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# **Report of the Commissioner- General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East**

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**1 January–31 December 2021**



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*Note*

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## Letters of transmittal

### **Letter dated 16 August 2022 from the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

I am pleased to transmit to the General Assembly the annual report on the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for 2021. It is submitted in compliance with the requests made in paragraph 21 of Assembly resolution [302 \(IV\)](#) of 8 December 1949, as modified by paragraph 11 of Assembly resolution [1018 \(XI\)](#), and in paragraph 8 of Assembly resolution [1315 \(XIII\)](#) of 12 December 1958.

UNRWA continues to operate in an extremely volatile region. Four of the five fields of operations are currently in crisis. Over 80 per cent of Palestine refugees in Gaza, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon live in poverty. Conflict, socioeconomic challenges and the increased cost of living severely affect the human development of Palestine refugees. Despair and hopelessness have risen sharply, particularly among young people living in camps. Tensions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, have significantly escalated during the first half of 2022. Gaza, which is struggling to recover from the May 2021 conflict, has just experienced another round of conflict in August 2022. Lebanon continues to reel from an acute financial and socioeconomic crisis. The Syrian Arab Republic is facing its most severe socioeconomic crisis since the conflict started 12 years ago.

For over 70 years, UNRWA has been a lifeline and a source of opportunity and hope for one of the most destitute communities in the region. In doing so, it has become a major contributor to regional stability. As attested to in the present report, in 2021, UNRWA was able to continue its provision of quality services to Palestine refugees and respond to emergency needs despite challenges posed by conflict, occupation, socioeconomic downturn, a global pandemic and its own deepening financial crisis. UNRWA continues to be one of the most successful human development partners in the region, delivering high-quality services at the lowest cost in an often highly volatile and complex political environment. The Agency is committed to ensuring that no Palestine refugee is left behind, in line with our mandate and commitments to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

However, as I submit this report, I remain seriously concerned that the Agency will increasingly be unable to fulfil its General Assembly mandate.

For more than 10 years, the UNRWA programme budget funding has stagnated while the needs of refugees and the cost of services have increased. The Agency's financial challenges are the consequence of shifting geopolitical priorities and regional dynamics. UNRWA was established to support Palestine refugees pending agreement by the international community on a political solution to their situation, but there appears to be less and less political investment towards such a solution.

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Today, UNRWA faces three conflicting demands that, if not reconciled, present a risk of collapse of the Agency: first, the demands of the General Assembly mandate for UNRWA to deliver services to Palestine refugees and to protect their rights; second, inadequate funding from Member States to implement the mandate and the resulting impact on Palestine refugees and regional stability; and third, the deep concern on the part of the hosts and Palestine refugees that any change to UNRWA operations may presage the abandonment of Palestinians rights and undermine the Assembly mandate.

The Agency has exhausted its internal capacity to respond alone to the chronic underfunding. Austerity is affecting the quality of services, pushing the Agency to the brink. In 2022, for the third time in a row, I approved a zero-growth programme budget of \$817 million, recognizing that, with huge cost increases, zero-growth equates to far less than the previous year. In 2022, we foresee a programme budget deficit of more than \$100 million and deep uncertainty as to how services can be delivered, and staff salaries paid, during the last quarter of the year. In addition, our emergency appeal for the occupied Palestinian territory is currently just 37 per cent funded, and our Syria Appeal just only 32 per cent funded.

UNRWA is required to provide government-like services to one of the most destitute communities in the Near East, the Palestine refugees. Education, primary health care and social services simply cannot be delivered without proper funding or by teachers and medical personnel who are employed on a day-to-day basis. What the Agency requires is increased financial predictability and multi-year funding.

Our ability to fulfil our mandate lies with Member States of the United Nations and their political will to fully fund our core budget.

Where United Nations operations, such as peace operations, depend on adequate and predictable funding for their effectiveness, Member States typically provide assessed contributions. The core operations of UNRWA, however, rely instead on voluntary contributions.

A major aspect of the role of UNRWA in regional stability stemmed precisely from the predictability of its high-quality services, which are now undermined by the fragile and inadequate funding base.

I am grateful to Jordan and Sweden for co-hosting a high-level meeting on UNRWA on 22 September 2022 on the margins of the General Assembly high-level segment to explore realistic options for sustainable funding of the Agency. It is my deepest hope that this meeting will help to lead to options for the financial stability of UNRWA operations. In particular, consideration could be given to using assessed contributions to fund specific core UNRWA programmes and operations.

I will leave no stone unturned in our efforts to implement the UNRWA mandate, including by broadening the donor base, bringing back those who have disengaged and diversifying funding sources, including the private sector. I am confident that within the Agency, UNRWA staff will continue to go beyond the line of duty to protect the rights of Palestine refugees and provide them with services that enable their human development and support them during humanitarian crises.

My leadership team and I remain committed to modernizing the Agency, building on the recent progress achieved to ensure UNRWA is fit for purpose and aligned with modern global best practices, and that it espouses all United Nations principles and values in everything we do. Ensuring a human rights approach to service delivery, in keeping with the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights, is at the heart of the Agency's modus operandi.

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In all my conversations with Palestine refugees, I note their common fear of being abandoned by the international community. UNRWA, for them, remains the last standing pillar of the international commitment to their right to dignity and to a just and lasting solution to their plight, as enshrined in international law and United Nations resolutions. On the eve of the General Assembly's consideration of renewal of the UNRWA mandate, I appeal to all Member States to mobilize politically and financially to support UNRWA as part of the multilateral commitment to Palestinians and to continue working toward a political solution that will benefit the region and its peoples.

(Signed) Philippe **Lazzarini**  
Commissioner-General



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**Letter dated 15 June 2022 from the Chair of the Advisory Commission of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East addressed to the Commissioner-General of the Agency**

At its regular session, held in Beirut on 14 and 15 June 2022, the Advisory Commission of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) considered your annual report on UNRWA activities and operations, covering the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021, to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forthcoming session.

The Commission strongly commends UNRWA for the vital role it plays in favour of stability in the region and for its efforts in continuously delivering essential core services and humanitarian assistance to Palestine refugees despite major challenges until a just and lasting solution is reached, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions (General Assembly resolutions [194 \(III\)](#) and [302 \(IV\)](#)). The Commission notes that the number of refugees under the UNRWA mandate is 5.8 million and accordingly recognizes the growing needs and enduring hardship of Palestine refugees, who have been affected by displacement for over seven decades.

The Commission expresses its sincere gratitude to hosts and donors for supporting essential UNRWA activities and service delivery to promote Palestine refugees' rights and human development, in the fields of health, education, relief and social services, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance, protection and humanitarian assistance.

The Commission is concerned that during 2021, violence and volatility in the region, coupled with the consequences of the lasting coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, deepened the vulnerability and marginalization of Palestine refugees and the deterioration of their socioeconomic conditions, with an increasing number relying on UNRWA services, thus increasing needs which the Agency is facing enormous challenges to accommodate after years of protracted funding deficit.

The Commission is especially concerned with the increasing levels of insecurity and violence, in particular as tensions heightened in May 2021 in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and escalated violence resumed in Gaza for 11 days, resulting in the killing of 261 Palestinians, including 67 children, and of 13 people inside Israel, including 2 children, and further displacement inside Gaza following the destruction of shelter and infrastructure.

The Commission also expresses grave concern regarding the 80 per cent increase in number of confrontations between Israeli authorities and Palestinians over the reporting period, which led to 84 deaths and 9,629 injured, including a seven-fold increase in injuries related to live ammunition. We also express our concern for the rising levels of settler violence, with reported incidents increasing by 37 per cent over the reporting period, and a rising number of demolitions of Palestinian homes and livelihood structures resulting in a 20 per cent increase in displacement.

The Commission is equally concerned with the aggravated economic crisis in Lebanon, the ongoing conflict and protracted displacement in areas of the Syrian Arab Republic, the ongoing access restrictions on the Gaza Strip by Israel, which have been enforced for 15 years and further deepen dependence on UNRWA services, risking further instability, and very high unemployment rates, especially among young graduates. The Commission expresses concern over the increasing levels of despair and frustration among Palestine refugees, which could increase the risk of young people lacking hope and of opportunities to turn to radicalization.

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At the same time, the Commission welcomes the Agency's ways of rising to challenges despite its continued financial crisis, specifically as in-person primary health services progressively resumed in 2021 and as vaccination campaigns were introduced to impede the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across all fields of operations, resulting in improved health indicators through the increased utilization of UNRWA health services in all fields. The Commission equally welcomes positive outcomes in the technical and vocational education and training programmes coupled with the decrease of school dropout rates in Gaza, the West Bank and Jordan, as well as monitoring and evaluation efforts in fostering transparency, efficiency and accountability within the Agency.

The Commission is seriously concerned with the increasing level of threats and attacks against UNRWA staff across several fields. In that regard, the Commission laments the evacuation of the Director and Senior Deputy Director of the Gaza field office in late May 2021 and remains concerned about the lack of Agency access to, and information on, its 16 staff who are missing, detained, kidnapped or presumed detained.

The Commission is also concerned with the restrictions and other detrimental practices directed at UNRWA staff and property such as the ongoing searches of United Nations vehicles, with which UNRWA staff continue to comply under protest, incursions into UNRWA premises and the uncovering of underground cavities underneath UNRWA installations. Such practices effectively erode the protection provided to United Nations property and assets from any form of search or interference pursuant to the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, as well as the Comay-Micheltmore Agreement of 1967, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant United Nations resolutions and agreements with relevant countries, under which all parties are reminded to respect the inviolability and neutrality of UNRWA assets and personnel.

The Commission remains deeply concerned with the Agency's protracted financial crisis, which led to the deferring of payments to suppliers, continued austerity measures and deferring staff salaries at the end of the year, as well as the contracting of a Central Emergency Response Fund loan, which was only in part repaid, leaving the Agency to carry forward \$62 million in liabilities into 2022. This situation increases fears and worries among the Palestine refugee communities and among UNRWA staff across fields of operation, which is not conducive to the Agency's essential contributions to peace and stability.

In the aforementioned context, the Commission is further concerned with the additional costs incurred by restrictions imposed on UNRWA in some fields of operations, practices such as restriction of movement of goods and persons on security grounds, and results in improper taxes and charges, which lead to lost workdays, delays and cost increases, thus deepening the financial crisis faced by the Agency.

The Commission would like the Commissioner-General to convey our gratitude to host and donor countries for their continued financial and political support of UNRWA, and encourages Member States to reinforce their financial support to face the aforementioned crisis and ensure predictability of funding and to reiterate their political support for the Agency by voting for the extension of the UNRWA Mandate beyond 2023 in the General Assembly until a just and lasting solution is reached for the plight of Palestine refugees in the region.

*(Signed)* Bassel Al-Hassan

## Chapter I

### Contextual overview

#### A. Summary of developments

1. In 2021, an unstable regional environment, violence and marginalization, exacerbated by the continued impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, deepened the vulnerability of Palestine refugees across the five fields of UNRWA operation: Gaza; Jordan; Lebanon; the Syrian Arab Republic; and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.
2. Within this context and in line with its mandate provided by the General Assembly, the Agency continued to deliver development and humanitarian assistance in the areas of education, health, relief and social services, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance and protection.
3. UNRWA began 2021 with liabilities of \$75 million carried forward from 2020, resulting from funding from Member States that fell short of UNRWA budget needs and requests. The Agency's funding situation remained critical in 2021, partially owing to the fragilities inherited after several years of austerity and steady financial deterioration in the face of both rising costs and voluntary contributions from donors that were unable to meet the Agency's needs.
4. In managing financial challenges, UNRWA initially operated on the basis of a 90 per cent allocation of the approved programme budget, and expenditure was controlled through strict vacancy management and reductions in non-staff expenditure. Payments to suppliers were deferred month-on-month from June onwards to maintain liquidity. Staff salaries for November were deferred to December and critical operations were only sustained through Central Emergency Response Fund loans totalling \$43 million, of which \$15 million was repaid during 2021, and the remaining \$28 million was carried over to 2022. In total, UNRWA carried forward approximately \$62 million in liabilities into 2022.
5. Despite financial challenges, the Agency ensured the continuity of services to Palestine refugees during a period of increased conflict in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continued hostilities in the Syrian Arab Republic, and an economic crisis in Lebanon.
6. UNRWA also achieved considerable progress in relation to reforms that strengthened internal management systems and practices, thus enabling a working environment that embraces better inclusivity, transparency and accountability. These ongoing reforms also contributed to the ongoing modernization of working practices, systems and service delivery.
7. Throughout the year, the Agency received valuable support from hosts and donors, with Jordan and Sweden co-hosting a ministerial-level international conference on UNRWA in November. The conference highlighted the Agency's crucial role in the region and its important work on humanitarian principles and acknowledged that the General Assembly's strong political support for the UNRWA mandate is not being translated into matching resources.
8. For the Agency to be able to continue providing its services to a growing population and to play its central role in upholding Palestine refugee rights, sustainable solutions to the chronic financial difficulties of UNRWA must be found. The Agency has engaged with hosts and donors to advance these discussions and looks forward to their continued support in 2022.

## B. Political, economic and security developments

### Gaza Strip

9. In 2021, multiple crises converged to deepen the suffering of 1,516,258 registered Palestine refugees in Gaza.<sup>1</sup> The intra-Palestinian political division between Fatah and Hamas continued to have an impact on the ability of local institutions to deliver basic services. In April, legislative and presidential elections, announced for May and July, respectively, were indefinitely postponed.<sup>2</sup>

10. On 10 May, armed hostilities in Gaza erupted that lasted for 11 days, leaving 261 Palestinians dead, including 67 children,<sup>3</sup> and a further 2,220 injured, including 685 children. An additional 13 people inside Israel, including 2 children, were killed, and 710 others were injured. The fighting was the most intense since 2014 and, at its peak, displaced some 113,000 residents of Gaza, including approximately 71,000 who sought shelter and protection in 59 UNRWA schools. Widespread destruction was also recorded, with 1,663 homes destroyed, a further 959 severely damaged and 58,000 partially damaged, in addition to the destruction of and damage to public infrastructure.<sup>4</sup>

11. In 2021, Gaza experienced several waves of COVID-19, stretching public health services to the breaking point and leading to new restrictions.<sup>5</sup> As at 31 December, 190,427 cases had been registered, resulting in 1,706 deaths.<sup>6</sup> Beyond its immediate health consequences, the pandemic placed an additional burden on Palestine refugees already struggling to cope with multiple social, economic and security-related pressures, with a growing number, particularly children, displaying physical and psychological signs of severe distress. In March, a COVID-19 vaccination campaign commenced, through which 39 per cent of the population were vaccinated by the end of the year.<sup>7</sup>

12. In June, the land, air and sea blockade of Gaza entered its fifteenth year, aggravating an already dire humanitarian and economic crisis. Restrictions on the entry to and exit from the territory tightened at the onset of the hostilities; however, by September, they were gradually eased.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, the blockade, compounded by hostilities, the ongoing political divide and the impact of the pandemic, continued to drastically limit economic activity and hinder the delivery and availability of essential services. Unemployment reached 46.9 per cent (74 per cent amongst young graduates).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In addition, 189,094 other registered persons are registered with the Agency in Gaza. "Other registered persons" refer to those who, at the time of original registration, did not satisfy all of the UNRWA Palestine refugee criteria but were determined to have suffered significant loss or endured considerable hardship for reasons related to the conflict of 1948 in Palestine, and those who belong to the families of "other registered persons".

<sup>2</sup> Reuters, "Palestinian leader delays parliamentary and presidential elections, blaming Israel", April 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Gaza after the May escalation-November 2021", *Humanitarian Bulletin*, November 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian Needs Overview – occupied Palestinian territory", December 2021, available at [www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-needs-overview-2022](http://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-needs-overview-2022).

<sup>5</sup> Reuters, "Gaza gravediggers and medics stretched as COVID spikes during Ramadan", 22 April 2021.

<sup>6</sup> UNRWA, COVID-19 Field Update Dashboard, December 2021.

<sup>7</sup> World Health Organization (WHO), "COVID-19 Situation Report 85", December 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian Needs Overview – occupied Palestinian territory", December 2021, available at [www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-needs-overview-2022](http://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-needs-overview-2022).

<sup>9</sup> Young graduates are defined as persons between 19 and 29 years of age holding an intermediate diploma or higher. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Results of the Labour Force Survey, 2021", press release, February 2022, available at [https://pcbs.gov.ps/portals/\\_pcbs/PressRelease/Press\\_En\\_15-2-2022-LF-year-en.pdf](https://pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_15-2-2022-LF-year-en.pdf).

On a positive note, in March, the Palestinian Authority reinstated the wages of public employees in Gaza to 100 per cent, up from the 70 per cent paid in the past several years.<sup>10</sup> A chronic electricity shortage continued to inhibit access to health care, water and sanitation, and economic opportunities. Over 97 per cent of the household water supply was non-potable owing to over-extraction from the coastal aquifer and seawater seepage.<sup>11</sup> This forced families to purchase purified or desalinated water at heavily inflated prices.<sup>12</sup>

### West Bank

13. Throughout 2021, the daily lives of 883,950 Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA in the West Bank,<sup>13</sup> including East Jerusalem, remained heavily affected by the Israeli occupation. Tensions peaked in May, following Palestinian protests in East Jerusalem and across the West Bank over access and movement restrictions in and around Jerusalem's Old City during Ramadan and the planned eviction of Palestine refugees in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup>

14. The number of confrontations between Israeli security forces and Palestinian civilians increased by approximately 80 per cent from 2020, resulting in 84 Palestinian deaths,<sup>15</sup> including those of 30 Palestine refugees, and 9,629 injured, the highest number of injuries recorded since UNRWA protection records began in 2013. Of the injuries incurred, 1,181 were due to the use of live ammunition, a seven-fold increase from 2020.<sup>16</sup> Settler violence also increased, with 369 injuries to Palestinians resulting from 1,658 incidents recorded in 2021, a 37 per cent increase from the 1,206 incidents recorded in 2020. The demolition of Palestinian homes and livelihood structures by the Israeli authorities also increased, generating further displacement. In 2021, 903 Palestinian structures, 183 of which belonged to Palestine refugees, were demolished, causing the displacement of 1,203 Palestinians, including 240 refugees, a 19.8 per cent increase from 2020.<sup>17</sup>

15. The pandemic continued in the West Bank, leading to restrictions that had an impact on Palestine refugees' health, education and economic well-being. As at 31 December, 280,152 COVID-19 cases had been recorded in the West Bank, resulting in 3,234 deaths.<sup>18</sup> In February, a national vaccination campaign commenced and, by the end of 2021, 63.6 per cent of the population had been vaccinated.<sup>19</sup> Israel contributed to these efforts including through vaccinating international UNRWA personnel. As vaccination rates rose, economic recovery began, with growth in 2021 estimated at

<sup>10</sup> Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, World Bank, November 2021, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/443631635864878225/pdf/Economic-Monitoring-Report-to-the-Ad-Hoc-Liaison-Committee.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian Needs Overview – occupied Palestinian territory", December 2021, available at [www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-needs-overview-2022](http://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-needs-overview-2022).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> In addition, 216,018 other registered persons are registered with the Agency in the West Bank.

<sup>14</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Escalation in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Israel, flash update #1", 11 May 2021, available at <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/escalation-west-bank-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-1-1700-11-may-2021>.

<sup>15</sup> In 2020, 27 Palestinians were killed, including 3 Palestinian refugees. Of those killed in 2021, 54 were reportedly unarmed civilians, 13 deaths occurred during reported exchanges of gunfire between the Israeli security forces and Palestinians, and 17 deaths were reportedly related to alleged attacks on Israeli security forces personnel (UNRWA Protection and Neutrality Database, West Bank Field Office).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. In 2020, 189 Palestinians were injured by live ammunition.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Some 1,004 individuals were displaced in 2020.

<sup>18</sup> UNRWA, COVID-19 Field Update Dashboard, December 2021.

<sup>19</sup> WHO, "COVID-19 Situation Report 85", December 2021.

7 per cent,<sup>20</sup> compared to an 11.5 per cent contraction in 2020.<sup>21</sup> Unemployment stabilized at 16 per cent, although young graduate and women's unemployment were considerably higher, at 36 and 29 per cent, respectively.<sup>22</sup> The Palestinian Authority's challenging fiscal situation continued. Government revenue and public spending both increased by 18 per cent, while donor financing decreased by 38 per cent from 2020. Additional deductions by the Government of Israel from the monthly taxes it collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority added to fiscal stress.<sup>23</sup>

### Syrian Arab Republic

16. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the humanitarian and economic challenges facing the population, including the estimated 438,000 Palestine refugees remaining in the country,<sup>24</sup> increased during the reporting period. Approximately 40 per cent of Palestine refugees remained displaced, and the combined impact of the conflict, economic crisis and COVID-19 perpetuated a dire humanitarian situation.

17. While active conflict subsided in large areas of the Syrian Arab Republic, fighting continued in Idlib and Dar'a governorates. In July, conflict in and around Dera'a displaced approximately 36,000 civilians, including 600 Palestine refugee families from the Dar'a refugee camp.<sup>25</sup> Unexploded ordnance continued to kill and injure civilians, including seven Palestine refugee boys.

18. The economic crisis deepened. According to a May 2021 UNRWA crisis monitoring survey, 83 per cent of Palestine refugees reported living on \$1.90 or less per day,<sup>26</sup> even after the provision of UNRWA emergency cash assistance. Additionally, 57 per cent stated that the quantity and quality of food they consume had decreased, with 50.5 per cent of respondents resorting to the consumption of cheaper and less nutritious food. Palestine refugees faced widespread unemployment, the loss of assets and livelihoods, fuel and electricity shortages and a relentless increase in basic living costs. The average cost of the standard reference food basket<sup>27</sup> increased by 97 per cent between January and December,<sup>28</sup> while the prices of government-subsidized diesel and gas rose by 172 per cent and 272 per cent year-on-year, respectively.<sup>29</sup> Inflationary pressures were exacerbated by the Syrian pound's (LS) diminishing value against the United States dollar, which reached a historic low of 3,972 LS in March.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>20</sup> International Monetary Fund (IMF), "IMF staff concludes visit to the West Bank and Gaza" March 2022.

<sup>21</sup> World Bank, "Palestinian Territories' economic update – April 2021", April 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Results of the Labour Force Survey, 2021", press release, February 2022, available at [https://pcbs.gov.ps/portals/\\_pcbs/PressRelease/Press\\_En\\_15-2-2022-LF-year-en.pdf](https://pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_15-2-2022-LF-year-en.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> World Bank, economic monitoring report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, November 2021, available at <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/443631635864878225/pdf/Economic-Monitoring-Report-to-the-Ad-Hoc-Liaison-Committee.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Please note that 575,234 Palestine refugees and 90,632 other registered persons are registered with the Agency in the Syrian Arab Republic.

<sup>25</sup> UNRWA, "Vulnerable Palestine refugees affected by ongoing clashes in southern Syrian Arab Republic", August 2021, available at [www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/vulnerable-palestine-refugees-affected-ongoing-clashes-southern-syria](http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/vulnerable-palestine-refugees-affected-ongoing-clashes-southern-syria).

<sup>26</sup> This figure stood at 74 per cent in 2018. UNRWA, Syria Field Office, "Socio-economic situation of Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic crisis monitoring report – high-frequency survey results", May 2021.

<sup>27</sup> In the Syrian Arab Republic, the food basket consists of dry goods, including bread, rice, lentils and oil, that provide 1,930 kilocalories per person/day for a family of five.

<sup>28</sup> World Food Programme (WFP), Syria country office, *Market Price Watch Bulletin*, issue No. 85, December 2021, available at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WFP-0000135982.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> WFP, Syria country office, *Market Price Watch Bulletin*, issue No. 76, March 2021, available at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WFP-0000135982.pdf>.

19. COVID-19 continued to stretch the Syrian health system. Since the start of the pandemic, the country registered 50,278 cases, resulting in 2,897 deaths.<sup>31</sup> As testing is both limited in availability and extremely expensive, the actual infection rate is likely to be significantly higher. A national vaccination campaign commenced in May; however, as at 31 December, only 5.2 per cent of the population had been vaccinated.<sup>32</sup>

20. In 2021, UNRWA recorded 1,049 Palestine refugee returns to the Syrian Arab Republic, 63 per cent of which were from Lebanon, 10 per cent from Jordan and the remainder from other countries. The number of returns decreased in 2021, compared to 2020 (1,371 returns), influenced in part by the country's economic crisis and lack of livelihood opportunities.

## Lebanon

21. In 2021, Lebanon grappled with the accumulated impacts of the following: (a) the eleventh year of the Syrian refugee crisis; (b) the continuing impact of COVID-19; and (c) the socioeconomic and political turmoil that began in 2019. By the end of the year, the country hosted 839,788 Syrian refugees registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,<sup>33</sup> in addition to 29,344 Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic registered with UNRWA. A further 482,676 Palestine refugees in Lebanon are registered with the Agency.<sup>34</sup>

22. The financial and economic crisis in Lebanon has been described by the World Bank as quite possibly one of the three most severe crises since the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup> The country's economy contracted by an estimated 10.5 per cent in 2021, on top of the 21.4 per cent contraction in 2020.<sup>36</sup> Amidst economic collapse, the local population's ability to fulfil their needs was severely affected by shortages of food, medicines and fuel.<sup>37</sup> Consumer purchasing power was decimated by the depreciation of the Lebanese pound against the United States dollar by 219 per cent and inflation of 145 per cent.<sup>38</sup> As a result, the poverty rate reached 82 per cent, with 40 per cent of the population assessed as living in extreme poverty.<sup>39</sup> Official steps to tackle the crisis were undermined by the inability of political actors to form a government for almost 13 months, until September.<sup>40</sup>

23. COVID-19 continued to exacerbate the suffering faced by Lebanese citizens and refugees alike. By 31 December 2021, the country had recorded 731,288 cases, resulting in 9,136 deaths.<sup>41</sup> In February, a national vaccination campaign was launched, and, by 31 December, 33.0 per cent of the population had been vaccinated.<sup>42</sup>

24. Palestine refugees were already among the most vulnerable and marginalized communities in Lebanon, and deteriorating conditions added to their hardship.

<sup>31</sup> UNRWA, COVID-19 Field Update Dashboard, December 2021.

<sup>32</sup> WHO, COVID-19 Dashboard, December 2021, available at <https://covid19.who.int/>.

<sup>33</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Operational Data Portal, accessed December 2021, available at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>.

<sup>34</sup> Of which 67,016 other registered persons are registered with the Agency in Lebanon.

<sup>35</sup> World Bank, "Lebanon sinking (to the top 3)", *Lebanon Economic Monitor*, spring 2021, available at <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/394741622469174252/pdf/Lebanon-Economic-Monitor-Lebanon-Sinking-to-the-Top-3.pdf>.

<sup>36</sup> World Bank, "The great denial", *Lebanon Economic Monitor*, fall 2021, available at [www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/publication/lebanon-economic-monitor-fall-2021-the-great-denial](http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/publication/lebanon-economic-monitor-fall-2021-the-great-denial).

<sup>37</sup> Reuters, "Life grinds to a halt in Lebanon's blackouts", August 2021.

<sup>38</sup> World Bank, "The great denial", *Lebanon Economic Monitor*, fall 2021.

<sup>39</sup> [E/ESCWA/CL3.SEP/2021/POLICY BRIEF.2](https://www.unrwa.org/press-releases/2021/09/2021-09-20-ESCWA-CL3-SEP-2021-POLICY-BRIEF-2).

<sup>40</sup> Reuters, "Lebanon agrees new government to tackle economic collapse", September 2021.

<sup>41</sup> UNRWA, COVID-19 Field Update Dashboard, December 2021.

<sup>42</sup> Our World in Data, "Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccinations", available at <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations?country=LBN>.



Through a crisis monitoring survey in 2021, 58 per cent of respondents reported consuming fewer meals per week, while 25 per cent reported eating less to provide for their children. The Agency also registered: (a) cases of students dropping out of UNRWA schools owing to the necessity of taking paid employment; (b) an increased number of children suffering psychological distress; and (c) increased cases of child labour/marriage/abuse/harassment and violence against girls and women.

### **Jordan**

25. In Jordan, 2,334,789 Palestine refugees are registered with the Agency,<sup>43</sup> the majority of whom are understood to possess Jordanian citizenship, which allows them to enjoy the same rights as other Jordanian nationals. The approximately 175,033 Palestine refugees who fled Gaza to Jordan in 1967 stand as an exception. This group does not possess citizenship and faces restricted access to some public services and livelihood opportunities, although their rights and privileges have expanded in recent years. In addition, 18,824 Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic in Jordan were registered with UNRWA at the end of 2021. The estimated 9.9 per cent of Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic without legal status in the country<sup>44</sup> remained particularly vulnerable, as they faced restricted access to the labour market, courts, civil status and registration, and humanitarian assistance. Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic also faced the constant threat of detention and forcible return. These individuals are referred to the Agency as their primary provider of assistance. UNRWA continued to appeal to the Government of Jordan to uphold the principle of equal treatment of all persons, including refugees, in accordance with international law, and to consider temporary access to State services for Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic for humanitarian reasons.

26. In January, a national COVID-19 vaccination campaign was launched, and, by 31 December, 43.6 per cent of the population had been vaccinated.<sup>45</sup> Despite this, as at 31 December, 1,063,405 COVID-19 cases had been recorded, resulting in 12,653 deaths.<sup>46</sup> Following a modest contraction of 1.6 per cent in 2020, the Jordanian economy grew by 2.6 per cent in 2021, spurred on by the full reopening of the economy in September.<sup>47</sup> However, high unemployment persisted, reaching 23.3 per cent, with women and youth unemployment at 30.7 per cent and 52.1 per cent, respectively.<sup>48</sup> In August, the Government announced its economic priorities programme for 2021–2023, which prioritized investment and business environment reforms.<sup>49</sup>

## **C. Operational and organizational developments**

27. In 2021, the devastating health, social and economic consequences of COVID-19 continued to be felt by Palestine refugees across all UNRWA fields of operation, exacerbating simultaneous crises in Gaza, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Overall, the number of

<sup>43</sup> In addition, 165,116 other registered persons are registered with the Agency in Jordan.

<sup>44</sup> UNRWA, Vulnerability Assessment Report, Jordan, May 2017.

<sup>45</sup> Jordan, Ministry of Health, <https://web.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=287936040041907&set=a.251546157014229>.

<sup>46</sup> UNRWA, COVID-19 Field Update Dashboard, December 2021.

<sup>47</sup> Jordan, Department of Statistics, “2.6% GDP growth rate at constant prices in the fourth quarter of 2021”, April 2022, available at [http://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/q4\\_2021/](http://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/q4_2021/).

<sup>48</sup> Jordan, Department of Statistics, “23.2% unemployment rate during the fourth quarter of 2021”, March 2022, available at [http://dos.gov.jo/dos\\_home\\_e/main/archive/Unemp/2021/Q4\\_2021.pdf](http://dos.gov.jo/dos_home_e/main/archive/Unemp/2021/Q4_2021.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> World Bank, “The World Bank in Jordan – overview”, November 2021, available at [www.worldbank.org/en/country/jordan/overview#1](http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/jordan/overview#1).



Palestine refugees reliant on the Agency's core services increased, adding an additional burden on the Agency as it continued to experience a funding crisis.

28. During the reporting period, UNRWA provided 7,000,706 primary health-care consultations,<sup>50</sup> education for 539,770 children, social safety net assistance (including cash and food) for 398,044 persons, technical and vocational education and training for 8,000 youth<sup>51</sup> and microfinance loans to 29,111 clients.<sup>52</sup> In addition, 1,049 shelters were rehabilitated or constructed and, in accordance with Agency protection and safety standards, UNRWA either constructed, upgraded or reconstructed four health centres and four schools. Protection assistance extended across all fields with an emphasis on advocacy and the mainstreaming of protection standards within service delivery.

29. The provision of food remained an Agency priority in Gaza. To that end, UNRWA supported the nutritional needs of 1,136,351 vulnerable Palestine refugees and distributed cash assistance to 160,180 refugees, mitigating the additional socioeconomic hardship caused by COVID-19. The Agency also provided temporary cash-for-work opportunities for 14,300 refugees, including 4,663 women. Health services were maintained through 22 health centres, and 25,633 refugees benefitted from mental health and psychosocial support services.<sup>53</sup> In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, emergency food continued to be provided, in partnership with the World Food Programme, to 37,437 food-insecure and vulnerable individuals from Bedouin and herder communities, and UNRWA distributed emergency cash assistance to 23,903 abjectly poor Palestine refugees. The Agency monitored, documented, reported and provided emergency assistance to persons affected by protection threats.

30. During the reporting period, UNRWA also responded to the humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon and Jordan, including those affected by ongoing hostilities in the Syrian Arab Republic, the economic crisis in Lebanon and the humanitarian impact of the COVID-19 emergency.<sup>54</sup> The Agency disbursed emergency cash assistance to 417,807 Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic, with supplementary cash provided to 142,579 of the most vulnerable. In addition, 413,074 Palestine refugees were provided with food assistance. Some 50,609 Palestine refugee students in the Syrian Arab Republic were taught in UNRWA schools and primary health-care was maintained through 25 facilities. Psychosocial support was extended to 46,659 refugees. In Lebanon, cash grants supported the food, housing and winterization needs of 29,344 Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic, while 84,537 Palestine refugees in Lebanon and Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic received one-off emergency cash assistance. Primary health-care was extended through 27 health centres, 4,654 Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic children were provided with quality, inclusive and equitable education, and legal aid was extended to 7,058 Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic and Palestine refugees in Lebanon. In Jordan, cash assistance was provided to 18,730 Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic in support of basic needs. Primary health-care was extended to Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic through 29 health centres and 1,063 Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic, and Syrian children benefitted from UNRWA education services.

<sup>50</sup> In 2021, primary health-care consultations included 6,156,188 in-person and 844,518 telemedicine consultations.

<sup>51</sup> Technical and vocational education and training enrolment pertains to the 2020–21 academic year. An additional 2,009 students were enrolled in the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts in Jordan and the Education Science Faculty in the West Bank.

<sup>52</sup> 12,987 clients were Palestine refugees.

<sup>53</sup> Of the 25,633 Palestine refugees provided with mental health and psychosocial support, 12,255 were students.

<sup>54</sup> In addition, UNRWA coordinates support to some 3,000 Palestinian refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic who have migrated to Egypt. These refugees were provided with health assistance and food vouchers through United Nations agencies and other humanitarian partners.

31. In response to the May escalation of hostilities in Gaza and clashes in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Agency launched a humanitarian and early recovery appeal to address the immediate needs of affected Palestine refugees. In Gaza, these funds supported the provision of emergency shelter to approximately 71,000 people and the disbursement of one-off multisectoral cash assistance to 10,193 families, including those whose shelters were affected by the hostilities. Mental health and psychosocial support was extended to 98,595 school children. In addition, cash assistance was distributed to 194 households in the West Bank whose shelters and livelihoods were impacted by Israeli security forces operations and settler violence.

32. Following the hostilities in Gaza, UNRWA commissioned an after-action review of the Agency's response. The resulting report highlighted the life-saving role UNRWA in Gaza and noted areas for further improvement in Agency emergency response actions. UNRWA has committed to fully address and implement the review's recommendations.

33. Pursuant to the overarching priority to modernize Agency practices, systems and services, UNRWA made considerable progress on management reforms in 2021. In that respect, the Agency strengthened its senior management governance structures through the establishment of an Executive Advisory Group, tasked with advising the Commissioner-General on issues of Agency-wide significance and improving the function of its senior management team, to enhance transparency and inclusivity. Since its inception in October 2021, the Executive Advisory Group, consisting in a smaller group of UNRWA senior management, has supported the endorsement of the Agency's overall digitalization strategy, the specific education digitalization strategy, restructuring of the Agency's finance operations, a new area staff selection policy, the Gaza after-action review, the 2022 emergency appeals and the Agency's 2022 programme budget.

34. Building on work initiated in 2020, the review of the Agency's regulatory framework continued, resulting in a new procurement framework, promulgated in November. A review of the Agency's financial regulations and Area staff selection policy also commenced, and policies on information governance, management life cycle and security were revised. A comprehensive review of the protection function of UNRWA was also finalized, which led to the endorsement of a new strategic framework and organization chart.

35. In 2021, the Agency also established its first Regional Ombudsman's Office. The Ombudsman provides informal conflict-resolution services, including mediation, to all UNRWA personnel, based on the principles of independence, confidentiality, neutrality and informality. The Agency also undertook a review of its administration of justice system and efforts towards improving its smooth functioning are ongoing.

36. UNRWA further defined its application of humanitarian principles, including on issues related to neutrality. Despite COVID-19 and conflict-related challenges, 83 per cent of Agency installations received two or more neutrality inspections and 93 per cent of staff completed a mandatory course on social media and neutrality. During the reporting period, in instances in which personnel were alleged to have posted inappropriate content on social media, the Agency immediately undertook investigations and imposed disciplinary measures, in accordance with internal rules and regulations and due process requirements. The Agency remains fully committed to upholding United Nations principles and values at all times and has zero tolerance for hate speech and incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. With dedicated project funding available as of 2021, UNRWA is scaling up and integrating its humanitarian principles and protection work.

37. In 2021, UNRWA also launched a centralized online learning platform, the Digital Learning Platform, where teaching materials thoroughly vetted through a three-step process are posted. This was developed as a response to school closures

during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure learning continuity and provide UNRWA students and their parents with access to age-appropriate, relevant and safe self-learning material that is in line with United Nations values and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) education standards.

## **D. Legal matters**

### **Agency staff**

38. The freedom of movement for UNRWA personnel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, continued to be restricted by the Israeli authorities on security grounds. Restrictions included: (a) the prohibition of Agency local staff not resident in Jerusalem to travel in United Nations vehicles across the Erez crossing (into and out of Gaza) and the Allenby Bridge (into and out of Jordan), or to drive in Israel and East Jerusalem; and (b) time-consuming and cumbersome procedures to obtain permits for local staff not resident in Jerusalem to enter Israel and East Jerusalem. On average, permits to enter East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank were not issued to 19 per cent (108 individuals) of UNRWA area personnel when required, even though procedures had been followed. UNRWA applied for permits for local staff to enter East Jerusalem to carry out the Agency's mandated operations and without prejudice to relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolutions relating to the status of Jerusalem. Israeli authorities maintained that the restrictions were necessary for security reasons.

39. Procedures at the Allenby Bridge set by the relevant Israeli authorities continued to require that United Nations vehicles be submitted to a search unless an occupant thereof held an identification card issued by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

40. Measures introduced by the Israeli authorities in April 2018 at the Erez crossing remained in place. Those included a requirement for all vehicle doors to be opened for inspection by a sniffer dog. United Nations staff complied with the procedures under protest.

41. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, staff movement continued to be restricted and was rendered unpredictable at several checkpoints, notably those controlling access to East Jerusalem or through the West Bank barrier. In 2021, a total of 37 access-related incidents, including search demands and denials to cross checkpoints, were reported, which resulted in the loss of an estimated 252 individual workdays or 1,893 work hours. That represents a large increase from the preceding year, when 27 staff days were lost. Searches were avoided through UNRWA interventions, rerouting or turning back. Since 8 July 2021, in order to avoid search demands at certain checkpoints, UNRWA has redirected its buses transporting staff from Hebron and Bethlehem to Jerusalem through alternative routes, causing longer travel times and increased lost working days.

42. Despite several requests for unimpeded humanitarian access, it remained difficult and at times operationally unfeasible to deliver Agency services in some West Bank areas in the "seam zone" (areas between the Green Line and the West Bank barrier). The situation regarding requirements for UNRWA and other United Nations trucks to use specific commercial checkpoints to enter Jerusalem remained unchanged.

43. The aforementioned restrictions are inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations, the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, relevant United Nations resolutions and the Comay-Micheltmore Agreement of 1967, by which the Government of Israel is obligated to facilitate the task of the Agency to the best of its ability, subject only to regulations or arrangements that may be necessitated by considerations of military security. Israel maintains that the measures

are necessary in the light of heightened security concerns and on the basis of previous incidents not involving UNRWA.

44. The Agency continued to apply for permits from the Israeli authorities for area staff in Gaza to transit through the Erez crossing. During 2021, of 172 applications, 126 permits (73 per cent) were granted, bearing in mind the restricted movement and the closure of the Erez crossing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Compared with 2020, the number of applications increased by 26.5 per cent and the overall percentage of permit applications not granted decreased from 79.5 to 13.9 per cent. However, considering that the United Nations Department of Safety and Security has not approved official travel through Rafah on security grounds, the denial of permits and delays in processing permits to transit through Erez continued to have an impact on the Agency's operations, including by preventing staff from attending important meetings, training courses and conferences and from performing their relevant duties outside Gaza. UNRWA has not received a substantive justification as to why permits were not approved.

45. Beginning in October 2021, Hamas, the de facto authorities in Gaza imposed new restrictions on area staff members when they enter or exit Gaza through the Erez crossing, prohibiting area staff from travel by United Nations vehicles through checkpoints administered by them.

46. During the reporting period, the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza was open for public use throughout the year, with the exception of Fridays and holidays, for a total of 221 days, for humanitarian cases, students and holders of visas for a third country. The ban imposed by the United Nations on duty travel for staff travelling through Rafah remained in place on security grounds.

47. In Lebanon, the volatile security situation in Palestine refugee camps in the Saida and north Lebanon areas resulted, at times, in movement restrictions that affected UNRWA staff and operations. No significant movement restrictions were imposed on UNRWA staff by the Governments of Jordan or Palestine.

48. Since 2017, the Agency has been unable to secure residency for three expatriate UNRWA area staff members in Jordan owing to the Government's refusal to exempt them from the requirement of a labour permit and its associated fees. During the reporting period, the Agency continued to pay fees relating to two of these staff members, under protest.

49. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the security situation in the capital, north and central areas continued to stabilize during the reporting period. However, the security situation in the south deteriorated, despite the Government's interventions and conciliation efforts. Frequent reports of kidnappings and targeted killings, including of civilians, at several locations in Dar'a governorate continued. Armed conflict, asymmetrical attacks, terrorist attacks and generalized insecurity continued to seriously affect free movement and humanitarian access, particularly in the south, where security incidents were more frequent. While some checkpoints in the capital and central areas were removed, checkpoints in other areas remained. In 2021, 137 visa applications (residency and visit) for international personnel were submitted to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates. A total of 136 applications were approved, and one was rejected.

50. At the end of 2021, 16 Agency staff were missing, detained, kidnapped or presumed detained: 11 were believed to be missing, detained or kidnapped in the Syrian Arab Republic, either by the Syrian authorities or other parties,<sup>55</sup> 2 detained by the Israeli authorities,<sup>56</sup> 2 by Hamas, the de facto authorities in Gaza, and 1 by the

<sup>55</sup> In addition, as at the end of the reporting period, six non-staff personnel in the Syrian Arab Republic were also believed to be missing, detained or kidnapped, either by the Syrian authorities or other parties.

<sup>56</sup> One daily paid worker was also detained by the Israeli authorities as at 31 December 2021.

Palestinian authorities. Despite requests in accordance with General Assembly resolution 36/232, the Syrian authorities did not provide access, but provided information about certain staff. Questioning the mandate of the Agency to seek information and access, Israeli authorities provided minimal to no information regarding the reasons for their detention of staff members and did not provide access. The Palestinian authorities facilitated access to and provided information about the detained staff member in their custody. Hamas, the de facto authorities in Gaza granted access but did not provide information in writing.

### **Agency services and premises**

51. Israeli authorities continued to impose transit charges on shipments entering Gaza, obliging UNRWA to pay \$1.47 million in 2021. The Agency considers such charges a direct tax from which it ought to be exempt under the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations. In the view of Israel, the charges are a fee for service, from which there is no exemption. Since November 2016, UNRWA vehicles could only be imported through Erez. For all other Agency imports, Kerem Shalom remained the sole crossing for imports into Gaza. It was fully closed for imports of all goods and construction materials on 29 out of 261 scheduled operating days (11.1 per cent) and closed only for construction materials on 97 out of 261 scheduled operating days (37.2 per cent). The continuing closure of the Karni crossing and the prohibition of containerized imports, in place since 2006, contributed to increased UNRWA expenditure resulting from storage, palletization, sterilization and additional mileage and staff, amounting to \$12.6 million. That was in addition to transit charges levied on imports through the Kerem Shalom and Erez crossings.

52. Conditions relating to the Agency's construction projects in Gaza and related approvals remained in place. UNRWA continued to make use of local monitoring staff to meet the laborious and time-consuming daily monitoring and coordination requirements previously introduced by the Israeli authorities owing to the blockade imposed on Gaza, amounting to almost \$95,000 in extra costs in 2021. The Agency also continued to provide the Israeli authorities with written confirmation of UNRWA monitoring for each project, in addition to requirements predating 2017 for documentary material to facilitate the monitoring, by Israel, of construction projects. Cumbersome clearance procedures and frequent processing delays of import requests for materials, some of which Israel classifies as dual-use items,<sup>57</sup> and equipment, continued to have a negative impact on Agency operations.

53. In 2021 alone, additional staffing, transit and logistical costs resulting from Israeli requirements regarding the access and monitoring of all UNRWA imports into Gaza amounted to almost \$14.18 million. Further to the Agency's inability to import a generator for its official use in Gaza, as reported in 2020, the Israeli authorities agreed to remove the preconditions for allowing the shipment to enter Gaza during the reporting period.

54. The Israeli authorities continued to require standards testing for items imported by UNRWA for its official use, and the Standards Institution of Israel inspected Agency shipments bound for official use in the West Bank on three occasions. The United Nations considers that Israeli requirements are contrary to the exemption from prohibitions and restrictions on imports for official use under the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations.

<sup>57</sup> Dual-use items are materials/products/technologies normally used for civilian purposes that, according to the Israeli authorities, may have military applications. These materials are only permitted to enter Gaza for approved projects implemented by international organizations and, since mid-October 2014, under the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism.

55. Arrears of \$90.9 million accrued as value added tax (VAT) for services and goods procured for the West Bank and Gaza, before arrangements were agreed in 2013 with the Palestinian Ministry of Finance, remained outstanding. During 2021, the Agency further accrued an additional \$0.57 million in VAT. UNRWA received reimbursement in 2021 of \$0.31 million, and the cumulative total owed to the Agency for the reimbursement of VAT paid for services and goods procured in the West Bank and Gaza amounted to \$99.5 million as at 31 December 2021.<sup>58</sup> UNRWA makes periodic claims to the relevant authorities for the outstanding amounts.

56. During the reporting period, the Israeli authorities paid \$3.7 million in VAT reimbursements owed to the Agency. Some \$6.43 million<sup>59</sup> in VAT reimbursements remained outstanding as at 31 December 2021, representing a decrease of approximately \$1 million compared to the end of 2020.<sup>60</sup> The outstanding balances are from 2019 and prior years and consultations to solve the issue once and for all are ongoing.

57. UNRWA was required, as in the past, to pay port fees and other charges to the Syrian authorities in contravention of the agreement of 1948 between the United Nations and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. In 2021, fees and charges totalling \$41,546.00 were paid under protest.

58. During the reporting period, installation neutrality inspections were conducted across all five fields of Agency operation.

59. The 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations provides that the premises of the United Nations shall be inviolable. On at least 11 occasions during the reporting period, tear gas canisters, stun grenades, plastic-coated metal bullets, or live ammunition used by the Israeli security forces landed in Agency premises in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, including schools, or damaged UNRWA property.

60. During the reporting period, and within financial constraints and additional constraints related to COVID-19, UNRWA continued to implement the recommendations of the UN Headquarters Board of Inquiry into certain incidents that occurred in the Gaza Strip between 8 July 2014 and 26 August 2014, referred to in previous reports.

61. On 22 March 2018, the United Nations submitted a claim to Israel for the reimbursement of losses that the United Nations sustained as a result of incidents that were the subject of the Board of Inquiry, which occurred at the Agency's premises during the 2014 hostilities in Gaza. A claim was also presented to Israel for the losses sustained by dependants of a member of UNRWA personnel following his death during the hostilities. UNRWA remains concerned as to the need for accountability regarding these and other incidents in which Agency installations were directly or indirectly affected during the 2014 hostilities in Gaza contrary to their inviolability, and UNRWA personnel and civilians sheltering in them were killed as a result thereof.

62. In the West Bank, there were three incidents of incursions into the Agency's premises by armed Palestinians in 2021. UNRWA premises and services were disrupted on at least 21 occasions by forced closures or protests, including by members of camp service committees, during the reporting period.

63. In Gaza, there were five incursions into UNRWA installations by Hamas, the de facto authorities during 2021. During the reporting period, two pieces of unexploded ordnance were found in two Agency installations in Gaza. In January 2021, bullets

<sup>58</sup> Reflecting unaudited financial information.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> See A/76/13, para. 44

from an unknown source hit an UNRWA school in Rafah. Furthermore, in January 2021, three schools and one health centre were affected by the accidental explosion of live ammunition in storage in one of the adjacent houses in the Beit Hanoun area, located in northern Gaza. The Agency protested breaches of its privileges and immunities with the de facto authorities.

64. A further 57 incidents related to the May 2021 hostilities between Israel and Hamas affected UNRWA in Gaza. One UNRWA personnel member was gravely injured, and a residential tower housing UNRWA international personnel was damaged owing to nearby airstrikes. In addition, one UNRWA vehicle was damaged by debris and shrapnel from a nearby airstrike. A total of 53 installations were also damaged, including four UNRWA schools that were struck by air and artillery weapons, causing damage to the installations but no casualties. On two of those occasions, underground tunnels were discovered underneath UNRWA installations due to the impact of unexploded ordnance. The cavities were filled soon after the respective incidents. In addition, all unexploded ordnance and weaponry elements were removed from the installations by the Mine Action Service without any injuries. UNRWA protested breaches of its privileges and immunities and neutrality with Israel and Hamas.

65. In addition, threats directed against UNRWA senior management in Gaza in late May 2021, including the assembly of a very large protest in front of the UNRWA Gaza Field Office compound on 31 May 2021, created extreme disruptions for UNRWA services in Gaza. In particular, the safety and security of the Director and Senior Deputy Director of UNRWA operations in Gaza were threatened, which led to the Agency strongly protesting the position conveyed by Hamas in Gaza that they could no longer guarantee the safety and security of UNRWA staff. Regrettably, such a position left the Agency with no other choice than to redeploy the Director and Deputy Director outside Gaza.

66. During the reporting period, there were no incursions into the Agency's premises by the Jordanian authorities.

67. In the Syrian Arab Republic, as previously reported, UNRWA has sustained conflict-related property losses to its installations and assets in the millions of United States dollars since hostilities began in 2011. Assessments carried out in late 2018 indicate that almost all Agency installations require major rehabilitation, and many have been severely damaged and are in need of reconstruction, especially in Yarmouk, Ein el Tal and Dar'a. During the reporting period, no incidents of unauthorized entry into UNRWA installations by the Syrian authorities were reported. However, two incursions by third parties were reported, namely an incursion involving armed men in Dar'a and an incursion by a Russian charity accompanied by a Russian military police patrol. The Agency sanitation office in Khan Dunoun continued to be used by military personnel at the adjacent checkpoint.

68. In 2021, there were closures of UNRWA installations on at least 53 days in Lebanon, in addition to 24 partial closures. Closures were mostly the result of strikes and protests by beneficiaries and general civil unrest. Palestinian factions closed UNRWA installations on several occasions to demand further support from UNRWA owing to the growing vulnerability and socioeconomic challenges faced by Palestine refugees in Lebanon.

### **Other matters**

69. The \$680,000 seized by the Government of Lebanon in 2013 has yet to be returned. UNRWA has continued to dispute any liability for payments demanded by the Government of Lebanon in the amount of 252,928,673,000 Lebanese pounds<sup>61</sup> for

<sup>61</sup> UNRWA was invoiced in Lebanese pounds. The equivalent total value in United States dollars is \$167,780,214.

electricity consumed by Palestine refugees outside of Agency installations in camps in Lebanon. In addition, in March 2019, the Government of Lebanon demanded that UNRWA pay 1,714,639,000 Lebanese pounds<sup>62</sup> in fines for the resale of electricity by Popular Committees in the Burj Barajneh and Shatila refugee camps. The Agency disputes its responsibility to pay these fines and formally protested to the Government of Lebanon.

70. In relation to the internal justice system, the UNRWA Dispute Tribunal, established in 2010, operates on a full-time basis and comprises one judge and a part-time ad litem judge. During 2021, the Tribunal issued 72 judgments, disposing of 197 cases. As of the end of 2021, 234 cases were pending, including two cases on remand, of which 222 were filed by area staff and 12 by international staff members. There were also 21 appeals pending before the United Nations Appeals Tribunal.

#### **Legal status of Palestine refugees in the Agency area of operations**

71. The legal status of Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and Gaza remained substantially the same as that described in the Report of the Commissioner-General to the General Assembly for 2008 (A/64/13, paras. 52–55).

### **E. Financial overview**

72. With the exception of 158 international staff posts funded by the General Assembly through the United Nations regular budget, UNRWA operations are supported through voluntary contributions. The Agency receives funding through: (a) a programme budget fund that supports core operations, including education, health, camp improvement, relief and social services, protection and support systems and structures; (b) EAs for humanitarian interventions; and (c) specific, time-bound projects that improve services without increasing recurrent costs.

73. In 2021, UNRWA resource mobilization efforts yielded a total pledged amount of \$1.19 billion (including United Nations regular budget support for international staff). Planned programme budget (cash view) income was \$640 million against a planned expenditure of \$806 million. According to unaudited financial statements, in 2021, the Agency spent \$1.21 billion. The largest expenditure was \$817 million, under the unrestricted programme budget, accounting for 67.7 per cent of total expenditure. Emergency activities and projects (including restricted fund activities) accounted for 26.9 per cent and 7.8 per cent, respectively. Education remained the largest programme funded through the programme budget, expending 60 per cent (\$492.56 million) of the total unrestricted programme budget.

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<sup>62</sup> UNRWA was invoiced in Lebanese pounds. The equivalent total value in United States dollars is \$1,137,406.



Table 1  
**Expenditure by programme, 2021**  
 (Thousands of United States dollars and percentage)

<i>Programme budget</i>	<i>West Bank</i>		<i>Syrian Arab Republic</i>		<i>Gaza</i>		<i>Lebanon</i>		<i>Jordan</i>		<i>Headquarters</i>		<i>Total</i>	
Education	64 962	8	25 294	4	249 440	30	49 599	6	101 307	12	1 957	–	492 559	60
Health	29 710	4	8 937	1	38 433	5	22 607	3	22 239	3	823	–	122 749	16
Relief	10 004	1	3 726	–	14 131	2	10 006	1	9 717	1	1 007	–	48 591	5
Infrastructure	5 900	1	1 104	–	8 263	1	6 710	1	5 899	1	1 861	–	29 737	4
Executive direction	3 578	–	1 876	–	2 954	–	2 641	–	2 867	–	19 817	3	33 733	3
Protection	46	–	88	–	53	–	201	–	–	–	534	–	922	–
Support	15 114	2	4 445	1	21 470	3	9 460	1	7 730	1	30 370	4	88 589	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>129 314</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>45 470</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>334 744</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>101 224</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>149 759</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>56 369</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>816 880</b>	<b>100</b>

  

<i>All funding streams</i>	<i>West Bank</i>		<i>Syrian Arab Republic</i>		<i>Gaza</i>		<i>Lebanon</i>		<i>Jordan</i>		<i>Headquarters</i>		<i>Total</i>	
Education	75 905	6	36 394	3	261 130	23	62 217	5	111 037	9	3 079	–	549 762	46
Health	32 797	3	13 955	1	54 601	5	32 381	3	27 292	2	3 000	–	164 026	14
Relief	16 483	2	74 046	6	136 898	11	35 987	3	23 803	2	3 365	–	290 582	24
Infrastructure	9 372	1	2 255	–	19 868	2	20 696	2	9 050	1	2 602	–	63 843	6
Executive direction	5 361	–	3 691	–	4 948	–	6 016	–	3 715	–	23 982	4	47 713	4
Protection	1 080	–	1 115	–	395	–	958	–	323	–	1 002	–	4 873	–
Support	15 660	1	6 791	1	41 691	2	10 212	1	8 044	1	-5 064	–	77 334	6
Microfinance	3 300	–	374	–	1 458	–	–	–	3 412	–	– <sup>a</sup>	–	8 544	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>159 958</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>138 621</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>520 989</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>168 467</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>186 676</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>31 966</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1 206 677</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>a</sup> Microfinance Headquarters expenditure is incorporated under the expenditure for the West Bank.

Table 2  
**Expenditure by medium-term strategic outcome, 2021**  
 (Thousands of United States dollars and percentage)

<i>Programme budget</i>	<i>West Bank</i>	<i>Syrian Arab Republic</i>		<i>Gaza</i>		<i>Lebanon</i>		<i>Jordan</i>		<i>Headquarters</i>		<i>Total</i>	
1: Protection	940	–	276	–	775	–	530	–	514	–	534	–	3 569
2: Health	28 904	4	8 667	1	37 864	5	22 001	2	21 716	3	–	–	119 152
3: Education	57 283	7	23 571	4	241 606	29	45 497	6	93 371	10	–	–	461 328
4: Livelihood opportunities	8 229	1	1 579	–	7 367	1	4 008	–	6 825	1	405	–	28 413
5: Food, shelter and environmental health	12 211	1	3 762	–	17 688	2	14 025	2	14 052	2	33	–	61 771
6: Governance and support	21 747	3	7 615	1	29 444	4	15 163	2	13 281	2	55 397	7	142 647
<b>Total</b>	<b>129 314</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>45 470</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>334 744</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>101 224</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>149 759</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>56 369</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>816 880</b>
<b>100</b>													
<i>All funding streams</i>	<i>West Bank</i>	<i>Syrian Arab Republic</i>		<i>Gaza</i>		<i>Lebanon</i>		<i>Jordan</i>		<i>Headquarters</i>		<i>Total</i>	
1: Protection	1 974	–	1 321	–	1 118	–	1 287	–	836	–	1 001	–	7 537
2: Health	31 684	3	12 047	1	53 648	4	31 551	3	26 709	2	60	–	155 699
3: Education	66 561	6	32 210	3	250 750	21	55 650	4	100 637	9	147	–	505 955
4: Livelihood opportunities	13 111	1	3 954	–	14 773	1	9 261	1	14 187	1	1 651	–	56 937
5: Food, shelter and environmental health	19 966	2	73 797	6	140 474	12	49 109	4	28 430	2	33	–	311 809
6: Governance and support	26 662	1	15 292	1	60 226	5	21 609	2	15 877	1	29 074	4	168 740
<b>Total</b>	<b>159 958</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>138 621</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>520 989</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>168 467</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>186 676</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>31 966</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1 206 677</b>
<b>100</b>													

## Chapter II

### Subprogramme review

#### A. Subprogramme 1

#### **Palestine refugee rights under international law are protected and promoted**

74. UNRWA aims to ensure that Palestine refugees enjoy human rights to the fullest extent possible by mainstreaming protection in and through its service delivery and by promoting respect for international law with duty bearers. In 2021, Palestine refugees continued to face protection challenges due to the lack of a just and durable solution to their plight, the ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, the occupation of the West Bank, 15 years of blockade, the outbreak of hostilities in Gaza, the economic crisis in Lebanon and a precarious legal status in some host countries. COVID-19 also exacerbated protection threats experienced by Palestine refugees, including gender-based violence and violence against children.

75. Throughout 2021, the Agency continued to address protection concerns faced by Palestine refugees. A new case management system was introduced that provided Palestine refugees with more integrated and systematic protection support. Protection mainstreaming, in and through UNRWA service delivery, was also enhanced, while advocacy efforts were undertaken in relation to Palestine refugee rights.

<i>Expected accomplishment</i>	<i>Indicator of achievement</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	
		<i>Unit</i>	<i>Number</i>
Duty bearers are held accountable for violations of international law through monitoring, reporting and advocacy	Number of advocacy interventions, including formal letters, concerning protection issues	Baseline (2021)	642
		Target (2021)	642
		Actual (2021)	809
Vulnerable and at-risk individuals and communities benefit from protection responses	Percentage of students identified with a disability receiving support meeting their specific needs	Baseline (2021)	60.5
		Target (2021)	60.5
		Actual (2021)	32.1

#### **Outputs**

- UNRWA social workers supported 2,006 Palestine refugees through counselling and referral to other Agency and external services.
- Rehabilitation services and specialized support were extended to 7,829 Palestine refugees with disabilities.
- 85,530 Palestine refugees received psychosocial support.
- Legal counselling and referrals were extended to 13,365 Palestine refugees on issues including civil status, registration and gender-based violence.
- UNRWA made 10 confidential submissions/briefings to international human rights mechanisms.
- Initiatives were implemented to address violence against children, promote gender equality and women's empowerment and address gender-based violence.
- 4,344 UNRWA personnel received protection training.

## B. Subprogramme 2

### Palestine refugee health is protected and disease burden is reduced

76. Despite the considerable challenges presented by COVID-19 across all fields of operation, the blockade and hostilities in Gaza, ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, economic and political instability in Lebanon and the occupation of the West Bank, the Agency continued to meet the health needs of Palestine refugees. A robust response to COVID-19 focused on the continuity of essential health services and support for the successful introduction of national vaccination campaigns across all fields of operation. During the second half of the year, non-essential treatment was reintroduced to UNRWA health centres, although the use of telemedicine continued throughout 2021 in all fields, except Lebanon, to improve access to services and protect staff and patients. Other protective measures, including the use of a triage system, enhanced cleaning in health centres and the distribution of an expanded set of personal protective equipment were also maintained.

77. The utilization of UNRWA health services increased Agency-wide, leading to improved performance against most health indicators, including those related to maternal and child health, non-communicable disease care, reproductive health, the antibiotic prescription rate and the percentage of social safety net programme patients accessing hospitalizations. Telemedicine remained an essential component of UNRWA primary health-care delivery.

Expected accomplishment	Indicator of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit	Number
Universal access to quality, comprehensive primary health care	Average number of daily medical consultations per doctor	Baseline (2021)	58.8
		Target (2021)	58.8
		Actual (2021)	66.3
Protection and promotion of family health	Percentage of women attending at least four antenatal care visits	Baseline (2021)	75.5
		Target (2021)	75.5
		Actual (2021)	77.6
	Percentage of targeted population screened for diabetes mellitus (aged 40 and above)	Baseline (2021)	9.1
		Target (2021)	9.1
		Actual (2021)	13.9
	Number of expanded programme on immunization vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks	Baseline (2021)	2
		Target (2021)	0
		Actual (2021)	0
Efficient hospital support services provided	Percentage of UNRWA hospitalization accessed by social safety net programme participants	Baseline (2021)	24.6
		Target (2021)	24.6
		Actual (2021)	28.4

#### Outputs

- Provision of 7,000,706 medical consultations to Palestine refugees.
- 115,650 Palestine refugees aged 40 and above were screened for diabetes.
- Hospital care extended to 79,878 patients.
- Four UNRWA health centres were constructed, upgraded or reconstructed. Some 75 per cent of all Agency health centres meet enhanced quality care standards.

### C. Subprogramme 3 School-age children complete quality, equitable and inclusive basic education

78. For a second successive year, Palestine refugee children's education was disrupted by COVID-19. As per host Government decisions, students enrolled in UNRWA schools were taught through a combination of in-person, remote and blended lessons, as schools continued to face intermittent closures or, in the case of Gaza and the Syrian Arab Republic, a curtailed academic year owing to the pandemic. Despite these challenges, UNRWA maintained the learning process for 539,770 students enrolled in 710 schools. The majority of 2020–2021 academic year results were assessed as ahead of plan.<sup>63</sup>

79. Agency-wide indicators on education retention improved, with the retention rate to the end of basic education increasing to 98.76 per cent in 2020–2021 from 97.25 per cent in 2019–2020, with similar results for both female and male students. Cumulative dropout rates fell, influenced by a national automatic grade promotion policy implemented by the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the provision of psychosocial support for students, the use of authentic and formative student assessments and increased digital learning. These positive results were not reflected in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, where deteriorating economic conditions led to increased preparatory-level and, in the Syrian Arab Republic, elementary-level dropout rates.

Expected accomplishment	Indicator of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit	Rate
Inclusive access to basic education	Cumulative drop-out rate (elementary)	Baseline (2020–21)	0.61
		Target (2020–21)	1.25
		Actual (2020–21)	0.22
	Cumulative drop-out rate (preparatory)	Baseline (2020–21)	1.71
		Target (2020–21)	2.84
		Actual (2020–21)	0.83
Expected accomplishment	Indicator of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit	Number
Improved educational quality and outcomes	Number of textbooks reviewed using UNRWA curriculum framework <sup>a</sup>	Baseline (2021)	435
		Target (2021)	N/A <sup>b</sup>
		Actual (2021)	190
	Proportion of classes exceeding thresholds (less than/or equal to 25; and more than 40) students	Baseline (2020–21)	52.60 (>40)
			5.12 (≤25)
		Target (2020–21)	38.88 (>40)
			5.97 (≤25)
		Actual (2020–21)	53.25 (>40)
			4.99 (≤25)

<sup>a</sup> When new textbooks are issued, their “rapid review” is prioritized, focusing on neutrality/bias, gender and age appropriateness. Full textbook reviews under the curriculum framework continue to be undertaken, including against those for which a “rapid review” has been completed.

<sup>b</sup> A target is not set for this indicator, as the result is influenced by the number of new textbooks/new editions issued by host countries during the year.

<sup>63</sup> Student enrolment and UNRWA school numbers pertain to the 2020–2021 academic year.

## Outputs

- Provision of quality, inclusive and equitable education to 539,770 Palestine refugee children.
- Student drop-out rates were addressed, including through identifying at-risk students, to prevent them from leaving school.
- Four UNRWA schools were constructed, upgraded or reconstructed to meet UNRWA education reform, protection and safety requirements.

## D. Subprogramme 4 Palestine refugee capabilities are strengthened for increased livelihood opportunities

80. UNRWA aims to ensure Palestine refugees have a decent standard of living through interventions by its education, relief and social services, microfinance, and infrastructure and camp improvement programmes.

81. In 2021, Agency technical and vocational education and training programming helped to mitigate the effects of severe economic difficulties experienced by Palestine refugees. Through its eight vocational training centres, UNRWA focused on improving access to higher education for the most vulnerable and enhancing course relevance to labour market needs. Despite high unemployment in all fields, technical and vocational education and training graduate employment rates remained strong. Although COVID-19 continued to present challenges, both in terms of ensuring learning continuity and job availability for graduates, the Agency succeeded in training 8,000 students in its vocational training centres. UNRWA also maintained teacher training and higher education services to 2,009 students enrolled in the Education Science Faculty in the West Bank and Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts in Jordan.

82. In Gaza, Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and the West Bank, the Agency continued to increase sustainable livelihood opportunities through the provision of microfinance loans. In 2021, UNRWA disbursed \$25,415,575 in loans to 29,111 clients, of which \$12,618,910 was extended to 12,987 Palestine refugees. Lending rates progressed towards pre-pandemic levels as business restrictions were eased; however, they still reflected the depressed economic situation in all areas of programme operation. Performance was also impacted by the hostilities in Gaza and the devaluation of the Syrian pound.

83. The Agency's infrastructure and camp improvement programme worked to have a positive impact on local economies by driving community demand for construction materials and generating employment opportunities for camp residents.

84. A total of 27 partnership agreements were concluded in support of enhanced livelihood opportunities that benefitted 14,111 Palestine refugees, especially those with disabilities, youth and women.

Expected accomplishment	Indicator of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit	Percentage
Palestine refugee capabilities are strengthened	Percentage of vocational training centre graduates employed		
	Female	Baseline (2020–2021)	68.30
		Target (2020–2021)	68.30
		Actual (2020–2021)	68.58
	Male	Baseline (2020–2021)	78.76
		Target (2020–2021)	78.76
		Actual (2020–2021)	79.46

## Outputs

- Technical and vocational education and training was provided to 8,000 students.
- The vocational training centre graduate employment rate (for 2020 graduates) remained stable at 75.1 per cent, with 2,929 graduates employed or enrolled in further studies. In addition, 84.4 per cent of Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts and Education Science Faculty graduates were employed.
- The proportion of social safety net programme beneficiaries enrolled in the first year at vocational training centres was 33.88 per cent.

Expected accomplishment	Indicator of achievement	Measurement	
		Unit	Number
Refugees have improved access to livelihood opportunities	Total number of microfinance loans to refugees	Baseline (2021)	8 200
		Target (2021)	14 274
		Actual (2021)	12 987
	Number of employment opportunities (full-time equivalents) created from the infrastructure and camp improvement programme interventions <sup>a</sup>	Baseline (2021)	1 359
		Target (2021)	3 153
		Actual (2021)	2 040

<sup>a</sup> Excluding the Syrian Arab Republic.

## Outputs

- 12,987 loans, valued at \$12,618,910 were extended to Palestine refugees, corresponding to 45 per cent of all clients with loans and 49.7 per cent of the total disbursed value.
- Women were prioritized as loan recipients, with 13,861 loans (valued at \$10,671,883), representing 48 per cent of all loans, of which 5,612 loans (valued at \$4,871,889) were extended to female refugees.
- 7,328 loans (valued at \$6,458,013) were disbursed to youth, of which 3,412 loans (valued at \$2,823,352), or 46.6 per cent, were extended to Palestine refugee youth.
- Camp improvement works, valued at \$43,000,000, included the planning and construction of shelters and Agency installations, and the repair and reconstruction of sewerage and drainage works, wells and wastewater treatment systems.

## E. Subprogramme 5

### Palestine refugees are able to meet their basic human needs of food, shelter and environmental health

85. The UNRWA social safety net programme aims to mitigate poverty and food insecurity among Palestine refugees with the abject poor<sup>64</sup> and vulnerable prioritized for assistance. To this end, the social safety net programme provides social transfers, including a basic food basket, cash transfers and/or electronic cash vouchers. In 2021, the Agency served a caseload of 398,044 across Gaza (98,935), Jordan (58,857), Lebanon (61,544), the Syrian Arab Republic (142,579) and the West Bank (36,129). Although the value of Agency social transfers does not cover all basic needs, they represent a lifeline for those in greatest need.

<sup>64</sup> UNRWA defines those in a state of abject poverty as individuals who cannot meet their basic food needs.

86. In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNRWA provided emergency cash assistance to 417,807 Palestine refugees and, in Gaza, extended in-kind food assistance to 1,136,351 Palestine refugees, including 32,945 female-headed households.

87. Overcrowded conditions and makeshift shelters are just some of the challenges facing the 58 official Palestine refugee camps across all fields of Agency operation. Continued years of underfunding, coupled with depressed economic conditions, have translated into degraded living environments. UNRWA estimates that more than 36,000 substandard shelters, excluding those in the Syrian Arab Republic, are in need of rehabilitation.

<i>Expected accomplishment</i>	<i>Indicator of achievement</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	
		<i>Unit</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Abject poor refugees are better able to meet their food needs	Percentage of social safety net programme beneficiaries who are abject poor	Baseline (2021)	74.4
		Target (2021)	79.0
		Actual (2021)	74.5
	Percentage of poor individuals that receive social safety net programme social transfers	Baseline (2021)	16.1
		Target (2021)	17.1
		Actual (2021)	16.5
<i>Expected accomplishment</i>	<i>Indicator of achievement</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	
		<i>Unit</i>	<i>Percentage<sup>a</sup></i>
Improved living conditions for poor refugees	Percentage of substandard shelters repaired or reconstructed	Baseline (2021)	13.2
		Target (2021)	15.4
		Actual (2021)	14.4

<sup>a</sup> Excluding the Syrian Arab Republic.

## Outputs

- 398,044 Palestine refugees received social safety net programme support through the UNRWA programme budget. Emergency programming supported food and/or cash assistance for 1,136,351 in Gaza, 23,903 in the West Bank, 417,807 in the Syrian Arab Republic, 113,881 in Lebanon and 18,886 in Jordan.
- Temporary job opportunities were extended to 14,300 refugees in Gaza.
- 1,049 shelters were rehabilitated.



## Endnote

88. UNRWA was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) of December 1949. The Agency is a subsidiary body of the Assembly and became operational on 1 May 1950, responding to the needs of approximately 750,000 Palestine refugees. It is one of the largest United Nations programmes, with a population of 5.8 million registered Palestine refugees under its mandate at the end of 2021, and approximately 28,000 staff. Palestine refugees are defined as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period of 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict” and include descendants through the male line.<sup>65</sup>

89. The mission of the Agency is to assist Palestine refugees in achieving their full potential in human development until a durable and just solution is found to the refugee issue.

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<sup>65</sup> UNRWA does not formally register persons displaced and in need of continued assistance as a result of the June 1967 (in the aftermath of the six-day war) and subsequent hostilities (the so-called “1967 displaced”). Accordingly, the Agency does not have an official record of the number of the 1967 displaced. Those eligible to receive UNRWA services in accordance with the Agency’s mandate, including the former, may benefit from the full range of humanitarian and development assistance provided including education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, protection, microfinance and emergency assistance in times of crisis.

