



UNRWA Implementation of Colonna Report: Quarterly Report January 2025

This report provides an update on UNRWA's implementation of the 50 recommendations of the Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality ("Colonna Report"). It also includes an update on funding requirements, and a brief presentation of upcoming deliverables.

Progress

UNRWA received the Colonna Report on 20 April 2024 and immediately started working on its implementation. The 50 recommendations have been put into a High-Level Action Plan which articulates the specific actions and related timelines and resource requirements for their implementation. This High-Level Action Plan, which will be updated regularly, is now the key management tool for UNRWA for the implementation process.

As of the end of 2024, a total of 5 recommendations¹ had been fully implemented:

- **Recommendation 5:** Expand the reach and presence of DIOS and the Ethics Office in UNRWA fields of operations.
- **Recommendation 8:** Pending an evaluation, create a centralized Neutrality Investigations Unit with international staff, that reports directly to the DIOS to oversee field office-led investigation.
- **Recommendation 23:** Reinforce the existing regular sharing of digital staff lists with host countries and Israel.
- **Recommendation 29:** Train staff on the civilian nature of UNRWA's facilities.
- **Recommendation 49:** UNRWA to enhance its participation in the humanitarian coordination system.

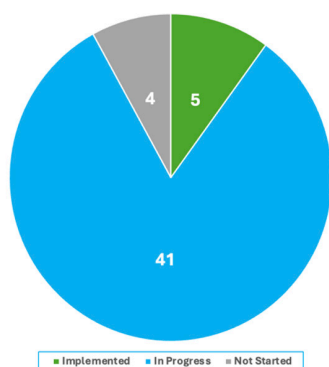
The implementation process continues to move forward at a steady pace. It is expected that by the end of Q1 2025, a total of 6 recommendations will be completed, and a total of 25 recommendations by the end of 2025. The 5th Committee approved 23 posts directly related to implementation of the Colonna Report, which will contribute to progress in 2025 and beyond. It is worth noting that any delays or changes in the completion timeline of recommendations will be communicated with relevant partners.

Additionally, since the last quarterly progress report, implementation of several recommendations were initiated, including action on:

- Tools for social media monitoring of public expressions of staff views (recommendation 25);
- Establishment of a dedicated channel to report problematic teaching content (recommendation 38);
- Research on enhancing UNRWA's vetting process, including in the event of staff promotion (recommendation 24) and with regards to neutrality vetting of staff union representatives (recommendation 44) and the election of staff union representatives (recommendation 45);
- Outsourcing of issues related to pay and pay-related benefits (recommendation 46);
- Exploration of additional options for staff representation (recommendation 47).

¹ The implementation of Recommendation 19 (Update the Neutrality Framework, especially to address the challenges posed by social media and new technologies), which had been scheduled to be completed by the end of 2024, has been posted to Q1 2025 due to increase demand on the Department of Legal Affairs during Q4 2024.

Implementation Progress



Funding requirements

While several recommendations can be implemented within existing resources, the Colonna Report stressed that others will require additional funding support for UNRWA to fully implement them.

UNRWA is grateful to Member States and donors who have provided funding for the implementation of several recommendations so far.

Funding secured to date ¹		
Member state	Project	Amount
Austria	Various projects	EUR 200,000 ²
Denmark	P4 secondment	In kind
European Union	DIOS/Ethics projects	EUR 5 million
Germany	P4 staff officer	US\$ 240,000 ³
Japan	LEAP	US\$ 250,000
Luxembourg	P3 secondment	In kind
UK	Various projects	GBP 1,000,000 ⁴

Notes: 1) As of 10 January 2025, 2) 200,000 = approx. \$206,000, 3) rounded, 4) £1,000,000 = approx. \$1,320,000

As UNRWA continues to design the implementation of several recommendations and as different donors demonstrate interest in contributing to the implementation, the funding overview, attached to this report, will continue to be updated as required. UNRWA is expected to finalize agreements with a number of donors during Q1 2025. Interested donors are invited to contact the Department of External Relations and Communications.

Implementation spotlight: Ethics Office

The Ethics Office (EO) has successfully rolled out a number of key Colonna Report recommendations (with support from the EU and Austrian Government), aimed at maintaining high ethical standards and transparency within the organization.

In October 2024, the Ethics team opened applications for the annual Area Staff Declaration of Interest Programme (ASDIP) to over 3,000 colleagues across UNRWA. The Ethics Office has assisted staff to ensure successful completion and compliance with the declaration programme, designed to mitigate risks of conflicts of interest among staff members.

The Ethics Office also appointed new field-based ethics officers (FEOs) to support UNRWA staff across our field sites.

The new FEOs have completed a series of training courses, including ethics topics and training of trainer (ToT) workshops. They have started providing ethics advice and have led scores of staff training courses, both in-person and online. The Ethics Office is also creating new training programmes, including an updated module on UNRWA's 2024 Outside Activities policy and a new Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption training course.



Due to security and access challenges, work in the Gaza, West Bank and Lebanon field offices has been significantly disrupted between October-December 2024, but the team have persevered by providing advice and training to colleagues remotely.

Other general updates

As of early 2025, an approximate amount of US\$ 7 million has been received for the implementation of the Colonna recommendations. The Colonna Report Multi-Donor Fund has officially been established and has already received contributions, both earmarked to specific categories of the Colonna Report and unearmarked, giving UNRWA more flexibility in the allocation of funds to optimize the prioritization of the implementation process. Additionally, during its 79th session in December 2024, the UN Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee) approved a list of 29 posts to the Agency's regular budget, which will provide UNRWA with additional capacities to implement several recommendations. The Colonna Implementation Support Team has also started providing updates on the password-protected AdCom website, where members can access documentation and key updates related to the implementation of the Colonna recommendations.

Next steps

In the first quarter of 2025, UNRWA's on-going implementation of the Colonna Report recommendations will focus on:

- Maintaining active outreach to internal and external stakeholders, including through bilateral briefings to Member States as requested;
- Completing all recommendations due by the end of Q1 2025 and continuing the preliminary work related to other recommendations;
- Providing regular briefings to SubCom, AdCom and Host Countries on the implementation process;
- Monitoring and managing risks to UNRWA related to the Action Plan, considering developments in the external environment.



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UNRWA is the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The United Nations General Assembly established UNRWA in 1949 with a mandate to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to registered Palestine refugees in the Agency's area of operations pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. UNRWA operates in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Tens of thousands of Palestine refugees who lost their homes and livelihoods due to the 1948 conflict continue to be displaced and in need of support, nearly 75 years on.