deal with heavy workloads and being unable to take leave, resulting in exhaustion and burnout. While there were several examples of synergies between UNRWA programmes, UNRWA could improve mechanisms for collaboration and coordination across programmes.
29. UNRWA made a commitment to strategic partnerships in the MTS and developed a strategic framework for

<sup>1</sup> This is even though, under United Nations General Assembly resolution 194 (III) (1948), the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and to obtain restitution and compensation is affirmed and remains an inalienable and binding universal right, which has been further strengthened by other UN resolutions (e.g., including, *inter alia*, 393 (V) (1950), 2452 A (XXIII) (1968), 2535 B (XXIV) (1969), 3236 (XXIX) (1974)).

partnership in 2015/16 that outlines the procedure to be followed in establishing partnerships. It has a variety of partnership agreements at different levels of the Agency, with a stock-take of programmatic and operational partnerships from 2010–2017 identifying formal and non-formal engagement with over 600 entities.

30. While it has a long-term institutionalized relationship with UNESCO on the education programme and WHO on the health programme, the Agency often has field-level partnerships, based on context and needs, because this is where it delivers its assistance. The purpose of the field-level partnerships is often to fill gaps in UNRWA services, helping to ensure that Palestine refugees receive much-needed assistance. UNRWA also engages in UN-led coordination mechanisms.
31. The evaluation also focused on three specific cross-cutting issues that are included in the MTS – gender, youth and the inclusion of persons with disabilities. It found that UNRWA has performed well against UN indicators on gender equality. It has adopted an action plan on gender parity in its workforce and committed to increasing the number of women in management positions. The online survey and interviews identified a backlash against these policies, suggesting a need for UNRWA to engage with male staff to secure their buy-in. UNRWA has mainstreamed gender into its programmes and, despite the lack of funding, has strengthened staff capacity on gender issues and Gender-Based Violence (GBV).
32. The MTS makes several references to the importance of meeting the specific needs of Palestine refugee youth. However, the Agency's main way of engaging with them is through the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme and, to some extent, the microfinance programme. UNRWA has a framework in place for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in its programmes. It addresses their needs in a variety of ways, but the lack of funding has hampered the Agency's efforts to ensure that all its facilities are accessible and has reduced the number of people that it could help.

#### Achievement of Strategic Outcomes

33. UNRWA annual reporting shows that it has largely delivered against the indicators on which it reports for each of the Strategic Outcomes in the MTS. This is a significant achievement in view of the challenges that the Agency has faced, particularly funding shortfalls and COVID-19 (some of the 2020 results were affected by the pandemic). UNRWA adapted very quickly to COVID-19 restrictions, switching to remote education and telemedicine, which was also a major achievement.
34. While the 2019 management crisis potentially delayed and reduced donor funding, the Agency was able to continue delivering assistance to Palestine refugees. That it has been able to achieve commendable results despite numerous crises is largely due to its dedicated workforce and an indication of the organization's robust planning and delivery systems. However, the continued pressure, particularly due to funding cuts, is beginning to have an impact on staff well-being and operations.

#### **Conclusions**

35. The MTS has proved to be a useful strategic framework for guiding the Agency's work and aligning it with the SDGs. While it was comprehensive in outlining what UNRWA set out to achieve, funding shortfalls have limited the Agency's ability to address fully the needs of Palestine refugees. Although it has not reported on the needs that are going unmet and their costs, it is clear that UNRWA cannot deliver on its mandate without adequate funding.
36. UNRWA's reporting in 2020 showed largely positive trends over the MTS implementation period in the results achieved against the indicators on which it reports for each Strategic Outcome. This is despite the chronic funding crisis, COVID-19 and the 2019 management crisis and is largely due to its dedicated workforce. Although the MTS referred to the UNRWA workforce as a comparative advantage, funding shortfalls have forced it to adopt a variety of strategies to save on staffing costs. This has meant that the Agency has achieved results at the expense of staff well-being to some extent. Ongoing funding constraints mean that UNRWA has limited options for addressing this, but it could take some steps to support staff and respond to their concerns.
37. The Agency's funding crisis is having an impact on the quantity of assistance (including to the poorest and most vulnerable), the ability to maintain service quality and the ability to invest in operations. UNRWA could strengthen its communications and resource mobilization efforts, but it has been hampered by the lack of funding to invest in these functions. Given the Agency's voluntary funding model, UNRWA relies heavily on donors to provide adequate levels of funding.

38. Therefore, donors need to fulfil their responsibility to provide adequate, timely and predictable funding. If they are unable to do this, they need to be transparent about the reasons so that UNRWA can plan accordingly and also communicate this to Palestine refugees. However, all parties need to recognize that decisions on funding for UNRWA are based on political considerations as well as levels of need and Agency performance. The forthcoming international conference will be an opportunity for stakeholders to identify ways to address this.
39. UNRWA has a unique relationship with Palestine refugees and the latter see their identity and long-term future as inextricably linked to the Agency, although UNRWA does not have a mandate for durable solutions. An approach to AAP that is focused mainly on complaints and feedback mechanisms is not sufficient to ensure that UNRWA makes itself accountable to Palestine refugees and addresses their very real fears about changes to services. UNRWA needs to engage in transparent two-way communication with Palestine refugees to make clear its resource limitations and to secure their buy-in for any changes. Its dialogue with Palestine refugees should also focus on their protection and human rights, not simply the provision of services.
40. UNRWA has sought to address gender issues (both in its programmes and organizational practices) and has done well in addressing the needs of persons with disabilities. However, as in so many areas of its work, a lack of funding has been a constraint. Although the MTS recognized the importance of addressing the specific needs of Palestine youth, the Agency's primary engagement is through the TVET programme. The MTS acknowledged this as an important area of its work so UNRWA could be more creative about how it engages with youth and also on which issues. Essentially, the Agency needs a vision for how it could engage with youth as agents for change. Its recent consultations with Youth Parliaments could provide the basis for a way forward.
41. UNRWA has effective planning and coordination processes and clear structures and systems to link headquarters to field offices. However, it could decentralize some decision making and put in place mechanisms to support greater communication, information sharing and lesson-learning between peer groups across the field offices.

## Recommendations

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | <p><b>Based on the findings from this evaluation, <u>UNRWA's</u> process for developing the next strategy should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly identify, and cost, the needs that UNRWA seeks to address, including those of the poorest and most vulnerable, so that it can demonstrate what needs will go unmet if there is insufficient funding.</li> <li>Be realistic about what the Agency can and cannot deliver based on the level of resources that donors provide. This could also help the Agency to plan how it might deal with sudden and/or significant changes in funding levels.</li> <li>Review and rationalize the CMM indicators, focusing on those that reflect Agency priorities (e.g., on gender equality and addressing GBV), are useful for programmatic decision making, and meet donor reporting requirements.</li> <li>Identify data collection methods that would help to assess and report on the quality of Agency services and impact on refugee lives.</li> <li>Identify how the Agency could adapt its activities (particularly infrastructure and camp improvement) to be more environmentally sustainable.</li> <li>Indicate how programmes can be more integrated to contribute jointly to objectives/outcomes and SDGs.</li> <li>Develop a high-level result on gender equality, based on SDG 5 and its indicators.</li> <li>Identify how the Agency could build on its work on cross-cutting issues, particularly gender and assisting persons with disabilities (see also Recommendation 5 below).</li> </ul> |
| 2 | <p><b><u>UNRWA</u> needs to strengthen its resource mobilization by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investing adequate resources in improved communications and resource mobilization, ensuring that the Agency has sufficient staffing capacity and the right skill sets.</li> <li>Developing a more positive and proactive narrative about the Agency's achievements and how it makes a difference to the lives of Palestine refugees.</li> <li>Continuing to diversify funding sources to include Islamic giving (Zakat and Waqf) and the private sector but also being realistic about how much funding these can generate.</li> <li>Establishing national committees that can generate grassroots support in donor countries and</li> </ul>  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <p>influence funding decisions in Parliaments and governments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Spending time with decision makers at capital level to explain how the Agency works and what it is delivering.</li> <li>▪ Coordinating resource mobilization efforts across all the offices and leveraging the relationships that individual staff members have with donors more effectively.</li> </ul>  |
| 3 | <p><b><u>UNRWA senior management</u> should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review decision-making processes to ensure that they are more transparent, particularly to field staff, and that decisions are communicated clearly.</li> <li>▪ Put in place mechanisms for staff to express their concerns and get a response.</li> <li>▪ Review mechanisms for including installation managers and area staff, who manage frontline service delivery, in discussions of results and ways to address challenges.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>UNRWA's Department of Human Resources</u> should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify options for staff to improve their work-life balance and to be able to take their annual leave.</li> <li>▪ Ensure that staff performance is managed effectively.</li> <li>▪ Assess the time taken to recruit staff in order to identify and address reasons for delays.</li> </ul>  |
| 4 | <p><b>To better implement its commitment to accountability to affected populations, <u>UNRWA</u> should improve its engagement with Palestine refugees and reflect their voices better by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promoting participatory planning to ensure that assistance responds to refugee needs and that refugees have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. This could build on examples such as the development of camp improvement plans.</li> <li>▪ Working with social workers and other national staff on two-way communication and community engagement. This would include setting up a mechanism to collate the feedback that social workers already receive from Palestine refugees.</li> <li>▪ Exploring with Palestine refugees themselves the options for strengthening their voice, particularly those of the most vulnerable and marginalized.</li> <li>▪ Being aware of the risk of elite capture and the politicization of representation mechanisms and taking steps to avoid this.</li> </ul>   |
| 5 | <p><b><u>UNRWA</u> should build on the foundation of its work to address the needs of youth and persons with disabilities and continue to improve its work on gender issues by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing a coherent strategy for engaging with youth across the fields of operation.</li> <li>▪ Providing youth with opportunities to organize themselves and engage on issues such as environmental sustainability and climate change.</li> <li>▪ Engaging more proactively with men and boys to secure their buy-in on gender equality, GBV and other gender-related issues.</li> <li>▪ Developing systems to ensure that the Agency collects data on gender and persons with disabilities systematically across programmes and uses this to inform decision making.</li> </ul> <p><b>If it is adequately resourced, <u>UNRWA</u> should invest in ensuring its facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities, financing focal points for cross-cutting issues at programme and/or field office level to ensure that they are mainstreamed, strengthening staff capacity for conducting systematic gender analyses, and implementing the MOPAN review recommendation that gender should not be 'projectized' or siloed within a single programme.</b></p> |

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

1. The UNRWA Medium Term Strategy (MTS) outlines a strategic vision and objectives for UNRWA programmes and operations, with the aim of maximizing the Agency's use of resources and impact for the refugees that it serves. It lays out a set of Strategic Outcomes designed to meet the needs of Palestine refugees. The MTS initially covered the period 2016–2021, but UNRWA has extended the strategy implementation period by one year to 2022.<sup>2</sup>
2. The evaluation of the MTS 2016–2022 has come at a critical time for UNRWA, when the Agency is facing a range of existential challenges. Central to these difficulties is chronic and systemic underfunding that UNRWA has been experiencing for at least the last decade. The Agency is funded from voluntary contributions, rather than from the UN's general budget, and these contributions fluctuate.
3. The US administration's decision in August 2018 to withdraw financial support to UNRWA made its problems more acute. While the Biden administration has resumed funding to UNRWA, some Gulf countries, reflecting changing regional alignments, have reduced their support. Notwithstanding its financial problems, UNRWA's mandate was renewed with overwhelming support by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in December 2019.
4. Alongside sustained efforts to make up for this funding shortfall, UNRWA has stepped up ongoing reforms geared to better transparency, accountability, oversight and effectiveness.<sup>3</sup> This set of management initiatives aimed to restore confidence among donors following a management crisis that prompted the resignation of the leadership team in late 2019.
5. UNRWA operates in a unique political context for a UN agency, with its mandate renewed every three years.<sup>4</sup> It also faces very different operating environments, with a mix of political and operational challenges, in each field of operation. These include, for example: the ongoing conflict in Syria that has led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestine refugees inside the country and also into Lebanon and Jordan where they are among the most vulnerable people and are assisted by UNRWA,<sup>5</sup> the current economic crisis in Lebanon with the Lebanese pound losing 80 per cent of its value and poverty levels amongst displaced and Lebanese populations sharply on the rise; and the cyclical nature of the conflict between Israel and Hamas that escalated most recently in May 2021 and, inter alia, has worsened the already desperate humanitarian situation in Gaza. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has added to UNRWA's challenges and has also meant that UNRWA has had to adapt the way in which it provides services in all its fields of operation.
6. In view of the many challenges that UNRWA has faced in recent years, the Commissioner-General requested that Member States host an international conference to renew support for UNRWA's work and endorse its next strategy. Jordan and Sweden will co-chair the conference. The evaluation team worked with UNRWA to ensure that the findings from this evaluation inform preparations for the conference.

### 1.2 Evaluation Purpose and Scope

7. Set in the challenging context in which UNRWA currently operates, the evaluation's primary purpose is threefold:
  - First, by taking a summative approach to assessing progress and results under the MTS 2016–2022, it aims to support accountability to the Advisory Commission and UNRWA's donors, UNRWA leadership, Palestine refugees and wider stakeholders.
  - Second, the evaluation aims to generate evidence-based insights and learning. It aims to do this by taking a formative approach to how UNRWA has been able to deliver results against its strategic

<sup>2</sup> UNRWA (2016) *Medium Term Strategy 2016–2021*.

<sup>3</sup> The Commissioner-General referenced these aspects of organizational performance in his 23 November address to the Advisory Commission. See also UNRWA (2021) *UNRWA Management Initiatives: Implementation Progress Summary*, March 2021.

<sup>4</sup> UNRWA has a unique mandate from the UN General Assembly (UNGA), to protect and provide protection and core services to Palestinian refugees across Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The political context in which UNRWA operates is also unique in the West Bank and Gaza, insofar as it provides support to refugees living under a long-standing military occupation; additionally, the long-term future of all Palestine refugees is dependent on a political solution.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/5th-brussels-conference-syria-unrwa-calls-support-help-palestine-refugees>

objectives, how effective the MTS framework has been to support this, and what procedural and structural improvements can be made going forwards.

- Third, the evaluation will inform the development of the successor to the current MTS. The proposed international conference will help determine UNRWA's future direction, with UNRWA putting forward proposals for stakeholders to consider. The evaluation team liaised with those within UNRWA helping to prepare for the international conference to ensure that findings from the evaluation inform proposals and discussion. The evaluation also had a participatory approach that provided opportunities for UNRWA to engage with the team on emerging findings and the development of recommendations.
8. The evaluation focuses on UNRWA's implementation of the MTS between 2016 and 2020 and covers all fields of UNRWA operations, namely Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.
  9. The evaluation covers all the programme areas through which UNRWA provides support to Palestine refugees under the five Strategic Outcomes in the MTS. These are health, education, relief and social services, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance, protection and emergency assistance. The evaluation examines planning and coordination processes, programmatic and operational structures that help the Agency to achieve the Strategic Outcomes, and the Agency's annual operations, including the UNRWA PB and complementarities with Emergency Appeals (EAs) and project-funded interventions.

### 1.3 Methodology Summary

10. This section provides an overview of the evaluation methodology with Annex B providing more details. The team's approach to the evaluation has been based on three key principles:
  - **Ensuring utilization through a participatory approach.** This has involved engaging with UNRWA and the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) at key stages of the evaluation process to build ownership of findings and recommendations (see Annex B for further details).
  - **Embedding a gender-sensitive approach.** This included ensuring that the team assessed UNRWA's approach to gender as a cross-cutting issue (adding it to the evaluation questions), taking a gender-sensitive approach to interviews with Palestine refugees, and disaggregating interview and survey data by gender.
  - **Taking a rigorous approach to evidence assessment.** The team developed an Excel-based framework to record and analyze the large volume of data collected through interviews (see Annex B for further details).
11. During the inception phase, the evaluation team consulted with UNRWA staff and the ERG to finalize the evaluation questions and develop an evaluation matrix (see Annex B for the evaluation matrix). The team then used a mixed-methods approach to collect data to address the evaluation questions. Table 1 below provides a summary of the evidence sources for the evaluation.

Table 1. Evaluation evidence sources

| Data Collection Tools and Methods        | Description  |
|--|--|
| Semi-structured key informant interviews | 196 interviews with UNRWA current and former staff, donor and host government representatives, and partners (79 women and 115 men, see Annex C for interviewee list)   |
| Phone interviews with Palestine refugees | 49 interviews (30 with women and 19 with men), see Annex C   |
| Online survey                            | 770 responses out of 2,186 (35 per cent response rate)   |
| Document review                          | Reviewed library of 553 documents  |
| Quantitative data                        | UNRWA financial data drawn from annual financial statements, data on MTS indicators from Annual Operational Reports (AORs), and human resources data provided by UNRWA |

12. Once the team had completed data collection, it entered data into an Excel sheet organized by evaluation question. This formed the basis of the team's data analysis. It met virtually over two half-days to identify the main findings. The team discussed these preliminary findings in a virtual workshop with UNRWA staff. This was an opportunity to validate findings and to co-create major recommendations. It also laid the foundation for this draft evaluation report. Annex B provides further details.

#### **1.4 Limitations and Mitigation Measures**

13. As identified in the inception report, one limitation was the team's inability to conduct in-person focus group discussions (FGDs) or interviews with Palestine refugees in a COVID-19-secure manner. The team's mitigation measure was to do phone interviews with individual refugees, which had the benefit of enabling team members to have more in-depth discussions than is feasible in an FGD. The team had hoped to conduct remote FGDs with Palestine refugees in Gaza but the surge in COVID-19 cases at the time of data collection made it impossible to bring refugees together in a group without putting them at risk. Therefore, the team switched to conducting individual phone interviews in Gaza as well.
14. The team also identified the broad scope of the evaluation as a limitation (the evaluation covers all five UNRWA fields of operation as well as all the programmes, support structures and activities that contribute to delivering the five Strategic Outcomes in the MTS). Its mitigation measure has been to draw on, and complement, existing evidence rather than duplicating prior work. For example, UNRWA already produces considerable data on results (presented in the annual operation report as well as the results review information package). Therefore, the team has used this and complemented the quantitative data with qualitative data on results collected through interviews. It has also referenced the findings of the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) review of UNRWA and previous evaluations of UNRWA's work.
15. One unforeseen limitation was the outbreak of violent conflict between Israel and Hamas in May 2021. This occurred towards the end of the team's data collection and meant that two UNRWA partner organizations from Gaza were unable to participate in the scheduled interviews. It was also not possible to interview male Palestine refugees in Gaza, which the team had planned to do after Ramadan. However, the team was able to interview UNRWA staff as planned and also to interview Palestine refugee women in Gaza.

## 2. Key Findings

16. This section organizes the evaluation questions under thematic headings, rather than by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) evaluation criteria. This is to ensure a logical and coherent narrative. Each sub-section lists the specific evaluation questions that are addressed in it. For ease of reference, the numbering of the evaluation questions follows that of the evaluation matrix (Annex B).
17. As outlined in the previous section, the evaluation had a very broad scope. The team was also asked to respond to 16 evaluation questions, some with judgement criteria that required additional information. To enable the team to deliver a succinct report that also addresses all the questions, this section focuses on the most important findings and does not go into the details of all UNRWA programmes and all field operations but provides examples where relevant.

### 2.1 External and Internal Relevance of the MTS

This section addresses questions relating to the MTS's relevance externally (to stakeholders and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)) as well as its relevance to internal programme delivery and the organization of funding streams. It presents findings against the following evaluation questions:

- 1.1 To what extent did the MTS 2016-2022 and its implementation reflect the needs of Palestine refugees, and the priorities of host governments and the donor community? This includes the specific point that the ERG added in the evaluation matrix, which is the 'Level of alignment of implemented activities/reforms with AdCom Recommendations and/or Statements'.
- 1.2 To what extent has the MTS 2016-2022 served as a strategic framework that supports front line service delivery?
- 1.3 How adequately has the MTS 2016-2022 positioned UNRWA to contribute to the SDGs, particularly the commitment to leave no one behind?
- 2.1 To what extent does the MTS 2016-2022 support the strategic alignment of programmes against the Agency's three funding streams (UNRWA programme budget, Emergency Appeal and project streams)?

UNRWA managed the very different priorities of donors and host governments by securing their buy-in for seven key principles that represented the 'middle ground' and laid the foundation for the MTS.

18. In June 2013, UNRWA discussed a set of seven principles with the Advisory Commission (AdCom). It then consulted widely with both internal and external stakeholders to develop a Blueprint for the MTS 2016–2022, which it shared with the Sub-Committee (SubCom) and the AdCom in October-November to check whether it was 'on the right track'.<sup>6</sup> Securing buy-in for the principles (see Box 1 below) before developing the Blueprint was a useful way for UNRWA to try to manage the often very different priorities of donors and host governments. As one interviewee pointed out, 'there was a middle ground, rather than common ground'. Managing the competing demands of donors and host governments remains a challenge for UNRWA, as described in section 2.2 on UNRWA's contribution, role and comparative advantage.

#### Box 1: Seven principles underpinning the MTS 2016–2022

- Principle 1: UNRWA will register Palestine refugees.
- Principle 2: UNRWA will provide universal access to quality basic education.
- Principle 3: UNRWA will provide universal access to quality primary health.
- Principle 4: UNRWA's role in the mitigation of poverty.
- Principle 5: UNRWA is mandated to protect Palestine refugees.
- Principle 6: UNRWA must be emergency prepared and ready.
- Principle 7: UNRWA will recognize and respond to the needs of youth.

<sup>6</sup> UNRWA (2013) *Medium Term Strategy (MTS) Blueprint*



While UNRWA has broadly implemented AdCom recommendations, repeated recommendations around resource mobilization demonstrate the need for AdCom members to take responsibility for greater engagement and action.

19. UNRWA provides a detailed written response to each recommendation or statement in an ‘aide memoire’ from each AdCom session. For example, in response to the AdCom recommendation to take account of the areas for improvement identified in the MOPAN assessment of UNRWA and to engage with interested AdCom members on ways to address them, UNRWA referred AdCom members to its management response but also outlined how it was engaging with the Harmonized Results Working Group and addressing the issues.
20. It also pointed to an agreement between UNRWA and AdCom members that the Agency could only follow up on identified priorities if it had the required resources.<sup>7</sup> An obvious example of UNRWA having implemented an AdCom recommendation or statement is that it commissioned this evaluation, in line with a recommendation from the July 2020 meeting.<sup>8</sup>
21. UNRWA has also complied broadly with other recommendations, such as those related to UNRWA’s governance and management, from the AdCom session in July 2020.<sup>9</sup> It has not circulated a formal letter to AdCom members summarizing the findings of the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight (OIOS) investigation into UNRWA’s former management and highlighting actions taken as a result of the investigation, as requested. However, it has pointed out that Member States can obtain the final confidential, redacted investigation reports through a written request to OIOS.
22. The interim Commission-General in 2019 introduced a set of management initiatives in response to the management crisis. AdCom members welcomed the plan to implement these management reforms and asked UNRWA to present a comprehensive review report at the AdCom meeting in November 2020. While UNRWA did not share a comprehensive review report, it has provided progress reports on the implementation of the management initiatives, for example in March 2021.<sup>10</sup>
23. A review of the recommendations and UNRWA’s responses to them highlights that AdCom members repeatedly make the same or similar recommendations on issues of national interest. These recommendations tend to be phrased in a generic manner rather than proposing concrete actions that also take account of UNRWA’s limited resources. Examples include gender equality and neutrality,<sup>11</sup> mainstreaming assistance to persons with disabilities<sup>12</sup> and protection.<sup>13</sup>
24. In addition, recommendations from every AdCom meeting since May 2016 have referred to UNRWA’s financial situation and resource mobilization efforts. As far back as May 2016, AdCom members expressed concern about the Agency’s financial sustainability and highlighted the need to mobilize resources in a more sustainable and predictable manner.<sup>14</sup> The wording of part of the July 2020 recommendation repeats wording used in November 2016, ‘AdCom members acknowledge that measures adopted by UNRWA management to close the shortfall cannot alone solve the Agency’s immediate and medium-term financial challenges’.<sup>15</sup>
25. There have also been repeated references to the need for predictable funding (and to multiyear funding in the July 2020 AdCom meeting) but, ultimately, UNRWA is dependent on voluntary contributions from Member States for this. Section 2.3 on funding and resource mobilization discusses this issue in more detail

<sup>7</sup> UNRWA (2019) *Aide Memoire: Response to Recommendations of the June 2019 Session of the Advisory Commission*. AdCom November 2019, External Relations and Communications Department

<sup>8</sup> ‘With regard to the next Medium Term Strategy (MTS 2023–2028), AdCom Members: Advise the Agency to start its planning processes for developing the MTS 2023–2028, and encourage it to consider, as part of this process, deciding to launch a strategic evaluation in 2021, as per normal procedure.’ UNRWA (2020) *Aide Memoire: Response to Recommendations of the July 2020 Session of the Advisory Commission*. AdCom November 2020, Executive Office

<sup>9</sup> UNRWA (2020) *Aide Memoire: Response to Recommendations of the July 2020 Session of the Advisory Commission*. AdCom November 2020, Executive Office

<sup>10</sup> UNRWA (2021) *UNRWA Management Initiatives: Implementation Progress Summary*, March 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Recommendations made at November 2017, June and November 2018, June and November 2019, and July 2020 AdCom meetings.

<sup>12</sup> Recommendation made at June 2019 and July 2020 AdCom meetings.

<sup>13</sup> Recommendation made at June and November 2019 AdCom meetings

<sup>14</sup> UNRWA (2016) *Aide Memoire: Response to the Recommendations of the May 2016 Session of the Advisory Commission*. AdCom, November 2016, External Relations and Communications Department

<sup>15</sup> UNRWA (2017) *Aide Memoire: Response to the Recommendations of the November 2016 Session of the Advisory Commission*. AdCom, May 2017, External Relations and Communications Department

but the repetition of certain recommendations highlights the need for AdCom members to engage more proactively on the substance of recommendations and base them on the reality of the financial situation that UNRWA faces.

UNRWA analyzed Palestine refugee needs in a variety of ways for the MTS 2016–2022 and also assesses needs for specific programmes on an ongoing basis. However, unpredictable funding and shortfalls have made it challenging to address them.

26. As part of the process of developing the current MTS, UNRWA gathered and analyzed data on Palestine refugee needs in a variety of ways. In 2014, it commissioned a human development study on Palestine refugees that brought together data from UNRWA's five fields of operation.<sup>16</sup> While the study faced challenges with obtaining standardized data on Palestine refugees, it was able to examine the three areas of a long and healthy life, access to education and resources for a decent life. The study highlighted that, while significant progress had been made in the areas of health and education, opportunities for livelihoods had been the greatest challenge for Palestine refugees over the years.
27. Although the MTS does not cite the study, it includes a section on human development indicators. Also, the issues covered in the study are reflected in Strategic Outcomes 2 (health), 3 (education) and 4 (livelihood opportunities). UNRWA also collaborated with Visualizing Palestine to present Palestine refugee needs in the form of graphics (see Figure 1). While the MTS did not make use of these, chapter 2 focuses on Palestine refugee needs.

Figure 1. Presenting Palestine refugee needs

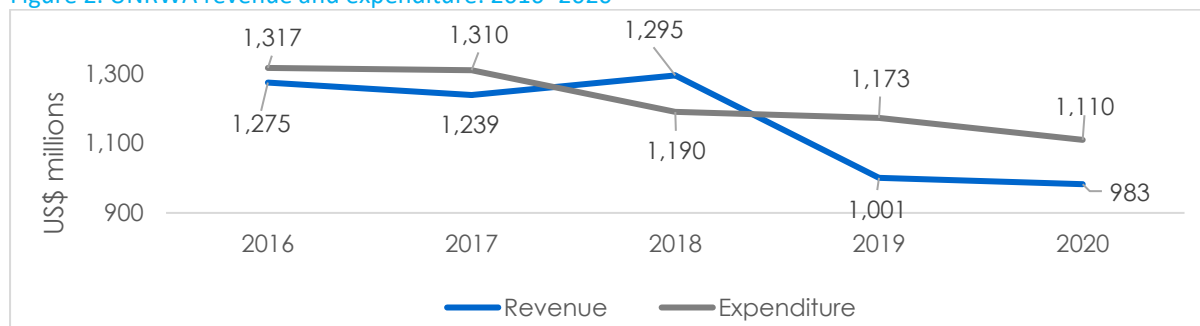


Source: UNRWA Department of Planning

28. Although UNRWA made an effort to reflect Palestine refugee needs in the MTS, the chronic funding crisis has meant that the Agency cannot meet these needs adequately, particularly as needs have increased as a result of population growth, higher poverty levels in Gaza, the economic crisis in Lebanon and the impact of COVID-19. Since UNRWA aims to provide universal health and education services to Palestine refugees, it does not need to conduct humanitarian-style needs assessments for these.
29. However, as described below, it does conduct needs assessments for other programmes, particularly relief and social services, to help target its assistance to the poorest and those most in need. Although, as Figure 2 shows, apart from 2018 when UNRWA was able to mobilize additional resources to compensate for the loss of funding from the United States, expenditure has exceeded income from all its funding streams. This is despite a 15 per cent reduction in expenditure between 2016 and 2020. The MOPAN (p. 21) review phrased UNRWA's challenge succinctly, 'Available resources are not commensurate with designated need.'

<sup>16</sup> UNRWA (2014) *Palestine Refugee Human Development Study*

Figure 2. UNRWA revenue and expenditure: 2016–2020



Source: UNRWA annual financial statement from 2016–2019 and UNRWA unaudited financial data for 2020<sup>17</sup>

30. UNRWA starts the annual budgeting process in September for the following year (i.e., it will start budgeting in September 2021 for 2022). However, it is challenging to predict the level of funding that it will receive because of the unpredictability in the level of donor contributions and when they will be paid. Also, some interviewees argued that the External Relations Department (ERD) makes deliberately low forecasts of donor contributions (in order to manage expectations), which has implications for budgeting. As one interviewee explained, ‘ERD does not see the impact of funding not coming in but people in the field do, so there is a fight for money’.
31. For 2020, although 100 per cent of the budget was approved, only 90 per cent was released to field offices and departments at the beginning of the year, with field offices asked to identify cost saving measures. Additional funds were released in April but interviewees highlighted that field offices had found this measure very challenging. This was before the COVID-19 pandemic increased the need for UNRWA assistance.
32. In light of the challenges of operating on the basis of volatile funding flows, some UNRWA staff members argued that the next strategy should be accompanied by a budget based on the identified needs, rather than one that is ‘realistic’ about the funding that UNRWA is likely to receive, otherwise the Agency will not be able to provide adequate services to meet the needs of Palestine refugees.

#### There is broad alignment between the SDG targets and the Common Monitoring Matrix (CMM) indicators.

33. By the time the 17 SDGs came into effect on 1 January 2016, UNRWA had finalized the MTS along with a comprehensive set of indicators to monitor its implementation. An UNRWA factsheet on the SDGs outlines how UNRWA is delivering against 11 of the 17 SDGs (with the others being outside the scope of its mandate).<sup>18</sup> The team also reviewed the CMM indicators more specifically against SDG targets and identified broad alignment. Table 2 below provides an example from SDG 2 – good health and well-being.

Table 2. Alignment between SDG targets and CMM indicators

| SDG target  | Relevant CMM indicators   |
|---|---|
| 3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio less than 70 per 100,000 live births      | 2.c Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)                        |
|   | 2.1.k Percentage of women with live birth who received at least 4 ANC visits  |
|   | 2.1.1 Percentage of post-natal women attending PNC within 6 weeks of delivery |
| 3.4 By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCD) through | 2.a Prevalence of diabetes among population served 18 years and above         |
|   | 2.b Percentage of DM patients under control per defined criteria              |
|   | 2.1.h Percentage of NCD patients coming to health center                      |

<sup>17</sup> Audited financial statement for 2020 was not yet available.

<sup>18</sup> UNRWA (2020) *Decade of Action: UNRWA and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*

| SDG target   | Relevant CMM indicators  |
|--|--|
| prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being  | 2.1.i Percentage of NCD patients with late complications   |
|  | 2.1.f Number of health centers integrating the mental health and psychosocial services (MHPSS) technical instructions into the Family Health Team approach |
|  | 2.1.g Percentage of individuals identified with MHPSS needs provided with assistance   |
| 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential healthcare services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all | 2.1.a Average daily medical consultation per doctor  |
|  | 2.1.b Average consultation time per doctor   |
|  | 2.1.j Number of EPI vaccine preventable disease outbreaks  |
|  | 2.1.m Percentage diphtheria + tetanus coverage among targeted students   |
|  | 2.1.n Antibiotic prescription rate   |
|  | 2.1.o Percentage of health centers with no stock out of 12 tracer medicines  |

UNRWA provides universal primary healthcare and education but aims to target certain forms of assistance to the poorest and most vulnerable, the focus of the 'Leave No One Behind' agenda. A lack of adequate resources is the greatest challenge to assisting these groups.

34. The UN Framework for 'Leaving No One Behind' focuses on reaching the poorest of the poor (reaching the furthest behind first), gender equality and empowering vulnerable groups. These include children, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees, internally displaced persons, migrants, people living in poverty and in areas affected by complex humanitarian emergencies and in areas affected by terrorism, and people living under colonial and foreign occupation.<sup>19</sup> Some of these groups clearly do not fall within UNRWA's mandate so the evaluation focused on the most relevant groups. The report addresses UNRWA's approach to gender, youth and persons with disabilities under section 2.5 while this section focuses more generally on assistance to the poorest and vulnerable groups.
35. UNRWA provides universal primary healthcare and education to Palestine refugees across its five fields of operation but also makes an effort to support the poorest and most vulnerable groups. The health programme supports the most vulnerable refugees to access secondary and tertiary care through contracts with hospitals or by covering a high proportion of the cost of care at public, non-governmental and private healthcare facilities.
36. UNRWA generally prioritizes families registered with the Social Safety Net Programme (SSNP) but, in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza, it regards all Palestine refugees as vulnerable (the economic crisis and COVID-19 have exacerbated vulnerability in Lebanon in the last two years while the conflict in Syria and the context in Gaza have led UNRWA to provide universal assistance – see below).
37. Taking into account patients registered with the SSNP in Jordan and the West Bank as well as patients assisted in Lebanon, Gaza and Syria, around 61 per cent of the 88,075 patients admitted for hospital care in 2019 were poor and vulnerable.<sup>20</sup> The challenge for UNRWA is that it has faced growing demands for hospitalization support and increased costs, despite attempts to identify efficiencies.<sup>21</sup>
38. UNRWA's SSNP provides cash assistance to the abject poor (using a proxy-means testing formula to identify these) and the most vulnerable (as well as in-kind food assistance in the Gaza Strip through both the SSNP

<sup>19</sup> United Nations (2017) *Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development. A Shared United Nations System Framework for Action*, New York, United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination

<sup>20</sup> Data provided by UNRWA Health Department

<sup>21</sup> UNRWA (2020) *Annual Operational Report 2019 for the Reporting Period 01 January–31 December 2019*.

and the emergency programme). The Agency has developed context-specific targeting.<sup>22</sup> However, in Syria and Gaza, widespread poverty has meant that it was more appropriate for UNRWA to provide universal assistance. As part of the SSNP, UNRWA conducts surveys and assessments to identify those most in need.<sup>23</sup>

39. The Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme (ICIP) also conducts vulnerability assessments to determine emergency or normal interventions. It does this through the use of both technical and social criteria (prioritizing women-headed households, widows, families that have members with disabilities and the elderly). In the past four years, UNRWA has focused on emergency response due to the regional context. This has restricted the normal interventions that target the poorest of the poor.
40. Funding shortfalls have made it difficult for UNRWA to cover the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable across its programmes. UNRWA field staff reported that the Agency could only support a limited number of vulnerable families, resulting in long waiting lists for the SSNP as well as the ICIP. Palestine refugees also highlighted that the assistance provided was insufficient, with cash assistance provided for three months only covering their needs for three weeks, leaving them with a considerable shortfall.
41. For those requiring hospital treatment, UNRWA is unable to cover the full cost. For example, in Lebanon, where refugees cannot access government services, UNRWA finances 60 per cent of tertiary healthcare in private hospitals with refugees expected to cover the remaining cost (although, as outlined in section 2.6, UNRWA did cover 100 per cent of the costs of COVID-19 patients requiring hospitalization).<sup>24</sup> If they are unable to do this, refugees noted that they might not be able to access the treatment they needed.

The MTS has served as a strategic framework for programme delivery, with the Strategic Outcomes remaining broadly applicable despite the significant shift in UNRWA's operating contexts. Programme staff found the CMM to be a particularly useful tool but felt it would be helpful to find ways to assess the quality of UNRWA services as well.

42. The report describes UNRWA processes for translating the MTS into annual operational plans to guide implementation in section 2.4. In interviews, UNRWA programme staff identified the CMM as particularly useful and relevant for monitoring progress, identifying challenges and developing action plans to address the challenges (done through the Agency's midyear and annual results reviews). The CMM lists 148 indicators for the five Strategic Outcomes, with some then disaggregated by sex, although the Agency agreed with the Harmonized Results Working Group that it would report on a smaller number.
43. A number of staff highlighted that the CMM indicators are mainly quantitative (with limited or no reporting against many indicators that are proxies for service quality or which assess the satisfaction of Palestine refugees with the assistance provided). For example, while the Agency measures the average consultation time per doctor (indicator 2.1.b in Table 2 above), it has no way of measuring the quality or accuracy of advice provided during the consultation.
44. 'Percentage of individuals identified as experiencing a protection risk (GBV) provided with assistance' is an indicator across protection, health, education and relief and social services but UNRWA does not report on this indicator comprehensively and has no way of assessing whether the assistance provided met the needs of the individuals or their experience of the assistance provided, e.g., was there a smooth referral process from health to relief and social services, were they treated with dignity, etc.
45. The MTS has a few indicators on outcomes such as maternal mortality levels or student achievements in examinations that could provide indications of the quality of UNRWA services but there are multiple factors that influence these outcomes, making it difficult to identify UNRWA's specific contribution. Therefore, there was a strong view amongst UNRWA staff that it would be useful for the Agency to find ways to assess the quality of the services that it provides.

<sup>22</sup> See UNRWA (2020) *Introducing Vulnerability Targeting for Palestine Refugees in the West Bank*, Relief and Social Services Department; UNRWA (2020) *Introducing Vulnerability Targeting for Palestine Refugees in the Gaza Strip*, Relief and Social Services Department; UNRWA (2019) *Cash Assistance Eligibility for Palestine Refugees from Syria in the Jordan Field*; UNRWA (2018) *Establishing a Social Safety Net Programme for Palestine Refugees in Syria*, UNRWA Department of Relief and Social Services;

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, UNRWA (2020) *Socio-Economic Survey on Palestine Refugees from Syria Living in Lebanon* and UNRWA (no date) *UNRWA Living Conditions Survey of Palestine Refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic*

<sup>24</sup> The percentage for Red Cross and Red Crescent hospitals is higher and UNRWA also has a medical hardship fund in Lebanon. Across its fields of operation, UNRWA covers around 90 per cent of hospitalization costs.



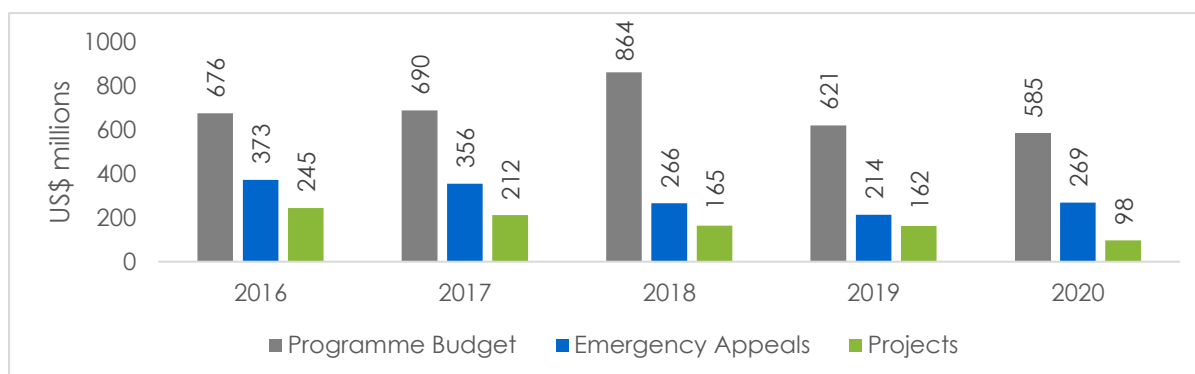
46. Staff in management positions highlighted that UNRWA's operating contexts changed significantly during the MTS implementation period, including the loss of United States' funding in 2018 and chronic funding shortfalls, the economic crisis in Lebanon, a continued deterioration in the prospects for a just solution for Palestine refugees and COVID-19. The MTS Strategic Outcomes were framed sufficiently broadly that they remained applicable across the very different and changing contexts in UNRWA's fields of operation.
47. A few staff members felt that the commitments in the MTS had not been changed to reflect funding challenges and contextual changes although there was scope to adjust the targets for the CMM indicators. As demonstrated in the section on the achievement of Strategic Outcomes, UNRWA has been able to adapt to challenges such as COVID-19. Nevertheless, looking ahead to the next strategy, one interviewee argued for the need to balance continuity in UNRWA services and direction with the ability to respond to change.

Due to chronic shortfalls in funding for the Programme Budget, UNRWA uses its three funding streams in a pragmatic and complementary way to meet the needs of Palestine refugees, with each field office having its own combination of funding streams.

48. The MTS outlines UNRWA's financial needs by Strategic Outcome and by three funding streams – the PB, EA and projects. UNRWA's finance system clearly delineates activities under these three funding streams so that UNRWA can understand the relationship between all of its operations, irrespective of funding source, resulting in reliable information for reporting and decision making. Its annual planning and budgeting processes under the MTS ensure complementarity between the funding streams. Figure 3 below shows that funding for the PB in 2019 and 2020 was even lower than in 2016/17 (2018 was an exceptional year).
49. Due to PB funding shortfalls, UNRWA is pragmatic about using the other funding streams in a complementary way to meet the needs of Palestine refugees. For example, it is almost entirely dependent on project funding from Saudi Arabia to maintain installations (such as schools, health centers and offices) that would normally be covered by the PB. Likewise, in a pragmatic way, UNRWA uses project funding from Japan, which far exceeds its PB contribution, to finance activities that would normally be paid for under the PB. As described above, at the start of 2020, field offices were forced to find savings of 10 per cent in their PB expenditure and many sought to use project funding to cover the gaps.
50. EA funding has been important in enabling UNRWA to support Palestine refugees affected by the Syria crisis (including in Jordan and Lebanon) and to provide critical assistance in Gaza and the West Bank. For example, in 2020, UNRWA provided emergency food assistance to over a million people in Gaza, emergency cash assistance to over 24,000 abject poor in East Jerusalem, and cash assistance to almost half a million Palestine refugees in Syria. This was even though the Syria EA was only 39 per cent funded while the EA for the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) was 56.4 per cent funded.<sup>25</sup>
51. The challenge for UNRWA is that project funding is short-term and there may be gaps between projects, making it difficult to maintain service continuity. Also, with EA or project funding, it is only able to hire staff on short-term contracts even though they might be providing longer-term services, such as health and education in Syria.
52. Each field office has its own combination of funding streams. Syria relies heavily on EA funding, with around 60 per cent of its expenditure covered from this in 2019 and 2020. The Gaza office covered around a quarter of its expenditure from EA in 2019 and 2020. In 2019, Lebanon received 48 per cent of its funding from projects and EA, which enabled it to fill gaps in the PB. Jordan relies on the PB (which covered 81 per cent of its expenditure in 2020) although the office receives some EA funding for its response to the needs of Palestine refugees from Syria.
53. To respond to the COVID-19 crisis, the Jordan office relied almost entirely on EA and project funding. Figure 3 shows that UNRWA received more EA funding in 2020 than in the previous two years because of its separate COVID-19 appeals although there was a considerable reduction in project funding). PB funding shortfalls in Gaza have been so extreme that the field office has resorted to using project funding to cover even basic items such as stationery.

<sup>25</sup> UNRWA (2021) *Annual Operational Report 2020* [draft]

Figure 3. UNRWA income by funding stream: 2016–2020



Source: UNRWA annual financial statements 2016–2019 and UNRWA unaudited financial data for 2020

## 2.2 UNRWA's Contribution, Role and Comparative Advantage

This section focuses on UNRWA's outward facing role and contribution to regional goals/developments. It presents findings against the following evaluation questions:

- 2.2 Does UNRWA's implementation of the MTS 2016–2022 include a triple nexus (humanitarian-development-peace) approach? To what extent does UNRWA contribute to ongoing efforts to enhance the triple nexus approach to sustainable development of Palestine refugees in the region?
- 4.3 In what ways did UNRWA's work to achieve the MTS 2016–2022 Strategic Outcomes contribute to regional security and stability?
- 2.3 To what extent has UNRWA's implementation of the MTS 2016–2022 supported linkages with the regional and country-level approaches of host governments, donors and the UN to assisting Palestine refugees?
- 2.4 To what extent are the Agency's activities based on its comparative advantages?

UNRWA combines its humanitarian and development activities effectively and it contributes to conditions for 'peace'. UNRWA does not have a mandate to contribute to peacebuilding.

- 54. UNRWA has provided humanitarian relief for Palestine refugees since it was established; its activities took on a development orientation since the early 1990s.<sup>26</sup> It has progressively built a culture and systems that enable it to work seamlessly across both the humanitarian and development spheres – and it does so effectively, as much of this report illustrates. The MTS and annual operational plans show how emergency interventions and development-oriented interventions contribute to the same Strategic Outcomes. The MTS itself is based on an analysis of the humanitarian, human development and protection threats and vulnerabilities of Palestine refugees.
- 55. As outlined in the previous section, UNRWA has a single integrated budget framework comprising its long-term programmes/basic services, projects and EAs. It also has a 'robust emergency framework' that outlines the operational structures, protocols and tools used in emergencies and that explains roles and responsibilities.<sup>27</sup> Due to the way it has integrated both approaches, UNRWA is an exemplar to other UN agencies that seek to work across both humanitarian and development activities.
- 56. The triple nexus approach is still evolving and only became mainstream in the last two years: practitioners are still trying to conceptualize what the 'peace' element means for agencies like UNRWA.<sup>28</sup> A recent

<sup>26</sup> UNRWA (2003), Memorandum submitted by UNRWA to the UK Parliament Select Committee on International Development

<sup>27</sup> MOPAN (2019) United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA): 2017/18 Performance Assessment, Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network, p.43

<sup>28</sup> The term 'triple nexus' refers to 'the interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace actions'. The nexus approach is defined as 'the aim of strengthening collaboration, coherence and complementarity. The approach seeks to capitalize on the comparative

position paper by a humanitarian expert working group has tried to unpack what is meant by ‘peace’ in the triple nexus.<sup>29</sup> It differentiates between activities that contribute to peace with a lower-case (p) and an upper-case (P), referred to as ‘little p’ and ‘Big P’ in the report.

57. ‘Little p’ activities can constitute long-term investments in accountable institutions and can include the equitable provision of social services and livelihood opportunities. ‘Big P’ interventions are related to activities that are ‘more directly aimed at a political solution or securitized response to violent conflict’. These could also be called ‘peacebuilding activities’. It is not within UNRWA’s mandate to engage in any ‘Big P’ activities, while there are some elements of UNRWA’s activities that clearly are ‘little p’.<sup>30</sup>
58. This includes all its service delivery and livelihoods work, and its efforts to establish inclusive institutions (e.g., camp committees). As the triple nexus is such an evolving concept, UNRWA does not yet explicitly claim to take this approach in its published documents. However, it could seek to situate how it operates across the nexus in its next strategy. UNRWA does reflect that, as detailed in its founding mandate, its contribution to SDG 16 includes the need ‘to further conditions of peace and stability’.<sup>31</sup>

The triple nexus approach requires agencies to apply a conflict sensitive lens to their work: UNRWA could benefit from applying conflict and political economy analysis perspectives to some of its future programming decisions.

59. UNRWA staff have a deep understanding of the operational context. But it is hard to judge the extent to which conflict or political economy analysis informs key decisions, as there are few explicit references to either.<sup>32</sup> A combination of conflict and political economy analysis could help UNRWA manage the risk of decisions at the community level having unforeseen consequences.
60. All of UNRWA’s fields of operation are highly conflictual and somewhat fragile. A higher degree of conflict sensitivity and deliberative political economy analysis could help UNRWA managers steer through difficult decisions. If this analysis is shared, even informally, with stakeholders who argue for UNRWA to ‘rationalize’ its services, stakeholders could better appreciate the potential impact on stability of different courses of action (see below).

UNRWA contributes to security and stability in the highly volatile contexts in which it works through the provision of services and employment opportunities to Palestine refugees.

61. The 1949 General Assembly mandate for UNRWA (as set out in UNGA resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949) recognizes that ‘continued assistance for the relief of the Palestine refugees is necessary to...further conditions of peace and stability’. There is evidence, set out below, that UNRWA’s provision of service, and its employment of Palestine refugees, continues to contribute directly to regional security and stability – just as it did when it was founded. In the absence of a political solution to the plight of Palestine refugees, UNRWA seeks to provide them with the protection and services they need to maintain a dignified life.
62. The registration of Palestine refugees is one of the three pillars of UNRWA’s relief and social services programme and UNRWA assists entities seeking to verify the registration of Palestine refugees seeking asylum outside its fields of operation.<sup>33</sup> Thus, UNRWA ensures that the rights of Palestine refugees under international law are independently recognized in a tangible way. This recognition alone possibly creates a sense of assurance among the 5.7 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA as of 31 December 2020<sup>34</sup>: As stated elsewhere in this report, Palestine refugees value highly the official recognition of their status.

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advantages of each pillar – to the extent of their relevance in the specific context – to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict’. See OECD (2021) *DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus*, OECD/LEGAL/5019.

<sup>29</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2020), *Issue Paper- Exploring Peace Within the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN)*. IASC Results Group 4 on Humanitarian-Development Collaboration, October 2020.

<sup>30</sup> The United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process does have a direct role in ‘Big P’. The Special Coordinator represents the Secretary General and leads the UN system in all political and diplomatic efforts related to the peace process.

<sup>31</sup> UNRWA (2020) *UNRWA and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*

<sup>32</sup> The only explicit reference to conflict analysis is in the *Syria Strategic Plan 2016-2021* risk register (p.68), which states that the Office will ‘Develop and utilize assessment and conflict analysis’ to mitigate strategic and programmatic risks. No references to political economy analysis were found.

<sup>33</sup> UNRWA (2021) *Annual Operational Report 2020* [draft]

<sup>34</sup> A further 685,000 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.



63. The region as a whole and each of UNRWA's five fields of operation are characterized by fragile political and conflict conditions, and several are highly volatile. Throughout the MTS period, UNRWA's provision of services has exerted a stabilizing influence most directly for the lives of Palestine refugees themselves. UNRWA provides services to Palestine refugees in contexts where they would otherwise receive few if any services. This in itself creates a basis for social stability and cohesion among vulnerable populations.
64. In Gaza it assists 1,476,706 registered Palestine refugees (nearly three quarters of the population) in a highly volatile political, security and socioeconomic environment.<sup>35</sup> Gazans live under blockade with a poverty rate over 50 per cent, one of the world's highest unemployment rates at 48 per cent in the first quarter of 2021, and with approximately 80 per cent of households receiving some form of social assistance.<sup>36</sup> The situation in Gaza would be even more unstable if UNRWA did not provide a safety net.<sup>37</sup>
65. In the West Bank, which includes East Jerusalem, it supports 871,537 registered Palestine refugees, many of whom are negatively impacted by the Israeli military occupation. The situation in Syria for the estimated 438,000 Palestine refugees who remain in the country remains highly uncertain. Lebanon is in a state of political flux and the government is stretched by the Syrian refugee crisis. The situation in Jordan is more stable for the 2,307,011 registered refugees, many of whom possess Jordanian citizenship, but the government still struggles to meet the needs of its citizens. Interviews with Palestine refugees indicate that many of UNRWA's beneficiaries could not sustain themselves without the Agency's support.
66. UNRWA also provides more than half a million students with an education that enshrines a human rights culture, seeking to embed tolerance in social and political contexts where children are exposed to conflict and violence. Generations of students have benefited from an education that equips them for productive lives – engendering a sense of hope and opportunity. UNRWA estimates around 2.5 million children have been educated in its schools since the Agency was established.<sup>38</sup> Without UNRWA's schools, it is not clear whether these children would have received an education at all; and if they had, it is unlikely to have emphasized a human rights culture.
67. UNRWA also provides services that host governments cannot or are unwilling to provide. If these governments or authorities were suddenly required to provide services to Palestine refugees, it could stress their resources and capability to breaking point. If the Lebanese or Jordanian governments were required to provide services to the detriment of their own populations, tensions between host and refugee populations could heighten. The Palestinian Authority itself has a large budget deficit and struggles to meet the social, health and educational needs of West Bank and Gazan non-refugees. The de facto authorities in Gaza likewise would be unable to provide the services UNRWA provides in Gaza.
68. UNRWA also provides employment directly for around 29,000 Palestine refugees in its five fields of operation. If each employee supports five dependents, UNRWA contributes to ensuring that 145,000 Palestine refugees have the support of a secure income in a region where there are few viable alternative employment opportunities.
69. The MTS argues that if the underlying problems that Palestine refugees face 'are not addressed, the consequences will be manifold: a continuation of reduced livelihood opportunities and dashed hopes for another generation of Palestine refugee children and youth. Without change, the population – susceptible to impoverishment, embitterment and isolation – may resort to actions with implications for host communities and countries in the region.'<sup>39</sup> The Agency has sought to address the 'underlying problems' through its protection, basic services and emergency assistance. All donor and host government representatives interviewed considered that UNRWA does contribute to regional security and stability, with many expressing the arguments cited above.

<sup>35</sup> These figures are drawn from UNRWA's 2020 Annual Operational Report.

<sup>36</sup> World Bank (2021) *Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment*, June 2021. p.4

<sup>37</sup> For example, desperation could lead to more popular protests such as the 'Great March of Return' protests of 2018/19, with the same potential for violence and escalation these showed (see Amnesty International, [Six months on: Gaza's Great March of Return](#)).

<sup>38</sup> In the 2019/20 school year, 354,345 students were enrolled in elementary education in UNRWA schools and a total of 533,342 in a combination of elementary, preparatory and secondary education. UNRWA schools use the same curricula and textbooks of the host government where its schools operate. UNRWA adds United Nations principles through the Agency's human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance (HRCRT) policy. See UNRWA (nd) *Unpublished information note UNRWA's Contributions to Human Development and Humanitarian Services*, p. 13

<sup>39</sup> UNRWA (2016) *UNRWA Medium Term Strategy 2016–2021*, p. 24

External stakeholders see UNRWA as having primary responsibility for assisting Palestine refugees. Therefore, there are very few opportunities for UNRWA to link to other assistance for the refugees.

70. From the perspective of a range of stakeholders (Palestine refugees, host governments, other UN agencies), UNRWA has the primary responsibility for assisting Palestine refugees. For example, Palestine refugees from Syria are not included in the refugee appeal for Jordan. Also, even when Palestine refugees have been displaced from Syria to countries where UNRWA is not operational (such as Turkey), UNRWA's office in Syria has received letters asking for assistance. This is even though, legally, UNRWA's mandate is to deliver services to Palestine refugees within its five fields of operation.
71. There is a division of responsibility with host governments, with UNRWA providing services but responsibility for security, law and order in the refugee camps and the physical protection of Palestine refugees falling within the sovereignty of respective host governments. However, there are limited opportunities for UNRWA to complement the services that host governments provide to Palestine refugees though its programmes align with their standards.
72. While only a few donors fund interventions that complement the services UNRWA provides, these donors indicated in interviews that UNRWA collaborates well with these complementary initiatives.<sup>40</sup> Some donor interviewees consider that UNRWA could deepen its partnerships with selected UN Funds and Programmes (e.g., UNFPA and WFP). The report discusses UNRWA's partnerships to provide additional services to Palestine refugees in section 2.5.

UNRWA's activities are based largely on its comparative advantage, with the vast majority of funds spent on the basic services envisaged by its mandate (health, education and relief and social services). The positions of stakeholders, particularly Palestine refugees, host governments and donors, make it difficult for the Agency to change or cut activities.

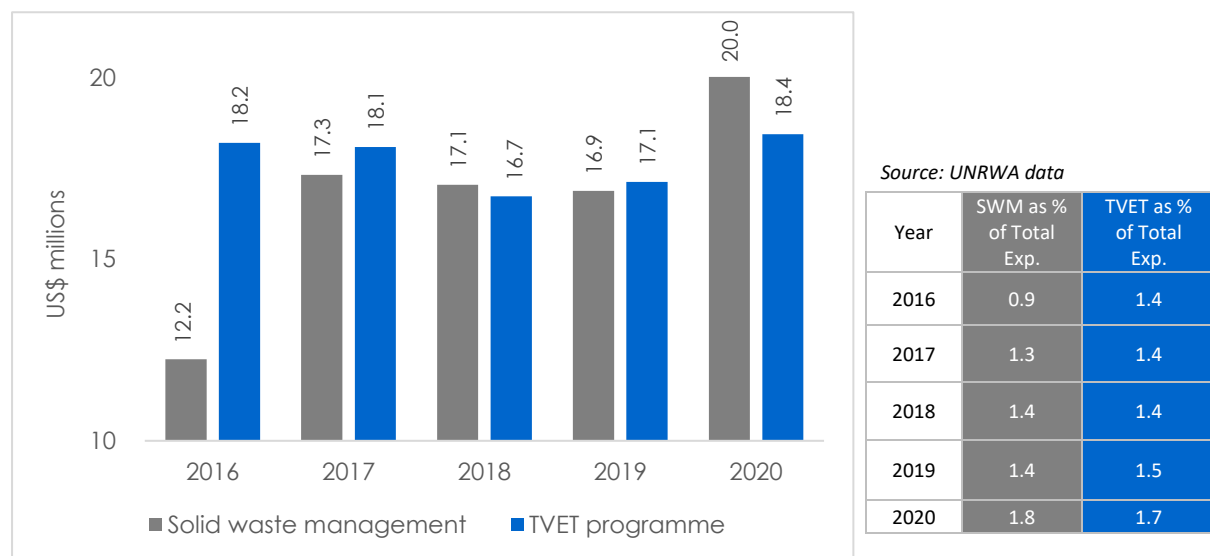
73. UNRWA's education programme is by far its largest and UNRWA financial reports show that around 90 per cent of its expenditure from 2016–2020 was on the provision of education, health and relief and social services, envisaged by its mandate. UNRWA has built up its expertise and comparative advantage in the provision of these services over the 70 years of its existence, initiating major reform of its health and education programmes in 2011 that continued to be implemented/embedded during the current MTS and sometimes setting examples and standards that others have followed.
74. Some donors consider that UNRWA should stop providing some services on the grounds that they are not within its core mandate or that other entities are better placed to provide them. However there is a lack of agreement among these donors on which services/activities it should stop, though interviewees focused particularly on solid waste management and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).
75. Donors sometimes view what is appropriate for UNRWA to provide through the 'lens' of their funding source. For example, one donor whose funding derives mainly from humanitarian funds, argued that some UNRWA services (e.g. solid waste management) were out of scope 'for a humanitarian agency'. That said, UNRWA provides both development and humanitarian assistance.
76. While the majority of donors interviewed felt that UNRWA itself is in the best position to judge what services it needs to provide and where, some donors would like UNRWA to provide them with an analysis of what services it provides and where, and an analysis of their use. The implication is that this would help them argue for what services UNRWA should cut. However, these decisions are not simply about objective data. Interviewees from within and outside the Agency noted that when UNRWA begins to provide new services to a community, continued provision becomes an expectation, making it very difficult for UNRWA to withdraw the services it provides.
77. Not only do communities consider the services provided as a 'norm', but they associate the loss of any of these services with a loss of their status as recognized Palestine refugees. Therefore, services become associated with the political identity of recipients and take on symbolic meaning. This gives any possibility of the loss of services a dimension that a 'technical' perspective would fail to highlight. The implication is that UNRWA should factor this expectation into any decision to begin providing new services. Likewise, any

<sup>40</sup> The EU provides support to vulnerable Palestinian families through its PEGASE instrument (Mécanisme Palestino-européen de Gestion de l'Aide Socio-économique). Some beneficiaries are in Gaza and are likely to have refugee status. One donor interviewee noted that both work in parallel but considered there may be grounds for UNRWA and PEGASE to collaborate and work in synergy.

decision to stop providing a service should be preceded by an analysis of the possible impact (i.e., a hybrid political economy/conflict analysis).

78. While UNRWA is not responsible for administering camps for Palestine refugees, it has been collecting solid waste within the camps, which is then collected by municipal authorities from camp perimeters. UNRWA made an effort to withdraw this activity in Jordan but there was no entity willing to take on the responsibility. Host governments are extremely reluctant to consider taking on services if UNRWA ceases to provide them.
79. There are two dimensions to this reluctance. First, in all fields of operations, host authorities are themselves operating under severe financial pressure: they do not have the resources to provide new services to Palestine refugees. Second, host authorities associate a withdrawal of UNRWA's provision of services with a denial of the political rights of refugees, with the logical implication that responsibility will fall to their governments. This is something that all are unwilling to countenance.
80. If, at the behest of its donors, UNRWA was to withdraw from providing services in order that host governments take on the service provision, UNRWA's donors would need to enter agreements directly with host governments – and make the associated funding commitments. This is because UNRWA does not have the predictability of funding to be able to make such commitments with credibility.
81. While some donors might consider that other organizations could run activities like the TVET programme more effectively than UNRWA, donors and host governments consider it important that UNRWA provides youth with the skills to build viable economic futures – thereby supporting social stability in local communities. This would include activities such as providing livelihood opportunities for Palestine refugee youth. Currently, the TVET programme is one of UNRWA's main ways of doing this and Palestine refugees regard it as a valuable form of assistance (see section 2.5 below). Thus, when trying to make decisions about its services, UNRWA is often caught between the opposing and sometimes entrenched positions of its different stakeholders.
82. UNRWA and AdCom members have spent considerable amounts of time discussing changes to the provision of solid waste management services and the TVET programme as potential areas for reform.<sup>41</sup> However, each represents 1-2 per cent of UNRWA's total expenditure. Figure 4 shows the Agency's expenditure on the two programmes and also this expenditure as a percentage of total expenditure. UNRWA's spending on solid waste management increased slightly in 2020, probably because of COVID-19, but was still 1.8 per cent of total expenditure. The TVET programme has comprised between 1.4 per cent and 1.7 per cent of UNRWA's total expenditure.

Figure 4. Expenditure on solid waste management and TVET and as percentage of total expenditure



<sup>41</sup> The Blueprint for the current MTS raised the question of whether UNRWA should end, where possible, solid waste removal but also identified the risks, including the ability to find an alternative provider and the need to protect the large workforce of unskilled camp residents.

### 2.3 Funding and Resource Mobilization

This section focuses on evaluation questions relating to UNRWA's funding model, the impact of funding shortfalls and the Agency's resource mobilization efforts, including communicating its results. Specifically, it addresses the following questions:

- 3.2 How adequate are the Agency's financing and funding models (including in relation to recommendations in the Secretary-General's 2017 report on UNRWA – UN doc. ref. A/71/849)? What has been the impact of funding shortfalls on the Agency and how has it adapted to these, including through efficiency gains and resource mobilization efforts?
- 4.2 How have service delivery efficiency gains of the Agency affected the overall quantity and quality of services for Palestine refugees, including its ability to benefit the most vulnerable Palestine refugees? How do affected populations perceive the quality of UNRWA services?
- 4.4 To what extent has the Agency been able to use achievements under the MTS for an external narrative to address complex political, financial, and other challenges?

In outlining the ways in which UNRWA has tried to reduce expenditure on staffing and its implications for staff well-being, the section also covers the staffing component of evaluation question 3.4 on process commitments. The rest of this question is dealt with in section 2.5 below

**The current funding model is inadequate for UNRWA's needs: it has left it with financing shortfalls over the last decade. Without change, the Agency will continue to face uncertainty.**

- 83. More than 90 per cent of UNRWA's funding is given on a voluntary basis. UNRWA's traditional donors contribute the lion's share of UNRWA's funding (in 2020 they gave 83.3 per cent of total funding).<sup>42</sup> This exposes UNRWA to changes that are largely beyond its control – related, principally, to politics and changes in donors' funding priorities. There was universal agreement among interviewees that the financing/funding models supporting UNRWA's operations are inadequate, though donors could not identify politically feasible alternative models.
- 84. As shown in Figure 2, UNRWA's income decreased by 23 per cent from 2016 to 2020 but UNRWA's costs have increased due to increasing staff and non-staff costs and the rising number of Palestine refugees eligible for (and in need of) its services. Even with a reduction in expenditure, UNRWA carried forward unpaid liabilities from 2020 to 2021 of \$75 million.<sup>43</sup> The Secretary-General's 2017 report noted that the ability of UNRWA's traditional donors to increase their established annual voluntary contributions 'was currently limited' and this remains the case.<sup>44</sup>
- 85. The withdrawal of United States funding under the former administration created an unprecedented challenge. In essence, UNRWA needs Member States to not only give it a mandate every three years but also the resources required to deliver on this. To secure commitment for this, Sweden and Jordan are co-chairing an international conference. The two governments also organized a ministerial-level online pledging conference to mobilize collective action in June 2020.<sup>45</sup> While this led to financial commitments of \$130 million, UNRWA's total income in 2020 was still less than in 2019 (see Figure 2).
- 86. UNRWA faces cash-flow problems due to unpredictable funding and needs a reserve of around three months of expenditure to manage this. However, its cash reserve was exhausted in 2011 due to budget shortfalls meaning that – in effect – UNRWA is obliged to operate 'hand to mouth'. The lack of reserves means it has to delay paying vendors if donor disbursements are late and it cannot keep foreign currencies until rates improve during periods of volatility.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> UNRWA (2021) *Annual Operational Report 2020* [draft], p.20

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p.20

<sup>44</sup> UN General Assembly (2017) *Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East Report of the Secretary-General (A/71/849)* P.6.

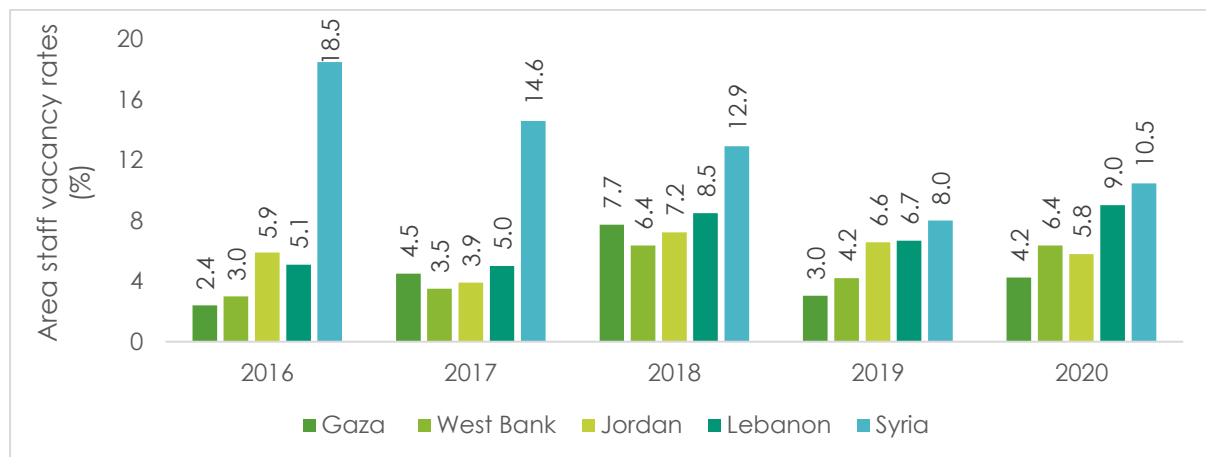
<sup>45</sup> <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/countries-raise-130-million-unrwa-and-commit-long-term-support-palestine>

<sup>46</sup> UNRWA (2021) *Annual Operational Report 2020* [draft]; UNRWA (2018) *AdCom Meeting: Finance Update Slides November 2018*

One way in which UNRWA has responded to chronic funding shortfalls is by trying to reduce expenditure on staffing.

87. Several UNRWA staff argued strongly that UNRWA has cut expenditure and made what efficiency gains it could. It has reduced expenditure through measures such as increasing vacancy rates and hiring staff on daily wage contracts even when they are filling permanent roles, such as teachers. Daily wage staff are cheaper in terms of both basic salary and the benefits and pension to which they would be entitled as permanent staff members. In addition, UNRWA reduced its travel and training budget for field offices by 50 per cent in 2020, leaving one office with \$3.80 per staff member to cover training costs. Responses to the online survey highlighted a shortage of funding for staff development (see Annex E).
88. The level of area staff vacancy rates has implications for the delivery of UNRWA services. Figure 5 below shows the vacancy rates for area staff positions funded through the PB in percentage terms across UNRWA field offices (see Annex E for a table showing the number of vacant posts and total number of posts by UNRWA field office). It highlights that the Lebanon and Syria field offices had the highest vacancy rates in percentage across the evaluation period. In the case of the Syria office, this was largely due to the challenge of recruiting staff in a volatile conflict setting but the office had been able to reduce the vacancy rate considerably by 2020.

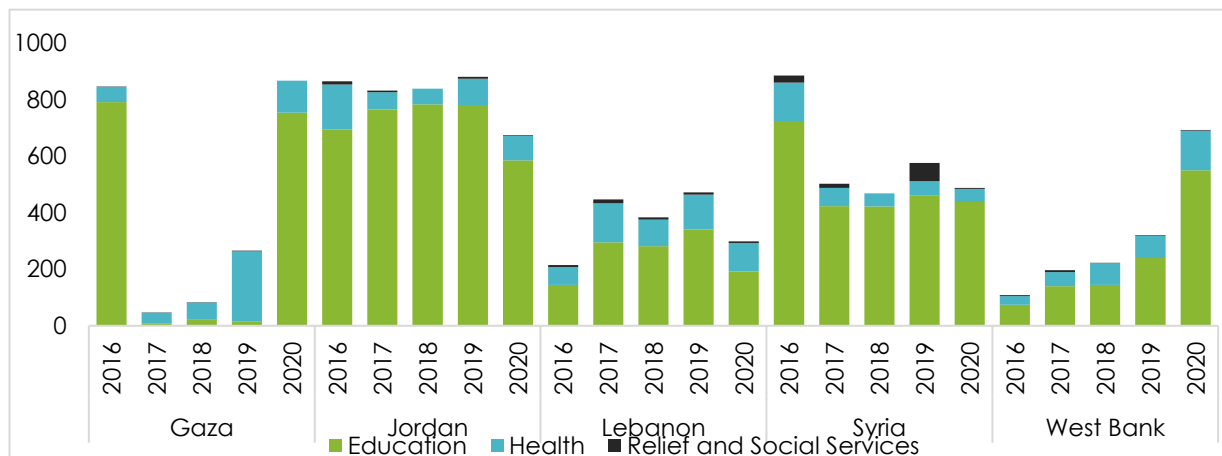
Figure 5. National staff vacancy rates by field office: 2016–2020



Source: UNRWA data (This includes staff on Special Leave Without Pay)

89. The Syria and Lebanon field offices have smaller numbers of area staff financed through the PB than the Gaza field office, which serves the largest number of Palestine refugees. In 2020, the Syria and Lebanon offices had 2,857 and 2,747 staff respectively while the Gaza field office had 11,781. Therefore, even though Gaza only had a 4.2 per cent vacancy rate in 2020, this represented 500 staff members (see Annex E).

Figure 6. Number of daily paid employees by programme and field office



Source: UNRWA data

90. At times, to reduce costs, UNRWA freezes the hiring of staff on fixed-term contracts, so that hiring managers can only use other contract modalities to fill vacant posts. These can include the use of daily paid staff. Figure 6 lists the number of staff that UNRWA hired as daily paid employees in its three most significant programmes across the five field offices (a table in Annex E provides a breakdown of daily paid staff by field office as well as programme). The education programme has increased the number of daily paid employees the most since 2017. This was driven mainly by increases in Gaza and the West Bank, while the number decreased in Jordan and Syria. The relief and social services programme made very limited use of daily paid staff.
91. The responses to the online survey (see Annex E) support findings from interviews that UNRWA staff at all levels are dealing with heavy workloads and not taking leave because of this workload and/or because under-staffing meant that there was no one to cover for them in their absence (the challenge of under-staffing had been exacerbated by slow recruitment, the financial crises and COVID-19). Survey respondents noted that staff could be managed more effectively (including expressing concerns that the performance management system was not effective and poorly understood) and that UNRWA's run down offices did not create a good working environment.
92. Due to a combination of these factors, staff were exhausted and burnt out (almost 50 per cent - 62 out of 138 – of staff who responded to statement 4 under question 1 in the survey expressed this range of views). Overall, the qualitative responses to the survey and interviews suggested that UNRWA has not been able to deliver on the commitments to staffing in the MTS and ensure staff well-being because it simply does not have sufficient funding.

UNRWA has cut expenditure to the point where 'there is no more fat left to trim'. In fact, a lack of investment in operations and maintenance risks bringing UNRWA close to breaking point.

93. UNRWA has cut investment in a number of areas in order to reduce expenditure. For example, it is only able to undertake maintenance of school and health clinic buildings if there is project funding available because funding from the PB is very limited. It was able to secure project funding from the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from 2013–2019 and signed a follow-up agreement in November 2019 for funding in 2020. However, it has no funding in the pipeline for 2021, which is a major concern.
94. Figure 9 shows that UNRWA maintained its 'occupancy and utility' costs that cover the rental and maintenance of premises as well as the cost of utilities<sup>47</sup> between 2016 and 2019, but there was a significant reduction in 2020. It has also not been able to maintain its vehicles, which are beyond their depreciation dates of 8–10 years and rapidly reaching the state of being beyond repair. As a result, respondents to the online survey highlighted concerns about UNRWA cars and transport being unsafe (see Annex E).
95. UNRWA is unable to afford cars that other UN agencies use. In one field office, another UN agency gave UNRWA three Toyota cars that it had discarded after five years of use but which UNRWA will use for another 10 years or more. In some cases, UNRWA has adopted a strategy of delaying payments to vendors as a way of managing cash flows (for example, it suspended payments to suppliers from September 2020).<sup>48</sup> However, this affects UNRWA's reputation for reliability and is likely to result in higher costs in the future.
96. UNRWA's ability to invest in replacing obsolete and/or non-functioning computing devices or buying laptops has been significantly impeded by the lack of available funding. As a result, when staff were asked to work from home due to COVID-19 restrictions, some had to take desktop computers home. One field office reported that the Executive Office's decision to cut capital expenditure completely (on items under \$2,000) meant that they had no budget to replace a server if it broke down or to purchase equipment like sterilizers for health centers.
97. UNRWA has also not invested in ensuring that its 'REACH' business management system is fully functional and state-of-the-art. As one interviewee pointed out, outdated technology is making UNRWA inefficient. The challenge for UNRWA is not only to find funding for a one-off investment to bring the Agency up to date but to secure sustainable funding to keep up with rapid technological developments.

<sup>47</sup> See Note 29 in United Nations (2020) *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East Financial Report and Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2019 and Report of the Board of Auditors*, General Assembly Official Records Seventy-fifth Session Supplement No 5D, A/75/5/Add.4

<sup>48</sup> UNRWA (2021) *Annual Operational Report 2020* [draft]

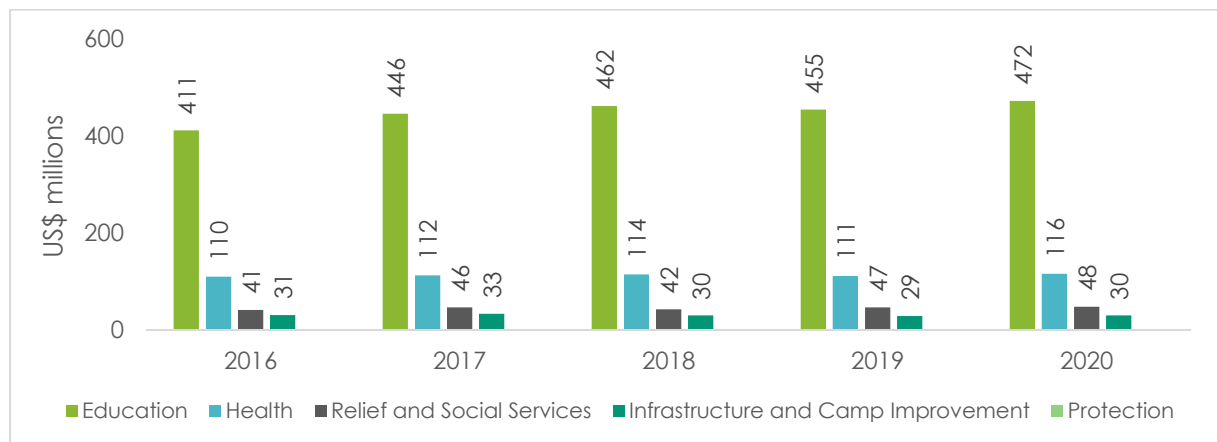


98. A lack of adequate funding has also left UNRWA unable to invest in environmentally friendly technology such as solar panels or green vehicles to transport area staff (although, as mentioned above, the Jordan field office has secured funding for a photovoltaic plant). Although UNRWA has been able to manage to keep delivering assistance to Palestine refugees despite years of under-investment or even no investment at all in some areas, there was concern that it is reaching breaking point.
99. The report discusses the implications of funding cuts for the quantity and quality of UNRWA services below. However, there was a strong sense within the Agency that it is not able to meet the needs of Palestine refugees adequately, particularly because needs have increased (as noted in section 2.1). One staff member argued, ‘We are balancing the books on the most vulnerable people in society; below that there is nothing left to trim.’ This is borne out by the reduction in cash grants and other forms of assistance highlighted in Figure 9.
100. Some interviewees argued that it is neither efficient nor effective for UNRWA senior managers to have to spend their time trying to mobilize the last few per cent of funding that UNRWA requires annually to maintain services, rather than focusing their efforts on managing UNRWA’s expenditure of around \$1 billion per year in an effective manner. In the eloquent terms of one interviewee, ‘We are constantly plugging a finger in a leaking bucket so we cannot look systematically at the water flow.’

UNRWA has managed to maintain programme budget expenditure on its main programmes, despite the decrease in PB income, but expenditure based on other funding streams has varied. It has reduced frontline staff providing services.

101. An analysis of UNRWA’s expenditure shows that it was able to maintain PB expenditure on programmes between 2016 and 2020 (see Figure 7 below). This is important because PB funding generally covers staffing and other key costs. However, UNRWA relies on EA and project funding for programmes other than health or education. For example, PB expenditure on protection was less than \$1 million (compared with over \$400 million on education so it is not visible in Figure 7).

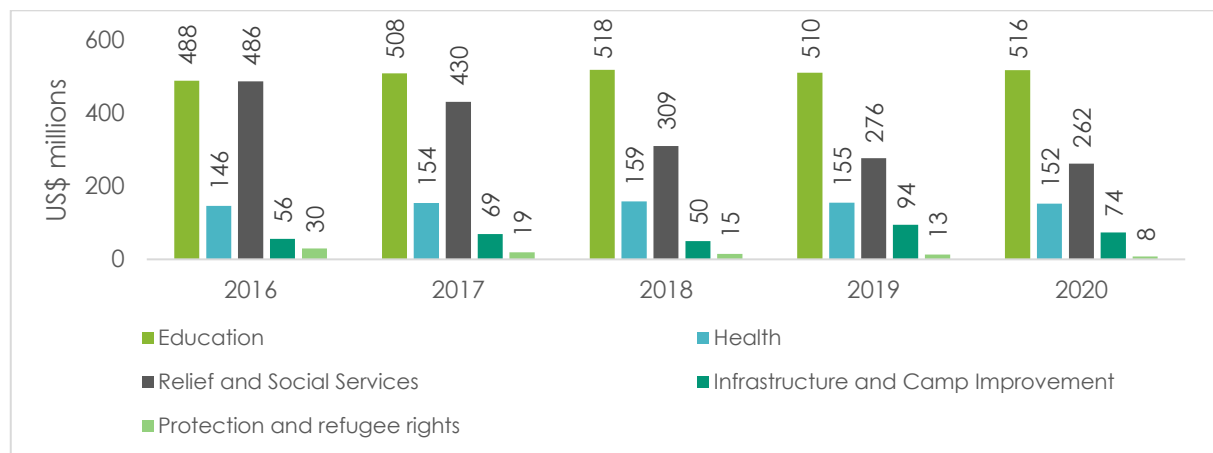
Figure 7. UNRWA PB expenditure by programme: 2016–2020



Source: UNRWA Annual Operational Reports 2016-2020

102. Figure 8 shows programme expenditure across all funding streams and highlights that total spending on protection and human rights (Strategic Outcome 1) went from \$30 million in 2016 to \$8 million in 2020 (a decrease of 74 per cent). Infrastructure and camp improvement activities are also very dependent on project funding, with total expenditure varying from \$56 million in 2016 to \$94 million in 2019 and down to \$73.7 million in 2020, although PB expenditure hovered around \$30 million across the evaluation period.

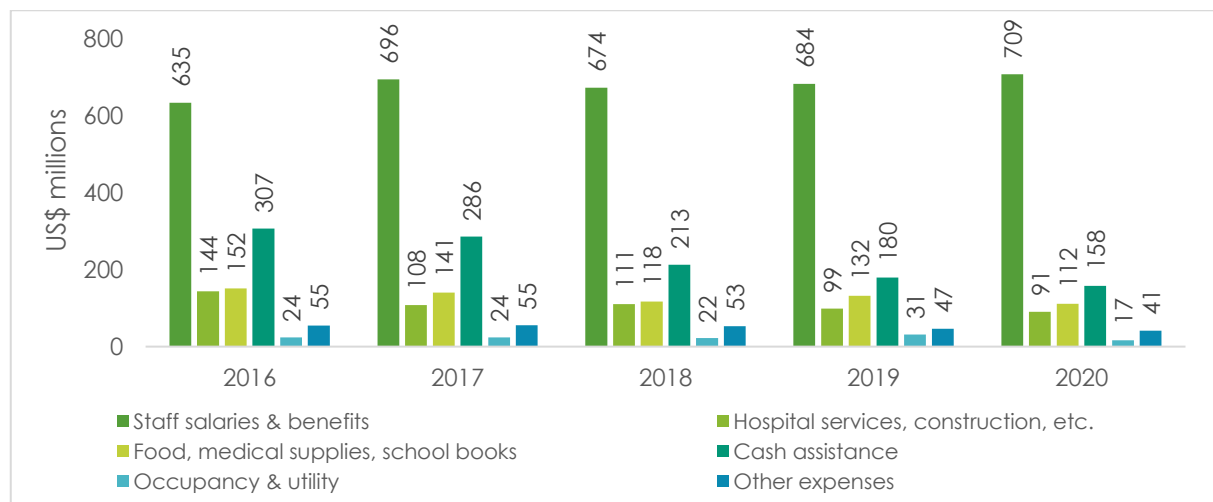
Figure 8. UNRWA total expenditure by programme: 2016–2020



Source: UNRWA annual financial statements 2016–2019 and unaudited data from draft Annual Operational Report 2020

103. Total spending through the relief and social services programme fell by 48 per cent from \$486 million in 2016 to \$252 million in 2020 (see Figure 8). This was largely due to a reduction in EA income and expenditure. However, the number of people receiving UNRWA cash and food assistance increased from around 255,000 in 2018 and 2019 to 390,443 in 2020.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, it was not surprising that Palestine refugee interviewees highlighted that the amount of cash/food received was very limited compared to their needs. In Lebanon specifically, with the devaluation of the Lebanese Pound against the US dollar, interviewees were very dissatisfied and argued that food assistance would be more valuable than cash. Figure 9 shows that UNRWA has also reduced its spending (across funding streams) on hospital and construction contracts, and on food, medical supplies and school supplies.

Figure 9. UNRWA expenditure by category: 2016–2020



Source: UNRWA annual financial statements 2016–2019 and UNRWA unaudited data for 2020

104. It would not be possible for UNRWA to provide services and assistance to Palestine refugees without frontline staff such as teachers, doctors, nurses, and social workers. UNRWA has been able to maintain overall expenditure levels on staffing over the evaluation period, which is covered largely by the PB (see Figure 9). However, as noted earlier, it has taken measures such as hiring staff on daily wages rather than permanent contracts and increasing vacancy rates.

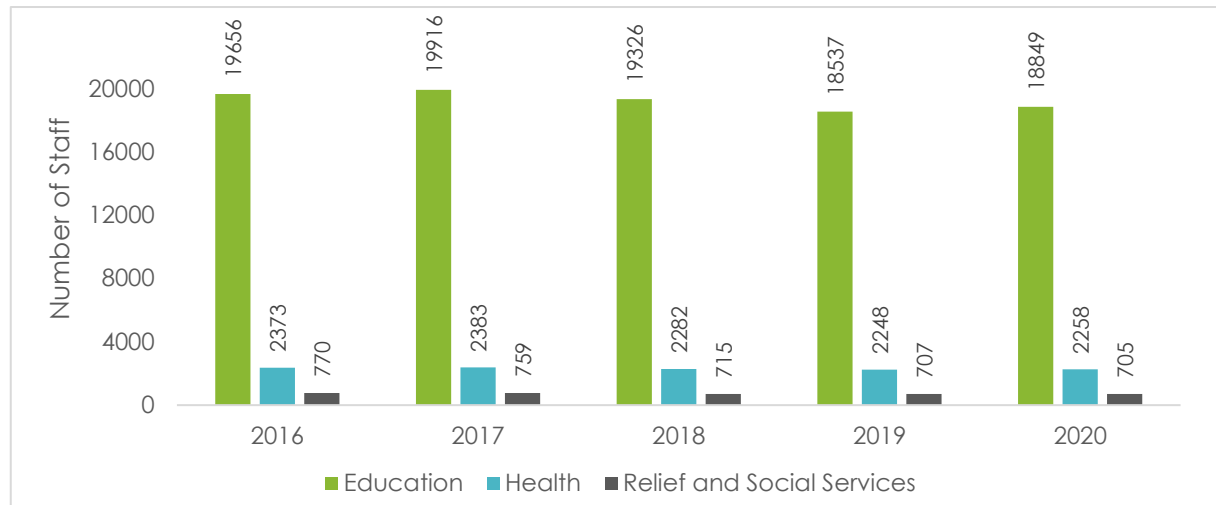
105. Figure 10 below shows that UNRWA has decreased frontline staff numbers across its three major programmes, with the education and health programmes reducing staff by 4–5 per cent while relief and

<sup>49</sup> UNRWA annual operational reports for 2018, 2019 and 2020 (2020 report available as draft).



social services reduced staff numbers by 8 per cent over the evaluation period.<sup>50</sup> In total, the Agency cut almost a thousand frontline staff between 2016 and 2020. According to interviewees, in Gaza, UNRWA only has one doctor per 10,000 refugees so they have to triage patients to prioritize the most critical cases.

Figure 10. UNRWA frontline staff numbers: 2016–2020



Source: UNRWA data

106. The MTS set a target for each doctor to spend five minutes with each patient, but this has been reduced during the strategy implementation period. The current target for the end of the MTS period is 3.5 minutes, which has implications for the quality of care that they can provide. One interviewee argued that UNRWA's inability to provide effective primary healthcare risks causing an increase in more serious conditions. Another example of the impact of staffing reductions on the quantity of services was that UNRWA has had to reduce the number of people receiving MHPSS since 2018.

**From a Palestine refugee perspective, funding shortfalls have also affected the quality of services that UNRWA can provide.**

107. While UNRWA does not have specific measures to assess the quality of its services, it has proxy indicators such as the proportion of classes exceeding the threshold of 40 children or more. This has increased from 38.8 per cent in 2016 to 52.6 per cent in 2020.<sup>51</sup> The shift from permanent contracts to hiring staff on daily wages highlighted above had implications for the performance and productivity of teachers. Although this had not yet translated into poorer performance in exams, there was a concern about the impact on attainment over time.

108. Other cost-cutting measures also impact on the quality of services, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable. For example, in Gaza, UNRWA had to cut teaching assistant posts even though they supported students with disabilities, and it was also unable to provide stationery to children from vulnerable families.

109. Palestine refugees expressed different levels of satisfaction with UNRWA services during interviews. For example, some indicated that, with the shift to remote learning during COVID-19, quality had been reduced due to the difficulties with distance learning and because the lack of access to computers or alternative devices left a large number of students unable to complete the curriculum.

110. Interviewees cited the large number of students in classes prior to COVID-19 as a major factor affecting the quality of education because teachers were unable to pay sufficient attention to students. A high turnover of teachers, the lack of a replacement when a teacher is absent, and lack of extracurricular activities were also factors affecting the quality of education.

111. Overall, Palestine refugees were satisfied with the service they received through the health programme though they noted that it was very basic and did not cover many specializations (including diagnostic tests)

<sup>50</sup> The data only includes frontline service delivery roles such as principals, teachers, teaching assistants, medical officers, nurses, midwives, dental surgeons, pharmacists and social workers.

<sup>51</sup> UNRWA (2021) *Annual Operational Report 2020* [draft]

and treatments. Interviewees across the fields of operation highlighted the lack of availability of specialized medication at UNRWA pharmacies (beyond common treatments such as anti-inflammatory drugs, antibiotics and painkillers). This meant that they had to pay for this medication.

112. This is understandable given that UNRWA only provides primary healthcare though it contributes to the cost of secondary and tertiary healthcare for Palestine refugees in need. UNRWA's limited ability to cover the cost of treatment and hospitalization as well as the limited capacity of laboratories and equipment to meet growing needs (due to funding constraints) influenced Palestine refugee perceptions. Despite the best efforts of UNRWA healthcare staff, under-staffing meant that patients had very limited time with a doctor (as noted above). Refugees also alluded to crowded clinics. Both these factors affected the quality of treatment received and refugee views.

UNRWA's traditional donors are sympathetic to the Secretary-General's 2017 call to make multiyear commitments and have sought to make contributions early in the year. Progress has been made but many donors remain constrained by their national budget and political systems. Earmarking of funds appears to be rising rather than diminishing.

113. Most donors try to provide support in line with the commitments embedded in the Grand Bargain and the Secretary-General's 2017 call to provide voluntary contributions early in the year and to make multiyear commitments.<sup>52</sup> Traditional donors noted that the Secretary-General's 2017 report helped encourage closer alignment with what UNRWA needs in terms of financing, but most said that what they can do is limited by their national governance systems related to funding UNRWA and similar agencies.

114. As reported in the 2020 evaluation of UNRWA's monitoring and reporting activities, the volume of multiyear funding contributions and of unearmarked funding improved markedly between 2015 and 2018.<sup>53</sup> In 2020, 48 per cent of funding from government donors was given under multiyear funding arrangements (29 agreements, up from 28 agreements in 2019).<sup>54</sup>

115. UNRWA was also able to secure 48 per cent of its income requirements for the PB (\$384.5 million) and 33.3 per cent for the EAs (\$141.5 million) by the end of the first quarter, surpassing its annual target. While there was a positive trend towards less earmarking between 2015 and 2018, this was reversed from 2019, despite donors' Grand Bargain commitment.<sup>55</sup> In 2019, 62.5 per cent of PB and EA funds were unearmarked. In 2020, this decreased to 59 per cent.<sup>56</sup>

UNRWA is making progress in reaching out to non-traditional donors and exploring alternative fundraising methods. However, the scale of UNRWA's needs means these efforts will mitigate but not resolve UNRWA's financing problem.

116. UNRWA has effective systems to liaise with its traditional donors. In turn they expressed satisfaction with the quality of engagement with UNRWA's resource mobilization team, noting that it is responsive and meets their own reporting needs effectively. UNRWA is also able to engage with national policymakers through its Representative Offices. These Offices seek to counter misrepresentations of UNRWA's activities in donor capitals, though as noted below, there is scope for UNRWA to improve its strategic communications and messaging.

117. The Secretary-General's 2017 paper endorsed UNRWA's initiative to try to diversify its funding base. The Agency has been taking this forward under its 2019–2021 Resource Mobilization Strategy. For example, UNRWA has engaged with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which has established a 'Waqf development fund', or endowment fund, for UNRWA, administered by the Islamic Development Bank. The fund aims to generate a sustainable source of contributions to the PB in the form of profits generated by an investment portfolio.

<sup>52</sup> See <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/Quality-funding> and <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-05/Workstream%207%268%20-%20Enhanced%20Quality%20Funding%20-%20Success%20and%20next%20steps%201-pager.pdf>. Donors have committed to reducing the earmarking of humanitarian contributions because flexible funding enables a faster, more cost-effective and more needs-based response.

<sup>53</sup> See UNRWA (2020) 'Evaluation of the Agency's Monitoring and Reporting Activities on the MTS 2016–2021', figures 13 and 14.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 126.

<sup>55</sup> UNRWA (2020) 'Evaluation of the Agency's Monitoring and Reporting Activities on the MTS 2016–2021', figure 14.

<sup>56</sup> UNRWA (2021) *Annual Operational Report* [draft], p. 126

118. UNRWA has also invested in digital fundraising, as both an advocacy and a fundraising tool, to diversify resource mobilization. UNRWA has secured, or is in the process of signing agreements, worth over \$1 million from private corporations and foundations in the Gulf.<sup>57</sup> However, the Agency notes that combined income from diversified sources made up only 6 per cent, or \$60.2 million, of total income in 2020 – significantly below the annual target of 26.5 per cent as well as the 2019 result of 20.6 per cent.<sup>58</sup>
119. UNRWA's investment in diversifying its sources of funding could help it alleviate its financing constraints over time. However, it is unlikely to provide a solution – particularly in the short term – to UNRWA's endemic underfunding. The MOPAN assessment also highlights UNRWA's overall challenge in mobilizing resources and suggests that, even with the best strategy, the Agency will struggle to significantly and durably improve its mobilization of much-needed resources.
120. It is also noteworthy that project funding for some staff posts in the unit responsible for fundraising was due to end in May/June 2021. UNRWA was therefore in the unenviable position of seeking funds to continue its fundraising work. Ideally these posts would be funded from UNRWA's PB, but funding shortages have prevented this.

UNRWA is able to mobilize resources at field office level but there is a need for greater communication and coherence between donor relations at headquarters and in the field.

121. UNRWA's donor relations and project support staff at field office level raise funds for projects that have been agreed as priorities with headquarters, EA and 'PB-relieving' projects (such as staffing and running costs for a school or health center that a donor wishes to build). Field offices can raise significant amounts of funding for innovative activities. For example, in 2020, the Jordan field office secured funding from the German government for a photovoltaic plant. The aim is to save up to 80 per cent of the over \$1 million that UNRWA pays in electricity costs across its operations each year. The Lebanon field office also raises significant funding for projects, currently managing around \$200 million in multiyear, multisectoral funding (including for reconstruction of Nahr el-Barad camp).
122. However, interviews highlighted the need for improved communication and coherence between donor relations at headquarters and field levels. Coordination was strong in 2019, with headquarters engaging field office staff on the resource mobilization strategy, communications and working together better. However, with the COVID-19 crisis and other challenges in 2020, this had stopped to the point where a headquarters decision to separate the external relations and communications departments was not communicated to donor relations staff in the field. The failure to provide updates on initiatives at headquarters left field office staff reliant on their donor contacts for information.

UNRWA has made significant achievements, in spite of chronic funding shortfalls, but interviewees within and outside UNRWA felt that it was weak at communicating these.

123. UNRWA's AORs highlight that it has continued to achieve its CMM indicator targets and deliver vital assistance to Palestine refugees despite a range of challenges over the evaluation period, including decreasing funding levels and the COVID-19 crisis in 2020. Despite this, a number of UNRWA staff members felt that the Agency had not communicated its achievements and the difference that it makes to the lives of Palestine refugees ('the stories behind each figure') in an effective manner.
124. They suggested a variety of reasons. One of these was a tendency to be defensive and focus on technical issues when attacked in the media or online instead of highlighting positive aspects. For example, when criticized in a review of its at-home learning materials<sup>59</sup>, interviewees felt that UNRWA should have focused on the speed with which it had been able to switch to providing remote learning and other positive aspects of its education services rather than trying to refute individual allegations. Some interviewees argued that UNRWA needs to develop more politically savvy narratives to counter the hostile environment in which it operates.
125. Another reason was the lack of means to capture the quality of the Agency's services and how they had led to improvements in the lives of Palestine refugees. There was a view that UNRWA was not even communicating the achievements identified in the AORs adequately, let alone looking beyond these. A third

<sup>57</sup> UN General Assembly (2020) *Report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA* (A/75/196)

<sup>58</sup> UNRWA (2020) *Annual Operational Report*, p.128.

<sup>59</sup> IMPACT-se (2021) *Review of UNRWA-Produced Study Materials in the Palestinian Territories November 2020-January 2021*

was simply a lack of resources and the right skill set to develop compelling narratives and also to have a strong communications presence in donor capitals, where funding decisions are often made.

126. Most donors consider that UNRWA's reporting is strong and meets their needs – particularly the AOR. They expressed satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of reporting. Some praised UNRWA's video communication. However, some called for stronger messaging on the impact of what UNRWA does – communication that is accessible to the general public in donor countries.

## 2.4 Structures, Systems and Processes

This section focuses on UNRWA structures, systems and processes for implementing the MTS. It presents findings against the following questions:

- 3.1 How adequate are MTS 2016–2022 planning and coordination processes?
- 3.3 To what extent are programmatic and operational structures and systems – in place to facilitate the achievement of the MTS 2016–2022 Strategic Outcomes – fit for purpose? The section addresses two specific points under this question requested by the ERG. The first is whether UNRWA's programmatic and operational structures and systems were reformed to facilitate the achievement of Strategic Outcomes. The second is the 'Extent to which evaluation function enables the Agency to assess what is working and what is not and use this to inform decision making'.

UNRWA's planning and coordination processes to implement the MTS are well developed and consistently applied; they effectively embed results-based monitoring in the core processes that underpin the Agency's operations.

127. UNRWA has well-designed planning and coordination processes, and evidence indicates that they are consistently applied (see Annex E for a mapping of the planning and coordination processes).<sup>60</sup> There is also evidence that systems have been progressively strengthened to respond to areas of weakness. For example, responding to an audit finding, the Department of Planning overhauled project management procedures and systems, as described under 3.3 below.<sup>61</sup>
128. UNRWA has established clear planning processes to ensure that the Strategic Outcomes identified in the MTS guide operational plans, and that field office and programme operational plans are coherent. There is a requirement that all UNRWA's policies are coherent with the objectives of the MTS and some policies (e.g., on gender equality and on infrastructure) are developed to the same timeframe as the MTS. The MTS establishes a framework that allows UNRWA to track results throughout the MTS period.
129. UNRWA's use of 'management compacts' between the Commissioner-General and responsible directors for the delivery of annual operational plans established accountability. UNRWA has robust monitoring systems – with monthly financial monitoring, quarterly financial and programme reviews, and six-monthly and annual reviews: both of the latter provide important opportunities for strategic reflection and learning. UNRWA's reporting against annual operational plans is transparent and clear.
130. This evaluation endorses the MOPAN assessment observation that one of UNRWA's main strengths is that it has 'An embedded practice of results-based management that is strongest within core programme areas and enabled by a continual strengthening of strategy and performance management; regular review of and use of results reporting and data to inform planning and decision making at different levels within the organization.'<sup>62</sup> The evaluation also agrees with the MOPAN observation that 'UNRWA's operational planning and implementation have matured over time... with an Agency-wide emphasis on strategic planning'.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>60</sup> These are set out in UNRWA (2017), *Organizational Directive No.21: Programme and Project Cycle Management*.

<sup>61</sup> UNRWA (14 Nov 2020) *Draft Revised Project Procedures Manual* (internal document)

<sup>62</sup> MOPAN (2019) *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA): 2017-18 Performance Assessment*, Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network p.47

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p.30

131. The evaluation team held a workshop with Department of Planning leadership to review and validate the team's understanding of the systems and processes used. It discussed UNRWA's planning and coordination policies and how they have been implemented, and in some areas adapted, since 2016. Annex E provides detail on the main elements of UNRWA planning and coordination processes that underpin the current MTS.

UNRWA had well-established programmatic and operational structures in place that were developed further under the implementation of the MTS. Some interviewees expressed concern about a tendency to centralize decision making.

132. The MOPAN review found that UNRWA's organizational architecture was consistent with its mandate and the MTS, and also that the organizational reform process started in 2007 had been robust.<sup>64</sup> This evaluation's findings support this assessment. UNRWA has a number of advisory committees for key operational areas, including resource allocation, human resources and procurement, as well as for the microfinance programme (which is financially independent from UNRWA). Some of these, such as the Advisory Committee on Resource Allocation pre-date the current MTS.<sup>65</sup> The advisory committees make recommendations to the Commissioner-General (CG), who makes final decisions based on those recommendations.

133. The Agency has a Management Committee comprising senior staff across programmes, headquarters and field offices. This is not a decision-making body but a consultative one that supports the CG. UNRWA had an executive decision-making body chaired by the Chief of Staff. This dealt with policy and organizational issues that were beyond the remit of the advisory committees or UNRWA's annual planning process.

134. It did not meet very often but, in late 2020, the CG decided to convene the Executive Committee (ExCom) every week or two. There was also a decision that advisory committee recommendations should be discussed and endorsed in the ExCom before the CG made a final decision. Some staff members expressed concern that this had slowed down decision making.

135. There was also a concern that, since the loss of funding from the United States government in 2018, there had been a tendency to centralize decision making, even on relatively small matters such as approving staff overtime above a small threshold. Comments on the first statement under question 1 of the online staff survey reflected this concern, with 40 respondents out of 145 noting that decision making is centralized and hierarchical, with a top-down approach (Annex E).

136. The area of project management is one example of structures and systems being strengthened during the MTS implementation period. As explained in section 2.1, project funding has become increasingly important to complement the PB and fill gaps. In 2015, it became clear that UNRWA needed to improve its project management (including due to the implementation of UNRWA's enterprise resources planning system REACH).<sup>66</sup>

137. It developed a manual to complement the organizational directive that covered project cycle management<sup>67</sup> as well as a technical instruction that outlines the process for developing projects and getting approval from the Project Review Committee.<sup>68</sup> The process for reviewing and approving proposed projects ensures that they contribute to the achievement of MTS Strategic Outcomes. The Department of Planning has a separate process for developing and approving interventions under EAs.

UNRWA has clear structures and systems to link headquarters and field offices, but some staff felt that it would be helpful to have mechanisms to promote communication and collaboration with peer groups across the field offices.

138. UNRWA staff outlined clear structures and systems to ensure coherence between headquarters and field offices. The midyear and annual results reviews are an opportunity for a variety of headquarters and field staff to come together, while field office and headquarters directors can exchange information through Management Committee meetings.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p.30

<sup>65</sup> UNRWA (2012) *Organizational Directive No. 31: Terms of Reference of the Advisory Committee on Resource Allocation*

<sup>66</sup> UNRWA (2020) *UNRWA Project Procedures Manual*, v.0.6, November 2020

<sup>67</sup> UNRWA (2017) *Organizational Directive No. 21: Programme and Project Cycle Management*

<sup>68</sup> UNRWA (2018) *Technical Instruction 1: Project Identification, Verification and Approval*, Department of Planning, Strategic Project Management Office

139. Individual programme departments at headquarters provide technical guidance and support to programme staff in the field offices and convene meetings with field offices. For example, the health programme has an annual retreat to bring together staff across field offices, and the education programme has a weekly call between the programme director at headquarters and the chiefs of the education programme at field office level. There used to be annual meetings for field project support officers, but these had been discontinued due to the financial crisis and COVID-19.

140. Operational functions such as finance also have mechanisms to bring together headquarters and field office staff. The Department of Planning brings together the Syria, Lebanon and Jordan field offices for annual planning meetings on the Syria crisis. Despite this, some staff felt that there was a lack of mechanisms for ongoing communication and information sharing between peer groups in field offices, e.g., field office directors or deputy directors or at programme level (outside the various annual meetings). They felt that this would enable them to share experiences on a more regular basis and to learn from each other.

**UNRWA has reformed programmes, but Palestine refugees tend to view changes as a threat to their rights under international law while national staff fear the loss of livelihoods.**

141. The current MTS refers to major reforms to the health and education programmes, which started in 2011, and also to organizational reforms.<sup>69</sup> However, the relief and social services programme has undergone reform during the current MTS, including a shift from food distribution to cash assistance in Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank since 2016<sup>70</sup> and the reform of the Agency's social work. As noted above, UNRWA also strengthened operational structures and systems.

142. As noted in section 2.2, the challenge for UNRWA is the level of resistance to the introduction of change from different stakeholder groups. An interviewee who had undertaken extensive consultations with Palestine refugees strongly argued that, in the absence of a peace process that is meaningful for refugees, UNRWA has come to represent the Palestine refugee issue. Therefore, they regard any change in its services as an existential threat (even though UNRWA was established to provide assistance until the implementation of UNGA resolution 194 (III) (1948), which has been reaffirmed by the General Assembly since 1948).

143. Refugees are concerned that change inevitably means reduced assistance over time that will eventually make their situation invisible. Therefore, the more visible the assistance that they receive (whether in the form of a school or a bag of food), the better their chance of preserving UNRWA as an institution and their right to return.<sup>71</sup> This echoes the finding from an earlier evaluation that, 'people worry about their rights being diminished along with a slow but steady decrease in support.'<sup>72</sup>

144. Similarly, as discussed in section 2.2, host governments do not want changes or reductions to UNRWA services. UNRWA area staff fear change and a loss of jobs because, in light of limited employment options in some of the fields of operation, they and their families rely on UNRWA. There was feedback that some staff members have been with the Agency for decades and set in their ways of working. As a result, UNRWA attempts to reduce staff numbers or change their roles have led to industrial action. From a host government perspective, UNRWA maintains stability through its large-scale employment of Palestine refugees (as highlighted in section 2.2) so industrial action can be a worrying sign of instability.

**UNRWA's evaluation function has been under-resourced, making it challenging to implement the evaluation plan in the MTS.**

145. UNRWA's Evaluation Division is located within the Department of Internal Oversight Services, making it independent. Although the MTS included an evaluation plan as an annex, implementing this has been a major challenge because of a lack of funding. A peer review of UNRWA's evaluation function in 2015 identified that the resources for conducting central evaluations were 'very limited and unpredictable', with

<sup>69</sup> UNRWA (2016) *UNRWA Medium Term Strategy 2016-2021*

<sup>70</sup> UNRWA (2018) *Evaluation of UNRWA's Transition to the e-card Modality in the Jordan, Lebanon and West Bank Fields*, Department of Internal Oversight Services and Avenir Analytics

<sup>71</sup> This is even though UNRWA's continued existence and the delivery of its mandate (as extended by the UN General Assembly) for the provision of assistance and protection to Palestine refugees pending a just and lasting solution to their plight, is not the same as the Right of Return of Palestine refugees under international law. UNRWA was established to provide assistance pending the implementation of UNGA resolution 194 (III) (1948), which has been reaffirmed by the General Assembly since 1948. The Agency does not have a mandate for durable solutions.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 12



less than 0.1 per cent of UNRWA's PB allocated to the evaluation function (compared with 0.3 per cent in most UN agencies).<sup>73</sup> In 2016/17, this had fallen to 0.01 per cent of the total PB against the UN benchmark that 0.5 per cent of programme expenditure should be allocated to evaluations.<sup>74</sup>

146. The MOPAN review also pointed out that UNRWA's evaluation function had been 'a casualty of the funding crisis', leaving the Agency unable to conduct several planned strategic evaluations between 2015 and 2018.<sup>75</sup> This affected the quality of evaluations as well, with the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services reviewing two out of the three evaluation reports that UNRWA published in 2016/17 and finding that neither were rated good or very good for their overall quality.<sup>76</sup>
147. With UNRWA's funding shortfalls becoming worse since 2018, the Agency continues to face the challenge of deciding whether to allocate scarce resources to programmes and service delivery or to support functions such as evaluations. The UNRWA evaluation policy recommends a funding approach and notes that responsibility for ensuring that the function is adequately funded rests with the CG.<sup>77</sup> However, this has not been implemented and has left the evaluation function dependent on additional donor funding to deliver on its mandate to manage and conduct central evaluations and independent assessments, and to commission complex evaluations.
148. Since 2019, the Evaluation Division has sought to improve both the quantity of evaluations and their quality (by focusing on more technical backstopping for evaluations managed by field offices or programme departments and also ensuring that central evaluations comply with UN quality standards). Currently, the Evaluation Division only has funding for two international and one national position.
149. It is easier for the Agency to build the cost of evaluations into project funding, and it has been able to conduct a number of 'decentralized' project evaluations managed by field offices and programme departments, such as of a European Union-funded project to assist Palestine refugees from Syria.<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, the lack of funding has limited the Evaluation Division's capacity to provide technical leadership and support to these decentralized evaluations.
150. With resources to undertake centralized evaluations being very limited, UNRWA has relied on its Results-Based Monitoring (RBM) system to assess MTS implementation. In particular, interviewees highlighted the annual results review as a good opportunity to discuss progress and challenges. The MOPAN review found that 'UNRWA has a strong corporate commitment to results-based management and there is strong evidence of a 'results-orientated' culture at various levels of the organization to ensure evidence-based decision making and accountability'.<sup>79</sup>
151. An evaluation of UNRWA's monitoring and reporting activities also found that they were well managed, with many UNRWA staff valuing the Department of Planning's coordination support and mechanisms for internal reflection on progress and challenges. However, a lack of resources for analyzing and acting on data was a significant challenge with following up on problems identified.
152. UNRWA could also strengthen follow-up on challenges by involving installation managers and area staff (as those managing the frontline delivery of services close to communities) in discussions of results.<sup>80</sup> This would also address feedback in the online staff survey (Annex E) that there is a lack of consultation with staff in decision making (comments to question 1) and that there is an opportunity for better inclusion of field staff inputs into decision making (in response to question 4).

<sup>73</sup> United Nations Evaluation Group (2015) *Professional Peer Review of the UNRWA Evaluation Function*, Peer Review Panel

<sup>74</sup> OIOS (2019) *United Nations Evaluation Dashboard 2016-17: Assignment No: IED-19-002*, Office of Internal Oversight Services Inspection and Evaluation Division

<sup>75</sup> MOPAN (2019) *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA): 2017-18 Performance Assessment*, Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network, p. 45

<sup>76</sup> OIOS (2019) *United Nations Evaluation Dashboard 2016-17: Assignment No: IED-19-002*, Office of Internal Oversight Services Inspection and Evaluation Division

<sup>77</sup> UNRWA (2016) *UNRWA Evaluation Policy*. Lot # DIOS 1/2016

<sup>78</sup> UNRWA (2019) *Final Evaluation Report: Maintaining the Resilience of Palestine Refugees from Syria in Jordan and Lebanon*, Martine van de Velde, Mainlevel Consulting AG; UNRWA (2020) *Final Evaluation of EUTF Funded Project in Jordan and Lebanon MADAD II: Strengthening the Resilience of Palestinian Refugees from Syria in Jordan and Lebanon*, IOD Parc

<sup>79</sup> MOPAN (2019) *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA): 2017-18 Performance Assessment*, Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network, p. 94

<sup>80</sup> UNRWA (2020) *Evaluation of UNRWA Monitoring and Reporting Activities on the Medium Term Strategy 2016-2021*

## 2.5 MTS Process Commitments and Cross-Cutting Issues

This section examines UNRWA's delivery against a set of 'process' commitments in the MTS but also its mainstreaming of three main cross-cutting issues. Specifically, the section addresses the following two evaluation questions:

- 3.4 To what extent are the process commitments in the current MTS (including participation of Palestine refugees and staff, synergies between programme areas, and partnerships) on track, and contributing to the achievement of the MTS 2016–2022? The report has already covered the staffing aspect of this question in section 2.3 on funding and resource mobilization.
- 2.5 To what extent has UNRWA successfully mainstreamed the cross-cutting issues of gender, youth and the inclusion of persons with disabilities into its programmes and ways of working?

UNRWA has complaints and feedback mechanisms in place to deliver Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) but could have done more to deliver on the ambition of the MTS commitments.

153. The MTS has a section on fostering a culture of partnership with refugees. This commits to giving refugees influence over decisions that affect them, involving them at different stages of the planning cycle and reporting to them annually on results. UNRWA has a short AAP framework that outlines five guiding principles: information sharing, participatory information gathering, consultation, ensuring the participation of vulnerable groups, and complaints and feedback mechanisms.<sup>81</sup>
154. While UNRWA has mechanisms in place for refugees to make their voices heard, such as School Parliaments, parent-teacher associations and camp committees, and various complaints and feedback mechanisms, the evaluation findings suggest that it has not delivered on the full range of its commitments (with interviewees pointing to a lack of funding as one key factor).
155. Another challenge is perhaps that UNRWA has tended to equate accountability with putting in place feedback and complaints mechanisms, based on the humanitarian sector's approach. However, it has been argued that such an approach, when divorced from the concept of responsibility, becomes simply transactional.<sup>82</sup>
156. Since UNRWA's relationship with Palestine refugees goes well beyond traditional humanitarian agency-beneficiary relationships and is linked to Palestinian refugee perceptions about their identity, rights under international law and UNRWA's mandate (as described in sections 2.2 and 2.4), it needs to apply a broader concept of accountability that reflects the MTS commitment to 'a culture of partnership' with Palestine refugees.
157. UNRWA reports encouraging feedback and complaints and providing safe and confidential avenues for Palestine refugees to raise concerns and receive responses.<sup>83</sup> Interviews with UNRWA area/field staff and refugees identified that these mechanisms include raising complaints with camps managers, complaints boxes, an 'Open Door Policy' (with health center managers, for example) and direct communication with UNRWA field staff (in many cases, refugees felt most comfortable raising issues with UNRWA social workers).
158. However, they also highlighted that refugee awareness of complaints mechanisms was sometimes limited and they were not always sure what was the most appropriate mechanism to use. When refugees did make complaints, they did not always receive a response on how their complaint was being addressed.
159. In a few cases, refugees were hesitant to make written complaints because they were afraid it could jeopardize the services they received. This suggests that UNRWA needs to engage more with refugees accessing its services so that they can feel confident about using feedback mechanisms as a tool for improving services.

<sup>81</sup> UNRWA (nd) *UNRWA Framework for Accountability to Affected Populations*

<sup>82</sup> Aijazi, O. (2020) *Why Technocratic Understandings of Humanitarian Accountability Undermine Local Communities*, Development in Practice, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09614524.2021.1911939>

<sup>83</sup> UNRWA (2021) *Annual Operational Report 2020* [draft]



While there is a degree of synergy between UNRWA's programmes, there is scope to improve mechanisms for collaboration.

160. Although the MTS only makes one reference to synergies between its existing programmes (as a way of strengthening its response to poverty), the evaluation identified several examples of coordination, collaboration and synergy between UNRWA programmes through both interviews and the survey.

161. These included a system for referring GBV cases identified through the health system to case managers under the relief and social services programme, school health teams, provision of MHPSS in schools and efforts to link TVET and the microfinance programme to promote youth entrepreneurship and self-employment. COVID-19 incentivized programmes to work together on the response, for example, in ensuring that the return of students to school was compliant with COVID-19 health measures.

162. However, there was a general view that UNRWA could improve mechanisms for working across programmes with suggestions including the creation of joint committees or task forces, inclusive strategic planning processes, improved structures at area staff level, the use of shared computer drives, and mechanisms to bring programme staff together both at headquarters and at field levels.

UNRWA has a variety of programmatic partnership arrangements with a large number of organizations. These include long-term institutionalized partnerships with UNESCO and WHO and partnerships across field offices that are based on contextual needs. Field-level partners tend to fill gaps in UNRWA services.

163. UNRWA engages with partners in different ways across headquarters/regional level and field offices (i.e., service delivery/activities implementation, advocacy, and coordination) and adopts a variety of partnership agreements (i.e., Memoranda of Understanding, UN to UN agreement, annual workplan, indirect accession agreement, etc.). The scope of the partnership depends on contextual need (i.e., the extent to which the assistance might be better provided by a partner).

164. A stock-take of partnerships from 2010–2017 identified formal and non-formal partnerships with over 600 entities. The MTS refers to the importance and different purposes of partnerships and UNRWA subsequently developed a strategic framework for partnerships.<sup>84</sup> This outlines the procedure for establishing a partnership arrangement, with the Department of Planning at headquarters playing an important role in the process, including ensuring that partnerships align with the Agency's strategic priorities. Relevant programme departments and the department of legal affairs are also involved as needed.

165. The Department of Planning has bi-weekly meetings with field offices, which provides an opportunity to discuss potential partnerships. It also leads the annual operational planning process during which field offices and programme departments are asked to identify their partnership priorities. As the MOPAN assessment notes, its partnership strategy positions UNRWA to act 'where it has a proven advantage over other service providers and where it can make the most impact'.<sup>85</sup>

166. Although not made explicit in the MTS, it has had long-term institutionalized partnerships with UNESCO for the education programme and WHO for the health programme. These agencies second key programme staff to UNRWA and provide a range of other support including technical support. UNRWA has also built partnerships with a number of other UN agencies, including WFP (on food distributions), UN-Habitat (United Nations Human Settlements Programme under ICIP in Syria), UNFPA, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to support Palestine refugee access to services.

167. It also partners with the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement and local and international NGOs, including the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). The more strategic partnership agreements are reviewed on a regular basis. For example, UNRWA has annual meetings with UNHCR to monitor the partnership and this might identify new priorities. Since UNRWA assistance is delivered at field level, this is often where partnerships are initiated. These partnerships can then develop into more strategic engagement, as highlighted by the case study of UNRWA's partnership with the NRC in the partnership strategic framework.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>84</sup> UNRWA (2015/16) *Partnerships: A Strategic Framework*, Department of Planning

<sup>85</sup> MOPAN (2019) *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA): 2017-18 Performance Assessment*, Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network

<sup>86</sup> UNRWA (2015/16) *Partnerships: A Strategic Framework*, Department of Planning

168. In some cases, partnerships are based on delivering a specific project and are more transactional in nature. This was reflected in interviews with a UN agency and an NGO. These suggested that partnerships were not always based on shared/agreed objectives and results or long-term planning; instead, agreements tended to be short-term and ad hoc. There is some evidence of partners having close consultations and coordination with UNRWA to plan, design and implement specific activities but there appeared to be a lack of strategic engagement in recent times.
169. One partner mentioned that it had been difficult to develop ideas jointly with UNRWA and that, in the last couple of years, UNRWA had not engaged proactively to discuss strategic priorities, core issues and opportunities for working together (possibly due to lack of resources and time, and loss of key staff). An UNRWA staff member at headquarters noted that the 2018 financial crisis had a negative impact on the Agency's ability to further partnerships, including because it did not have the resources to develop the strategic framework for partnerships.
170. Unlike other UN agencies, UNRWA is a direct service provider, so it does not rely on implementing partners in the same way. Rather, in field-level partnerships, both UN and NGO partners tend to fill gaps in UNRWA service delivery, with refugees being referred to them for services that UNRWA cannot provide mainly due to lack of funding. This covers different sectors such as health, education, protection, and youth-related services, and, for example, includes referrals for psychosocial support and counselling, support with case management or persons with disabilities, and medical services.
171. Partners also provide alternative or complementary activities that add to what UNRWA does. For instance, some partners offer pre-school activities to refugee children in UNRWA camps or support young refugees with leadership and civic engagement activities that UNRWA does not offer. These collaborations have benefited Palestinian refugees with what is sometimes lifechanging support and allowed more people to receive much-needed services.
172. For example, UNICEF in Lebanon has supported UNRWA to create its Youth Unit and has also helped UNRWA to reach more youth with vocational activities (UNRWA in Lebanon can assist up to 1,200 youth with its vocational center but UNICEF has helped to reach 3,000–4,000 youth). WFP in Jordan has been able to support 12,000 Palestine refugee families on a quarterly basis by giving flexible assistance through cash or restricted vouchers, and has also been providing food assistance to around 160–180 vulnerable Palestine refugee families from Syria in King Abdullah Park camp.
173. Sometimes, UNRWA undertakes joint advocacy work and coordination with other UN agencies (i.e., UNICEF and UNFPA), including as part of the cluster system, but the extent of this engagement differs by field location and organization. While headquarters does not prescribe how field offices should engage with UN development assistance frameworks and coordination because these depend on the approach of host governments and the UN, there is a clear expectation that they will engage proactively in humanitarian coordination mechanisms. There was evidence that UNRWA field offices participate actively with UN Humanitarian Country Teams as well as the cluster system.

**A variety of factors influence the success of field-level partnerships and activities, including the quality of UNRWA staff and UNRWA structure and processes.**

174. UN and NGO partners provided a variety of explanations and examples of what is working well and less well, and why, in UNRWA partnerships. However, a couple of elements recurred in the interviews:
- The quality of the UNRWA teams involved; how dedicated, capable and collaborative UNRWA staff are an important factor influencing the success of partnerships and activities. Several partners mentioned good collaboration and relationship with UNRWA, with UNRWA teams on the ground in particular being perceived as helpful, cooperative and responsive.
  - A challenge to the success of partnerships and activities is the high level of UNRWA bureaucracy and centralized decision making, which often makes things slow. Also, some partners perceived UNRWA as a large and complex organization whose hierarchy and structure were not always clear to them, generating confusion about how best to follow up on issues.

UNRWA has performed well against UN indicators on gender equality. The Agency has adopted an action plan on gender parity and committed to increasing the number of women in management positions but there is a backlash against this, and it has not yet achieved targets.

175. As noted in the MTS, UNRWA participates in UN System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Although UNRWA was outperforming other UN agencies on UN-SWAP indicators when the MTS was developed, it committed to establishing a gender marker to track progress on resource allocation to gender equality (a requirement of the UN-SWAP) and to increase the number of women in management positions.
176. UNRWA's gender equality strategy identified how it would develop a gender marker to track resource allocation across the Agency's three funding streams and feed information into strategic planning processes.<sup>87</sup> Its 2019 report on the implementation of the strategy (the most recent one available) highlighted progress in applying the gender marker to project funding. This included training 15 staff members in the Lebanon office (which relies heavily on project funding) on the use of the gender marker and the inclusion of the head of gender in the projects review committee so that projects that did not meet minimum requirements were not approved.<sup>88</sup>
177. In 2020, UNRWA met or exceeded the requirements for 10 of the 17 indicators in the UN-SWAP 2.0 (compared with only seven in 2019). This was despite the lack of additional resources.<sup>89</sup> In December 2017, UNRWA adopted an action plan on gender parity, in line with the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity.<sup>90</sup> At the end of 2020, 54 per cent of UNRWA's staff were female (15,585 out of a total workforce of 28,756).<sup>91</sup> However, it has made limited progress on increasing the number of women in management positions.
178. The gender breakdown for area staff in senior and leadership positions (at Grade 16 and above) was 31 per cent female (158 posts) versus 69 per cent (345 posts) male. While this represents a 1 per cent improvement on results achieved in 2019, it was 12 per cent short of the 2020 target. Amongst senior international staff (P5 and above), 39 per cent of incumbents were female (22 out of 56) and 61 per cent (34) male. This was a 3 per cent improvement against results achieved in 2019, but 4 per cent below the annual target.
179. While it is positive that UNRWA is promoting gender parity in its workforce and increasing the number of women in management positions, the staff survey as well as interviews identified a strong backlash from male staff against these measures (these were included in the 123 qualitative responses to question 5 on how successfully UNRWA has mainstreamed gender into its programmes and 99 qualitative responses to question 6 on how successfully UNRWA has mainstreamed gender into its internal working practices. See the details of the online staff survey in Annex E).
180. Some interviewees noted that UNRWA has tended to equate gender with women and girls, rather than engaging with men and boys as well. Female respondents to the survey felt that, though more women were in senior positions, they were not being heard. This highlights the need for UNRWA to engage with male staff to secure their buy-in and to take steps to promote a workplace culture that enables women to be heard.

UNRWA has mainstreamed gender into its programmes and strengthened staff capacity on gender and GBV.

181. UNRWA has mainstreamed gender into its programmes in a variety of ways. Certain programmes, such as the SSNP, ICIP and microfinance, prioritize assistance to women and women-headed households. UNRWA's annual reporting on the implementation of the gender equality strategy provides substantial evidence on how the Agency is mainstreaming gender into programmes. For example, in 2019, 16,052 women accessed loans through the microfinance programme in four areas of operations (Gaza, West Bank, Jordan, and Syria) which represented 83 per cent of the target.
182. UNRWA has also promoted gender-sensitive health services and one priority has been to include men in pre-conception care and family planning. In education, UNRWA has focused on the gender dimensions of

<sup>87</sup> UNRWA (2017) *Integrating Gender, Improving Services, Impacting Lives: Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2021*

<sup>88</sup> UNRWA (2020) *UNRWA Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2021: Annual Implementation Report January-December 2019*

<sup>89</sup> UNRWA (2021) *Annual Operational Report 2020* [draft]

<sup>90</sup> UNRWA (2020) *UNRWA Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2021: Annual Implementation Report January-December 2019*

<sup>91</sup> UNRWA (2021) *Annual Operation Report 2020* [draft], page 58

school dropouts, noting that male students have higher drop-out rates.<sup>92</sup> Interviewees also highlighted mechanisms for referring GBV cases identified through the health programme to UNRWA's social workers for case management and ongoing support.

183. Strengthening staff capacity on gender issues is clearly necessary to enable them to mainstream gender into programmes. Respondents to question 5 in the online survey (on mainstreaming gender into programmes) identified positive examples of UNRWA's efforts in this regard such as raising staff awareness on the topic of violence and training health staff to identify cases of GBV (see Annex E).
184. UNRWA's 2019 annual report on the gender equality strategy identifies a broad range of measures to strengthen staff capacity and the Agency's response to GBV, despite a lack of funding for staff capacity development. UNRWA also trained 30 gender focal points on gender analysis and developed e-learning to provide mandatory gender awareness training to all staff.<sup>93</sup>
185. Gender-disaggregated data is also a critical requirement for effective gender mainstreaming. UNRWA collects gender-disaggregated data for several CMM indicators but both interviews and the online survey showed that this is not necessarily used to inform programming decisions, with the exception of the education programme perhaps.
186. In response to question 10 in the online survey on whether UNRWA uses gender data to inform programming, 46 per cent of the 569 respondents said 'often' but 33 per cent said 'occasionally'. Of the 74 staff members who provided qualitative responses to this question, many said that they did not know or did not understand the question.
187. UNRWA's gender equality strategy identifies four drivers of change, the first of which is a strengthened gender architecture to ensure that gender structures and coordinating mechanisms are geared towards providing technical inputs and facilitating the implementation of identified actions for gender mainstreaming. However, interviews indicated that the five field offices still have limited capacity to coordinate and support the implementation of field gender action plans since only the Gaza and Jordan field offices have gender mainstreaming officers.
188. Despite the MTS's recognition of the importance of meeting the specific needs of Palestine youth, UNRWA has limited activities for doing this.
189. The MTS makes several references to the importance of meeting the specific needs of Palestine refugee youth, in particular, providing them with livelihood opportunities. It also recognizes that certain sub-groups of youth are especially vulnerable because of 'exclusion, discrimination and the ongoing denial of their rights.'<sup>94</sup> Currently, UNRWA only has the TVET programme to support employment opportunities for youth across its fields of operation and, to a small extent, the microfinance programme.
190. The online survey of UNRWA staff highlighted opportunities to address a broader set of unmet needs, such as career guidance, youth activities in camps and addressing drug-related problems (see Annex E). According to Palestine refugee interviewees, UNRWA only had ad hoc initiatives for youth. This is even though, as noted in section 2.2, addressing the needs of Palestine youth is one way in which UNRWA contributes to regional stability. With the TVET and microfinance programmes targeted at relatively small numbers of Palestine refugee youth, Palestine refugee interviewees argued that UNRWA should increase its engagement.

UNRWA has a framework in place and addresses the needs of persons with disabilities in a variety of ways but is constrained by a lack of funding.

191. UN agencies tend to be weak at addressing the needs of persons with disabilities in their humanitarian programmes.<sup>95</sup> UNRWA, however, put in place a policy on promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in 2010, followed by a strategy in 2011.<sup>96</sup> In 2017, it issued guidelines on disability inclusion. This notes that the UNGA has encouraged the Agency to address the needs and rights of persons with disabilities, in line

<sup>92</sup> UNRWA (2020) *UNRWA Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2021: Annual Implementation Report January-December 2019*

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> UNRWA (2016) *Medium Term Strategy 2016-2021*, p. 19

<sup>95</sup> Mowjee, T. and A. Featherstone (2020) *Independent Review of the Four Priority Underfunded Areas for the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF): Final Report*

<sup>96</sup> UNRWA (2010) *UNRWA Disability Policy: Promoting the Rights of persons with disabilities*; UNRWA (2011) *UNRWA Disability Implementation Strategy 2011-2013: Promoting the Rights of persons with disabilities*

with the UN Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities, as part of its mandate.<sup>97</sup>

192. UNRWA also participated in developing the normative framework on addressing the needs of persons with disabilities in the humanitarian field, including signing the Charter on Disability Inclusion in 2016 and engaging in the development of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on the Inclusion of persons with disabilities in Humanitarian Action in 2019. Since 2018, it has published an annual report on disability inclusion.<sup>98</sup> In 2020, UNRWA, together with other UN entities, submitted a report on 2019 performance against 15 indicators in the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy.<sup>99</sup>
193. UNRWA has an inclusive education policy based on a human rights-based approach to education and on appreciating the diversity of learners. It also has an inclusive education strategy that outlines its approach to providing additional support to children vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion and also to developing systems to respond to children with extensive needs.<sup>100</sup> The percentage of students with disabilities receiving additional UNRWA support increased from 37.7 per cent in 2018 to 71.7 per cent in 2019.<sup>101</sup>
194. UNRWA reports a range of targeted assistance and services to person with disabilities across its field offices and programmes, including ensuring that new UNRWA premises comply with international technical standards for accessibility. It recognizes that a lack of reliable data across its programmes has been one barrier to disability inclusion. The health programme has tried to address this by piloting the use of the Washington Group questions to collect disability data.<sup>102</sup>
195. COVID-19-related restrictions not only affected Palestine refugees with disabilities disproportionately but also posed operational challenges for UNRWA. In response, the health and education programmes put in place specific measures, including staff training and guidance, to deliver inclusive services.<sup>103</sup> Interviewees highlighted that the relief and social services and ICIP programmes, in particular, prioritize persons with disabilities. However, funding shortfalls had led to a reduction in the number of persons with disabilities helped and/or the level of assistance. UNRWA itself has noted the challenge of the lack of adequate funding for disability inclusion.<sup>104</sup>

## 2.6 Achievement of Strategic Outcomes

This section responds to one remaining evaluation question:

- 4.1 To what extent is it expected that the MTS 2016–2022 Strategic Outcomes will be achieved, and what are the major factors (e.g., funding issues, the 2019 management crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic) influencing achievement?

**UNRWA is delivering against its indicators and targets, which is a major achievement, particularly in view of the chronic funding crisis and COVID-19.**

196. UNRWA's 2020 AOR identifies trends in the results achieved against the CMM indicators on which it reports for each Strategic Outcome over the MTS implementation period. Nineteen indicators had positive trends while six had negative trends. These were mainly in the area of microfinance and livelihoods. Under the health programme, there had been a reduction in average daily medical consultations, indicative of understaffing. The two indicators where the education programme had negative trends related to the proportion of classes with more than 40 students.
197. Some 2020 results were affected by COVID-19 (such as the ability to screen target populations for diabetes or the percentage of vocational training graduates employed).<sup>105</sup> During its annual results review, UNRWA

<sup>97</sup> UNRWA (2017) *Disability Inclusion Guidelines*

<sup>98</sup> UNRWA (2019) *Transforming the Lives of Palestine Refugees with Disabilities*

<sup>99</sup> UNRWA (2020) *Disability Inclusion Annual Report 2020*

<sup>100</sup> UNRWA (2013) *Inclusive Education Policy* and UNRWA (2013) *Inclusive Education Strategy*

<sup>101</sup> UNRWA (2020) *Annual Operational Report 2019 for the Reporting Period 01 January-31 December 2019*

<sup>102</sup> UNRWA (2020) *Disability Inclusion Annual Report 2020*

<sup>103</sup> UNRWA (2021) *Annual Operational Report 2020* [draft]

<sup>104</sup> UNRWA (2020) *Disability Inclusion Annual Report 2020*

<sup>105</sup> UNRWA (2021) *Annual Operational Report 2020* [draft]



also decided to defer reporting against certain indicators under the five Strategic Outcomes until 2021 because of the impact of COVID-19. It delayed the conduct of the protection audit and reporting against education-related indicators that require classroom observation.

198. In 2018 and 2019, during the annual results reviews, UNRWA identified certain output indicators where it had not achieved its targets. However, there were usually identifiable reasons for this. As noted under previous questions, funding shortfalls have posed the greatest challenge with meeting the needs of Palestine refugees, including the poorest.

199. The lack of funding impacted UNRWA's activities relating to protection and refugee rights (Strategic Outcome 1) in particular, as highlighted by Figures 7 and 8. It has relied on project funding and secondments from donors and other organizations to undertake protection work because of a lack of PB funding for protection staff. It has also been challenging to mainstream protection when the protection division is separate to the programme departments, providing advice on mainstreaming protection, but not able to hold programme staff accountable for contributing to Strategic Outcome 1.

**UNRWA's ability to switch to telemedicine and online education very quickly in response to COVID-19 is a significant achievement.**

200. UNRWA adapted very quickly to COVID-19 restrictions across its programmes. The health programme switched to telemedicine to reduce the number of people visiting its health centers. It set up hotlines within days, trained staff and established Standard Operating Procedures for telemedicine. In Lebanon, given the level of over-crowding in camps, UNRWA partnered with an NGO to turn vocational training centers into isolation centers for asymptomatic COVID patients. It also used EA funding to cover 100 per cent of hospitalization costs for COVID-19 patients.

201. The education programme quickly switched students to remote education, organizing children into classes, revising curricula and addressing technological issues. UNRWA was able to report a slight improvement in its education retention level in 2020, which is an achievement.<sup>106</sup> It continued to provide MHPSS remotely through the education and health programmes, using qualified counsellors and dedicated helplines.

202. For example, when schools closed in March 2020, school counsellors worked with teachers and principals to set up virtual support groups for students and provide individual counselling.<sup>107</sup> As a result, UNRWA was able to provide individual counselling to almost 16,000 students in 2020, compared with around 11,000 in 2019. It was more challenging to be able to provide individual counselling to adults, with UNRWA reaching just under 4,000 in 2020, compared with 6,400 in 2019.<sup>108</sup>

203. One challenge with the switch to remote education was that many students lacked access to devices or the internet. A lack of funding meant that UNRWA was unable to provide devices to the poorest or to assist students with getting internet access. In these cases, it provided students with self-learning materials. Remote education was also a challenge for students with disabilities, including those with learning difficulties. UNRWA supported these students with mentors.

**UNRWA's commendable achievements, despite the chronic financial crisis and COVID-19, are largely due to its dedicated workforce. However, this is having an impact on staff well-being.**

204. Section 2.3 described how UNRWA staff have been working hard under difficult conditions to continue to deliver assistance to Palestine refugees. Many of the national staff were willing to go the extra mile to serve their communities. However, the continued pressure was beginning to affect staff well-being, and this was reflected in the responses to the online survey as well as in interviews.

**While the 2019 management crisis potentially delayed and/or reduced donor funding, UNRWA was able to continue to deliver assistance to Palestine refugees.**

205. Interviews indicated that some donors had delayed funding to UNRWA as a result of the 2019 management crisis. It is also possible that the crisis contributed to the 22 per cent decrease in UNRWA's income between 2018 and 2019 (see Figure 2). However, given UNRWA's well-established structures and systems and its

<sup>106</sup> UNRWA (2021) *Annual Operational Report 2020* [draft]

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> UNRWA (2020) *Annual Operational Report 2019 for the Reporting Period 01 January-31 December 2019* and UNRWA (2021) *Annual Operational Report 2020* [draft]

dedicated workforce, the crisis did not have a material impact on UNRWA's provision of assistance to refugees or on the achievement of MTS targets. Nevertheless, some staff members suggested that it would have been helpful if headquarters had been more transparent in sharing information with field offices because this would have prevented speculation.

206. One interviewee noted that UNRWA's ability to continue serving Palestine refugees and delivering results in spite of the recurrent crises that it has faced during the evaluation period was an indication of its resilience, which should be commended.



### 3. Conclusions

207. Based on the key findings presented in the previous section, this section outlines the main conclusions from the evaluation.

The MTS has proved to be a useful strategic framework for guiding UNRWA's work and aligning it with the SDGs though funding shortfalls have limited its ability to address fully the needs of Palestine refugees.

208. The MTS has proved to be a useful guide for the Agency's work, with both donors and programme staff appreciating the CMM indicators as a basis for reporting results. However, there are a lot of indicators, some of which are measured at long intervals and some of which are not reported against (in agreement with donors), so there is scope to focus them down. Also, UNRWA staff felt that a future strategy should include methods that enable the Agency to assess and report on the quality of its services, such as the quality of patient consultations with doctors and the satisfaction of recipients with services.

209. These could include a combination of data sources such as satisfaction surveys, more regular data collection and consistent reporting on indicators that serve as proxies for service quality, evaluations that assess service quality and the views of Palestine refugees or even simple methods such as user satisfaction buttons at key service points like health centers.<sup>109</sup>

210. The Strategic Outcomes in the MTS were broad enough to be applicable across the very different contexts in which UNRWA operates. This has been helpful because not only has UNRWA's overall operating environment changed considerably since it formulated the current MTS but the contexts in the individual fields of operation have also been volatile. The challenge for UNRWA is to be able to respond flexibly to the inevitable shocks and emergencies, including sudden fluctuations in donor contributions.

211. Although the MTS was developed before the SDGs were finalized, UNRWA's work contributes to several SDG targets. The next strategy will be an opportunity for UNRWA to be more explicit about the links between its objectives and indicators, and the SDGs. In particular, since UNRWA is part of the UN-SWAP, it could link its work on gender equality more clearly to SDG 5. It would also be helpful for UNRWA to link objectives/indicators in the next strategy together more clearly to guide programmes in delivering synergies.

212. While the MTS is comprehensive in outlining what UNRWA set out to achieve, funding shortfalls have meant that the Agency has not been able to address fully the needs of Palestine refugees, resulting in long waiting lists for some programmes. This underlines the fact that UNRWA cannot address the needs of Palestine refugees without adequate funding.

213. However, the Agency has not reported on the needs that are going unmet and their costs, such as the number of families eligible for the SSNP but not receiving assistance or shelters remaining unrepaired (potentially in a dangerous state) or the length of waiting times for assistance because there is not enough funding. This makes it difficult to demonstrate the impact of funding shortfalls.

UNRWA has been able to deliver significant achievements under the MTS, despite a chronic funding crisis and other challenges. This is largely because of its dedicated workforce.

214. UNRWA's reporting highlights largely positive trends in the CMM indicators on which it reports for each Strategic Outcome over the MTS implementation period. Its ability to deliver against the MTS indicators and targets, despite a chronic funding crisis and other challenges, is a significant achievement. Its switch to telemedicine and remote education in response to COVID-19 was also a major achievement and is an indication of the Agency's adaptability and resilience.

215. The Agency's provision of basic services and employment opportunities to Palestine refugees has contributed to regional stability and security. It combines its humanitarian and development activities effectively (including through a flexible use of different funding streams) and has contributed to conditions for 'peace'.

216. These achievements are due largely to its dedicated staff. Although the MTS referred to UNRWA's workforce as a comparative advantage, funding shortfalls have forced it to adopt a variety of strategies to save on

<sup>109</sup> See <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/02/05/customer-satisfaction-at-the-push-of-a-button>

staffing costs. This has meant that the Agency has achieved results at the expense of staff well-being to some extent. Ongoing funding constraints mean that UNRWA has limited options for addressing this, but it could take some steps to support staff and respond to their concerns.

UNRWA's chronic funding crisis is having an impact on the quantity of assistance, the ability to maintain service quality and the ability to invest in operations. While UNRWA could take steps to strengthen resource mobilization, ultimately, it is reliant on donors to deliver on the recommendations and commitments to which they have signed up.

217. The evaluation's findings indicate that the chronic funding shortfalls are having an impact on the quantity of assistance that UNRWA can provide, particularly to the poorest and most vulnerable. There are long waiting lists for UNRWA assistance and even those able to receive cash assistance have found this insufficient to meet their needs. Palestine refugees also identified a reduction in service quality. Furthermore, the lack of funding to invest in operations is hampering the Agency severely in a number of areas, including environmental sustainability, maintaining facilities (schools, health centers, office premises) and ensuring that its technology is fit for purpose.

218. UNRWA could strengthen its communications and resource mobilization efforts, including perhaps by highlighting the unmet needs of the poorest and most vulnerable refugees. However, it has been hampered by the lack of funding to invest in these functions. It is also not the best use of senior management time to focus on mobilizing funding to avoid collapse rather than managing the Agency and advocating for the rights of Palestine refugees under international law.

219. Some AdCom members have suggested that UNRWA cut programmes such as solid waste management or TVET, but these represent a tiny proportion of the Agency's expenditure and would not help resolve the funding shortages. UNRWA's efforts to cut these kinds of activities inevitably meets with resistance from host governments and Palestine refugees so donors need to acknowledge that any reduction in services or activities has a symbolic meaning for key stakeholders.

220. Ultimately, due to its voluntary funding model, UNRWA is heavily dependent on donors to provide adequate funding. All parties also need to recognize that decisions on funding for UNRWA are based on political considerations as well as levels of need and Agency performance. The international conference will be an opportunity for stakeholders to identify ways to address this.

UNRWA has a unique relationship with Palestine refugees, so its accountability measures need to go beyond a focus on complaints and feedback mechanisms.

221. UNRWA has a unique relationship with Palestine refugees, providing services that would normally be provided by a government across their lifetimes. From a Palestine refugee perspective, their identity and rights are inextricably linked to UNRWA and its services, regardless of UNRWA's mandate and resourcing levels.

222. An approach to AAP that is focused mainly on complaints and feedback mechanisms is not well-suited to this relationship. This is partly because such mechanisms fail to involve refugees in the decisions that affect their lives and to address the very real fears that Palestine refugees have about changes to UNRWA services undermining the visibility of their situation.

223. Therefore, UNRWA needs to engage in transparent two-way communication with Palestine refugees to make clear its resource limitations and secure their buy-in for any changes. It could do this through its social workers, for example, since refugees already share concerns and raise complaints with them. Its dialogue with Palestine refugees should also focus on their protection and human rights, not simply the provision of services.

While UNRWA has sought to mainstream gender and address the needs of persons with disabilities (within its funding constraints), it needs a vision for how to engage with youth.

224. UNRWA has done very well to address the needs of persons with disabilities, particularly compared to other agencies providing humanitarian assistance. However, as with so many areas of its work, funding shortfalls have been a major constraint, for example on ensuring that all its facilities are accessible and on meeting needs fully. It has also made significant efforts to address gender issues, including GBV, in its programming and in its ways of working. However, UNRWA has tended to equate gender with women and girls and the

pushback against its gender parity policy highlights the need to secure buy-in from men and boys on issues of gender equality and GBV.

225. Although the MTS recognized the importance of providing livelihood opportunities for Palestine refugee youth and addressing their specific needs, the TVET programme and, to a small extent, the microfinance programme, are UNRWA's main way of providing specific support to youth. Palestine refugees highlighted that this aspect of UNRWA's work is important to them so UNRWA could be more creative about how it engages with youth and also on which issues. Essentially, UNRWA needs a vision for how it could engage with youth as agents for change. UNRWA's recent consultations with Youth Parliaments could provide the basis for a way forward.
226. Apart from funding challenges, UNRWA has also had to grapple with how best to incorporate cross-cutting issues into its structures and systems. This includes ensuring that the data that it collects on cross-cutting issues feed systematically into programming decisions.

**UNRWA has effective planning and coordination processes and clear structures and systems to link headquarters to field offices. However, it could improve decision-making mechanisms.**

227. UNRWA's coordination and planning processes for translating the MTS into practice and for reporting against the CMM indicators work well. Where necessary, the Agency improved systems and processes, for example in the area of project management. UNRWA's mechanisms to link headquarters to field offices function well but field office staff felt that it would be helpful to have mechanisms in place for more frequent communication between peer groups across field offices, such as directors, deputy directors and staff within specific programmes. These could include regular virtual meetings, a WhatsApp group and other technology-based knowledge-management mechanisms.
228. More regular communication between programme staff across field offices could help with information exchange and lesson-learning on specific technical issues, good practice, findings from programme evaluations, and addressing common challenges (as was the case during COVID-19). UNRWA staff also felt that decision making could be more decentralized and inclusive while responses to the staff online survey indicated that staff performance management could be improved.
229. The lack of adequate funding for the Evaluation Division since at least 2015 has limited its ability to deliver on the mandate outlined in the UNRWA Evaluation Policy. The CG is responsible for ensuring adequate funding for the evaluation function, but this has not been provided throughout the MTS implementation period. With the percentage of UNRWA programme expenditure allocated to evaluations well below that of other UN agencies, UNRWA has been left dependent on additional donor and project funding to finance evaluations.
230. The Agency has relied on results-based monitoring to track MTS implementation. The midyear and annual results reviews are a valued opportunity to reflect on progress and challenges though, again, a lack of funding has made it difficult for UNRWA to take follow-up action. One option for addressing this would be to include installation managers and area staff (as those managing the delivery of assistance close to communities) in discussions of results and in identifying ways to address challenges.

## 4. Recommendations

231. The evaluation team acknowledges that UNRWA's ability to implement change is severely constrained by the chronic financial crisis. It took this into account when formulating the recommendations presented below. These also build on discussions with UNRWA's Management Committee during a participatory workshop at the end of the data collection phase.

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| 1 | <p><b>Based on the findings from this evaluation, <u>UNRWA's</u> process for developing the next strategy should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clearly identify, and cost, the needs that UNRWA seeks to address, including those of the poorest and most vulnerable, so that it can demonstrate what needs will go unmet if there is insufficient funding.</li> <li>▪ Be realistic about what the Agency can and cannot deliver based on the level of resources that donors provide. This could also help the Agency to plan how it might deal with sudden and/or significant changes in funding levels.</li> <li>▪ Review and rationalize the CMM indicators, focusing on those that reflect Agency priorities (e.g., on gender equality and addressing GBV), are useful for programmatic decision making, and meet donor reporting requirements.</li> <li>▪ Identify data collection methods that would help to assess and report on the quality of Agency services and impact on refugee lives.</li> <li>▪ Identify how the Agency could adapt its activities (particularly infrastructure and camp improvement) to be more environmentally sustainable.</li> <li>▪ Indicate how programmes can be more integrated to contribute jointly to objectives/ outcomes and SDGs.</li> <li>▪ Develop a high-level result on gender equality, based on SDG 5 and its indicators.</li> <li>▪ Identify how the Agency could build on its work on cross-cutting issues, particularly gender and assisting persons with disabilities (see also Recommendation 5 below).</li> </ul> |
| 2 | <p><b><u>UNRWA</u> needs to strengthen its resource mobilization by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Investing adequate resources in improved communications and resource mobilization, ensuring that the Agency has sufficient staffing capacity and the right skill sets.</li> <li>▪ Developing a more positive and proactive narrative about the Agency's achievements and how it makes a difference to the lives of Palestine refugees.</li> <li>▪ Continuing to diversify funding sources to include Islamic giving (Zakat and Waqf) and the private sector but also being realistic about how much funding these can generate.</li> <li>▪ Establishing national committees that can generate grassroots support in donor countries and influence funding decisions in Parliaments and governments.</li> <li>▪ Spending time with decision makers at capital level to explain how the Agency works and what it is delivering.</li> <li>▪ Coordinating resource mobilization efforts across all the offices and leveraging the relationships that individual staff members have with donors more effectively.</li> </ul>  |
| 3 | <p><b><u>UNRWA senior management</u> should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review decision-making processes to ensure that they are more transparent, particularly to field staff, and that decisions are communicated clearly.</li> <li>▪ Put in place mechanisms for staff to express their concerns and get a response.</li> <li>▪ Review mechanisms for including installation managers and area staff, who manage frontline service delivery, in discussions of results and ways to address challenges.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>UNRWA's Department of Human Resources</u> should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify options for staff to improve their work-life balance and to be able to take their annual leave.</li> <li>▪ Ensure that the staff performance management system operates effectively.</li> <li>▪ Assess the time taken to recruit staff in order to identify and address reasons for delays.</li> </ul>   |
| 4 | <p><b>To better implement its commitment to accountability to affected populations, <u>UNRWA</u> should improve its engagement with Palestine refugees and reflect their voices better by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promoting participatory planning to ensure that assistance responds to refugee needs and that</li> </ul>   |

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|   | <p>refugees have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. This could build on examples such as the development of camp improvement plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Working with social workers and other national staff on two-way communication and community engagement. This would include setting up a mechanism to collate the feedback that social workers already receive from Palestine refugees.</li> <li>▪ Exploring with Palestine refugees themselves the options for strengthening their voice, particularly those of the most vulnerable and marginalized.</li> <li>▪ Being aware of the risk of elite capture and the politicization of representation mechanisms and taking steps to avoid this.</li> </ul>  |
| 5 | <p><b>UNRWA should build on the foundation of its work to address the needs of youth and persons with disabilities and continue to improve its work on gender issues by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing a coherent strategy for engaging with youth across the fields of operation.</li> <li>▪ Providing youth with opportunities to organize themselves and engage on issues such as environmental sustainability and climate change.</li> <li>▪ Engaging more proactively with men and boys to secure their buy-in on gender equality, GBV and other gender-related issues.</li> <li>▪ Developing systems to ensure that the Agency collects data on gender and persons with disabilities systematically across programmes and uses this to inform decision making.</li> </ul> <p><b>If it is adequately resourced, UNRWA</b> should invest in ensuring its facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities, financing focal points for cross-cutting issues at programme and/or field office level to ensure that they are mainstreamed, strengthening staff capacity for conducting systematic gender analyses, and implementing the MOPAN review recommendation that gender should not be ‘projectized’ or siloed within a single programme.</p> |

## Annexes

### Annex A: Management Response

UNRWA welcomes the findings of the evaluation of its Medium Term Strategy 2016-22 (MTS evaluation), which builds on and is aligned with the positive findings of the 2019 evaluation of the Agency's monitoring and reporting activities and the conclusions of the 2017 – 2018 Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) assessment.

The evaluation finds that the MTS 2016-22 has served as a comprehensive and valuable strategic framework that has successfully guided Agency interventions over the past six years. This support has led to tangible improvements in the lives of Palestine refugees. In this regard, it was noted that, in addition to providing Palestine refugees with universal access to primary healthcare and basic education, the Agency prioritizes the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, for additional support, for example in relation to livelihoods and relief interventions.

Looking at the internal functioning of UNRWA, the evaluation found that the MTS 2016-22 supports effective planning and coordination processes, robust monitoring systems and provides clear structures to ensure coherence between headquarters and field offices. It has also enabled UNRWA to make good performance against UN indicators on gender equality and effectively address the needs of persons with disabilities, supporting seamless working across humanitarian and development activities. This makes the Agency an exemplar for other UN agencies, with programmes that contribute to stability and conditions for peace in volatile operating contexts.

All these achievements came in spite of a chronic funding crisis, the impact of COVID-19 and the 2019 management crisis, and with the Agency often having to navigate between the opposing and sometimes entrenched positions of its different stakeholders.

The MTS evaluation also offers a number of constructive findings and recommendations, many of which are practical and not cost-intensive. We particularly welcome recommendations related to the development of the successor to the MTS 2016-22, including the benefits associated with strengthening communications and resource mobilization efforts, engaging in transparent two-way communication with Palestine refugees and being more creative about how the Agency engages with youth as agents for change. Given funding constraints, it is appreciated that many evaluation recommendations pertain to the way UNRWA works. For those that require resources, progress will have to be tempered against the need to be realistic about what the Agency can and cannot deliver, based on the level of resources that donors provide, as recognised through evaluation recommendation 1(b), below.

Finally, we would like to record our appreciation for the constructive approach taken throughout the evaluation process, the opportunity to comment on drafts of the report and engage with the evaluation team and would note that many of these comments have been incorporated into the evaluation, resulting in a strengthened final product.

## Response to specific recommendations:

**Office and person coordinating the management response / recommendation follow up:**

Sam Rose, Director, Department of Planning

| recommendation   | responsible department / division / field office | response (agree, partially agree, disagree): | action planned / taken / reason for partially agreeing or disagreeing   | planned date for implementation |
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| <b>Recommendation 1(a):</b> Based on the findings from this evaluation, UNRWA's process for developing the next strategy should clearly identify, and cost, the needs that UNRWA seeks to address, including those of the poorest and most vulnerable, so that it can demonstrate what needs will go unmet if there is insufficient funding.                       | Department of Planning                           | Agree  | The successor to the Medium Term Strategy (MTS) 2016-22 will reflect the multiple and evolving needs of Palestine refugees, outlining the Agency's response to these needs with particular focus on the most vulnerable. In this regard, the next strategy will clearly identify and cost, the needs that UNRWA will seek to address until a just and durable solution to the plight of Palestine refugees is found, in accordance with international law and relevant UN resolutions.  | Q4 2022                         |
| <b>Recommendation 1(b):</b> Based on the findings from this evaluation, UNRWA's process for developing the next strategy should be realistic about what the Agency can and cannot deliver based on the level of resources that donors provide. This could also help the Agency to plan how it might deal with sudden and/or significant changes in funding levels. | Department of Planning                           | Agree  | As was the case with the MTS 2016-22, the next UNRWA strategy will ground service delivery levels on forecasted income and expenditure that themselves will be based on a series of assumptions regarding the overall funding environment.  | Q4 2022                         |
| <b>Recommendation 1(c):</b> Based on the findings from this evaluation, UNRWA's process for developing the next strategy should review and rationalize the CMM indicators, focusing on those that reflect Agency priorities (e.g., on gender equality and addressing GBV), are useful for programmatic decision making, and meet donor reporting requirements.     | Department of Planning                           | Agree  | The MTS 2016-22 Common Monitoring Matrix (CMM) was established to monitor and assess Agency performance and includes key indicators at the outcome, output and activity levels. Indicators included in the CMM were developed to provide an evidentiary basis for Agency decision-making and/or in response to donor community and host authority requests for information in support of their engagement with UNRWA. The next Agency strategy will review and make all attempts to rationalize CMM indicators, focusing on those that reflect Agency, donor and host priorities. | Q4 2022                         |



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| <b>Recommendation 1(d):</b> Based on the findings from this evaluation, UNRWA's process for developing the next strategy should identify data collection methods that would help to assess and report on the quality of Agency services and impact on refugee lives.                      | Department of Planning and all UNRWA Programme Departments and Field Offices | Agree | In developing its next strategy, UNRWA departments will engage UNRWA Field Offices and, in collaboration with the Department of Planning, develop performance indicators and data collection methods that will help assess and report on the quality of Agency services and impact on Palestine refugee lives.   | Q4 2022 |
| <b>Recommendation 1(e):</b> Based on the findings from this evaluation, UNRWA's process for developing the next strategy should identify how the Agency could adapt its activities (particularly infrastructure and camp improvement) to be more environmentally sustainable.             | Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Department (ICID)                        | Agree | The next Agency strategy will articulate how UNRWA will adapt its activities (particularly in relation to infrastructure and camp improvement) to be more environmentally sustainable. In this regard, the Agency will build on: (i) existing best practice in UNRWA operations (e.g., the greening of premises, water efficient fixtures, sewer system rehabilitation and the enhanced use of renewable energy); and (ii) the elaboration of an Agency-wide environmental sustainability policy and environmental and social management framework (focusing on UNRWA facilities, shelters and other infrastructure and camp improvement construction / reconstruction works), both of which are slated for completion by the end of 2021. | Q4 2022 |
| <b>Recommendation 1(f):</b> Based on the findings from this evaluation, UNRWA's process for developing the next strategy should indicate how programmes can be more integrated to contribute jointly to objectives/outcomes and SDGs.   | Department of Planning   | Agree | The UNRWA programmatic offer under its next strategy will continue to focus on health, education, relief, livelihoods, infrastructure and camp improvement and protection assistance to Palestine refugees. However, the Agency will seek opportunities to improve the linkages between interventions, where needed, including through use of technology, particularly in relation to mental health and psychosocial support, ensuring the provision of comprehensive support to the most vulnerable and livelihoods interventions.  | Q4 2022 |
| <b>Recommendation 1(g):</b> Based on evaluation findings, UNRWA's process for developing the next strategy should develop a high-level result on gender equality, based on SDG 5 and its indicators.  | Executive Office   | Agree | The results hierarchy of the next strategy has yet to be finalized. Regardless as to the results of consultations in this regard, the Protection Division will engage counterpart programmes to integrate specific gender mainstreaming outputs across all programmatic objectives / outcomes.   | Q4 2022 |
| <b>Recommendation 1(h):</b> Based on evaluation findings, UNRWA's process for developing the next strategy should identify how the Agency could build on its work on cross-cutting issues, particularly gender and assisting persons with disabilities (see also Recommendation 5 below). | Protection Division  | Agree | The next Agency strategy will incorporate strengthened efforts to promote gender equality, women's empowerment and assist persons with disabilities. This will build on current Agency programming, coupled with lessons identified in these areas, the UNRWA disability inclusion guidelines and an upcoming evaluation of the UNRWA Gender Equality Strategy (2016-22).  | Q4 2022 |

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| <b>Recommendation 2(a):</b> UNRWA needs to strengthen its resource mobilization by investing adequate resources in improved communications and resource mobilization, ensuring that the Agency has sufficient staffing capacity and the right skill sets.        | External Relations Department (ERD) | Agree | UNRWA will continue to strengthen its external relations and communications activities, ensuring outreach, messaging, advocacy and asks are aligned to facilitate coherence across the Agency's external relations portals. It is hoped that external relations and communications capacity issues will be eased through a positive response from the General Assembly Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions that is set to consider the provision of additional international posts for the Agency by the end of 2021 (for recruitment in 2022). In the interim, the External Relations and Communications Departments have sufficient staff resources to avoid disruption.   | Q4 2022 <sup>110</sup>   |
| <b>Recommendation 2(b):</b> UNRWA needs to strengthen its resource mobilization by developing a more positive and proactive narrative about the Agency's achievements and how it makes a difference to the lives of Palestine refugees.                          | ERD                                 | Agree | ERD will endeavour to develop a more positive and proactive narrative about UNRWA's achievements and how it makes a difference to the lives of Palestine refugees, disseminating these narratives more widely. As part of this effort, the Agency will ensure alignment between private partnerships digital fundraising campaigns and other public outreach and advocacy interventions. ERD will further seek to align donor communications with Communications Department campaigns; however, to do so, an advocacy / fundraising focal point is required to both liaise inside ERD and with the Communications Department with the overall goal of producing joint campaigns (brand management / fundraising).   | Q1 2022<br>(creation of advocacy / donor communications capacity in ERD) |
| <b>Recommendation 2(c):</b> UNRWA needs to strengthen its resource mobilization by continuing to diversify funding sources to include Islamic giving (Zakat and Waqf) and the private sector but also being realistic about how much funding these can generate. | ERD                                 | Agree | The ERD Private Partnerships Division has already established Islamic Giving as a funding stream and will further work with regional and private partnership counterparts on how to attract additional funds for the Agency under Zakat and Islamic philanthropy. To this end: (i) an Islamic philanthropy strategy is currently under development for full implementation in 2022; and (ii) an ERD Private Partnerships Officer – Islamic Philanthropy has been appointed and will work closely with the public sector Gulf Cooperation Council team and the newly formed Asia regional team, given the tremendous potential for Islamic giving in these regions. Income forecasts will reflect realistic assessments of the level of funding that can be generated under these workstreams. | Q4 2021  |

<sup>110</sup> ACABQ recommendations should be approved by end 2021 for post creation during 2022.

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| <b>Recommendation 2(d):</b> UNRWA needs to strengthen its resource mobilization by establishing national committees that can generate grassroots support in donor countries and influence funding decisions in Parliaments and governments.            | ERD              | Partially agree | The establishment of additional UNRWA national committees will be predicated on the findings of thorough feasibility studies. ERD is currently exploring priority countries (UK, Italy and Germany) for the establishment of such committees to see whether such the required investments would be worthwhile in terms of income generation.   | Q1 2022 (for the engagement of feasibility studies).  |
| <b>Recommendation 2(e):</b> UNRWA needs to strengthen its resource mobilization by spending time with decision makers at capital level to explain how the Agency works and what it is delivering.  | ERD              | Agree           | This activity is shared between the ERD and UNRWA Representative Offices. Together, these entities will focus on: (i) strengthened regional partnerships, resource mobilization and advocacy (e.g., the UNRWA Representative Office to the European Union recently engaged the services of a dedicated senior level partnerships and advocacy officer); (ii) joint ERD and UNRWA Representative Office missions to capitals; and (iii) joining the Commissioner-General and/or Deputy Commissioner-General on their missions to capitals.  | Ongoing (to be incorporated in annual country plans).   |
| <b>Recommendation 2(f):</b> UNRWA needs to strengthen its resource mobilization by coordinating resource mobilization efforts across all the offices and leveraging the relationships that individual staff members have with donors more effectively. | ERD              | Agree           | UNRWA recognises that it is critical to leverage relationships that individual Agency staff have developed with donors. This has been done with regard to select missions to capitals where nationals of a particular country who work with the Agency advise on the mission agenda, meetings, messaging and, at times, accompany the Commissioner-General. Reducing staff turnover and the exchange of portfolios is also critical and can be achieved with a more solid staffing structure and sustainable contracts for staff. ERD has developed fundraising guidelines to support Field Offices, Programme Departments and Representative Offices in their outreach activities, while ensuring a close link with ERD donor strategies and Agency fundraising priorities and messaging. | Q1 2022 for the: (i) rollout of fundraising guidelines to all UNRWA Field Offices and Programme Departments; and (ii) training / information sessions, as required. |
| <b>Recommendation 3(a):</b> UNRWA senior management should review decision-making processes to ensure that they are more transparent, particularly to field staff, and that decisions are communicated clearly.  | Executive Office | Agree           | The Executive Office is currently in the process of reviewing and refining executive bodies to ensure greater transparency, inclusion and clarity on decision-making. It is expected that new executive governance systems will be in place by the end of 2021. The Executive Office will also review the delegation of authority Agency-wide, thus providing greater clarity across the organisation on levels of decision-making authority, both at the Headquarters and Field levels.   | Q4 2021 (executive governance)<br><br>Q1 2022 (delegation of authority)   |

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| <p><b>Recommendation 3(b):</b> UNRWA senior management should put in place mechanisms for staff to express their concerns and get a response.</p>  | <p>Department of Human Resources</p> | <p>Agree</p> | <p>Following the January 2021 signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between UNRWA and the UN Ombudsman and Mediation Services (UNOMS), an UNRWA Ombudsperson's Office was established as an independent and neutral body dedicated to the provision of assistance to address staff work-related concerns / help resolve conflict through informal means. The Office commenced operations in June 2021, funding is in place through December 2021 and discussions are ongoing to extend this key service. Since its establishment, the UNOMS Regional Ombudsman for UNRWA has developed an ambitious agenda that features: (i) townhall meetings on informal conflict resolution services; (ii) private and confidential meetings between UNRWA personnel and the Regional Ombudsman; (iii) the development of a strategy to include policies, guidance and FAQs to UNRWA staff as to the functions of the Ombudsperson's Office; and (iv) plans to ensure that requests are recorded and responded to in a timely manner. Once governing systems are in place, key performance indicators will be established and monitored.</p>  | <p>Q1 2022 (pilot basis)</p>   |
| <p><b>Recommendation 3(c):</b> UNRWA senior management should review mechanisms for including installation managers and area staff, who manage frontline service delivery, in discussions of results and ways to address challenges.</p> | <p>UNRWA Field Offices</p>           | <p>Agree</p> | <p>UNRWA senior management agrees as to the importance of including Installation Managers and other key Area Staff who manage frontline service delivery in discussions of results and ways to address challenges. In this regard,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Gaza Field Office (GFO) will establish mid-year and annual results review meetings at the area management level, employing the same modalities used for the Agency-wide results review meetings.</li> <li>• The West Bank Field Office (WBFO) will include programme Area Staff and Installation Managers (e.g., Directors of TVET Centres / Qalqilya Hospital) to participate in Quarterly Results Monitoring Meetings. In addition, these staff will be included in programme planning consultations, conducted on an annual basis in support of Emergency Appeal planning.</li> <li>• The Lebanon Field Office (LFO) will include Area Staff in Quarterly Management Reviews and relevant project review meetings to: (i) ensure their full understanding of programme / project progress; and (ii) solicit their views in relation to programme and project planning and implementation. In addition, LFO will circulate the results of evaluations to relevant managers and will organize participatory discussions on ways to address evaluation recommendations.</li> <li>• The Syria Field Office (SFO) will continue to: (i) closely involve</li> </ul> | <p>GFO: Q1 2022<br/>WBFO: Q3 2021<br/>LFO: Q4 2021<br/>SFO: Q4 2021<br/>JFO: Q1 2022</p> |

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|   |                               |                 | <p>Installation Managers and other key Area Staff responsible for service delivery in various organisational processes; (ii) consult, through relevant programme teams, to inform needs and delivery approaches for programmes; (iii) convene regular meetings, at least quarterly, between senior team representatives and frontline staff; and (iv) involve Installation Managers and Area Staff who manage frontline service delivery in internal and external reviews and evaluations, ensuring that results are shared, challenges discussed and solutions to address the challenges are agreed. In addition, in Nov./Dec. 2021, SFO will convene a meeting with programme team leaders and Chief Area Officers to discuss existing participatory processes and recommended actions to strengthen same.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Jordan Field Office (JFO) will continue to involve Installation Managers and key Area Staff in regular meetings where results are discussed and challenges are addressed (e.g., bi-weekly meetings between the Front Office, Heads of Programmes and Chief Area Officers and Chief Area Officer weekly meetings with Area Programme Heads and key Area Staff). In addition, JFO has elaborated a participatory key performance indicator framework for JFO Programme and Operations Management that will be cascaded to Area and Installation Managers in January 2022.</li> </ul> |                           |
| <b>Recommendation 3(d):</b> UNRWA's Department of Human Resources should identify options for staff to improve their work-life balance and to be able to take their annual leave. | Department of Human Resources | Agree           | <p>The UNRWA Department of Human Resources has identified a series of options for staff to improve their work-life balance and to take their annual leave. In this regard: (i) during the period 2019-21, to further strengthen a culture that considers safety, health and wellbeing as core workplace values, the Staff Wellbeing Programme provided self-care training 3,432 front line workers across the five areas of Agency operation. UNWRA is currently in talks to have this programme extended for an additional three years; (ii) reminder messages on the availability of the counselling services will be sent to all staff on a regular basis; and (iii) annual leave will be monitored and reported to the Director of the relevant organisational unit when accumulated leave exceeds the maximum threshold for carry over. Managers will be accountable to ensure that their staff take periodic leave in order to ensure mental and physical well-being.</p>  | Q1 2022                   |
| <b>Recommendation 3(e):</b> UNRWA's Department of Human Resources should ensure that staff performance is managed effectively.  | Department of Human Resources | Partially Agree | <p>This recommendation is partially agreed as the responsibility for effective staff performance is jointly shared between the Department of Human Resources and staff supervisors. In this regard, the former establishes and manages the performance management system / framework / policy while</p>  | Q1 2022<br>(streamlining) |

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|   |                                      |              | <p>the latter are responsible for implementation / accountable to provide a fair and balanced performance evaluation.</p> <p>The Department of Human Resources is committed to strengthening UNRWA performance management processes, including through: (i) the issuance of e-mail reminders to staff and their managers through the ePer system; (ii) streamlining the ePer system to make it more efficient and user friendly, placing an emphasis on key aspects of competencies and performance; (iii) integrating Commissioner-General / Senior Manager compacts into ePer system; and (iv) instituting the practice that a completed ePer performance evaluation as a prerequisite to contract extensions / pay raise increments. The aforementioned will be implemented in close collaboration with senior managers/supervisors to assist them in effectively managing staff performance. In addition, the Department of Human Resources ensures that training resources and guidance are readily available and conducts periodic monitoring and reporting on ePer compliance. To further facilitate ePer completion rates: (a) status reports will continue to be issued to Department and Field Directors so that senior management can monitor progress and act; and (b) an ePer dashboard will be developed as a tool to monitor compliance and ease reporting and analysis.</p> |  |
| <p><b>Recommendation 3(f):</b> UNRWA's Department of Human Resources should assess the time taken to recruit staff in order to identify and address reasons for delays.</p> | <p>Department of Human Resources</p> | <p>Agree</p> | <p>The Department of Human Resources has assessed the time taken to recruit staff, finding that recent recruitment delays are rooted in limited resources, long-term staff illness, the deployment of a new corporate recruitment system (Inspira) and the time required to implement a significant increase in outreach and visibility related to UNRWA vacancies.</p> <p>To address recruitment delays, an action plan has been developed that includes the: (i) revision of recruitment workflows for UNRWA vacancies; (ii) further delegation of authority to recruitment hiring managers (piloting the greater involvement of hiring managers) in order that enhanced control can be exercised over recruitments; (iii) implementation of ongoing refinements / fine tuning of the corporate recruitment system as a natural follow-on from the September 2020 launch of the system; and (iv) issuance of a new Area Staff Selection Policy by mid-2022.</p>   | <p>(i) Q4 2021<br/>(ii) Q4 2021<br/>(iii) Q3 2021<br/>(iv) Q2 2022</p> |

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| <p><b>Recommendation 4(a):</b> To better implement its commitment to accountability to affected populations, UNRWA should improve its engagement with Palestine refugees and reflect their voices better by promoting participatory planning to ensure that assistance responds to refugee needs and that refugees have a say in the decisions that affect their lives. This could build on examples such as the development of camp improvement plans.</p> | <p>UNRWA Field Offices and the Department of Planning</p> | <p>Agree</p> | <p>Across all fields of UNRWA operation, concrete steps have been taken to ensure that the Agency's services remain accountable and responsive to the needs of Palestine refugees, as guided by the UNRWA accountability to affected populations (AAP) framework. In all cases, participatory engagement is grounded in the unique platforms provided by: (i) the Agency workforce of over 28,000 staff, the vast majority of whom are engaged in the direct delivery of assistance and are drawn from the Palestine refugee communities they serve; and (ii) an extensive network of area offices, camp services offices and camp improvement plans, schools (including school parliaments and Parent Teacher Associations), health centres (including health centre friendship committees), other installations and complaints and feedback mechanisms. This ensures that refugees have direct and regular access to and interaction with UNRWA staff and communication structures. The Agency also recognizes that sufficient levels of human and financial resources are required to fully implement UNRWA's commitment to AAP, ensuring that Palestine refugee feedback is systematically collected, acknowledged, assessed and referred and responded to in a timely, confidential, and effective manner.</p> <p>By way of ensuring, within the bounds of available resources, that Palestine refugee voices are reflected in participatory planning; that assistance responds to refugee needs; and that refugees have a say in the decisions that affect their lives, UNRWA Field Offices will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GFO: strengthen and further mainstream the Community Feedback System at both the programmatic and operational levels, including the further development of the administrative Community Feedback System registry (including the feedback/complaint, reply, the process for handling the feedback/complaint, quality of response assessment and a dashboard.</li> <li>• WBFO: (i) enhanced communication and transparency to the refugee community (the provision of relevant operational updates, rights and entitlements, available services, etc.); (ii) strengthening the community engagement role of Community and Camp Service Officers; (iii) the development of fact / information sheets on available UNRWA services and feedback and complaints mechanisms for wide dissemination; and (iv) conducting a survey on the accessibility of and challenges to online</li> </ul> | <p>GFO: Q3 2022<br/>WBFO: Q4 2021<br/>LFO: Ongoing<br/>SFO: Q4 2021<br/>JFO: Ongoing</p> |
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|  |                                       |       | <p>registration for possible replication to other service areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LFO: the continued operation of: (i) an AAP project that seeks inputs on UNRWA service delivery from Palestine refugees to inform planning and provide feedback to the community on decisions taken; (ii) satisfaction surveys for specific service delivery interventions; and (iii) on the application of donor funding, the launch of a broadened Camp Improvement Plan project that will strongly focus on the development of community capacity in support of collective and inclusive decision making.</li> <li>• SFO: efforts build on a variety AAP activities (meetings with community leaders, parent teacher associations and refugee leaders, perception surveys and assessments etc.) that contribute to intervention adjustments / redesign. In addition, a programme learning workshop was convened in April 2021 that reviewed existing AAP pathways issued recommendations as to strengthening refugee voices in Agency decision making. As a result, an action plan was developed for roll out by the end of 2021. The donor community has been engaged to support this effort.</li> <li>• JFO will continue to publish and disseminate information (through focus group discussions, hard copy and via electronic media) on UNRWA policies, processes, eligibility / rights to services and relevant targeting criteria.</li> </ul> |         |
| <p><b>Recommendation 4(b):</b> To better implement its commitment to accountability to affected populations, UNRWA should improve its engagement with Palestine refugees and reflect their voices better by working with social workers and other national staff on two-way communication and community engagement. This would include setting up a mechanism to collate the feedback that social workers already receive from Palestine refugees.</p> | Relief and Social Services Department | Agree | <p>The Relief and Social Services Department welcomes recommendations 4(a) through 4(d) which recognize the shared responsibility, across UNRWA, to advance AAP as an essential element of effective service delivery. Similarly, the establishment of two-way communication and community engagement mechanisms is a shared responsibility.</p> <p>As to the establishment of a mechanism to collate the feedback that social workers already receive from Palestine refugees: (i) feedback reporting on social issues affecting communities across all fields of UNRWA operation will be agreed during a November 2021 social work reform workshop, for action in 2022; (ii) a more comprehensive engagement and feedback mechanism with refugee communities will be conceptualised in 2022, pending project approval by donors. The sustainability of this mechanism will be ensured through its integration into the programme and staffing structure.</p>   | 2022-23 |

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| <b>Recommendation 4(c):</b> To better implement its commitment to accountability to affected populations, UNRWA should improve its engagement with Palestine refugees and reflect their voices better by exploring with Palestine refugees themselves the options for strengthening their voice, particularly those of the most vulnerable and marginalized. | Executive Office | Agree | The Chief of Staff, in cooperation with the Protection Division, will engage / collaborate with all Programme Departments and Field Offices to develop standard operating procedures in support of enhanced accountability to Palestine refugees that will clarify roles and responsibilities and identify mechanisms to improve engagement, including with the most vulnerable.   | Q4 2023 |
| <b>Recommendation 4(d):</b> To better implement its commitment to accountability to affected populations, UNRWA should improve its engagement with Palestine refugees and reflect their voices better by being aware of the risk of elite capture and the politicization of representation mechanisms and taking steps to avoid this.                        | Executive Office | Agree | As reflected above, efforts are underway across UNRWA fields of operation to further accountability to Palestine refugees; however, the Agency recognizes that there remains room for improvement. As UNRWA proceeds to develop its Strategic Blueprint, <sup>111</sup> (October 2021) and convene an International Conference (November 2021) that will consider the blueprint and feed inputs into the development of the next Agency strategy, AAP will remain one of the key principles underpinning frontline service delivery. In this regard, UNRWA is both aware of and will counter the risk of elite capture and the politicization of representation mechanisms through the deepening of direct engagement with Palestine refugees, mindful, as referenced above, of the resource constrained environment within which the Agency operates. | Q4 2022 |

<sup>111</sup> The Strategic Blueprint: (i) will articulate the Agency's ambition over the six-year period, 2023-2028, to deliver services that meet the evolving human development and protection needs of Palestine refugees; and (ii) is designed as the first high-level iteration of UNRWA's next multi-year strategy.

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| <p><b>Recommendation 5(a):</b> UNRWA should build on the foundation of its work to address the needs of youth and persons with disabilities and continue to improve its work on gender issues by developing a coherent strategy for engaging with youth across the fields of operation.</p>  | <p>Department of Education and the Microfinance Department</p> <p>The Protection Division in relation to the persons with disabilities and gender components of the recommendation.</p> | <p>Agree</p> | <p>In collaboration with a range of material programmes and interventions, an Agency-wide Youth Strategy will be developed by mid-2022. In this regard, the ambition is to support youth empowerment and livelihoods opportunities through an integrated approach, whereby economic autonomy is rooted in a foundation of good health and quality education and enabled, as needed, by microfinance services. This also includes direct programmatic activities (such as vocational training, cash for work, employment service centres and microfinance loans), indirect interventions created through the Agency's operations and staffing as well as employment opportunities originating through projects and advocacy work.</p> <p>There is a recognized need to continue UNRWA's livelihoods work with a focus on youth and women. Moreover, gender and disability inclusion will be facilitated through the: (i) establishment of specific performance indicator targets; and (ii) empowerment of the most vulnerable to become involved in decisions concerning them, enabling solutions to reflect their needs and aspirations.</p> | <p>Q3 2022</p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 5(b):</b> UNRWA should build on the foundation of its work to address the needs of youth and persons with disabilities and continue to improve its work on gender issues by providing youth with opportunities to organize themselves and engage on issues such as environmental sustainability and climate change.</p> | <p>ICID</p>   | <p>Agree</p> | <p>The UNRWA environmental sustainability policy and environmental and social management framework, currently under development, will build on established practice (in relation to the planning/design and construction/rehabilitation of Agency schools, health centres and when developing/implementing camp improvement plans) to provide youth and persons with disabilities with opportunities to organize themselves and engage on issues such as environmental sustainability and climate change.</p>  | <p>Q4 2021</p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 5(c):</b> UNRWA should build on the foundation of its work to address the needs of youth and persons with disabilities and continue to improve its work on gender issues by engaging more proactively with men and boys to secure their buy-in on gender equality, GBV and other gender-related issues.</p>             | <p>Protection Division</p>  | <p>Agree</p> | <p>On the availability of funding / additional capacity, the Protection Division will continue to improve its work on gender issues by engaging more proactively with men and boys to secure their buy-in on gender equality, GBV and other gender-related issues.</p>   | <p>Q4 2023</p> |

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| <p><b>Recommendation 5(d):</b> UNRWA should build on the foundation of its work to address the needs of youth and persons with disabilities and continue to improve its work on gender issues by developing systems to ensure that the Agency collects data on gender and persons with disabilities systematically across programmes and uses this to inform decision making.</p>  | <p>Protection Division and the Department of Planning</p> | <p>Agree</p> | <p>Of the 178 performance indicators in the CMM, 100 are disaggregated by gender and 35 are disaggregated by disability. The next Agency strategy presents an opportunity to enhance the scope of work in support of gender equality and persons with disabilities between 2023 and 2028. To this end, UNRWA will collect Agency-wide gender equality and disability data, using uniform and internationally acceptable methods such as the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, Short Set questions.</p>   | <p>Q4 2023</p>   |
| <p><b>Recommendation 6(a):</b> If it is adequately resourced, UNRWA should invest in ensuring its facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities, financing focal points for cross-cutting issues at programme and/or field office level to ensure that they are mainstreamed, strengthening staff capacity for conducting systematic gender analyses, and implementing the MOPAN review recommendation that gender should not be ‘projectized’ or siloed within a single programme.</p> | <p>Protection Division and the ICID</p>                   | <p>Agree</p> | <p>UNRWA acknowledges the importance of mainstreaming cross cutting issues across all Agency programming and, within the bounds of available resources, has made concrete strides to ensure alignment between service delivery and UN standards and best practice related to gender, disability, environmental sustainability and human rights mainstreaming. For example, in 2017, the ICID developed a plan to upgrade all existing installations by 2030 (including over 700 schools and 140 health centres) to ensure they meet set standards for a physically accessible environment, eliminating physical obstacles to accessibility for persons with disabilities. By the end of 2020, 73 per cent of the Health Centres and 48 per cent of schools met these standards, compared to 26.9 per cent of Health Centres and 22.7 per cent of schools in 2016. UNRWA will continue efforts to mainstream cross cutting issues both in and through its service delivery</p> | <p>2030 for all UNRWA installations to physically accessible in line with the Agency Disability Policy</p> |

## Annex B: Methodology and Evaluation Matrix

### Evaluation approach

As noted in the Methodology Summary section, the team's approach to the evaluation was based on three key principles. This section provides more detail of how the team has incorporated each of the three principles into its evaluation approach.

Firstly, it sought to ensure **utilization through a participatory approach**. The team engaged with UNRWA staff at the following key stages of the evaluation process to enable them to play an active role in the generation of learning and to build ownership of findings and recommendations:

- **Development of the evaluation framework and finalization of questions:** During the inception phase, the team conducted a participatory workshop with a small number of UNRWA staff to agree upon the evaluation framework (see below). It followed this up with a participatory discussion to attain agreement on the final evaluation questions.
- **Mapping of structures and processes:** At the start of the data collection phase, the team conducted an online participatory workshop with Department of Planning staff members to map the Agency's planning and coordination processes. This informed the team's assessment and response to evaluation question 3.1 and is summarized in Annex D.
- **Participatory workshop on preliminary findings and conclusions:** Once the team had completed its data collection and analysis, it conducted an online workshop with UNRWA's Management Committee. This started with a presentation and discussion of preliminary findings to validate the findings. The team then facilitated discussions in breakout groups to co-create recommendations.
- **Regular communication with UNRWA:** From the end of the inception phase to the end of the data collection phase, the evaluation team leader and project manager had weekly phone calls with UNRWA's Chief of the Evaluation Division to discuss progress, issues arising, and support required from UNRWA.

The evaluation team has also engaged with the ERG through online meetings. During the inception phase, the team held a short briefing to introduce the team and key features of the evaluation approach. It also presented the main aspects of the draft inception report and incorporated its comments, particularly on the evaluation questions, before soliciting written feedback from the ERG. The final inception report responded to written comments from both UNRWA and the ERG. As part of the reporting phase, the team will present the main findings, conclusions and recommendations from this draft evaluation report to the ERG and incorporate its verbal feedback, together with written comments from UNRWA, into a second draft report that will be shared with the ERG for written feedback.

Secondly, the team embedded a gender-sensitive approach in the following ways:

- Including gender as an important cross-cutting issue into the evaluation questions, examining both how it is mainstreamed into UNRWA programmes and reflected in its organizational practices. It incorporated questions on gender into an online survey with UNRWA staff as well as into key informant interviews.
- Collecting gender-disaggregated data on interviews and the online survey, which it has reported.
- Being gender-sensitive when conducting interviews with Palestine refugees, with a female team member conducting interviews with female Palestine refugees and a male team member interviewing male Palestine refugees. Both team members are native Arabic speakers and so were able to conduct the interviews in Arabic, facilitating communication and openness.
- Having a gender-balanced core evaluation team to take account of different gender perspectives in the data analysis phase.

232. Thirdly, the team has ensured a **rigorous approach to evidence assessment**. As indicated in

Table 1, the team collected considerable data from a variety of sources. To capture and analyze data from interviews in particular, the team developed an Excel-based framework. This included one tab for each evaluation criterion (relevance, coherence, efficiency, and effectiveness and impact) to record the main points

from each interview. It also included a summary findings tab to synthesize findings by evaluation question. Below is an example of the structure of the Relevance tab.

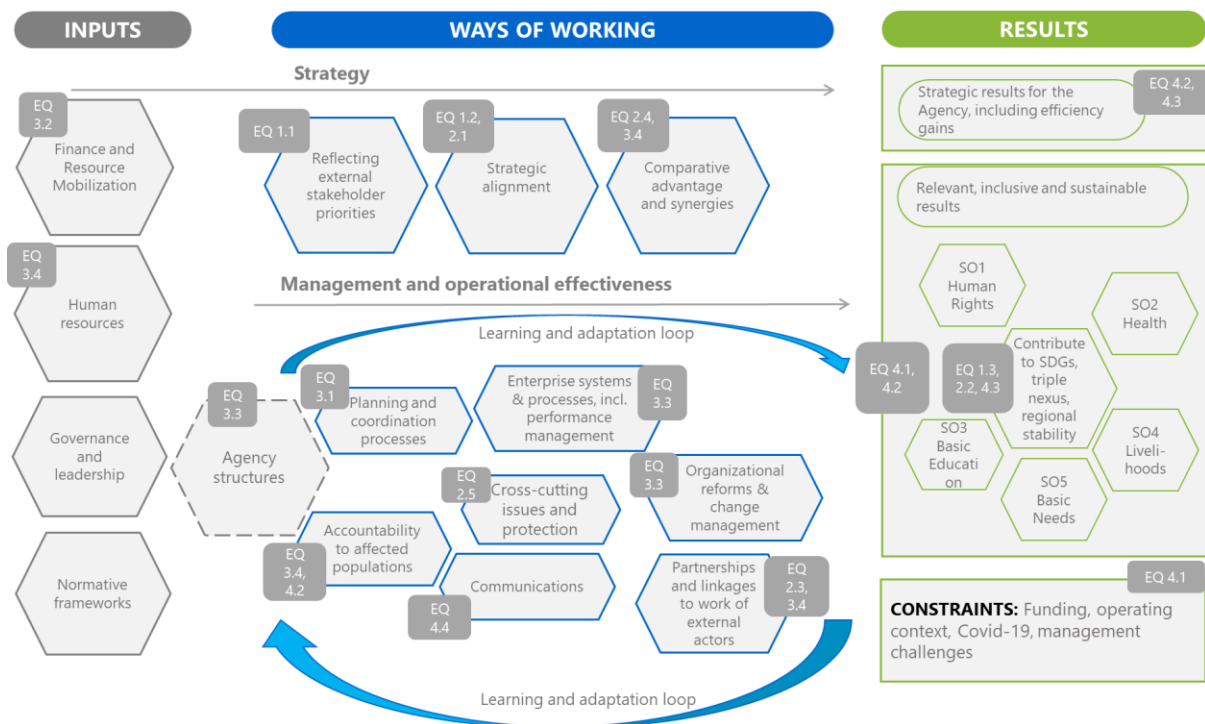
| Relevance   |                                  |             |  |   |   |   |
|---|----------------------------------|-------------|--|---|---|---|
| Interviewee type  | Field Operation/ Location        | Team member | Interview Code   | EQ 1.1  | EQ1.2   | EQ1.3   |
| UNRWA staff, donor, host government, partner, Palestine refugee | E.g., West Bank or donor capital | Initials    | Taken from interviewee list to anonymize data analysis | Key points from interview relating to this question | Key points from interview relating to this question | Key points from interview relating to this question |

The team held a virtual meeting over two half-days to review and agree on the summary findings against each question. It used a virtual whiteboard to capture the discussion. It then validated these findings with UNRWA staff in a participatory online workshop as described above.

### Evaluation Framework

In early discussions during the inception phase, the evaluation team reached an agreement with UNRWA that it would be more useful to develop an evaluation framework based on Theory of Change (ToC) principles rather than a full ToC. The MTS does not have a ToC embedded in it and developing one retrospectively would have had limited value. This was particularly the case because some issues that the evaluation needed to consider could not have been foreseen when the MTS was developed.

The context in which the Agency has been operating has also been significantly different than the one in which the MTS was developed. The team facilitated an online workshop with a small number of UNRWA staff to develop the evaluation framework, which is presented below. Once the team had agreed on a final set of evaluation questions with UNRWA and the ERG, it mapped these onto the framework. The main added value of the framework was to ensure that the evaluation took account of the main aspects of developing, implementing and reporting on the MTS.



### Evaluation matrix

The team used the agreed set of evaluation questions to develop the evaluation matrix below. Both UNRWA and the ERG provided input into this as part of their feedback on the draft inception report. In addition to listing the evaluation questions, the matrix outlines the judgement criteria that the team used to examine each question and its data sources/data collection methods for each question.



| Questions  | Judgement criteria  | Data sources and collection tools   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>1. Relevance</b>  |   |   |
| 1.1 To what extent did the MTS 2016–2022 and its implementation reflect the needs of Palestine refugees and the priorities of host governments and the donor community?                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mechanisms in place for assessing the needs of Palestine refugees.</li> <li>• Level of engagement with host governments and donor communities to assess priorities.</li> <li>• Decision-making processes in place to balance potentially competing demands and priorities.</li> <li>• Changes to MTS implementation in response to needs of Palestine refugees and/or priorities of host governments and donor communities.</li> <li>• Level of alignment of implemented activities/reforms with AdCom Recommendations and/or Statements.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• KIIs with UNRWA HQ staff, donors, host governments</li> </ul>   |
| 1.2 To what extent has the MTS 2016–2022 served as a strategic framework that supports front line service delivery?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which MTS is translated into policies and plans that guide service delivery.</li> <li>• Extent to which frontline service delivery matches priorities in the MTS and reasons for deviations.</li> <li>• Extent to which MTS Common Monitoring Matrix provides a framework for service delivery and results reporting.</li> <li>• Extent to which Department of Planning's QA function ensures alignment of strategies and plans with MTS..</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review, including Field Office Strategic Plans, annual operational plans and results reporting</li> <li>• KIIs with UNRWA HQ and field staff</li> </ul> |
| 1.3 How adequately has the MTS 2016–2022 positioned UNRWA to contribute to the SDGs, particularly the commitment to leave no one behind?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which Common Monitoring Matrix indicators link to SDG targets.</li> <li>• UNRWA results against Common Monitoring Matrix indicators show progress towards SDG targets.</li> <li>• Extent to which UNRWA's implementation of the MTS reflects the UN Framework for action on 'Leaving No One Behind'.</li> <li>• Factors enabling or hindering UNRWA in identifying and assisting the most vulnerable Palestine refugees.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Mapping of Common Monitoring Matrix and SDG targets</li> <li>• KIIs with UNRWA HQ and field staff</li> </ul>                          |
| <b>2. Coherence</b>  |   |   |
| 2.1 To what extent does the MTS 2016–2022 support the strategic alignment of programmes against the Agency's three funding streams (UNRWA programme budget, Emergency Appeal and project streams)? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systems in place to avoid duplication across the three funding streams.</li> <li>• Mechanisms in place to promote alignment and complementarities across the three funding streams.</li> <li>• Extent to which activities under the three funding streams enable UNRWA to provide a holistic response to the needs of Palestine refugees.</li> <li>• Extent to which activities implemented under the three funding streams demonstrate complementarities.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review, including Emergency Appeals and priority project lists</li> <li>• KIIs with UNRWA HQ and field staff</li> </ul>                                 |
| 2.2 Does UNRWA's implementation of the MTS 2016–2022 include a triple nexus (humanitarian-development-peace) approach? To what extent  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linkages between UNRWA's emergency and core programme activities.</li> <li>• Extent to which UNRWA applies a conflict sensitive or peacebuilding lens to its work.</li> <li>• External stakeholders perceive UNRWA as contributing to peacebuilding in the region.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• KIIs with UNRWA HQ and field staff, donors, host governments and UN</li> </ul>  |

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| does UNRWA contribute to ongoing efforts to enhance the triple nexus approach to sustainable development of Palestine refugees in the region?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linkages between UNRWA's work and that of external stakeholders on the triple nexus and sustainable development for Palestine refugees.</li> <li>• Existence of guidance/documents to frame UNRWA's work on the triple nexus.</li> </ul>   | agencies   |
| 2.3 To what extent has UNRWA's implementation of the MTS 2016–2022 supported linkages with the regional and country-level approaches of host governments, donors and the UN to assisting Palestine refugees? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mechanisms in place to identify opportunities for linking to the assistance of host governments, donors and UN agencies for Palestine refugees.</li> <li>• Number of formal agreements with host governments.</li> <li>• Linkages between UNRWA's activities and assistance to Palestine refugees provided by host governments.</li> <li>• Linkages between UNRWA's activities and donor-funded assistance to Palestine refugees.</li> <li>• Number of partnership agreements with UN agencies.</li> <li>• Linkages between UNRWA's activities and other UN agency support to Palestine refugees.</li> <li>• Examples of benefits of linkages with work of host governments, UN agencies and donor-funded assistance.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KIIs with donors, host governments, UN agencies, and UNRWA HQ and field staff</li> <li>• Document review</li> </ul>   |
| 2.4 To what extent are the Agency's activities based on its comparative advantages?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways in which UNRWA bases its work and partnerships on the comparative advantages identified in the MTS and the MOPAN review, particularly its workforce.</li> <li>• Extent to which UNRWA highlights its comparative advantages in reports, communications and resource mobilization efforts.</li> <li>• Extent to which UNRWA's activities are complementary to those of other actors supporting Palestine refugees.</li> <li>• Extent to which UNRWA fills gaps in services for Palestine refugees.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KIIs with donors, host governments, UN agencies, and UNRWA HQ and field staff</li> <li>• Document review</li> </ul>   |
| 2.5 To what extent has UNRWA successfully mainstreamed the cross-cutting issues of gender, youth and the inclusion of persons with disabilities into its programmes and ways of working?                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies and structures in place to support the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues.</li> <li>• Extent to which UNRWA's work reflects IASC commitments and good practice on cross-cutting issues.</li> <li>• Extent to which gender (including prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation and prevention of and response to GBV) is embedded in UNRWA programmes and ways of working.</li> <li>• Extent to which UNRWA programmes have been designed/adapted to be inclusive of persons with disabilities.</li> <li>• UNRWA programmes assess, and respond to, the specific needs of youth.</li> <li>• UNRWA gathers data on gender, youth and persons with disabilities and uses this to inform programming.</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review, including policies, guidelines, programme documents and evaluations</li> <li>• KIIs with UNRWA HQ and field staff</li> <li>• FGDs with Palestine refugees</li> <li>• Online survey of UNRWA staff</li> </ul> |
| <b>3. Efficiency</b>   |   |  |
| 3.1 How adequate are MTS 2016–2022 planning and coordination processes?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processes support the translation of the MTS into service delivery and activities.</li> <li>• Processes facilitate coordination between HQ and field offices as well as between field offices.</li> <li>• Planning and coordination processes enable the Agency to avoid duplication and ensure synergies across activities.</li> <li>• Extent to which planning and coordination processes support results reporting.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KIIs with UNRWA HQ and field staff</li> <li>• Mapping of planning and coordination processes</li> <li>• Document review</li> </ul>  |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which planning and coordination processes enable the Agency to be flexible and adaptive.</li> </ul>   |  |
| 3.2 How adequate are the Agency's financing and funding models (including in relation to recommendations in the Secretary-General's 2017 report on UNRWA – UN doc. ref. A/71/849)? What has been the impact of funding shortfalls on the Agency and how has it adapted to these, including through efficiency gains and resource mobilization efforts? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriateness of voluntary funding model for UNRWA's fixed-cost structure (with annual staff salary increases).</li> <li>• Extent of follow-up on recommendations in Secretary-General's 2017 report.</li> <li>• Impact of funding shortfalls on UNRWA's ability to respond to needs of growing number of registered refugees.</li> <li>• Examples of efficiency gains and funding cuts made and their implications for the Agency's work and achieving results.</li> <li>• Ways in which UNRWA has sought to mobilize resources to address funding shortfalls.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KIIs with UNRWA HQ and field staff, Advisory Commission members</li> <li>• Analysis of funding data</li> <li>• Document review, including resource mobilization strategy, relevant Advisory Commission documents</li> </ul> |
| 3.3 To what extent are programmatic and operational structures and systems – in place to facilitate the achievement of the MTS 2016–2022 Strategic Outcomes – fit for purpose?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which programmatic and operational structures support vertical integration between the HQ and field offices.</li> <li>• Extent to which programmatic and operational structures support horizontal integration at HQ and at field level.</li> <li>• Extent to which evaluation function enables the Agency to assess what is working and what is not and use this to inform decision making.</li> <li>• Extent to which programmatic and operational structures promote a holistic approach to meeting the needs of Palestine refugees.</li> <li>• Programmatic and operational structures and systems reformed to facilitate achievement of Strategic Outcomes.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KIIs with UNRWA HQ and field staff</li> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Mapping of programmatic and operational structures</li> </ul>  |
| 3.4 To what extent are the process commitments in the current MTS (including participation of Palestine refugees and staff, synergies between programme areas, and partnerships) on track, and contributing to the achievement of the MTS 2016–2022?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which UNRWA has implemented MTS commitments relating to participation of Palestine refugees.</li> <li>• Extent to which UNRWA has implemented MTS commitments relating to participation of staff.</li> <li>• Ways in which UNRWA is achieving synergies between the five Strategic Outcome programme areas.</li> <li>• Extent to which UNRWA has delivered on commitments relating to partnerships with UN agencies and NGOs.</li> <li>• Enabling factors and barriers to delivering on the process commitments in the MTS.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KIIs with UNRWA HQ and field staff, UN agencies, and other partner agencies</li> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• Online survey of UNRWA staff</li> <li>• FGDs with Palestine refugees</li> </ul>                           |
| <b>4. Effectiveness and impact</b>   |  |  |
| 4.1 To what extent is it expected that the MTS 2016–2022 Strategic Outcomes will be achieved, and what are the major factors (e.g., funding issues, the 2019 management crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic) influencing achievement?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress made in achieving targets in the Common Monitoring Matrix.</li> <li>• Qualitative evidence of results and achievements towards the Strategic Outcomes.</li> <li>• Ways in which funding challenges have hindered achievement of MTS targets.</li> <li>• Extent to which 2019 management crisis had an impact on decision making and systems and processes for achieving the Strategic Outcomes.</li> <li>• Positive and negative ways in which COVID-19 has impacted UNRWA's activities to achieve the Strategic Outcomes.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document review, including results review reports, Annual Operational Reports, Commissioner-General's annual reports, COVID-19 response report</li> <li>• KIIs with UNRWA HQ and field staff</li> </ul>                     |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which UNRWA has been able to adapt to or address the factors influencing the achievement of the Strategic Outcomes.</li> </ul>  |   |
| 4.2 How have service delivery efficiency gains of the Agency affected the overall quantity and quality of services for Palestine refugees, including its ability to benefit the most vulnerable Palestine refugees? How do affected populations perceive the quality of UNRWA services? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of efficiency improvements made in service delivery.</li> <li>• Examples of cost-cutting measures in operations and service delivery.</li> <li>• Changes in quantity of UNRWA services provided to Palestine refugees.</li> <li>• Changes in UNRWA assessments of service quality.</li> <li>• Changes in UNRWA assistance to the most vulnerable Palestine refugees.</li> <li>• Extent to which Palestine refugees report changes in the quality of UNRWA services.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KIIs with UNRWA HQ and field staff</li> <li>• Document review</li> <li>• FGDs with Palestine refugees</li> </ul>                                 |
| 4.3 In what ways did UNRWA's work to achieve the MTS 2016–2022 Strategic Outcomes contribute to regional security and stability?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNRWA's provision of basic services and livelihoods opportunities (including as employer of Palestine refugees) is a contribution to regional security and stability.</li> <li>• Linkages between UNRWA's activities and assistance to Palestine refugees from host governments, donors and UN agencies.</li> <li>• Host governments, donors and UN perceive UNRWA as contributing to achieving and enhancing security and stability in the region.</li> </ul>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KIIs with host government, donor and UN representatives, UNRWA HQ staff</li> <li>• UNRWA results data against Strategic Outcomes</li> </ul>      |
| 4.4 To what extent has the Agency been able to use achievements under the MTS for an external narrative to address complex political, financial and other challenges?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNRWA communications with donors, host governments and other stakeholders reflect results and achievements reported under the MTS.</li> <li>• Systems in place to draw on quantitative and qualitative data on achievements for communications and resource mobilization.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KIIs with UNRWA HQ staff and Advisory Commission members</li> <li>• Document review, including relevant Advisory Commission documents</li> </ul> |

## Data collection methods and tools

This section provides further detail on the data collection methods and sources for this evaluation.

### Document review

The team collected a library of 533 documents in total throughout the evaluation. These can be categorized as follows:

- Strategies, policies and plans, including annual operational plans; strategies for areas such as human resources and partnership; programme policies, strategies and guidance; and policies and strategies for cross-cutting issues.
- Reports, including AORs; midyear and annual results reviews; annual health reports; annual reports on the gender equality strategy; centralized and decentralized evaluation reports; and financial reports.
- Emergency appeals and progress reports.
- Project-related documents, including guidance.
- Advisory Commission documents, including the 2013 MTS Blueprint and AdCom recommendations.
- Other documents, including UNRWA organizational directives, documents on the SDGs, etc.

Annex C below lists the documents cited in this report.

### Semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs)

The evaluation team conducted semi-structured KIIs with UNRWA staff at headquarters and across the five fields of operation (programme and operations staff as well as management), former UNRWA staff, donor and host government representatives, and partners. It also undertook FGDs with UNRWA area staff. Using KIIs and FGDs, the team consulted almost 200 individuals, as listed in Annex B.

### Online survey

Annex D provides details on the online survey of UNRWA staff, including analyses of responses to each survey question.

### Consultations with Palestine refugees

Due to the COVID-19 situation in UNRWA's fields of operation, it was not safe to bring Palestine refugees together for FGDs. Therefore, UNRWA provided the team with phone numbers for male and female refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan and Lebanon. It was not possible to interview Palestine refugees in Syria because of strict requirements for permission to interview stakeholders other than UNRWA staff.

However, UNRWA included contact details for Palestine refugees from Syria in Jordan and Lebanon. The two team members based in the region conducted the phone interviews. Both completed online training on Itad's safeguarding approaches before doing the interviews and Itad ensured that there were clear measures in place to allow Palestine refugees to raise concerns either about UNRWA or the evaluation team in a safe manner.

Interviews with Palestine refugees focused on two evaluation questions. One was evaluation question 3.4, on MTS commitments to the participation of refugees. The second was evaluation question 4.2, on the impact of service delivery efficiency gains on the quality of UNRWA services and how affected populations perceive this. Conducting interviews rather than FGDs had the advantage of enabling the team to explore questions in more detail although it meant that the team consulted fewer individuals than would have been possible through FGDs. The team worked with UNRWA to ensure that Palestine refugee interviewees had accessed a range of UNRWA services and assistance so that they could share a range of experiences. The team consulted a total of 49 Palestine refugees as follows:

| Field of Operation | No of female interviews | No of male interviews |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Jordan             | 8                       | 6                     |
| Lebanon            | 13                      | 7                     |
| Gaza               | 6                       | -                     |
| West Bank          | 3                       | 6                     |

As noted in the main report, the team had planned to undertake interviews with male refugees in Gaza after Ramadan, but the outbreak of violent conflict meant that this was not possible.

### Quantitative data

The team collected a range of quantitative data to support findings from qualitative data sources. These include:

- Financial data from UNRWA annual financial statements as well as the department of finance.
- Data on frontline staff and vacancy rates from UNRWA human resources department.
- Data on CMM indicators from AORs to inform the team's assessment of the extent to which the MTS aligns with the SDGs and also the extent to which UNRWA is achieving planned results.

### Organization of the evaluation

#### Evaluation phases

The evaluation has been conducted in three phases: planning and inception, data collection and analysis, and reporting and dissemination. The graphic below lists the key activities that the team has undertaken and the outputs that it has delivered in each phase to date. Under phase 3, the team has some remaining activities and outputs to deliver.

| Phase 1 – Inception<br>January-March  | Phase 2 – Data Collection and Analysis<br>March-May   | Phase 3 – Reporting and Dissemination<br>June-August, November   |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Key Activities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial briefings with UNRWA and ERG</li> <li>Initial document review</li> <li>Interviews with internal and external stakeholders</li> <li>Development of evaluation methodology and data collection tools</li> </ul>        | <b>Key Activities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-depth document review</li> <li>Design and roll out online survey</li> <li>Remote KIs with internal and external stakeholders</li> <li>Phone interviews with Palestine refugees</li> <li>Quantitative data collection and analysis</li> <li>Data logging</li> <li>Data analysis and synthesis (including team workshop)</li> </ul> | <b>Key Activities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and submit draft evaluation report for UNRWA internal review</li> <li>Revise and submit draft evaluation report for ERG review</li> <li>Finalize evaluation report</li> </ul>                               |
| <b>Key Deliverables</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluation framework workshop</li> <li>Draft and Final Inception Report including finalized evaluation approach, methods and questions</li> <li>Presentation / briefing with ERG on planned evaluation approach</li> </ul> | <b>Key Deliverable</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online participatory workshop with UNRWA Management Committee to validate findings and start co-creation of recommendations</li> </ul>  | <b>Key Deliverables</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two draft and one final evaluation reports</li> <li>Workshop on evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations with ERG</li> <li>Presentation of evaluation results to UNRWA Advisory Commission</li> </ul> |

### Team Composition

The evaluation team was led by Dr Tasneem Mowjee, a highly experienced humanitarian consultant and evaluator, who was supported by a Deputy Team Leader, Daniel Arghiros, an international consultant with experience of working in the region; and two experts based in the region, Samer Shtayyeh and Nadia Saad. Dorian LaGuardia, as senior advisor, provided technical advisory support to the core team while Itad staff consultant Giorgia Giambi provided research and project management support. David Fleming, the Project Director at Itad, was responsible for project oversight and quality assurance.

**Annex C: List of interviewees**

| UNRWA staff           |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Headquarters          |   |
| Akihiro, Seita        | Director, Health Programme  |
| Alabed, Shadi         | Director, Department of Finance   |
| Alrifai, Tamara       | Director, Strategic Communications/Spokesperson & (Acting) Director, External Relations |
| Baker, Brian          | Director, Security and Risk Management  |
| Berry, Edwin          | Deputy Director, Department of Planning   |
| Capozio, Chiara       | Senior Emergency Officer, Department of Planning  |
| Cetinturk, Kaan       | Director, Information Management and Technology Department                              |
| Daniels, Ugochi       | Chief of Staff  |
| Delgado, Silvia       | Consultant, Executive Office  |
| Pontefract, Caroline  | Director, Education Programme   |
| Tonkin, Hannah        | Acting Director, Department of Legal Affairs  |
| Fernandez, Paz        | Senior External Relation Projects Officer, External Relations Department                |
| Giacaman, Jane Saba   | Director, Microfinance Programme  |
| Husain-Naviatti, Asif | Secretary, Advisory Commission and Head of the Advisory Commission Secretariat          |
| Jacquand, Marc        | Consultant, Executive Office  |
| Jelassi, Sana         | Head of Gender  |
| John, Natacha         | Neutrality Coordinator  |
| Kervinio, Yann        | Chief, Central Support Services Division  |
| Klaus, Dorothee       | Director, Relief and Social Services Programme  |
| Kubo, Takuto          | Senior External Relation Projects Officer, External Relations Department                |
| Lassouaoui, Marc      | Head, Private Sector Unit, External Relations Department                                |
| Manneh, Munir         | Director, Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme                                 |
| Matanes, Nabeeh       | Project Manager – Donor Relations   |
| McGreevy, Sean        | Senior Planning Officer, Department of Planning   |
| Min, Byung-Kun        | Director, Internal Oversight Services   |
| Neekhara, Vijay       | Senior Urban Planning Officer   |
| Pesic, Irena          | ERCD - Head, External Relations Services Section  |
| Rose, Sam             | Director, Department of Planning  |
| Traficanti, Maria     | Deputy Director, Department of Human Resources  |
| Gaza Field Office     |   |
| Abu Athra, Farid      | Chief, Field Education Programme  |
| Abu-Shawish, Asem     | Chief, Field Relief and Social Services Programme                                       |
| Adwan, Raed           | Area Education Officer  |
| Al-Habbash, Rafat     | Area Education Officer  |
| Austin, Jenifer       | Field Finance Officer   |
| Awwad, Ibrahim        | Area Education Officer  |
| de Bold, David        | Senior Deputy Director, UNRWA Affairs (Operations)                                      |
| Al-Jadba, Ghada       | Chief, Field Health Programme   |
| El-Awour, Imad        | Area Health Officer   |
| El-Aydi, Mohammad     | Area Chief  |
| El-Bayed, Majed       | Area Chief  |



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|----------------------|--|
| Halabi, Nisreen      | Area Health Officer  |
| Harb, Alaa           | Area Education Officer   |
| Jaber, Naser         | Chief, Microfinance Programme  |
| Joudeh, Wajih        | Area Relief and Social Services Officer                                  |
| Mughari, Raed        | Area Relief and Social Services Officer                                  |
| Najjar, Fathi        | Area Relief and Social Services Officer                                  |
| Nathan, Joanna       | Deputy Director, Programmes  |
| Quqa, Rihab          | Area Health Officer  |
| Reyati, Mohammad     | Acting Chief, Field Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme        |
| Safi, Maher          | Senior Employment Officer, Job Creation Programme                        |
| Schmale, Matthias    | Director, UNRWA Affairs  |
| Shuhaiber, Fuad      | Area Relief and Social Services Officer                                  |
| Zaqqout, Randa       | Area Health Officer  |
| Jordan Field Office  |  |
| Abd-Razeq, Haytham   | Area Health Officer  |
| Abu-Rub, Mohamad     | Area Relief and Social Services Officer                                  |
| Abu Safyeh, Lina     | Area Relief and Social Services Officer                                  |
| Afghani, Mueen       | Area Education Officer   |
| Ahmad, Nidal         | Chief of Area Office   |
| Al-Khalidy, Lubna    | Field Sanitation Engineer, Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme |
| Al-Mughrabi, Mohamed | Deputy Chief, Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme              |
| Al-Sadeq, Husam      | Area Relief and Social Services Officer                                  |
| Ammoura, Mustafa     | Chief, Health Programme  |
| Bitar, Osama         | Area Education Officer   |
| Chhetri, Vickram     | Programme Support Officer  |
| Darras, Sahira       | Area Education Officer   |
| Hamdan, Rashad       | Area Health Officer  |
| Hasan, Khalil        | Donor Relations and Projects Support Officer                             |
| Jadallah, Nasser     | Area Health Officer  |
| Jafal, Reham         | Acting Chief of Area Office  |
| Janho, Butros        | Head, Finance  |
| Labadi, Oroba        | Chief, Field Education Programme   |
| Lorenzo, Marta       | Director, UNRWA Affairs  |
| Osta, Rasha          | Emergency Coordinator  |
| Sa'adeh, Naser       | Acting Area Education Officer  |
| Siriany, Victor      | Chief, Microfinance Programme  |
| Uraidi, Hana         | Chief, Relief and Social Services Programme                              |
| Wheidi, Haifa        | Area Relief and Social Services Officer                                  |
| Lebanon Field Office |  |
| Abbas, Abdulkader    | Area Health Officer  |
| Abdel Rahman, Soha   | Relief and Social Services Officer                                       |
| Abu Nafiseh, Tamara  | Protection Officer   |
| Abu Sway, Wafaa      | Relief and Social Services Officer                                       |
| Ahmad, Mohamad       | Relief and Social Services Officer                                       |
| Alaiddin, Abeer      | Relief and Social Services Officer                                       |
| Al-Khalaf, Ibtissam  | Area Education Officer   |

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|------------------------|--|
| Ayyoub, Nidal          | Field Sanitation Engineer  |
| Cordone, Claudio       | Director, UNRWA Affairs  |
| Dib, Salem             | Chief, Field Education Programme   |
| Chanaa, Abed Al Hakim  | Chief, Field Health Programme  |
| Fares, Fadi            | Acting Chief, Field Relief and Social Services Programme                 |
| Haydar, Hamad          | Area Health Officer  |
| Korman, Daoud          | Chief, Field Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme               |
| Masrieh, Iman          | Area Education Officer   |
| Miari, Wael            | Area Health Officer  |
| Odeh, Fatmeh           | Area Education Officer   |
| Sheridan, Ingrid       | Donor Relations and Projects Officer                                     |
| Thompson, Mera         | Deputy Director, Programmes  |
| Wagner, Emma           | Protection and Neutrality Team Leader                                    |
| Zeidan, Mahmoud        | Area Education Officer   |
| Syria Field Office     |  |
| Abdulrazzak, Mahmoud   | Chief, Microfinance Programme  |
| Abu Rashed, Mirvat     | Acting Chief, Vocational Training Center                                 |
| Abu Sha'ban, Mohammad  | Acting Senior Humanitarian Officer                                       |
| Ali Tareq, Ahmad       | Field Sanitation Engineer, Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme |
| Alkhatib, Eyad         | Branch Manager, Microfinance Programme                                   |
| Amanya, Michael-Ebye   | Director, UNRWA Affairs  |
| Amayri, Ahmad          | Chief, Field Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme               |
| Balawni, Nour          | Area Social Work Supervisor  |
| Dr Fanous, Kinan       | Acting Chief, Field Health Programme                                     |
| Elsalfiti, Hisham      | Donor Relations and Projects Officer                                     |
| Haj Saeed, Amjad       | Area Education Officer   |
| Hitawi, Shahinaz       | Area Education Officer   |
| Jbra, Nadeem           | Disability & Gender Mainstreaming Officer                                |
| Mazen, Kassab Mohammad | Acting Chief, Field Education Programme                                  |
| Mishra, Prafulla       | Deputy Director, Programmes  |
| Qasem, Wael            | Area Relief and Social Services Officer                                  |
| Rafea, Mohammad        | Area Education Officer   |
| Saqer, Amneh           | Chief, Field Relief and Social Services Programme                        |
| Sawwan, Qasem          | Field Eligibility & Registration Officer                                 |
| Shehab, Waseem         | Branch Manager, Microfinance Programme                                   |
| Soudah, Mouffaq        | Area Education Officer   |
| West Bank Field Office |  |
| Abu-Baha, Usama        | Area Education Officer   |
| Abu Kteish, Razan      | Area Social Work Supervisor  |
| Adawi, Mohammad        | Field Sanitation Engineer, Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme |
| Amar, Muaweyah         | Chief, Field Education Programme   |
| Bader, Randa           | Area Relief and Social Services Officer                                  |
| Bridge, Oliver         | Protection and Neutrality Technical Lead                                 |
| Darwish, Hanadi        | Chief, Field Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme               |
| Qarmash, Adnan         | Chief, Field Health Programme  |

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|-----------------------------|---|
| Shilbayeh, Khaled           | Area Health Officer   |
| Eideh, Shaban               | Area Relief and Social Services Officer   |
| Jabarin, Ala                | Area Relief and Social Services Officer   |
| Kharoufeh, Voltaire         | Chief, Field Microfinance Programme   |
| Lewis, Gwyn                 | Director, UNRWA Affairs   |
| Madyeh, Lubna               | Chief, Field Relief and Social Services Programme   |
| Mashaqi, Awni               | Area Relief and Social Services Officer   |
| Ramadan, Hasan              | Area Education Officer  |
| Saqer, Nufoz                | Social Worker, Relief and Social Services Programme   |
| Shanaa, Fida                | Area Health Officer   |
| Titi, Jafar                 | Area Education Officer  |
| Tweir, Husam                | Area Health Officer   |
| Other                       |   |
| Burchard, Matthias          | Director, UNRWA Representative Office to the EU, Brussels and Geneva  |
| Campbell, Elizabeth         | Director, UNRWA Representative Office, DC   |
| Gunnarsdottir, Greta        | Director, UNRWA Representative Office, New York   |
| Former UNRWA staff          |   |
| Adar, Mohammed              | Former Director, UNRWA Affairs, Syria Field Office  |
| Anderson, Scott             | Currently, Director, US Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service / Former Director, UNRWA Affairs, West Bank Field Office  |
| Audette, Meg                | Currently, Vice President, Project Support Services, Tetra Tech / Former Deputy Director, UNRWA Affairs (Programmes), West Bank Field Office  |
| Baker, Laila                | Currently, UN Regional Director for Arab States / Former Director, UNRWA Relief and Social Services Program   |
| Hurt, Robert                | Currently, Deputy Director, Strategic Planning and Results, and Head, Implementation Management and Assurance Service, UNHCR / Former Director, Department of Planning, UNRWA, Amman                                |
| Leinen, Daniela             | Currently, Director, MTPS (Office of Procurement Services), International Atomic Energy Agency / Former Deputy Director, Operations, Lebanon Field Office   |
| Lilly, Damian               | Currently, Independent Consultant/Formal Chief of Protection, UNRWA   |
| Schoiswohl, Michael         | Currently, Senior Legal Officer - Office of the Legal Counsel, Office of Legal Affairs, United Nations / Former Deputy Director and Principal Legal Officer (International Law), Department of Legal Affairs, UNRWA |
| Stryk, Robert               | Currently, Regional Evaluation Advisor, Middle East and North Africa Regional Office, UNICEF / Former Chief, Evaluation Division, UNRWA, Amman  |
| Donors and Host Governments |   |
| Abdul-Rahman, Mwaffaq       | Director of UNRWA and International Organizations Directorate, Department of Palestinian Affairs, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan   |
| Agnimel, Pierre-Emmanuel    | Officer in Charge of Humanitarian Affairs, Consulate General of France  |
| Amad, Ureib                 | Development & Policy Advisor, Consulate General of Belgium  |
| Arosio, Marta               | Emergency Programme Officer, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) - Jerusalem Office   |
| Bennet, Richard             | Deputy Director (Development) for Global Affairs Canada   |
| Como, Odoardo               | Head of Operations Section - Macroeconomic Support and Social Development, EUREP Office   |
| Costandinides, Eillya       | Senior Programme Manager, Palestinian Programme, The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, British Consulate General - Jerusalem  |

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| De Nijs, Kaat              | Head of Development Cooperation, Consulate General of Belgium  |
| El-Ayi, Abdelnasser        | Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) Office Director, The Lebanese Republic                |
| Eloranta, Elina            | Deputy Head of Mission, Representative Office of Finland   |
| Fenger, Michaelsen Cecilie | Head of Cooperation – Development, Representative Office of Denmark                                  |
| Filippo, Riccardo          | Head of Political Affairs, Consulate General of Italy  |
| Fornara, Liù               | Senior Humanitarian Officer, Swiss Agency For Development and Cooperation                            |
| Gilbrin, Marie             | Director SDC Cooperation Office Gaza and West Bank, Swiss Agency or Development and Cooperation      |
| Gooch, Christopher         | Regional Refugee Coordinator, Consulate General of USA   |
| He, Siyuan                 | First Secretary, Representative Office of Germany  |
| Home, Erling               | Deputy Head, Representative Office of Norway   |
| Ishiguro, Asaka            | Economic Cooperation Coordinator, Representative Office of Japan                                     |
| Janson, Kristin            | Permanent Representative in New York, Canada   |
| Kaivola, Pekka             | Desk Officer for UNRWA and UNHCR, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland                            |
| Karakoski, Jussi           | Head of Development Cooperation, Representative Office of Finland                                    |
| Karlsson, David            | Consul, Political Affairs / Human Rights, Consulate General of Sweden                                |
| Khirfan, Rafiq             | Director General of Department of Palestinian Affairs, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan               |
| Khoury, Samah              | Refugee Programme Specialist, Consulate General of USA   |
| Mansour, Khaled            | Programme Manager, Representative Office of Denmark  |
| Mansour, Michael           | Task Manager (UNRWA policy), EUREP Office  |
| Matsui, Masahiro           | First Secretary - Head of Economic and Development Cooperation, Representative Office of Japan       |
| Mikkola, Riikka            | Senior Advisor on Humanitarian Funding, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland                      |
| Olausson, Jessica          | Consul General, Consulate General of Sweden  |
| Prachar, Kimberley         | Development Officer, Global Affairs Canada   |
| Razzouk, Wadi              | Senior Policy Advisor, Representative Office of Netherlands  |
| Roos, Claudia              | Head of Programmes ‘Supporting Palestinian Refugees’, German House for Development Cooperation - GIZ |
| Sayegh, Samar              | Programme Advisor, Representative Office of Norway   |
| Schmaltz, Jason            | Deputy Head of Cooperation, Representative Office of Canada  |
| Tulk, Jason                | Head of Cooperation, Representative Office of Canada   |
| Wanzeck, Angelika          | Second Secretary, Representative Office of Germany   |
| Partners                   |  |
| Alami, Sima                | Programme Officer - Youth, United Nations Population Fund, West Bank                                 |
| Ayoub, Janine              | Project Manager, Right to Play, Lebanon  |
| Caddeo, Marilena           | Child Protection Country Programme Manager/ Head of Base, Terre des Hommes Italy, Lebanon            |
| Dalling, Matthew           | Head of Child Protection, United Nations Children’s Fund, West Bank                                  |
| Idris, Hiba                | Protection Officer, Terre des Hommes Italy, Lebanon  |
| Jammal, Haifa              | Project Coordinator for UNRWA Projects, ABAAD, Lebanon   |
| Khalidi, Omar              | Programme Policy Officer – CBT, World Food Programme, Jordan   |
| Masri, Sawzan              | Country Director, Taawon, Lebanon  |
| Muscroft, Sarah            | Head of Office, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Palestine        |
| Natsheh, Sahar             | Gender Associate, United Nations Population Fund, West Bank  |

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| Qawas, Laila     | MEAL Officer, Sharek Youth Forum, West Bank  |
| Santoro, Stefano | Head of Cash-Based Transfers (CBT) Unit, World Food Programme, Jordan                          |
| Sougheyar, Dima  | Education Advisor, Norwegian Refugee Council, Lebanon  |
| Yacoub, Nazih    | Programme Specialist (Chief of Palestinian Programme), United Nations Children's Fund, Lebanon |

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## Annex E: Supporting Evidence

### Survey analysis and results

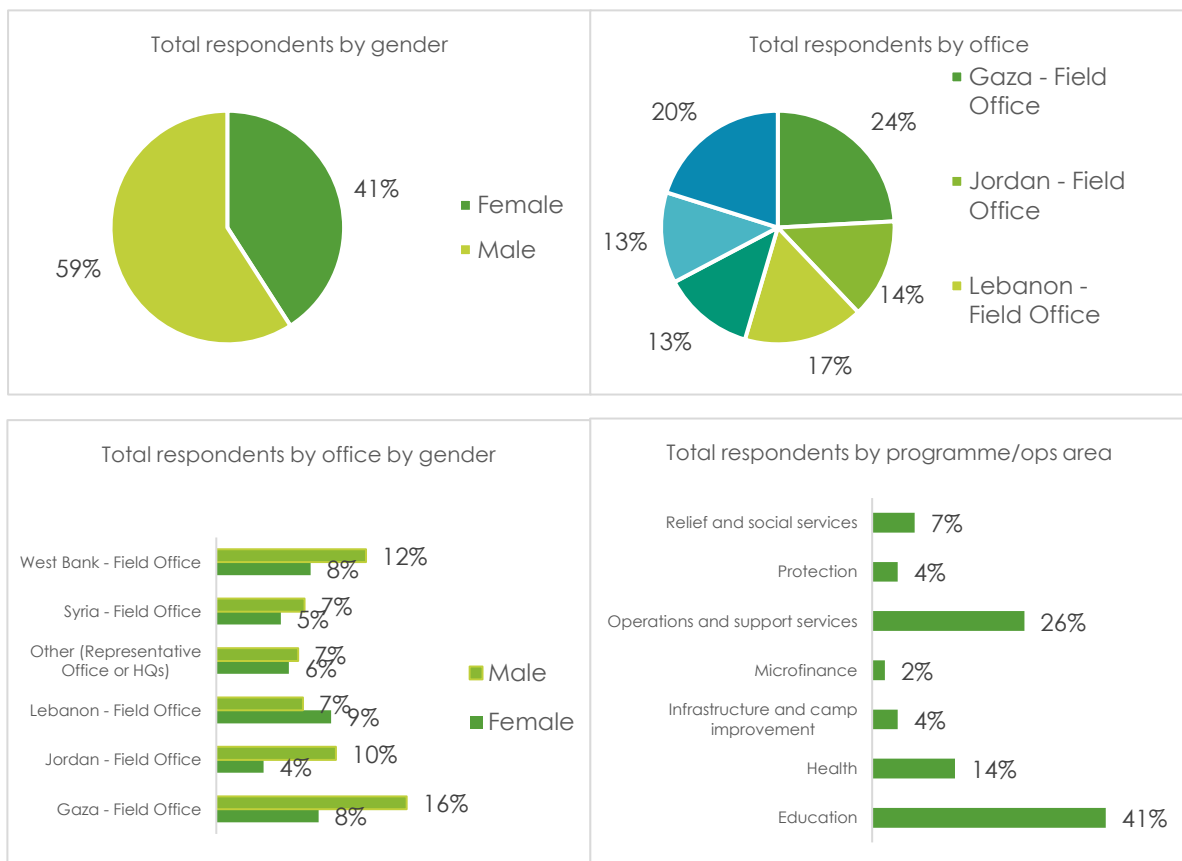
The team used SurveyMonkey to develop an online survey that focused on two evaluation questions. The first was UNRWA's commitments to staff in the MTS, under question 3.4 of the evaluation matrix. The other was question 2.5 on UNRWA's mainstreaming of the cross-cutting issues of gender, youth and persons with disabilities. The survey comprised 13 questions, with the first question seeking responses to five statements based on UNRWA commitments to staff. Each question had a Likert scale followed by a text box for qualitative responses.

In discussion with the evaluation team, UNRWA identified 2,186 staff who had dedicated email addresses and were in a position to address these questions. Of these, 770 responded, giving a response rate of 35 per cent. The UNRWA Evaluation Division sent out the survey to staff on 7 April, followed by regular reminders to complete the survey. The survey, which was administered in both Arabic and English, was closed after two weeks.

#### Overview

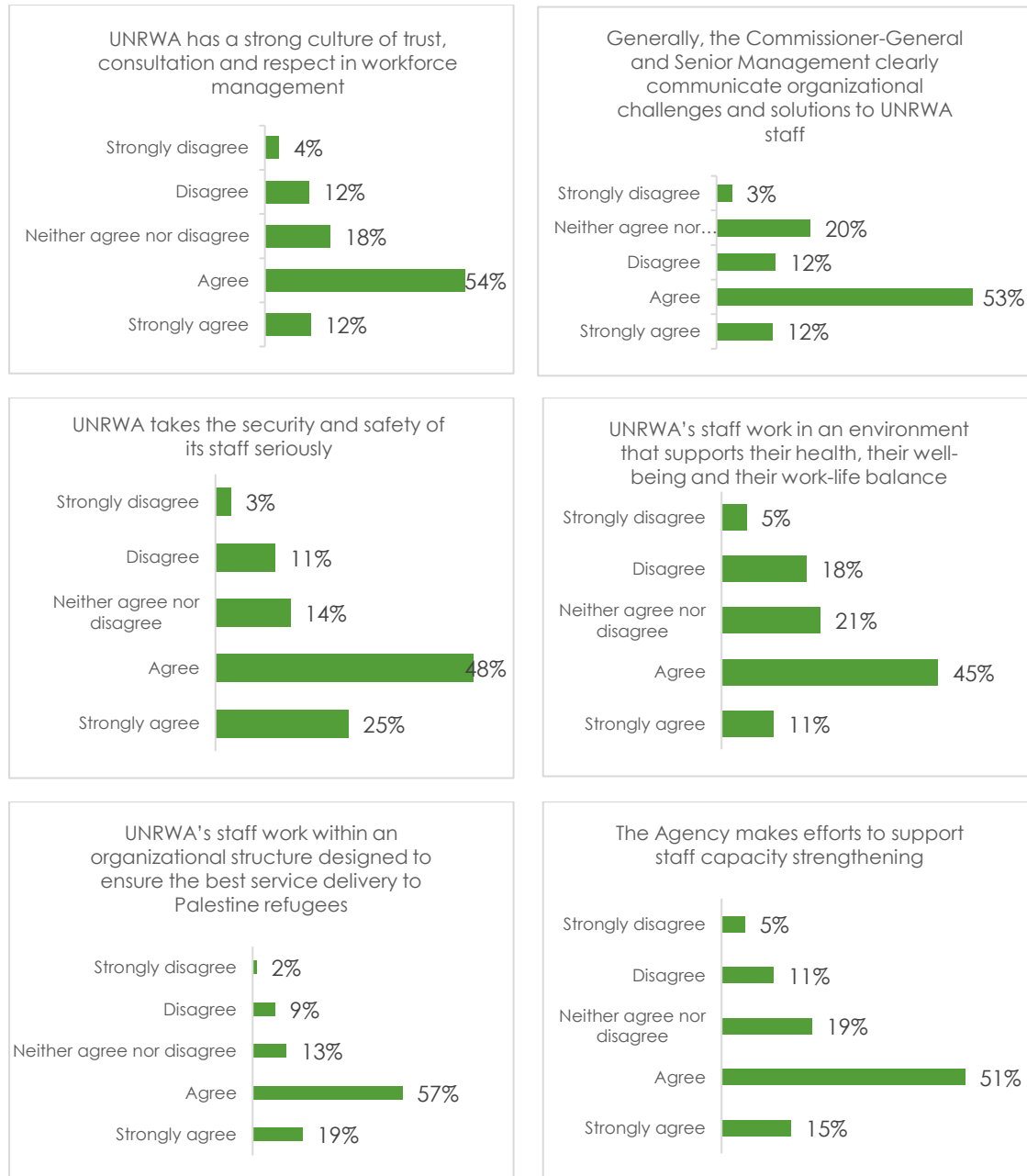
Of the total of **770** UNRWA staff who responded to the survey:

- 59 per cent were male and 41 per cent female
- Most respondents came from the Gaza field office (24 per cent) followed by the West Bank field office (20 per cent). The least were from the Syria field office (13 per cent) and 'other' Representative Office or HQs (13 per cent)
- All offices had a higher percentage of male respondents except Lebanon which had a higher percentage of female respondents
- Most respondents came from the Education programme (41 per cent) followed by Operations and support services (26 per cent). The least came from Microfinance (2 per cent), Infrastructure and camp improvement (4 per cent) and Protection (4 per cent)



**Question 1: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?**

(Answers received: 658)

**1. UNRWA has a strong culture of trust, consultation and respect in workforce management**

(Open ended comments received: 145)

While over half of respondents agreed, the most common comments on this question noted that:

- There is a lack of consultation with staff on decisions.
- Decision making is centralized and hierarchical with a top-down approach.
- There is no consistent workforce management at field office level – not effectively trickling down from top.
- There is a lack of transparency around decision making and what is happening at the top.

*2. Generally, the Commissioner-General and Senior Management clearly communicate organizational challenges and solutions to UNRWA staff*

(Open ended comments received: 139)

The most common comments on this question noted that:

- The CG often communicates challenges but rarely solutions.
- There are tensions around the comms for the financial crisis and UNRWA austerity.
- Communications are not always transparent.

*3. UNRWA takes the security and safety of its staff seriously*

(Open ended comments received: 125)

The most common comments on this question noted:

- Better security provided for international staff than national staff.
- Mixed response to COVID-19 safety: some flag serious concerns with the UNRWA response and others think the response was good. Some staff feel unsafe in their offices (no cleaning protocols, mask wearing).
- Concerns that staff are not well protected in the case of staff misconduct or assault or abuse when working in the field.
- Concerns about cars and transport not being safe due to maintenance and age.

*4. UNRWA's staff work in an environment that supports their health, their well-being and their work-life balance*

(Open ended comments received: 138)

The most common comments on this question noted:

- Concerns around heavy workload and urgent last-minute requests.
- Concerns around staff working outside of their duty hours and being unable to take leave due to workload.
- Issues of under-staffing increasing the pressure. Under-staffing impacted by COVID-19 and financial crisis.
- Issues with physical working environment of the offices (not good).

*5. UNRWA's staff work within an organizational structure designed to ensure the best service delivery to Palestine refugees*

(Open ended comments received: 105)

The most common comments on this question noted:

- Inefficiencies including programmes working in siloes forfeiting cross-programme learning and duplication of functions at HQ.
- Bureaucracy and centralization that disrupt the workflow.
- Concerns that the Agency's impact on refugees is shrinking.

*6. The Agency makes efforts to support staff capacity strengthening*

(Open ended comments received: 130)

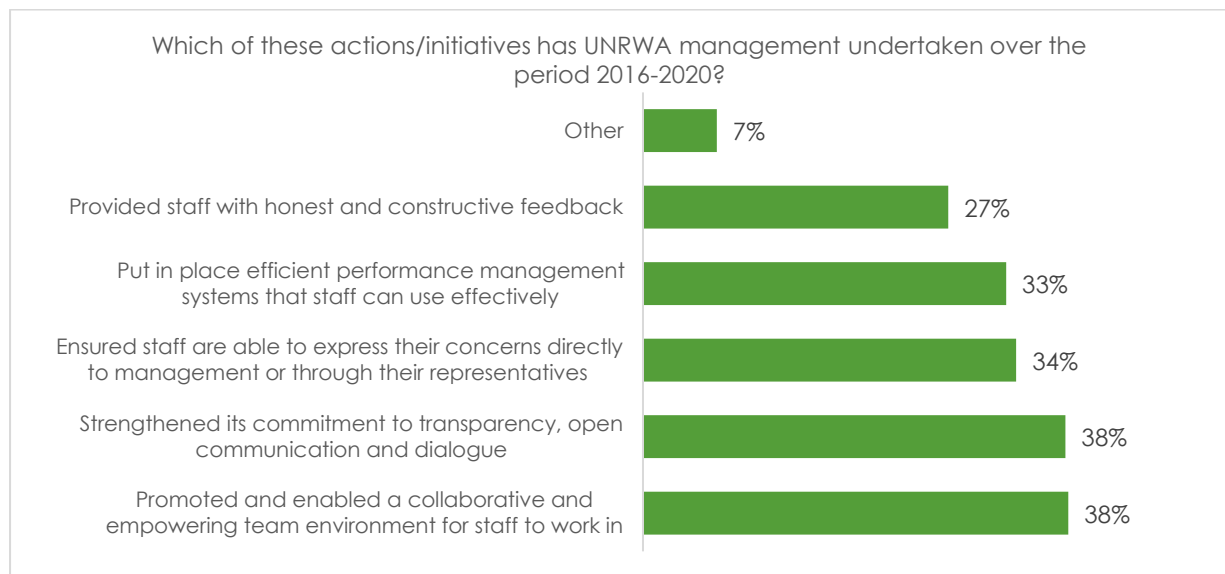
The most common comments on this question noted that there is a shortage of funding for staff development.

Some noted that there are several continuous workshops and trainings provided by UNRWA whereas others say they have not come across these opportunities in a long time/at all.

**Question 2: Which of these actions/initiatives has UNRWA management undertaken over the period 2016–2020? Please select all that apply:**

- *Promoted and enabled a collaborative and empowering team environment for staff to work in.*
- *Provided staff with honest and constructive feedback.*
- *Strengthened its commitment to transparency, open communication and dialogue.*
- *Ensured staff are able to express their concerns directly to management or through their representatives.*
- *Put in place efficient performance management systems that staff can use effectively.*
- *Other.*

(Answers received: 564)



(Open ended comments received: 120)

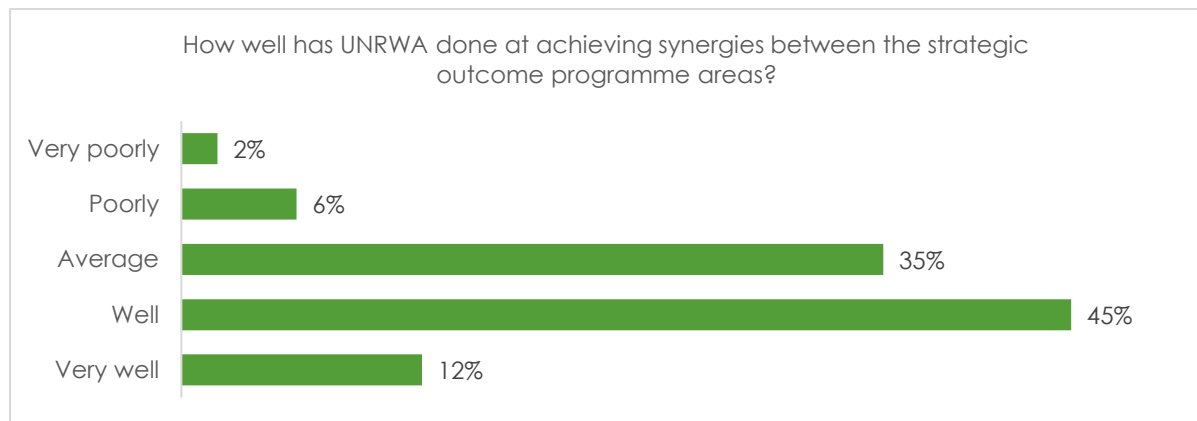
Comments on this question highlighted:

- Mixed responses on staff feedback. Some thought it was good and others bad.
- Several concerns about the performance management system (E-per) not being effective and poorly understood. However, it was noted that there were some ongoing changes to the system which might improve it.
- That the main route to raise complaints was through the Union which then communicated with higher-ups.
- Some comments on how social media is playing a role in connecting employees with directors of programmes and departments.

**Question 3: How well has UNRWA done at achieving synergies between the following Strategic Outcome programme areas?**

1. *Refugees' rights under international law are protected and promoted.*
2. *Refugees' health is protected and the disease burden is reduced.*
3. *School-aged children complete quality, equitable and inclusive basic education.*
4. *Refugee capabilities strengthened for increased livelihood opportunities.*
5. *Refugees are able to meet their basic human needs of food, shelter and environmental health.*

(Answers received: 603)



(Open ended comments received: 112)

Comments on this question highlighted:

- Some synergies between health and education such as ensuring the return to school was compliant to COVID-19 health measures or providing follow-up with student refugees on vaccinations, health checks, food services, psychosocial support programmes and others.
- Diagnosis of students with special learning needs.
- The introduction of mental health and psychosocial support.
- Synergies between education and livelihoods e.g., scholarships programme in Lebanon.

**Question 4: How could UNRWA improve synergies between the Strategic Outcome programme areas?**

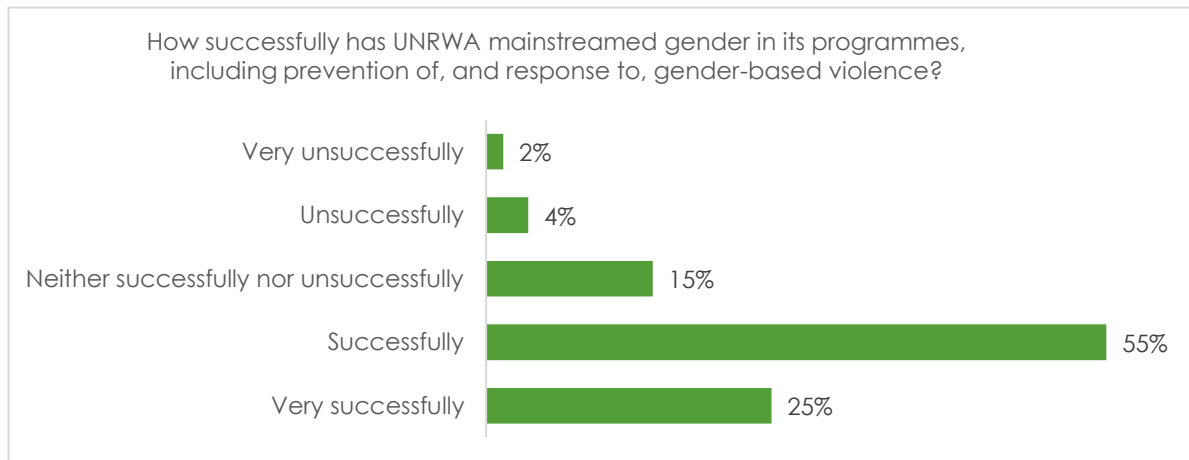
(Answers received: 278)

Most relevant suggestions included:

- Better inclusion of field staff inputs in decision making.
- Better inclusion of refugee inputs into decision making/re-assessment of refugee needs.
- Encourage communication, collaboration and information sharing between programmes by:
  - Creating joint-working committees between overlapping programmes or task forces.
  - Staff training on this issue.
  - Improved referral mechanisms.
  - Shared drives.
  - Annual meetings to discuss this topic.
- Improvements to the monitoring and evaluation system.
- Inclusive strategic planning processes with clear objectives in the annual plans for each level: Agency level → programme level
- COVID-19 could be an opportunity to reinvent the ways programmes work together.
- Some concerns that departments are competing rather than working together.

**Question 5: How successfully has UNRWA mainstreamed gender in its programmes, including prevention of, and response to, gender-based violence?**

(Answers received: 592)



(Open ended comments received: 123)

Comments on this question noted that:

- There have been some clear efforts to mainstream gender within the organization and through the programmes. For example, raising awareness with staff on the topic of violence, training health staff on GBV, good opportunities for female staff to move into senior positions, good mainstreaming of gender in education programming, SEA task force working with different departments.
- However, others noted that while women were moving into senior positions, they were still not heard. Unions are dominated by older men.
- More can be done in GBV in the programming – there are no effective referral pathways for survivors.
- Sex disaggregated data is being collected but unclear whether it is being used in decision -making. One success on using this data was in education.

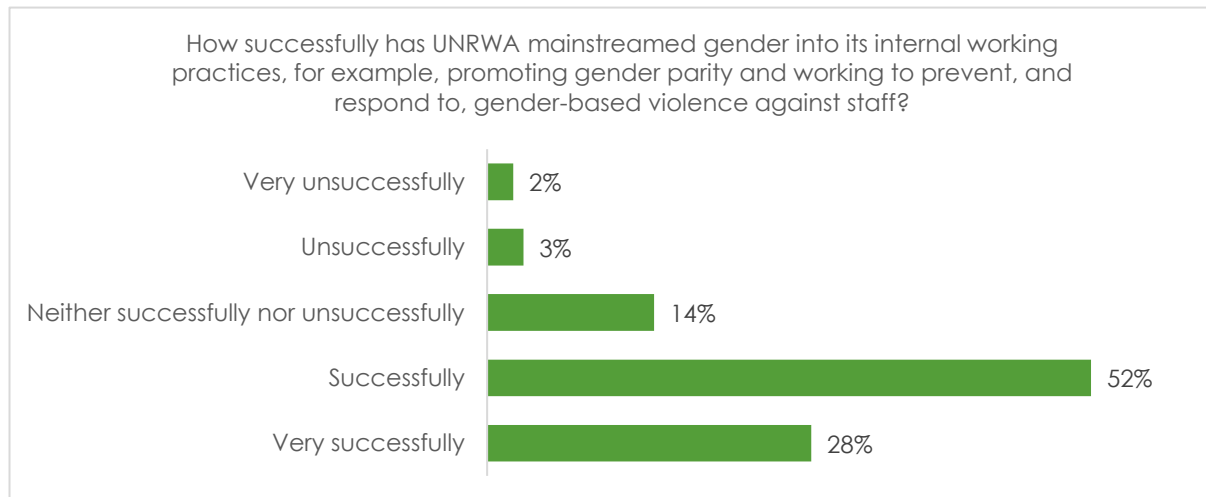
**Backlash**

- ‘Using the gender issue was to deprive some male staff from their rights and prevented them from getting higher posts and grades.’
- ‘The strategy that I have taken in supporting women has caused major problems, both clear and hidden.’
- ‘There is a requirement for each to have a percentage of the job applicants being female. Many female employees have been appointed in all programmes, based on competition between the sexes.’
- ‘Females have been increasingly appointed to higher levels of management, although this is often to the detriment of competence and ability.’
- ‘There is discrimination in favor of women.’
- ‘The UNRWA administration has given gender a greater role and importance at the expense of competence, skill, seniority and education, and this may harm the UNRWA administration and work according to my belief that gender [priority] is given when competencies are equal.’
- ‘The Agency gives female priority to the position and the topic is clear in most of the appointments.’

**Question 6: How successfully has UNRWA mainstreamed gender into its internal working practices, for example, promoting gender parity and working to prevent, and respond to, gender-based violence against staff?**



(Answers received: 576)



(Open ended comments received: 99)

Comments on this question suggested that:

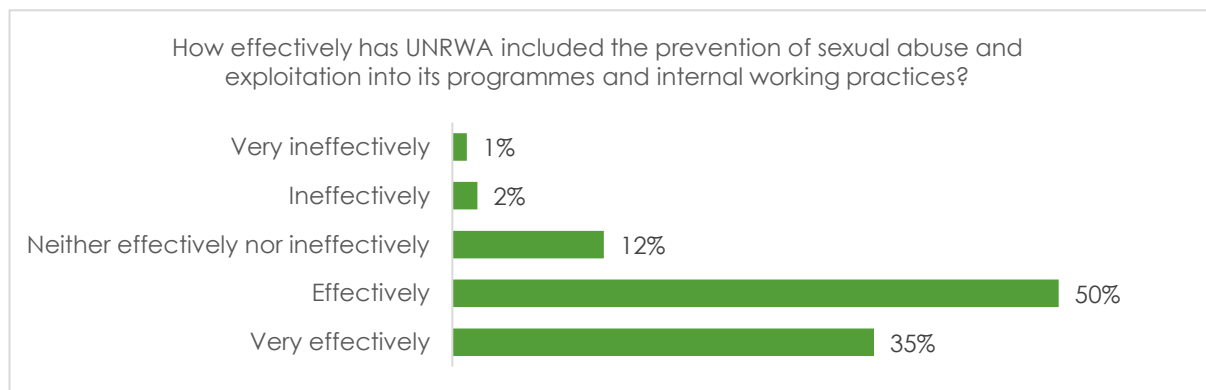
- Respondents acknowledge efforts to improve gender parity in recruitment of women in higher level roles, training on gender & GBV, sexual harassment policies.
- Some noted inconsistencies in women's roles, e.g., only one female head of department (Lebanon and Gaza operations and support services), less women leaders in FICIP, moving women in roles of responsibility without the necessary management support.
- Several respondents noted that there is not enough provision for working mothers: *'HR announced a pilot for women returning to work after maternity leave in 2019. Due to the limited application of the policy (limited time), very few women actually qualified for it. Two years on, we never heard whether the pilot was rolled out.... There is limited flexibility for working mothers, who now have a double burden of domestic duties due to the pandemic. Also, despite the existence of the policy, there is no safe space for breastfeeding and for women who are in the field (in the West Bank Field Office, the breastfeeding room is dirty and full of equipment), breastfeeding a child is almost impossible due to the lack of proper facilities for women in the area offices. Often there is no toilet paper, no clean areas, no private spaces. In general, facilities are not appropriate for women or consider their sanitary needs. In practice, the 1 hour provided for women to breastfeed their babies is not feasible due to high workloads, so women end up working more than their male counterparts.'*

Backlash:

- 'The gender parity promotion made the Agency lose [out on having] some great staff [from] being promoted or joining the Agency because they are males! The GBV against staff especially females is misinterpreted culturally so it is very weak to be reported upon.'
- 'There is discrimination in favor of women against men.'
- 'Exaggerated understanding to give women the greatest opportunity in employment and promotion at the expense of competencies, skills and abilities.'

**Question 7: How effectively has UNRWA included the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation into its programmes and internal working practices?**

(Answers received: 588)



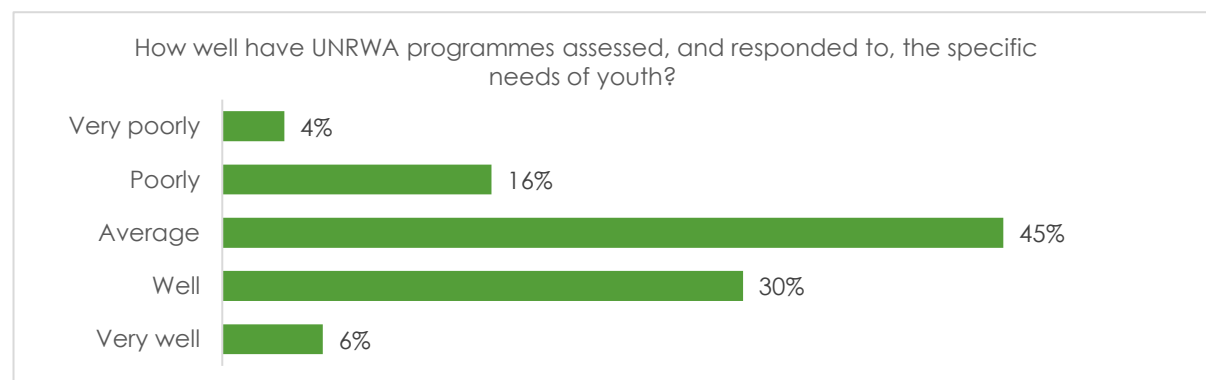
(Open ended comments received: 94)

Comments on this question suggested that:

- There has been lots of online training on SEA, awareness raising, publications and there are protection tools and child protection frameworks.
- There is a focal point system in place for the prevention of SEA.
- Reporting mechanisms are not well implemented, there is a feeling that it is women vs men, there are contextual obstacles which prevent reporting.
- Concerns about reporting on suspicion and/or false accusations.

#### Question 8: How well have UNRWA programmes assessed, and responded to, the specific needs of youth?

(Answers received: 587)



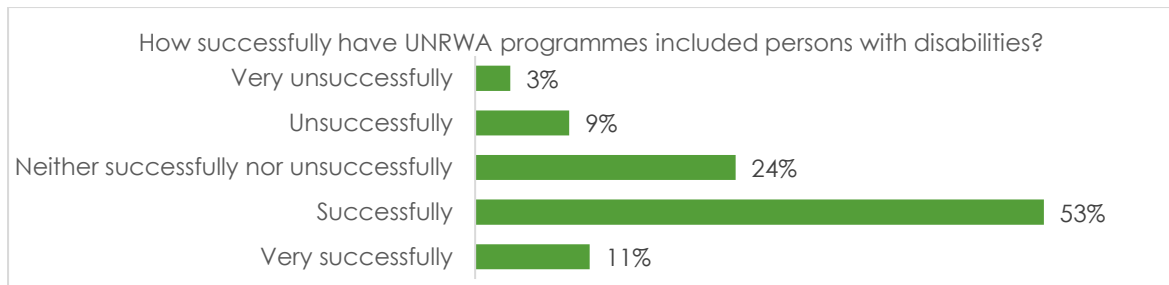
(Open ended comments received: 116)

Comments on this question suggested that:

- There are no programmes to support youth.
- Some elements of youth programming are doing well, such as cash-for-work activities, TVET courses, microfinance schemes. Youth strategic framework developed and good work through the employment center.
- Youth needs are not yet met; not enough career guidance, youth camps lack educational centers, drug issues on camps are not addressed sufficiently, there are no youth activities on camps aside from football.

#### Question 9: How successfully have UNRWA programmes included persons with disabilities?

(Answers received: 582)



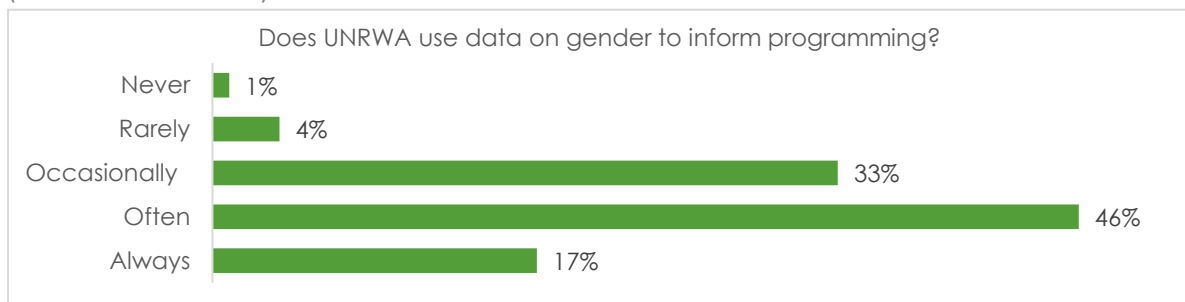
(Open ended comments received: 112)

Comments on this question suggested that:

- There are mixed opinions on inclusion of persons with disabilities. Some deem UNRWA to be doing well and others think there is a complete absence of support.
- The inclusive education framework and SEN programme supporting youth with special needs were reported as positive interventions for people with disabilities. Also, well trained school counsellors, psychosocial services and infrastructure for young people with disabilities.
- There is not enough consistent data on disabilities, not possible to compare across programmes.
- There is no uniform way to identify and record disability.
- There is lack of disability focal points.
- There are some efforts from UNRWA on employing persons with disabilities but unclear what and there are mixed comments on the number of staff with disabilities in different offices.

#### Question 10: Does UNRWA use data on gender to inform programming?

(Answers received: 569)



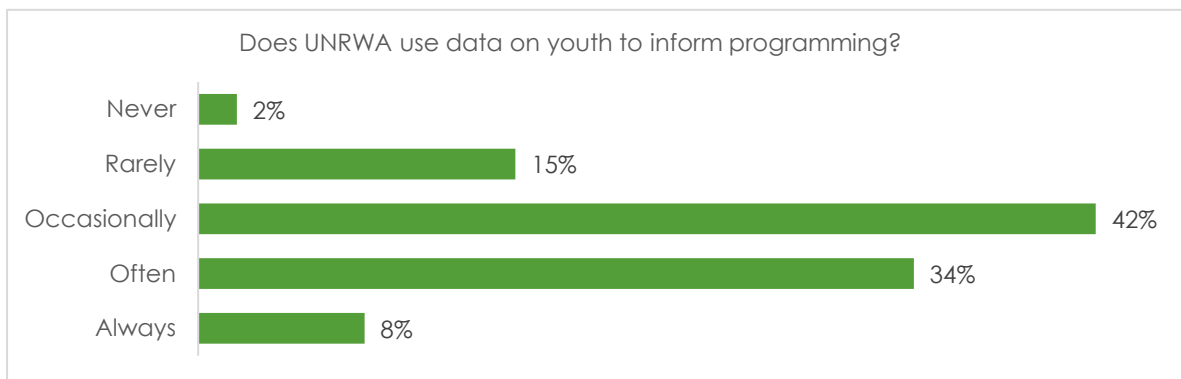
(Open ended comments received: 74)

Many comments said 'I don't know' or 'I don't understand the question', much more than any other question. This may be indicative of staff not being privy to the decision making or not seeing how data is used in programme design processes.

Respondents mention sex disaggregated data being collected.

#### Question 11: Does UNRWA use data on youth to inform programming?

(Answers received: 553)



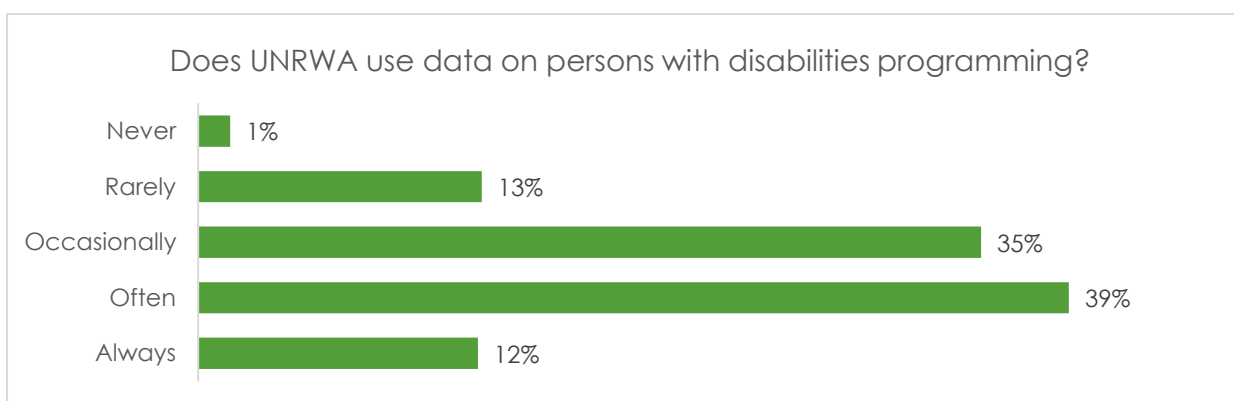
(Open ended comments received: 72)

This question received a lot of 'I don't know' answers. Main messages:

- Concerns that data is unreliable.
- Concerns that there is not a specific definition in UNRWA on who is considered 'youth'.
- Statement that at programme level they use statistics from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

#### Question 12: Does UNRWA use data on persons with disabilities to inform programming?

(Answers received: 564)



(Open ended comments received: 74)

Comments on this question suggested that:

- Data is collected and a database exists but there are concerns that data is not accurate or reliable.
- There are concerns that there is no uniform way to identify disability.

**Question 13: How could UNRWA improve its mainstreaming of the cross-cutting issues of gender, youth and the inclusion of persons with disabilities into its programmes and internal working practices?**

(Answers received: 366)

Comments that occurred the most and were particularly pertinent included:

- Better representation of women, youth and persons with disabilities in senior management decisions.
- Increase workshops on these issues to increase UNRWA staff awareness.
- Better data collection and research not driven by internal politics but by programme need. Map opportunities e.g., youth participation and networking at national level.
- Clarify strategies and vision on these issues at HQ level/targets: create policies and quotas within the Agency. Use Washington group short set questions for disability and youth policy papers.
- Set up working groups or dedicate personnel to work on these objectives.
- Prioritize funding in this area.
- Better cross-programme coordination for working on cross-cutting issues.
- Better assessment of needs through speaking with persons with disabilities and youths and more consultative planning process.
- Empower focal points across departments – protection mainstreaming officers can coordinate and support them from a technical perspective. Existing fora like The Integrated Protection Mainstreaming Working Group in the West Bank Field Office can be used to drive cross-cutting issues forward as they include protection focal points from each programme. Work of the focal points needs to be linked and supported by protection to ensure effective mainstreaming across all programmes. This is done through the protection audit cycle to some extent, but the two-year duration of the cycle means it is not sufficiently flexible to address urgent protection mainstreaming issues that require a more immediate response, or that were not included in recommendations to programmes.
- Senior managers need to speak protection language (safety, avoid harm, participation) and frame things in terms of rights.
- Goals overly ambitious. Need realistic goals to attract attention and enable better collaboration between donors to ensure the move from outputs to more sustainable outcomes.
- Draw learning from other successful programming all over the world, benchmarking, including against other UN agencies.
- Create more job opportunities for youth and persons with disabilities within UNRWA and within the community generally.

### Mapping of UNRWA planning and coordination processes

This section sets out in more detail the main elements of UNRWA planning and coordination processes that underpin the current MTS. The evaluation team held a workshop with the Department of Planning leadership to review and validate its understanding of the systems and processes used. It also discussed the Agency's planning and coordination policies and how they have been implemented since 2016. While this Annex is more detailed than the main text, it is still only a summary of the main processes. The processes described below are set out in UNRWA's 2017 'Organizational Directive No.21: Programme and Project Cycle Management'.<sup>112</sup>

The Agency's current planning guidance states that, 'After receiving the advice of the Advisory Commission', the Commissioner-General initiates drafting of the MTS and decides the duration of the strategy.<sup>113</sup> The MTS, which must be in keeping with the UNGA mandate and resolutions relating to UNRWA, is expected to set out the Strategic Outcomes that UNRWA will aim to achieve. It is also expected to be based on an analysis of the humanitarian, human development and protection threats and vulnerabilities of Palestine refugees.

The Department of Planning coordinated the development process for the current MTS. Guidance states that following the development of the MTS, each field office develops a strategic plan for each of the five fields of operations for the same period as the MTS. At the same time as the MTS is developed, the Department of

<sup>112</sup> UNRWA (2017), *Organizational Directive No.21: Programme and Project Cycle Management*.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. para 3

Planning leads on the design of the Agency-wide Emergency Response Framework. The Framework is created with field offices, programmes and other departments to ensure UNRWA is well-placed to deliver effective operations in emergency or crisis conditions. The Framework document sits alongside the final MTS.

The Agency's planning workflow seeks to ensure that all policies, strategies and standards that were developed before the current MTS are consistent with it.<sup>114</sup> With the finalizing of the MTS, functional units are asked to review their pre-existing policies, strategies and standards to ensure that they are consistent with the MTS and then to make any amendments if necessary. Some departments/units, such as gender and infrastructure/camp improvement developed new strategies to match the MTS period.<sup>115</sup> But this is not a requirement.

The MTS builds in a results matrix: the MTS CMM. It was established to monitor and assess the Agency's performance across the Strategic Outcomes and includes key performance indicators at the outcome, output and activity levels. The CMM is included as an annex to the MTS and includes baseline and target measures for the Agency. The current CMM indicators were developed by field offices and programmes through an iterative process. The Department of Planning has sought to ensure that final agreed indicators are 'SMART' (i.e., Specific, Measurable, Attainable and action-oriented, Relevant, and Time-bound).

With the current MTS, UNRWA has developed systems that enable it to monitor and report on activities and spend in detail. All activities that contribute to an MTS Strategic Outcome are disaggregated into a 'subprogramme structure' and each is given a code. Thus, authorization to spend is given only when an activity has a code, and each activity is mapped to a separate code. These financial and programmatic data are tracked through the UNRWA Enterprise Resource Planning system – SAP. Codes are mapped against the department and the field office; thus, the system allows UNRWA to disaggregate all financial and activity data by both field office and programme.

Following the development of the MTS, with its results and financing needs frameworks, UNRWA develops annual operational plans. Until 2018, field offices were required to produce standalone annual operational plans, as were headquarters departments and programmes. To streamline internal processes and enhance efficiency, from 2018 onwards, standalone plans were no longer required, and the Department of Planning coordinates a single UNRWA-wide annual operational plan. Annual Operational Plans are required to:

- a. 'Reflect annual priorities set by the Commissioner-General and be aligned with the UNRWA programme/sector/department policies and strategies.
- b. Be based on realistic income projections from the Department of External Relations and Communications.
- c. Be consistent with budgets developed under the lead of the Department of Finance.
- d. Be discussed with the Human Resources Department to assess eventual staffing implications.
- e. Detail the results that will be achieved in accordance with the Agency's monitoring framework.
- f. Set out the activities that will be conducted to achieve the aforementioned results.
- g. Set out the key risks to be managed during the concerned year.
- h. Take into account relevant audit and evaluation findings.
- i. Encompass all funding streams; and
- j. Set out priority projects for implementation (and resource mobilization) in the course of the relevant year.'<sup>116</sup>

The Advisory Committee on Resource Allocation reviews the budgets linked to the annual operational plan in a series of meetings and makes recommendations to the Commissioner-General. A frequent focus of the Committee's deliberations is how to close the gap between need and forecasted income.

<sup>114</sup> This includes, for example, the Resource Mobilization Strategy, the Human Resources Strategy, Programme policies and strategies; Strategies to mainstream Protection Standards and other cross cuttings themes such as women, children and persons with disabilities as required per UNRWA mandate; and the Evaluation Policy.

<sup>115</sup> UNRWA (2016) *UNRWA Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2021* and UNRWA (2016) *UNRWA Strategy for Infrastructure and Camp Improvement (2016 – 2021)*

<sup>116</sup> UNRWA (2017) *Organizational Directive No. 21: Programme and Project Cycle Management.*, p.5

The Commissioner-General then authorizes each accountable director to implement their relevant annual operational plan by agreeing a ‘management compact’ with the director. The management compact specifies the human and financial resources that will be made available to the director; their delegated authority, and it sets out the expected results. The compact is also used as a basis for the director’s performance evaluation. At the time of the workshop (22 March 2021) management compacts had not been agreed for 2020 – a reflection of management team changes.

Field offices then proceed to implement activities funded under either the regular programme budget, as projects, or under the emergency/humanitarian window. The Department of Planning and the Finance Department liaise with field office based staff to ensure that accurate performance and financial data flows both ways.

UNRWA has systems in place to ensure that initiatives funded as ‘projects’ do not duplicate activities funded by either the programme budget or emergency/humanitarian funding window. It has also taken steps to ensure that the Agency prioritizes fundraising for strategically important projects – it has established a list of ‘priority projects’ agreed by all field offices. The Department of Planning also screens all project submissions to ensure that they are coherent with other field office and programme activities. UNRWA also has a Project Assessment Committee, which meets quarterly, to review UNRWA-wide project implementation information. In turn, it provides recommendations to a Project Review Committee, which meets once or twice a year: this committee is tasked with strengthening project management in the Agency, and it agrees upon the parameters for what projects should be on the Priority Project list.

In 2020, to respond to 2015 audit observations and project assessments, the Department of Planning overhauled project management procedures. The new systems are designed to strengthen project management overall, but also to ensure that projects are closed promptly, and that any requested project extensions are warranted.<sup>117</sup>

UNRWA has well-structured monitoring and review systems. The Department of Finance reports on expenditure and cash flow to the Commissioner-General at least monthly and the ERD reports monthly on resource mobilization (currently fortnightly meetings on cash flow are also held). Quarterly reviews, chaired by the Executive Office, are also held and while formerly these were primarily expenditure reviews, equal focus is now given to programmatic issues.

UNRWA also conducts six-monthly reviews. The Department of Finance reports on expenditure and generates a cash-flow forecast. This is combined with forecast income prepared by the Department of External Relations. The Department of Planning collates all reporting against the CMM (i.e., progress against annual plans) and collates all risk reporting. A synthesis of review discussions is produced as a ‘Midyear Results Review Report Meeting Summary’.<sup>118</sup> The Commissioner-General may, on the basis of the half-year report, revise annual operational plans and management compacts.

The Agency’s annual results review process are the main annual points for reflection, learning and charting the way forward for the subsequent year. Supported by the Department of Planning, results reviews examine trends in programmatic, EA and flash appeal results drawing on both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Discussions are held between field office and headquarters directors, deputy directors – programme, programme chiefs and other key management, support, and monitoring and evaluation staff. As noted in the body of the report, interviewees highlighted the annual review as a helpful forum to discuss progress and challenges (see question 1.2)

The resultant AORs describe progress towards the Strategic Outcomes set out in the MTS.<sup>119</sup> Recent AORs provide a holistic view of programming implemented by the Agency. They contain an analysis of progress achieved against programmatic and resource mobilization targets. Indicators, baselines and targets are based on Agency-wide internal monitoring arrangements (i.e., the CMM), EAs and resource mobilization strategy. Annexes include results frameworks, risk registers and key statistics. Results are disaggregated by field office and, where relevant, by sex, poverty status and disability.

AORs streamline reporting within UNRWA and meet donors reporting needs. Programmes such as Education previously needed to produce their own reports – this is no longer the case (though some, such as Health, choose

<sup>117</sup> UNRWA (14 Nov 2020) *Draft Revised Project Procedures Manual* (internal document)

<sup>118</sup> See for example, UNRWA (2020) *Midyear Results Review: Reporting Period: 01 January – 30 June 2020*.

<sup>119</sup> See for example, UNRWA (2020) *Annual Operational Report 2019 for the Reporting Period 01 January – 31 December 2019*



to do so). The comprehensive reporting provided by AORs has rendered this kind of parallel reporting unnecessary. The structure and content of AORs also reflects collaboration with the Harmonized Results Working Group, which includes donors and hosts, and the Sub-Committee of the UNRWA Advisory Commission. As mentioned in the body of the report, donors interviewed for the evaluation expressed satisfaction with UNRWA reporting, and specifically with AORs.

#### National staff vacancy rates by field office

|              | 2016         |             | 2017         |             | 2018         |             | 2019         |             | 2020         |             |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| Field Office | Vacant posts | Total posts | Vacant posts | Total posts | Vacant posts | Total posts | Vacant posts | Total posts | Vacant posts | Total posts |
| Gaza         | 290          | 11,943      | 526          | 11,771      | 964          | 12,444      | 349          | 11,467      | 500          | 11,781      |
| Vacancy rate | 2.4 %        |             | 4.5 %        |             | 7.7 %        |             | 3 %          |             | 4.2 %        |             |
| West Bank    | 134          | 4,396       | 151          | 4,284       | 270          | 4,249       | 164          | 3,901       | 250          | 3,923       |
| Vacancy rate | 3 %          |             | 3.5 %        |             | 6.4 %        |             | 4.2 %        |             | 6.4 %        |             |
| Jordan       | 396          | 6,684       | 248          | 6,330       | 486          | 6,716       | 405          | 6,163       | 357          | 6,163       |
| Vacancy rate | 5.9 %        |             | 3.9 %        |             | 7.2 %        |             | 6.6 %        |             | 5.8 %        |             |
| Lebanon      | 143          | 2,822       | 138          | 2,753       | 243          | 2,861       | 188          | 2,813       | 248          | 2,747       |
| Vacancy rate | 5.1 %        |             | 5 %          |             | 8.5 %        |             | 6.7 %        |             | 9 %          |             |
| Syria        | 585          | 3,157       | 351          | 2,406       | 409          | 3,164       | 218          | 2,724       | 299          | 2,857       |
| Vacancy rate | 18.5 %       |             | 14.6 %       |             | 12.9 %       |             | 8 %          |             | 10.5 %       |             |

#### Number of daily paid employees by programme and field office

|           | 2016  | 2017  | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  |
|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Education | 2,422 | 1,629 | 1,652 | 1,831 | 2,517 |
| Gaza      | 790   | 7     | 23    | 14    | 753   |
| Jordan    | 694   | 764   | 782   | 777   | 585   |
| Lebanon   | 144   | 295   | 281   | 340   | 192   |
| Syria     | 720   | 423   | 422   | 461   | 438   |
| West Bank | 74    | 140   | 144   | 239   | 549   |
| Health    | 448   | 353   | 332   | 598   | 488   |
| Gaza      | 55    | 39    | 59    | 249   | 113   |
| Jordan    | 159   | 62    | 56    | 96    | 87    |

|                            |       |       |       |       |       |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Lebanon                    | 64    | 138   | 94    | 124   | 101   |
| Syria                      | 139   | 64    | 46    | 50    | 46    |
| West Bank                  | 31    | 50    | 77    | 79    | 141   |
| Relief and Social Services | 47    | 41    | 11    | 83    | 12    |
| Gaza                       | 1     | 1     | 1     | 2     | 0     |
| Jordan                     | 11    | 5     | 0     | 7     | 2     |
| Lebanon                    | 7     | 14    | 8     | 7     | 5     |
| Syria                      | 25    | 15    | 0     | 65    | 3     |
| West Bank                  | 3     | 6     | 2     | 2     | 2     |
| Grand Total                | 2,917 | 2,023 | 1,995 | 2,512 | 3,017 |

## Annex F: Evaluation Terms of Reference

## ANNEX C- TERMS OF REFERENCE

## INDEPENDENT STRATEGIC EVALUATION OF THE UNRWA MEDIUM TERM STRATEGY 2016-2022

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

## 1. BACKGROUND

UNRWA is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to provide assistance and protection to Palestine refugees, helping them achieve their full human development potential, pending a just solution to their plight. Currently, over 5.6 million refugees are registered with the Agency in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. UNRWA services encompass health care, education, relief and social services, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance, protection, and emergency assistance in times of crisis. The Agency is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions. In December 2019, the UNGA voted to extend UNRWA's mandate until June 2023. In line with its mandate, the Medium Term Strategy (MTS) 2016-22<sup>1</sup> presents the Agency's strategic vision and objectives with the overall aim of guiding the direction of UNRWA's work and maximizing the impact of its operations in the service of Palestine refugees.

UNRWA is dedicated to the elaboration of a successor to the MTS 2016-22, a process that would benefit from an independent strategic evaluation of the current strategy in order to: (i) further accountability in relation to Advisory Commission<sup>2</sup> member investments in the Agency and with regard to UNRWA leadership, managers and staff towards Palestine refugees, host authorities, donors and society at large; and (ii) support reflection and learning by these same stakeholders on the relevance and coherence, efficiency, and effectiveness and impact of the MTS 2016-22 and the Agency's strategic and operational approach to its implementation.

To this end, UNRWA is seeking to retain an evaluation service provider / team to undertake the deliverables outlined in the current terms of reference.

## 2. EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

## 2.1. PURPOSE

On the summative level, the evaluation will assess Agency progress under the MTS 2016-22. It will generate evidence-based findings and recommendations that relate to UNRWA: (i) progress in delivering against the strategic and process objectives set out under the MTS 2016-22; (ii) impact and complementarities of front line service provision with other actions / service providers, (both political and operational) and areas for improvement that could be pursued over the next strategic period; and (iii) contributions to Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). As a result, the evaluation will support understanding of the extent to which the Agency remains fit for purpose.

On the formative level, the evaluation will support learning as to the effectiveness of the MTS 2016-22 as a strategic framework and its usefulness in guiding UNRWA service delivery, identifying structural and procedural improvements that should be pursued over the next strategic period. As such, the evaluation will inform the approach underlying the development of the successor to the current MTS. It will also be important for the evaluation to develop stakeholder consensus on key issues, enabling informed decision making and strategic planning based on credible information and a shared understanding of Agency problems and their causes, comparative advantages and core competencies.

For the evaluation to be successful, it should be conducted along two streams: first, at the structural and procedural level to assess the relevance of the approach, and the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the MTS 2016-22 development process; and second, at the impact level, assessing whether the current MTS has made an impact on the approach UNRWA takes on service delivery, and if it has done so in an effective, efficient and sustainable manner, ensuring synergies between interventions supported: (i) under the programme budget, emergency appeal and project funding streams; and (ii) by other relevant actors, including host countries, donors, and the private sector.

<sup>1</sup> The Medium-Term Strategy was originally intended to end in 2021 but has been extended for another year, i.e. until the end of 2022.

<sup>2</sup> The Advisory Commission was created under UN Resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949, to advise and assist the Commissioner-General of UNRWA in carrying out the Agency's mandate. Consisting of four members when it was first created, the Advisory Commission is currently made up of 28 Members and four Observers.

## 2.2. OBJECTIVE

To evaluate the relevance and coherence, efficiency, and effectiveness and impact of the UNRWA MTS 2016-22 and the processes related to its implementation.

## 2.3. SCOPE

The scope of the MTS 2016-22 evaluation will be on the work of the Agency over the past five years (2016-20), i.e. the MTS period to date. It will cover: (i) all fields of UNRWA operation, Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan; (ii) all services that the Agency provides to Palestine refugees - health, education, relief and social services, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance, protection and emergency assistance; (iii) all executive management and support provided internally by the UNRWA Executive Office, Department of Planning, Department of Internal Oversight Services, Department of Human Resources, Department of Finance, Department of External Relations and Communications, Department of Legal Affairs, Department of Security and Risk Management, Department of Information Management and Technology, the Central Support Services Division and UNRWA Representative Offices (Brussels, Cairo, New York, Washington); and (iv) the Agency's annual operations, especially but not limited to the UNRWA programme budget and complementarities with emergency appeal and project funded interventions (without opening a wholesale review of these funding portals).

The MTS 2016-22 evaluation focus should be relatively high level to concentrate on strategic issues. In addition, it should be informed by, but not duplicate coverage provided by the 2017-18 Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) assessment of UNRWA, Agency evaluations that are planned or have been recently completed, and existing commitments to make improvements in a variety of areas.

### 2.3.1. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND KEY QUESTIONS

The line of inquiry to be employed by the evaluation should be guided by the standard Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development / Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) criteria for evaluation in the UN system. In addition, the evaluation is expected to fully integrate dimensions of youth, gender, human rights and disability inclusion into its analysis while giving due attention to humanitarian principles, protection and accountability to affected populations. Within this context, the evaluation should focus on the following key questions:

#### (I) RELEVANCE

- To what extent did the MTS 2016-22 reflect the needs of Palestine refugees, and the priorities of host governments and the donor community?
- How adequately has the MTS 2016-22 positioned UNRWA within the global development landscape and evolving global and regional priorities (looking forward as much as backwards given that the current MTS was being developed as the SDGs were being finalized)?
- To what extent did the MTS 2016-22 sufficiently target and benefit the most vulnerable Palestine refugees?

#### (II) COHERENCE

- To what extent does the MTS 2016-22 support the strategic alignment of programs against the Agency's three funding streams (UNRWA programme budget, emergency appeal and project streams)?
- Is a nexus approach explicitly or implicitly pursued through UNRWA interventions, and to what extent does this contribute to ongoing efforts to enhance the triple nexus approach to sustainable development in the region?
- To what extent does the MTS 2016-22 support linkages between UNRWA actions and the regional and country-level approaches of host governments, donors and UN? To what extent are the Agency's activities based on its comparative advantages?

#### (III) EFFICIENCY

- How efficient are MTS 2016-22 planning and coordination processes? Is the UNRWA evaluation function able to achieve expected results and inform decision making?
- How adequate are the Agency's financing and funding models (including in relation to recommendations in the Secretary-General's 2017 report on UNRWA - UN doc. ref. A/71/849). To what extent have these models ensured that Agency funding is sufficient, predictable, and sustained for the duration of the MTS 2016-22?



- To what extent are programmatic and operational structures - in place to facilitate the achievement of MTS 2016-22 strategic outcomes - fit for purpose?

### (III) EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT

- To what extent has the MTS 2016-22 served as a strategic framework that supports front line service delivery?
- To what extent is it expected that the MTS 2016-22 strategic outcomes will be achieved, and what are the major factors influencing achievement?
- To what extent are the process commitments in the current MTS (including better prioritization, participation, commitment to reform, efficiency, synergies and partnerships, etc.) on track, and contributing to the achievement of MTS 2016-22?
- To what extent is the MTS 2016-22 and the achievements under the implementation of the strategy (short and long-term outcomes) providing a way forward in addressing complex political, financial and other challenges faced by the Agency?
- How have service delivery efficiency gains of the Agency affected the overall quality of the services and the perception of affected populations?
- To what extent did the implementation of the MTS 2016-22 contribute to regional stabilization?
- To what extent have funding issues affected the achievement of the expected results?
- How have unanticipated events (e.g. the management crisis of 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic) affected the achievement of MTS 2016-22 strategic outcomes, staff commitment and the support of the international community?

The above evaluation criteria and their associated lines of inquiry are permeable: individual questions, findings, conclusions and recommendations may turn out to be equally applicable to, for example, relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and impact. As such, the evaluation should seek to identify performance against the separate criteria, in addition to the interactions between the criteria. In turn, this will facilitate judgments on the overall changes and results that UNRWA has delivered and – crucially – how those changes and results were delivered.

The evaluation service provider / team is expected to: (i) update the above listed evaluation questions and formulate sub-questions, during the inception phase; and (ii) develop a final evaluation matrix/framework, summarizing the key evaluation questions, sub-questions, assessment criteria and indicators, and possible data sources.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation should use a rigorous methodology, applying a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to facilitate the triangulation of information and provide credible answers to all research questions.

The evaluation approach, methods and tools should be closely informed through a theory of change that the evaluation team should develop, based on the formal guidance that governs the work and discussions with both internal and external stakeholders. The final evaluation questions should be derived from and reflect an initial analysis by the evaluation team and the theory of change, inclusive of its assumptions.

### 3.1. MAIN EVALUATION TOOLS

Proposals from evaluation service providers should suggest a methodology, research tools and data sources that will enable them to collect and synthesize relevant information in relation to the evaluation questions. In this regard, the following primary tools are expected to inform the evaluation, noting that a theory of change in support of UNRWA interventions should also be produced during the inception phase.

#### (i) DOCUMENT REVIEWS

The service provider will need to critically review the MTS 2016-22 to extract a list of outcome and impact objectives. To assess inter-linkages between different strategic documents, support the measurement of results achievement and assess MTS 2016-22 development processes, relevant documentation will include annual operational plans, annual and mid-year results review documentation, programme reform and subsidiary strategies, the 2016-2022 MTS blueprint, previous assessments and evaluations, annual operational reports and related documentation.

### **(ii) STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS**

A significant number of interviews and discussions with internal and external evaluation stakeholders, including Palestine refugees will have to be undertaken, virtually and, whenever possible, in person. Given COVID-19 travel restrictions, interviews may need to be conducted through video conferencing. Interview questions should be guided by the final evaluation framework that will be developed by the evaluation service provider / team.

### **(iii) PROCESS REVIEW**

Process reviews should be undertaken to address an evaluation priority of assessing the MTS 2016-22 development and implementation process. These reviews will involve a detailed analysis of MTS development guidance and procedures, closely supported by discussions with staff and the host and donor communities.

### **(iv) MTS 2016-22 IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Using quantitative and qualitative data, including data housed within UNRWA information management systems and Agency operational / results reporting, the impact assessment should identify outcomes delivered through the MTS period, to date. This should include an analysis of the specific outcomes delivered through individual programmes, an analysis of strategic outcomes to which more than one programme contribute and general outcomes delivered (e.g. improvements in beneficiary participation).

### **(v) ONLINE SURVEYS**

Surveys should be considered by the evaluation team to reach as wide an audience as possible, targeting both internal and external stakeholders.

### **(vi) SECONDARY DATA**

Agency programmes have been assessed through several previous UNRWA Department of Internal Oversight Services (DIOS) evaluations and audits, decentralized evaluations and reviews, as well as a MOPAN assessment, completed in 2019. A DIOS evaluation was also completed in 2020 into UNRWA MTS reporting systems and processes. Secondary data may assist in informing and/or validating findings from the MTS evaluation. In addition, by mid-2021, the DIOS Evaluation Division will have completed an outcome and impact evaluation of the Health programme, focusing on results achieved under the Family Health Team reform.

## **3.2. CORE STAKEHOLDERS**

Given the centrality of stakeholder consultation to the evaluation approach, an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) will be established with external membership being determined on a voluntary basis. The following are the primary stakeholders to be consulted during the evaluation, some of whom will be represented in the ERG:

- UNRWA staff involved in the development, support and implementation of the MTS 2016-22, including executive management, planning, finance, external relations and all Agency programmes, at both the field and headquarters levels;
- Advisory Commission members including host authorities and donor representatives;
- Key partners and individuals within host authorities, including counterpart organizations and referral partners, and relevant members of United Nations Country Teams as well as officials from relevant regional offices of United Nations organisations; and
- Direct beneficiaries - Palestine refugees including students, patients, recipients of food and cash assistance, and representatives from formalized Palestine refugee committees, including camp committees and camp residents, parent teacher associations, school parliaments and health clinic friendship committees.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EVALUATION**

The evaluation will be guided by the UNRWA Evaluation Policy, Standards and Procedures for Quality Assurance in Evaluation and conducted in accordance with the United Nations Evaluation Guidelines (UNEG), Norms and Standards for Evaluation. It is expected that the service provider / team will conduct the evaluation in three broad phases:

### (i) PHASE ONE: PLANNING AND INCEPTION

This phase is already underway with an initial output being the development of the present terms of reference and the recruitment of an evaluation service provider / team. The selected service provider / team should commence inception activities in January 2021 that will primarily be comprised of background research, both desk-review and through briefings and interviews with key Agency staff; an introductory meeting with the UNRWA Harmonized Reporting Working Group (HRWG), a subcommittee of the Advisory Commission; and a series of interviews with host authorities and key donor interlocutors. The HRWG introductory meeting should take place in January 2021 (convened in-person, travel conditions permitting). The evaluation service provider / team should present a draft inception report to the ERG and the DIOS Evaluation Division for review. The final inception report, the primary output of this phase, should be issued in March 2021.

### (ii) PHASE TWO: DATA COLLECTION, FIELD WORK AND ANALYSIS

The main evaluation work will be conducted during this phase, including but not limited to: literature review; field work with in person missions to the fields (Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan) to allow for visits to select camps and dialogue with the Palestine refugees, host country representatives and donors; and virtual meetings with interlocutors in the relevant headquarters (New York, Brussels, Washington, etc.), depending on availability and discussions with ERG members). In addition, a series of informal briefings with Agency focal points should be planned to share and validate preliminary results and to address any factual inaccuracies. The data collection and analysis phase should be completed by 31 May 2021; and

### (iii) PHASE THREE: REPORTING

Development of the draft evaluation report (including three to four iterations that are reviewed between the evaluation team, DIOS and other material internal and external stakeholders) will be completed in June 2021. Subsequently, the evaluation team will present the evaluation key findings, conclusions and draft recommendations to the ERG in a workshop event. The ERG and DIOS will then provide feedback and comments on the advance draft. In July 2021, a final report with recommendations and conclusions will be submitted to UNRWA management for a response and action plan. In August 2021, the final report will be submitted to the Agency's Commissioner General and the Advisory Commission. The final results of the evaluation will be presented to the Agency's Advisory Commission in November 2021.

Annex A provides the evaluation implementation schedule.

Given the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic across the fields of UNRWA operation, the evaluation team may need to rely on distance methods to complete this assignment and the use of local enumerators to support evaluation activities. If travel to the region becomes possible during the evaluation, or an evaluation team member is based in an UNRWA field of operation, the Agency will facilitate travel and provide for local security arrangements (as provided to UNRWA staff members).

## 4.1. ARRANGEMENTS FOR MANAGING THE EVALUATION

The evaluation will be managed by a DIOS evaluation officer, who will serve as a first point of contact for review of team outputs. A focal point from the Agency's Department of Planning will support in the preparation of the evaluation, including in relation to the development of these terms of reference and preparation of necessary background documentation.

An ERG, consisting of representatives of UNRWA, members of the Advisory Commission, and chaired by a senior level UNRWA representative, will provide input and feedback in relation to the inception report and the draft evaluation report. The evaluators will draw their conclusions independently without any interference from the management, especially regarding the analysis and the recommendations.

Based on UNEG norms and standards, UNRWA Standards and Procedures for Quality Assurance in Evaluation define the quality standards expected from this evaluation and set out the processes for quality assurance (including guidance and templates). The DIOS Evaluation Division will apply these guidelines to quality review the inception, draft and final evaluation reports.

The final report will be publicly available.

## 5. EVALUATION TEAM COMPOSITION AND REQUIRED EXPERTISE

UNRWA is seeking to hire an evaluation service provider / team of experts provided by a consulting company. Evaluation team members should not have been involved in the design or implementation of the MTS 2016–22 or have any other conflicts of interest. Further, they will act impartially and in accordance with UNEG ethical standards and norms at all times during the evaluation process.



The evaluation team should include at least three members, inclusive of the team leader, and provide a balance of expertise, practical knowledge and collectively possess the following competencies:

- Substantial, proven experience in evaluation;
- Skills and experience in mixed methods evaluation and impact assessments, including qualitative evaluation consulting in relation to local communities and governments, preferably in both the humanitarian and development contexts;
- Expertise in the evaluation of strategic planning, and/or organizational processes and systems;
- Expertise in conducting evaluation projects in the following sectors (health, education, relief and social services, infrastructure, microfinance, protection, the provision of emergency assistance etc.)
- Experience in development and humanitarian assistance / interventions and working with UN agencies;
- Strong analytical skills coupled with a proven capacity to synthesize data and other information and report writing;
- Fluency in English; and
- Previous evaluation experience in one or more of the Agency's fields of operation is desirable, Arabic language skills are an asset.
- For the team leader, proven experience in at least five assignments as a team leader.

Conditions permitting, the evaluators must be immediately available and able to travel in UNRWA's fields of operation apart from Syria.

#### 5.1. THE TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

The technical proposal should be no more than 20 pages, including: (i) a cover letter of between three to five pages that demonstrates the capabilities and history of the consulting firm(s) / team leader in conducting similar assignments, and highlights the past experience, skills and competencies of evaluation team members; (ii) a proposed methodology of no more than nine pages that reflects an understanding of the scope of the assignment and elaborates on the approach and methods the team will use to address the evaluation questions, including strategies to be used in support of developing the results analysis; (iii) a brief overview, in about three pages, of how the evaluation team will conduct its work, including the use of distance methods if COVID-19 related travel restrictions limit team member movement, using for example local partners; and (iv) a high-level timeline and work plan, in three pages, that reflects the three broad phases of the evaluation (planning, data collection and analysis and reporting).

#### 5.2. THE FINANCIAL PROPOSAL

Respondents are also requested to submit a financial proposal that addresses the following scenarios:

- a remote evaluation pricing model which assumes that travel restrictions will prevent evaluation team members from accessing UNRWA's fields of operation; and
- an unrestricted evaluation pricing model which assumes evaluation team travel to UNRWA Headquarters Amman and four fields of operation (Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon and Jordan), noting that under no circumstances will it be possible for the evaluation team to travel to Syria.