



unrwa  
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unrwa  
covid-19 appeal

august-december 2020



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## About UNRWA

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of some 5.6 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.

**Cover Photo:** UNRWA coordinated with the Lebanese Ministry of Health and Médecins Sans Frontières for 114 random COVID-19 tests for Palestine refugees in Beddawi camp. © 2020 UNRWA photo by Maysoun Mustafa

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# executive summary

COVID-19 has resulted in an unprecedented global crisis. As the pandemic spreads and countries around the world continue to struggle to contain its health and socio-economic consequences, UNRWA is issuing a new humanitarian appeal from August through December 2020 to address the worst impacts of the pandemic on Palestine refugees across the Agency's five fields of operation. Through this appeal the Agency seeks US\$ 94.6 million. The funds requested in this appeal are additional to the previous UNRWA COVID-19 appeal for March to July.

Before the pandemic, Palestine refugees were already amongst the most vulnerable communities in the Middle East, with many facing multi-faceted crises. Measures taken to mitigate and suppress the spread of the virus have exacerbated these vulnerabilities, with severe impacts on lives and livelihoods.

Health systems across UNRWA areas of operation are under pressure, and cases have been reported in all fields (see Box 1, below). On 24 August, the first reported cases of local transmission of COVID-19 were reported in Gaza. The epidemiological situation has also deteriorated recently in West Bank, Syria and Lebanon, with rapid increases in the number of active COVID-19 cases and overstretched or limited response capacities to cope with the escalation. In such circumstances it is vital that essential services remain available to Palestine

refugees to prevent a further deterioration in their humanitarian situation.

Conditions in Lebanon have deteriorated markedly following a major explosion at Beirut's harbour on 4 August 2020 and give particular cause for concern. The blast completely destroyed the port and caused extensive damage in many neighbourhoods, leaving at least 160 people dead and more than 5,000 injured. The blast also damaged a number of hospitals, affecting their capacity to operate and to assist people injured from the blast as well as other patients, including COVID-19 cases. Lebanese authorities estimate that 300,000 people have been made homeless by the blast, while the economic damage amounts to billions of dollars. The explosion is aggravating an already dire situation, with the country in the midst of its worst-ever economic crisis, prompting immediate concerns about food security in a country which imports most of its basic food commodities.

Services and assistance provided by UNRWA under the March-July COVID-19 Appeal played an important role in limiting the spread of COVID-19 amongst Palestine refugee communities, also helping prevent a major outbreak in the areas of operation. The recent surge in COVID-19 cases throughout the region poses a major risk for Palestine refugees.

## Cumulative case numbers and deaths by UNRWA fields of operation as of 10 Aug 2020

**Jordan:** 1,252 confirmed cases; 11 deaths; 9 confirmed cases amongst Palestine refugees\*

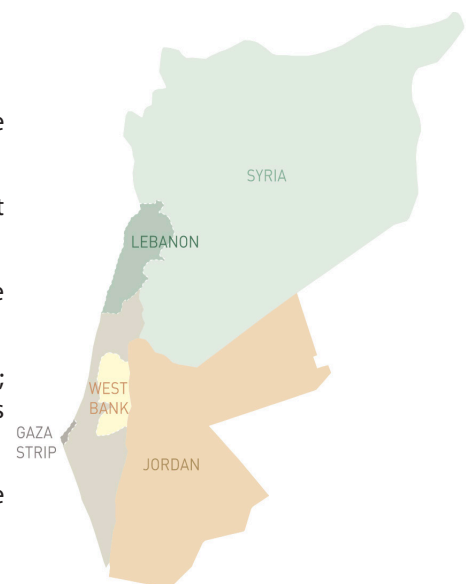
**Lebanon:** 6,517 confirmed cases; 76 deaths; 108 confirmed cases amongst Palestine refugees\*; 7 confirmed cases amongst UNRWA Staff

**Syria:** 1,188 confirmed cases; 52 deaths; 9 confirmed cases amongst Palestine refugees\*; 1 confirmed case amongst UNRWA Staff

**West Bank, including East Jerusalem:** 18,573 confirmed cases; 103 deaths; 2,168 confirmed cases amongst Palestine refugees\*; 25 confirmed cases amongst UNRWA Staff

**Gaza Strip:** 81 confirmed cases; 1 death; 50 confirmed cases amongst Palestine refugees\*; 1 confirmed case amongst UNRWA Staff

\*Unofficial internal data



The August-December appeal will be crucial to controlling the spread in refugee camps and preventing a major outbreak. It will also continue addressing the severe socio-economic and other effects that the pandemic is causing. It builds on the response implemented and results achieved under the March-July UNRWA COVID-19 Flash Appeal.<sup>1</sup> Interventions included in this appeal have been updated and priorities revised to reflect changes in context.

The continued provision of health, hospitalization, education, water and sanitation and protection services remain a core component of this appeal. As the main provider of primary care to a significant population of Palestine refugees, UNRWA is crucial to the public health system in all its fields of operation and its activities complement nationally-led preparedness and response efforts. All frontline health and non-health staff will continue to receive personal protective equipment (PPE), and where necessary, additional staff will be hired to replace those who may have contracted the virus or may be in quarantine, to avoid any disruption in services. Triage systems and telemedicine services will remain in place to reduce footfall at Agency clinics, as required.

UNRWA will continue to provide additional relief assistance to Palestine refugees affected by COVID-19. Cash and food interventions have also been adjusted to reflect changes in the operational context. In Gaza, as home delivery of food parcels transitions back to standard distribution, special risk mitigation measures - for example, distancing and other measures to avoid overcrowding, providing PPE to frontline staff, ensuring proper cleaning and disinfection - will be introduced at food distribution centres to ensure the safe provision of assistance; in Syria, UNRWA is planning to provide a top-up cash allowance to 418,000 Palestine refugees, to mitigate the additional hardship caused by both COVID-19 and the ongoing economic crisis affecting the country. In Jordan, the Agency will provide an additional round of cash assistance to the most vulnerable Palestine refugees including ex-Gazan and Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS).

An additional round of cash assistance will also be provided to all Palestine refugees and service eligible persons in Lebanon. In the West Bank, given the high number of COVID-19 cases, the Agency will continue to support families in quarantine with food and non-food items (NFIs).

In all UNRWA fields of operation, the 2020/2021 school year is expected to start at the end of August/ beginning of September, in line with instructions from host Ministries of Education. At the time of writing the modalities for the resumption of school activities were subject to change; however, a combination of approaches including in-person and remote learning seems to be the most likely scenario. In all cases, the Agency's priority remains to ensure a safe learning environment for students and teachers. For more information on the Agency's approach to education in times of COVID-19, see page 8.

Through this Appeal, UNRWA is appealing for funds to cover Back to Learning needs until December 2020, to complement regular education services funded through the programme budget. However, additional resources are likely to be required beyond the end of 2020, to ensure that COVID-19 specific adjustments can be implemented throughout the school year. The Agency will also fundraise for its Back to School plan through special projects.

The Agency requires US\$ 94.6 million to cover its COVID-19 humanitarian operations until the end of the year. Activities included in the appeal are informed by field level, regional and global inter-agency appeals coordinated by OCHA and WHO and are reflected in the July 2020 update of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP). UNRWA emphasizes that success of this appeal relies on full funding of its core programme budget for 2020, with its shortfall amounting to US\$ 375 million at end August. Equally, US\$ 42.6 million in critical humanitarian needs must be met under our 2020 oPt and Syria regional appeals, particularly for gaps in food and cash assistance in Gaza, Syria and Lebanon.

# financial requirements

Programme interventions	Gaza	Jordan	Lebanon	Syria	West Bank	HQ	Total
Health (medicines, staff, PPEs, medical supplies)	4,556,000	1,395,164	3,582,765	617,286	1,467,453	44,400	11,663,068
Hospitalization	-	249,750	9,015,313	222,000	-	-	9,487,063
Education in emergencies	7,920,000	2,446,755	2,107,148	1,728,358	4,468,022	17,844	18,688,127
Water, sanitation and hygiene	3,507,000	839,105	803,829	692,601	3,304,375	-	9,146,910
Cash and food assistance	5,235,000	11,033,958	10,584,065	13,986,083	3,827,035	-	44,666,141
Protection	37,000	104,321	15,359	68,920	382,711	-	608,311
Risk communication	-	-	-	-	-	274,781	274,781
Monitoring and evaluation	-	-	-	-	-	66,600	66,600
<b>Total (US\$)</b>	<b>21,255,000</b>	<b>16,069,053</b>	<b>26,108,479</b>	<b>17,315,248</b>	<b>13,449,596</b>	<b>403,625</b>	<b>94,601,001</b>

# back to learning within the covid-19 context

From March 2020 until the end of the 2019/2020 school year, all 709 UNRWA schools, eight vocational/educational training centres (VTC) and two teacher training facilities were closed due to COVID-19 and in line with host governments instructions in each field of operation. This affected 533,342 school children, 8,270 VTC trainees and 1,840 university students as well as 20,146 education staff. To ensure learning continuity, the renowned UNRWA Education in Emergencies (EiE) approach was adapted to better respond to the impact of the pandemic in five key areas: Self Learning, Psychosocial Support (PSS), Safety and Security – Health and Hygiene issues, Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

With the new school year 2020/21 approaching, UNRWA now must focus on getting children back to learning. To this end, UNRWA Education Department has been engaging with the five fields to plan for the new school year, building on: the findings of the parents' survey on student accessibility to the technological platforms and self-learning materials carried out during the closure of schools due to COVID-19; ii) the achievements made by the education programme during the school closure; and iii) reflections from the regional and global discourse. During the past months, UNRWA has actively contributed to regional and global webinars.

Moreover, through the regional UN Education

Interagency group (UNESCO, World Bank, WFP, UNICEF), UNRWA contributed to a regional framework on back to learning.

To ensure children do not miss further learning and remain safe, the UNRWA back to learning modality will strive to implement physical distancing and healthy hygiene practices in all UNRWA education facilities. A new learning modality, which is a combination of school learning time and remote learning, is planned. Average class sizes will remain unchanged from the 2019/2020 school year<sup>2</sup> and a blended learning approach will be introduced, according to which students study at home on some days. Additional teachers will be required to manage this model. Similarly, in order to maintain required levels of cleanliness and hygiene in schools, there is a need for more school attendants, who are responsible for cleaning.

As children learn to live with the new realities of school and community life, more psychosocial support (PSS) will be needed. With a current ratio of one school counsellor to 3.5 schools (of varying size) there is also a need to increase the number of counsellors to provide the level of support that UNRWA students require.

During the 2020/2021 school year, focus will also be given to Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centres, specifically on access to, and the development of, remote learning; addressing PSS, hygiene and safety needs; and monitoring and evaluation of



learning; addressing PSS, hygiene and safety needs; and monitoring and evaluation of the new teaching and learning modalities.

The education interventions included in this Appeal reflect the strands described above. All fields need additional resources to implement physical distancing and healthy hygiene practices at UNRWA education facilities. This will require additional teachers and more school attendants, as well as specific hygiene and sanitation materials. All fields seek to address the psychosocial needs of their students so that they can better cope with the impact of COVID-19 on their lives and on their schooling. Four of the five fields (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and West Bank, including

East Jerusalem) plan to adopt a blended remote modality for children's return to learning, with Gaza also seeking to strengthen its capacity for remote or blended learning, should the COVID-19 situation deteriorate. Support to TVET students is proposed in all fields with a focus on physical distancing in the TVET centres, the development of remote learning, addressing health and hygiene needs, and providing PSS support.

Funding requested through this Appeal will allow UNRWA to implement these measures for the period August to December 2020. Additional resources will be required if these arrangements have to continue for the remainder of the academic year.



Enas Al-Malahi (left) is a student at the UNRWA Shouka Elementary Co-Educational School, Gaza. "Though I miss my teachers and friends, I continue my classes from home with the help of my mother." © 2020 UNRWA Photo by Khalil Adwan

# field interventions

## Syria

As of 10 August 2020, 1,188 COVID-19 cases had been reported in Syria. Testing capacity in the country remains low and the actual number of infections is thought to be higher. Recent weeks have seen an increase in the number of cases, sparking fears of a more widespread outbreak, and risking a deepening of the humanitarian emergency in the country. To contain the spread of the virus in Damascus and Rif Damascus, where increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases have recently been reported, and where the majority of Palestine refugees live, the Government of Syria has imposed several local lockdowns.

In response to the reported increase in COVID-19 cases, in mid-July UNRWA Syria Field Office (SFO) reinstated many of the prevention and mitigation measures that were introduced in March and April. This includes prioritization of essential health services and expanded use of appointment systems at clinics to reduce congestion, the establishment of a staff rotation system to decrease the staff footprint in offices, expanded use of masks and increased sanitization of UNRWA facilities.

The current operational context is further complicated by the unpredictability of the security situation and by the continuing deterioration of socio-economic conditions following nearly ten years of conflict. The ongoing devaluation of the Syrian Pound is resulting in sharp increases in prices, reducing the ability of many families to cover the cost of basic needs. The national average price of a standard reference food basket in June 2020 was SYP 84,095, a 48 per cent increase as compared to May 2020 and a 110 per cent increase since February 2020 (pre-COVID-19 period).<sup>3</sup> Palestine refugees—already among the most vulnerable segments of the population, considering that two thirds have been displaced at least once since 2011—have been hit hard by the current economic crisis. Moreover, measures imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19 have limited their movements and constrained their livelihood opportunities, in particular for those relying on informal and daily labour.

Between August and December, UNRWA will ensure that basic services remain available to Palestine refugees across Syria. Primary health care will be provided through UNRWA health centres and the Agency will continue home deliveries of essential medications to non-communicable disease (NCD) patients as required to limit foot traffic at health centres. UNRWA will also support the secondary and tertiary health care needs of Palestine refugees through hospitalization subsidies, whilst water and sanitation in accessible camps will be maintained to avoid any additional public health hazard.

In response to the additional socio-economic hardship caused by COVID-19, compounded by the steep increase in prices caused by the sharp depreciation of the Syrian currency, UNRWA will provide a one-off cash allowance of US\$ 30 to 418,000 Palestine refugees, who are already receiving humanitarian assistance from UNRWA.

Planning is underway for the safe start of the new school year, limiting overcrowding and enhancing safe hygiene practices. This includes through remote or blended learning modalities at schools and vocational training centres, depending on conditions.

Finally, protection will continue to be mainstreamed across all UNRWA interventions, with a special focus on most vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, older persons, children and survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV).

### **Strategic Objective 1: Contain the spread of COVID-19 and decrease morbidity**

#### **Health**

Health workers are on the front line of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak and are exposed to hazards that increase their risk of infection. In this context, it is critical that UNRWA health staff are



Medical staff at an UNRWA health centre in Syria continue to provide basic health services to Palestine refugees with COVID-19 precautionary measures. © 2020 UNRWA Photo

adequately protected to provide primary healthcare services to Palestine refugees in conditions of safety both for staff and beneficiaries. Over the next five months, UNRWA will continue to implement a triage system at its health centres to define a patient pathway for those with respiratory symptoms. Frontline health staff will continue to be provided with personal protective equipment (PPE) such as medical masks, eye protectors, gowns and gloves. Enhanced hygiene standards will be maintained at health centres, through the provision of soap and alcohol-based hand sanitizer and increased cleaning and disinfection of health centres. PPE, sanitization materials and disinfectants will also be provided to other frontline staff, such as guards, distribution workers and other area staff dealing directly with beneficiaries. Sanitization materials and disinfectants will also be made available in distribution areas and offices for the same purpose.

Provision is made to cover health expenditures for hospital care for populations at risk, including those aged 60 and above. Hospitalization fees will also be subsidized for vulnerable patients at an estimated average cost of US\$ 200 per patient, covering around 1,000 persons.

In the event that the authorities impose a complete lockdown, or if transportation becomes restricted

and safe access to health centres difficult, and to prevent congestion at health clinics, UNRWA plans to deliver essential medications to vulnerable groups, including the elderly and NCD patients. Up to 8,000 patients in different parts of the country will benefit from this intervention.

### Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Through this appeal, UNRWA aims to ensure that sanitation and solid waste management services continue to function in ten Palestine refugee camps in Syria (all camps except Yarmouk and Ein el Tal). This will require continued availability of equipment, including compactors and tractors. In the event that the existing sanitation workforce needs to be reinforced or is unable to work (due to illness or movement restrictions), additional daily paid sanitation labourers will be hired locally. They will be provided with the necessary protective equipment, including rubber gloves, face masks and goggles.

Finally, UNRWA will distribute hygiene kits specifically addressing needs related to COVID-19 to approximately 19,500 Palestine refugee households across Syria, with emphasis on supporting the elderly and persons with disabilities.

## **Strategic Objective 2: Palestine refugees are able to meet their basic needs, preventing a further deterioration in their humanitarian and socio-economic conditions, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable**

### **Cash assistance**

The socio-economic impact of COVID-19, coupled with the deteriorating economic situation in country, is increasing the vulnerability of Palestine refugees. An assessment conducted by UNRWA in June 2020 showed that close to 80 per cent of Palestine refugees surveyed have reduced the number of meals or quantity of food consumed in their households since 15 March.

In response, UNRWA is planning to provide a one-off cash assistance payment to 418,000 Palestine refugees in Syria, to mitigate the additional hardship caused by the current circumstances. Each Palestine refugee will receive US\$ 30 to meet basic needs including food, NFIs, shelter (rent), and transport. This is intended as a top up to the assistance provided under the Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal.

## **Strategic Objective 3: Palestine refugees continue to access quality, inclusive and equitable education within the context of the COVID-19 crisis**

### **Education in Emergencies**

#### **Students and Installations**

In Syria, UNRWA provides education to approximately 50,000 students through 103 schools in addition to technical and vocational courses to more than 1,200 trainees at the Damascus Training Centre (DTC). While schools are scheduled to reopen as of 1 September, it is expected that with the increase in COVID-19 cases, the need for remote learning (periodically or for a prolonged period of time) will remain.

#### **Physical Distancing**

A number of COVID-19 risk mitigation and prevention measures will be implemented throughout the school year, including in relation to ensuring physical distancing. Under this appeal,

UNRWA is seeking funds to hire 26 additional teachers to support additional classes, including potentially extending the school week from five to six days per week to reduce the number of students in each class. Teachers will also be used to stand in for education staff who may be required to quarantine. Additional funds will be needed to cover these interventions beyond the COVID-19 Appeal period.

#### **Nature of Learning: Blended or Remote**

In order to allow for social distancing, a remote or blended learning approach may be implemented. The Agency will also ensure that the education of Palestine refugee children and youth continues through the UNRWA Self Learning Programme (SLP). Self-Learning Materials (SLM) play a vital role in the remote provision of education services and will be made available to all students mainly online. To ensure equitable access for all UNRWA students and given the socio-economic vulnerabilities of Palestine refugee families in Syria, UNRWA will support students with internet costs for the most vulnerable. Where connectivity issues exist, UNRWA will deliver hard copies of SLM.

#### **Health and Hygiene Safety**

In order to ensure that proper hygiene and cleaning practices remain in place in all 103 UNRWA schools and five training centres in Syria, before and after opening of these facilities, UNRWA will provide each education facility with cleaning and disinfection supplies. In addition, the Agency will ensure that positive hygiene practices are implemented in all educational facilities by procuring and distributing hygiene items to students and staff.

#### **Psychosocial Support**

Psychosocial (PSS) support aims to help students cope with the impacts of COVID-19 on the education modalities. The Agency PSS counsellors will provide Palestine refugee children and youth with group counselling sessions, including via instant messaging platforms, in addition to individual sessions by phone when needed. To ensure the continuation of these vital services, UNRWA will cover the related communication costs for PSS counsellors.

**TVET**

Under this appeal, UNRWA will support 100 vulnerable UNRWA TVET students who lack the means to purchase the necessary devices to access on-line learning platforms. These students will receive tablets or mobiles to ensure their access to and active participation in the Agency's online TVET programmes. UNRWA will also cover communications costs of teachers and instructors as they continue to deliver education services while working remotely.

**Strategic Objective 4: Palestine refugees are protected from the most severe impacts of the pandemic**

**Protection**

The vast majority of Palestine refugees live in overcrowded camps or are IDPs and are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19.

In response, UNRWA will raise awareness and provide information on measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Messaging to the Palestine refugee community in Syria will be provided through regular UNRWA activities including emergency distributions, health services and through the education SLP. Different communication methods

will be deployed including directly and through online forums such as Facebook, WhatsApp etc., and through community-based mechanisms. In addition, UNRWA will diversify methods of awareness-raising to reduce reliance on negative coping mechanisms including on early marriage and child labour. Student and community campaigns will continue to be conducted online or in person, in coordination with the UNRWA Department of Education, to raise awareness on explosive hazards, which may pose increased risks to those turning to unsafe labour practices (work in contaminated locations, collection of scrap metal). Community campaigns will also be accompanied by sign language.

A mix of in-person and remote work modalities will continue, to ensure an effective response to the protection needs of Palestine refugees. Hotlines and referral services will continue to provide Palestine refugees with information on UNRWA services and assistance. The Agency will ensure that existing identified protection cases continue to receive support, including case management and referral. Assistance will be provided remotely (by telephone, WhatsApp) and in person when possible. The most urgent cases, including GBV and child protection cases, will also be served directly



A young Palestine refugee takes part in a COVID-19 awareness raising campaign in the UNRWA Damascus Training Centre. © 2020 UNRWA Photo

including through community based organizations (CBOs) and through UNRWA health facilities as they remain open.

Moreover, through the roll-out of online protection training courses, the Agency will ensure that front-line staff are equipped with increased knowledge on how to best and safely to provide protective services during COVID-19.

UNRWA will ensure the needs of persons with disabilities continue to be met throughout the crisis. Rehabilitation and educational services will be conducted in person and through remote modalities including assistance via telephone and through online sessions. Approximately 180 children with severe disabilities and their families will be provided with learning tools through home delivery.

Finally, PSS counselling and support will continue to be provided through a network of Relief and Social Services, Health and Education staff, with special attention given to the needs of older persons and persons with disabilities.

## Lebanon

In Lebanon, Palestine refugees continue to suffer due to the sharp deterioration of general socio-economic conditions, coupled with the impact of COVID-19. Poverty rates, which were already high (65 per cent)<sup>4</sup> amongst Palestine refugees, are likely to have increased considerably over the past year. In recent months, the rapid devaluation of the Lebanese Pound, stemming from the ongoing economic crisis, has combined with COVID-19 related business closures and movement restrictions to increase hardship faced by Palestine refugee households. Across all camp settings, pressure on UNRWA services has increased at a time when it has become more difficult for the Agency to meet these demands due to the severe funding shortfall.

Days after the explosion that ripped through Beirut on 4 August, the humanitarian impact of this new tragedy continues to unfold. The entire country has been shaken by the tremendous scale of human

loss, with 160 people killed, more than 5,000 injured and some 300,000 displaced. Against the backdrop of a severe economic crisis, political turmoil, and a health system already overwhelmed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNRWA fears that this latest catastrophe will push vulnerable communities in Lebanon further into despair, including Palestine refugees, who are already amongst the most marginalized groups in the country.

During the past months, early action taken by UNRWA in response to the COVID-19 crisis has ensured that critical services remained available to Palestine refugees; remote learning programmes were activated, and facilities for COVID-19 patients to quarantine or isolate provided; relief programmes were also scaled up and cash assistance was provided to some 300,000 Palestine refugees.

At the time of writing, COVID-19 cases in Lebanon were rapidly and continuously increasing. While no official announcement has been made yet regarding the modalities for the resumption of schooling, there may be a need to sustain distance or blended learning for the 36,000 students in UNRWA schools; this remains a priority for UNRWA and is included in this appeal. Over the next five months, the Agency will also strive to maintain basic health services for Palestine refugees. All health and non-health frontline staff will be provided with PPE, to ensure that services are delivered in conditions of safety for staff and refugees. Increased water and sanitation coverage in camps will continue to prevent additional public health hazards. Under this appeal, the Agency is also seeking funds for a round of cash assistance at US\$ 40 per person to some 257,000 Palestine refugees and other eligible persons in Lebanon to mitigate their vulnerability.

## Strategic Objective 1: Contain the spread of COVID-19 and decrease morbidity

### Health

The Agency will ensure that primary health care services continue to be provided through its health centres, and that there are no stock-outs of essential medicines. Health staff will continue to receive PPE

and hygiene materials and strengthened cleaning practices will be implemented at UNRWA health centres (HCs) to ensure proper disinfection. Additional health staff will be hired as required, e.g. to ensure rotation and availability of critical personnel in case existing staff have to isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19 infection.

UNRWA will continue to cover the costs of COVID-19 testing and related hospitalization needs, including intensive care units (ICU), as Palestine refugees in Lebanon do not have full access to these services. The ongoing social and economic strife has exacerbated the negative impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns, affecting the ability of Palestine refugees to provide for their families. Given the high cost of health care in Lebanon, demands on UNRWA for assistance are likely to increase. Under this appeal, UNRWA will also support up to 7,500 Palestine refugees with hospitalization subsidies for non-COVID-19 treatments.

Due to the high risk of local transmission of COVID-19 in Lebanon, particularly in camps, UNRWA has supported the establishment of three isolation centres by converting its facilities in Sibliin Training Centre (STC) and in a school in Ein el Hilweh camp, and by making the necessary works in an abandoned hospital in El Buss camp. In total, these facilities provide a 170-bed capacity to accommodate mild and moderate cases of COVID-19. Over the next five months, UNRWA will ensure that these centres continue to operate, while at the same time new isolation/quarantine centres will be identified and facilities adapted as required.

### **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene**

COVID-19 has led to increased pressure on water and sanitation services across all 12 Palestine refugee camps, due to movement restrictions and the closure of many schools and businesses. UNRWA plans to enhance the supply of water, as well as the collection of wastewater, storm water and solid waste, to ensure that critical water and sanitation services remain available. Emphasis will also be placed on the collection, treatment and

disposal of increasing quantities of medical and infectious waste.

The Agency will increase pumping hours, disinfection and vector control campaigns in UNRWA installations and impacted camps. Maintenance of health centres and other critical UNRWA facilities will also be conducted as appropriate to avoid any additional hazards and ensure that health services continue to be provided in conditions of safety.

**Strategic Objective 2: Palestine refugees are able to meet their basic needs, preventing a further deterioration in their humanitarian and socio-economic conditions, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable**

### **Cash assistance**

The status of Palestine refugees as a marginalized and disadvantaged group in Lebanon has been compounded by the ongoing socio-economic crisis and COVID-19 restrictions on movement. Palestine refugees' ability to purchase basic food and other essential goods has further diminished in 2020 due to the rapid devaluation of the currency and a lack of employment opportunities, placing even basic goods out of reach for many.

To mitigate these impacts, UNRWA will provide one round of cash assistance of US\$ 40 per person, covering 50 per cent of the minimum basic food requirements, to some 257,000 Palestine refugees and service eligible persons.

During the period August-December, the Agency will continue to enhance its verification processes, including through the possible introduction of a biometric verification system, to ensure that all eligible beneficiaries are reached; hence, the caseload may be adjusted based on the findings of further verifications.

In addition, an estimated caseload of up to 40 families, whose breadwinner is infected with COVID-19, will be supported with an emergency cash allowance of US\$ 300 per family to help mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

## **Strategic Objective 3: Palestine refugees continue to access quality, inclusive and equitable education within the context of the COVID-19 crisis**

### **Education in emergencies**

#### **Students and Installations**

In Lebanon, UNRWA provides education to 36,000 students through 65 schools in addition to technical and vocational courses to approximately 900 youth.

#### **Physical Distancing**

Due to the continuation of the COVID-19 crisis, schools may not be able to re-open as normal, and additional precautionary and preventive measures are expected to be introduced to protect children and teachers. In this context, and in line with the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education instructions, the Agency is preparing for the different back-to-school scenarios. To support physical distancing, UNRWA in Lebanon is seeking funds to hire a learning support team of 217 teachers and five focal points for the period covered by this Appeal.

#### **Nature of Learning: Blended, Remote**

In addition to a normal situation, in which schools are able to fully re-open, two alternative scenarios have also been factored in for the next five months.

These are:

- Blended approach scenario: Students will report to schools on alternate days, with one day of in-person learning, followed by a day from home through a remote-learning modality, to avoid large number of students in schools at any one time. Odd and even grades will report on alternate days.
- Online approach: All students continue their education through a remote learning modality, with the whole teaching / learning process implemented remotely.

To ensure continuity of learning of students enrolled

across 65 UNRWA schools in Lebanon, the Agency is working to address all aspects that will be affected by the implementation of these modalities. Special attention will be placed on ensuring that students have continued access to the SLP, with a focus on those students reporting challenges in accessing online materials. Support will also be provided to parents and teachers in managing remote teaching and learning modalities.

#### **Health and Hygiene Safety**

If schools are able to reopen, strengthened hygiene practices will be initiated and facilities deep cleaned on a regular basis.

#### **Psychosocial Support**

Psychosocial support (PSS) will be provided through tailor-made activities tackling COVID-19 concerns among students, teachers, and families, alongside remote individual counselling sessions for students.

#### **TVET**

Additionally, 126 TVET students assessed as more vulnerable due to their lack of access to communication devices and connectivity will be provided with smart devices and accessories to allow them to participate fully in online learning.

Moreover, some vulnerable TVET students attending STC, who are not able to use the dormitories due to the establishment of the isolation centre in the facilities, will be supported with transportation subsidies to ensure their regular attendance.

#### **Youth**

In order to raise awareness on COVID-19 within the Palestine refugee community and mitigate the risk of transmission by promoting safe health practices, UNRWA will capture the potential of youth as community connectors through the creation of a youth volunteer network inside and outside camps.

The youth volunteers will be provided with information on all UNRWA COVID-19 interventions and will be called upon to assist in identifying initiatives in their neighbourhoods and communities implemented by other organizations.





An UNRWA sanitation labourer collects solid waste in Beddawi camp. © 2020 UNRWA photo by Maysoun Mustafa

While communities will gain from having active, well-informed members, UNRWA will receive enhanced information on their activities and needs, which will help to avoid any duplication and improve programming as much as possible.

As part of the COVID-19 response, volunteers will place an emphasis on promoting hygiene amongst fellow youth, including handwashing, mask wearing and social distancing competitions via social media. This activity, conducted at UNRWA Lebanon Field Office (LFO)-level, will complement Agency-wide initiatives on risk communication and risk awareness in the context of COVID-19.

#### **Strategic Objective 4: Palestine refugees are protected from the most severe impacts of the pandemic**

Over the next five months, UNRWA will continue to mainstream protection across all its COVID-19 response activities to ensure the dignity and wellbeing of affected populations, particularly vulnerable groups. This will be operationalized through the timely dissemination of information to vulnerable groups, prioritizing older persons and persons with disabilities; and by monitoring and supporting equitable and safe access to all UNRWA interventions. Training on sexual exploitation and abuse will also be provided to UNRWA and partner organizations' staff working in quarantine and isolation centres.

The Agency will also continue to reach out to the community through the provision of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), Gender Based violence (GBV), and Child Protection services, implemented both directly by UNRWA staff and through local partners. This will be done through a series of remote group support sessions run by psychologists with referral to UNRWA Relief and Social Services (RSS) social workers and health centres as necessary. UNRWA LFO protection team will also work with RSS and Health programmes to reduce family separation due to COVID-19 through encouraging community members to think about contingency care options ahead of time in case of separation and referring to partners for support

where possible, should the family not be able to identify alternative temporary arrangements. Messaging to combat stigma on COVID-19 will also be disseminated.

Protection emergency cash will be available, on a case-by-case basis, for highly vulnerable individuals facing protection risks and affected by COVID-19, and not already receiving assistance from the UNRWA cash distribution targeting families whose breadwinner is affected by COVID-19. Coordination will be ensured between Protection and RSS programmes to avoid duplication.

Lastly, the UNRWA LFO Legal Team will continue to respond to COVID-19-related cases, including increased queries regarding employment issues and unfair dismissal, and from women seeking advice on divorce and domestic violence.

#### **Jordan**

Due to the imposition of strict pre-emptive measures, including the closure of borders and the enforcement of curfews, to date the Government of Jordan has been able to largely contain the COVID-19 outbreak. Local transmissions and associated deaths remain low - as of 10 August, Jordan has recorded 1,252 COVID-19 cases, (of which 1,187 had recovered), and 11 deaths. Nine cases have been reported among Palestine refugees, with no deaths.

The multi-faceted impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic ramifications add further pressure to the country's already floundering economy; poverty and vulnerability among vulnerable segments of the community, including refugees, are likely to have increased due to the reduction in household income and livelihood opportunities, in particular for those depending on informal and daily labour.<sup>6</sup> The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported that the gross domestic product (GDP) in Jordan will decline by 3.7 per cent this year,<sup>7</sup> and high pre-existing levels of unemployment are expected to increase.<sup>8</sup> Poverty rates, which stood at 30.7 percent for camp residents – nearly twice the national average –and

13.5 for refugees living outside camps,<sup>9</sup> are also likely to increase.

Despite the volatile context and the unprecedented operational challenges, UNRWA has been able to continue to provide critical assistance to Palestine refugees in Jordan. During the lockdown, when UNRWA health centres were closed in line with government regulations, NCD patients continued to receive their essential medications through a home-to-home delivery system; water and sanitation services continued to be provided across ten Palestine refugee camps; and students in UNRWA schools were able to continue their education remotely through remote learning programmes. To mitigate the socio-economic consequences of COVID-19, emergency cash assistance was provided to the most vulnerable Palestine refugees, including Ex-Gazans, Palestine refugees from Iraq (PRI), and Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS). GBV and MHPSS hotlines were established to enable Palestine refugees to ask and receive timely support.

Between August and December, UNRWA will continue to ensure that essential health and water and sanitation services are maintained for Palestine refugees. A round of emergency cash assistance will also be provided to mitigate the socio-economic hardship caused by COVID-19 on the most vulnerable Palestine refugees. At the end of August 2020, UNRWA is planning to re-open its schools and TVET centres in line with the Ministry of Education's instructions. A flexible approach will be maintained to ensure a safe learning environment and to provide support to teachers and students in case of a blended learning or remote learning scenario.

## **Strategic Objective 1: Contain the spread of COVID-19 and decrease morbidity**

### **Health**

On 14 June, all 25 UNRWA health centres reopened and resumed delivery of primary health care services except for curative dental care. UNRWA provided frontline health staff with PPE kits, including surgical masks and gloves, and hygiene and sanitation materials. Under this appeal, the Agency is seeking

funds to ensure that PPEs continue to be available for 680 frontline health personnel until the end of 2020. Non-health frontline staff, including social workers, relief workers and other personnel at the Area Offices across the Field's four administrative areas of operations, will also be provided with PPEs and hygiene supplies until the end of the year, to protect their health and wellbeing as well as the safety of Palestine refugees.

To further enhance infection prevention and control at UNRWA clinics and in line with infection control protocols, UNRWA will also procure hand-sterilizers for its health centres in Jordan.

Additional queue ticketing machines will be installed at reception areas to limit the number of patients and avoid congestion.

Should there be a spike in the number of COVID-19 cases, it may be necessary to deploy additional daily paid frontline staff at UNRWA health centres, to cover and substitute those who may contract the virus or need to self-quarantine, and guarantee that essential healthcare services are maintained uninterrupted. A provision to cover extra needs in such circumstances has been included in this appeal.

Over the next five months, the number of Palestine refugees approaching the Agency for support with secondary and tertiary medical referrals is expected to increase. This is mainly due to the long period of lockdown and quarantine, during which only emergency health services were available. Consequently, UNRWA will provide hospitalization support to cover approximately 1,500 admissions at an estimated cost of US\$ 150 per admission.

### **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene**

Ensuring proper waste collection and disposal in the ten Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, which are characterized by overcrowding and poor public hygiene conditions, remains a priority for UNRWA.

In the framework of the August-December COVID-19 appeal, UNRWA aims to ensure adequate environmental health conditions in the camps, to prevent additional

public health hazards for an estimated 410,000 camp residents. Sanitation labourers will continue to receive protective equipment to ensure occupational safety. Some 90 additional sanitation workers will also be hired to guarantee the adequate removal of solid waste, and compactors and trucks will be maintained to ensure continued availability of the necessary equipment.

**Strategic Objective 2: Palestine refugees are able to meet their basic needs, preventing a further deterioration in their humanitarian and socio-economic conditions, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable**

### Cash assistance

The measures enforced by the Government of Jordan to contain the spread of COVID-19 have hit the most vulnerable and poor refugee populations hardest.

Results of a rapid assessment exercise undertaken by UNRWA in April 2020 also revealed that COVID-19 restrictive measures had a negative impact on Palestine refugees' sources of income from work or other coping mechanisms such as cash savings, food reserves, external support and assets. Before the outbreak, only 21 per cent of respondents worked regularly, and almost half of the respondents (50.4 per cent) had their work disrupted and/or have lost their source of income. Over two-thirds of surveyed Palestine refugees indicated that they are not confident that they will return to their old jobs once the outbreak is over.

During the period August to December 2020, UNRWA will continue to distribute cash assistance to ex-Gazans in Jordan to mitigate the socio-economic hardship caused by COVID-19. Ex-Gazans are not eligible for government assistance and live in conditions of high vulnerability. A total of 193,627 ex-Gazans (41,369 families) including 10,231 ex-Gazans (1,959 families) who are recorded under the UNRWA Social Safety Net Programme (SSNP) will receive a one-time cash allowance of US\$ 40 per person.

Acknowledging the vulnerability of other segments

of the Palestine refugee community in Jordan, UNRWA will seek to provide Palestine refugees enrolled in the UNRWA SSNP and who already receive US\$ 31.25 per person per quarter through this programme, with a top-up of US\$ 8.75 per person, to bring their total cash received to US\$ 40 per person. This targeted group will exclude the ex-Gazans SSNPs.

In addition, all 17,500 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) recorded with the Agency in Jordan (approx. 4,400 families) will receive a one-time cash support of US\$ 100 per person.

**Strategic Objective 3: Palestine refugees continue to access quality, inclusive and equitable education within the context of the COVID-19 crisis**

### Education in Emergencies

#### Students and Installations

In Jordan, UNRWA operates 169 schools for approximately 119,000 students, in addition to two Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) and the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Arts (FESA) for approximately 4,300 students.

#### Physical Distancing

For the 2020/2021 school year, UNRWA will be flexible and ready to adapt to ensure the safety of students and educational staff. In order to ensure that classes are delivered in a safe manner with the appropriate social distancing measures, UNRWA will follow a two-tier approach: first, the Agency aims to hire additional teachers to limit the number of students per classroom to a maximum of 25 pupils, which correspond to approximately 50 per cent of the usual capacity of one class section; secondly, schools will follow blended learning models by implementing a mix of in-person and distance learning schemes, including self-learning, online or through radio and television.

To implement this approach, UNRWA in Jordan is reviewing arrangements in its single and double shift schools to include an increased number of shifts and class sections. This implies that additional

educational staff, including 240 daily paid teachers, will be required.

### **Nature of Learning: Blended, Remote and Catch-up**

At the beginning of the school year, UNRWA will roll out catch-up classes for two weeks to bridge any gaps in students' education due to the suspension of in-person learning during the second half of the previous school year. To enable some schools to implement the blended learning approach, 80 schools will be provided with cameras and microphones to live stream the classes on available platforms. This approach will also require the development of self-learning materials to be used by students while learning remotely. Capacity-building sessions on the Agency's School Based Teacher Development Programme will be provided to the additional daily paid teachers hired under this Appeal, in order to ensure the provision of quality basic education, whether at school or remotely.

As part of contingency planning in case of another lockdown, school principals and their deputies, as well as school counsellors, will be provided with official mobile numbers and internet bundles to facilitate their follow-up, communication and coordination with education specialists, school teachers, parents and students.

UNRWA will also ensure that 164 school aged PRS children in King Abdullah Park (KAP) are supported with remote learning, including the provision of stationery and learning materials.

### **Hygiene and Health Safety**

UNRWA will also look at opportunities to improve hygiene measures, including hand washing, cleaning and sanitation of educational facilities. As such, each school building will be provided with hygiene and disinfectant supplies and the education frontline staff will wear disposable (non-surgical) face masks and gloves. Similar items will be made available to other UNRWA educational facilities, including VTCs and FESA. Schools and VTCs will follow the recommended practices outlined in the Agency's School Health Protocol, including checking the temperature of staff and visitors accessing the facilities. Therefore, thermometers will be procured and distributed.

### **Psychosocial Support**

Psychosocial support (PSS) will be provided to students who may feel concerned and disoriented following several months spent in isolation at home without social interaction with their peers. Forty-three additional school counsellors are required to complement the 52 already employed to cover all 95 schools with at least one counsellor. School counsellors will support the efforts of other school staff to ensure that students access self-learning and are engaged, and that enhanced health measures are followed in school premises. Students will also be engaged in recreational activities with ensured social distancing; in this regard, pre-packed recreational kits including items such as coloured cards, balloons, books, etc will be provided for outdoor and indoor activities.

### **TVET**

The TVET response to the COVID-19 emergency will focus on implementing physical distancing at the two TVET centres, the development of remote learning contents, addressing health and hygiene needs in TVET centres, and supporting TVET students with PSS services.

### **Strategic Objective 4: Palestine refugees are protected from the most severe impacts of the pandemic**

#### **Protection**

In response to the COVID-19 emergency, UNRWA has established Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) hotlines to enable persons of concern to reach out for consultations and receive timely support. Protection-specific messages have been regularly disseminated via UNRWA various communication channels, and online care services have been provided to specific groups including children with disabilities and their parents.

Over the next five months, UNRWA will ensure that the most vulnerable refugee groups are protected and not left behind. In particular, the delivery of comprehensive and structured GBV services will be adapted to the present operational context, by

strengthening existing mechanisms and further scaling up the assistance through enhanced partnerships with other UN Agencies, CBOs and external service providers, to address multi-sectoral needs of GBV survivors especially from the health perspective including mental and physical health. The adaptation of GBV case management services will include facilitating referrals to healthcare and other service providers, offering emotional and psychosocial support and undertaking enhanced safety planning with GBV survivors.

Participation of women and girls in the decision-making processes for the COVID-19 response will be enhanced and a two-way channel with the community will be maintained through women's groups to get a clear picture of their needs and challenges. This will contribute to creating a safe space where persons of concern will feel comfortable seeking support.

In order to identify GBV survivors in need of help, including those in imminent danger of injury and harm, and to have alternative arrangements in place to provide support to those survivors, UNRWA has already transitioned most of its protection services to phone, internet, or SMS based services. During the next five months, UNRWA will continue making such adjustments, ensuring that such services are inclusive, accessible and well known by Palestine refugees.

In KAP, UNRWA will provide dignity kits, including items explicitly tailored towards the local needs of women and girls of reproductive age (12-51), such as hygiene and sanitary items, in order to maintain and support their dignity, confidence and self-esteem during the pandemic. Distribution of such kits will contribute to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls and will connect women and girls to GBV related information and response services. The kits will be distributed on a monthly basis, in coordination with other Agencies working in KAP, including UNHCR and UNICEF.

## Gaza

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, UNRWA in Gaza has worked to ensure that critical services remained available to Palestine refugees;

as part of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), the Agency has coordinated its actions with other humanitarian partners to support the collective response to the pandemic.

More than 14,000 COVID-19 tests have been conducted in the Gaza Strip since March. Access to Gaza is tightly controlled and all 81 confirmed cases reported so far have been isolated in quarantine centres, preventing a further spread of the virus. The strategy adopted by health authorities relies heavily on enforcing quarantine at designated centres for all persons entering into Gaza via Israel and Egypt. Local authorities have indicated that the mandatory 21-day quarantine for people entering Gaza will be maintained through the end of 2020.

Authorities had started taking steps to resume public life in Gaza in recent weeks. These measures were reversed and tight lock down restrictions reimposed following the first reports of cases in the local community on 24 August.

UNRWA is assessing the situation in close coordination with the HCT and is adjusting programming modalities in line with measures imposed by the local authorities to manage the outbreak.

If conditions allow, for the period August-December 2020, the Agency will continue to focus on keeping in-person services available for Palestine refugees. Additional staff and resources are needed to undertake enhanced hygiene, sanitation and crowd control measures at UNRWA health centres and food distribution points. The Agency will also continue to seek funding to mitigate the socio-economic hardship caused by COVID-19, which has added to the burden of an already impoverished and vulnerable population, affected by the 14-year blockade.

On 8 August 2020, educational facilities were reopened for a four-week catch-up period. Specific COVID-19 risk mitigation measures were enforced, including no playground breaks, additional cleaning of facilities and shorter school days to allow cleaning between school shifts. The lessons learned in this period will be used to adjust approaches ahead of the planned re-opening of the new school year in September (should conditions allow).

Primary healthcare services will be maintained at the 22 UNRWA health centres in Gaza, and PPE will continue to be procured for health staff to ensure occupational safety. As part of supporting the collective oPt health cluster response and aiming at freeing resources from the public sector, as of July 2020, UNRWA has extended some essential primary healthcare services in support of NCD patients, who otherwise receive medical care through public health facilities. During the next five months, the Agency is also preparing to further enhance the service through telemedicine for basic primary health care and in response to any outbreaks of COVID-19, will extend the service to identified non-refugee patients. Maintaining sanitation, water supply and solid waste management will also remain critical to ensure a safe environment and avoid additional health risks.

In order to continue to safely provide food parcels to one million Palestine refugees, UNRWA is also re-organizing its delivery process and adapting its distribution centres to introduce COVID-19 risk mitigation measures, moving away from the home delivery model as long as there is no local outbreak. Upon a review of its current COVID-19 cash assistance intervention, the Agency also plans to target 20,000 additional extremely vulnerable families, who will receive a cash transfer of US\$ 40 per person to mitigate the hardship caused by COVID-19.

### **Strategic Objective 1: Contain the spread of COVID-19 and decrease morbidity**

#### **Health**

To sustain the occupational safety of staff and beneficiaries, UNRWA will continue to procure PPEs for health staff, in accordance with WHO recommendations. Disinfection materials and tools will be available at clinics, and increased cleaning and disinfection will be maintained to control the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

As part of the Agency's support to the national health response plans in the containment phase, UNRWA, in coordination with the oPt health cluster, will support the provision of primary healthcare interventions to identified non-refugees to alleviate

the pressure on the already struggling public health sector. In addition, PPE will be provided to Palestine refugees with specific vulnerabilities visiting UNRWA health centres, in order to protect them from possible exposure and mitigate any risks.

In the event of a widespread outbreak of COVID-19 in Gaza, UNRWA will further contribute to the collective response through the extension of essential primary healthcare services through telemedicine to identified non-refugee patients. This will allow the Ministry of Health to concentrate its limited human and financial resources on COVID-19 testing and treatment. UNRWA will provide this care through telephone hotlines recently launched to ease crowding in health centres. The Agency will build on the lessons learned of the past few months and will enhance staff capacity through on-the-job trainings and guidance. Active interaction with the community will also be maintained through UNRWA health centres and communication with beneficiaries will be enhanced through a variety of means, including phone messages, posters, and social media amongst others.

#### **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene**

To avoid additional public health hazards, the Agency will maintain sanitation and solid waste management services in Palestine refugee camps. This will be done by ensuring the continued availability of equipment, and through hiring of additional sanitation workers as needed. Sanitation labourers will be provided with the necessary PPE as per WHO recommendations.

UNRWA will also aim at providing WASH assistance packages to 55,000 highly vulnerable families (e.g. female-headed households, households with persons with disabilities) to promote sound hygiene practices as part of risk mitigation measures. Assistance will be provided either in the form of in-kind hygiene kits, one-off cash or vouchers, dependent on the circumstances during implementation.

## **Strategic Objective 2: Palestine refugees are able to meet their basic needs, preventing a further deterioration in their humanitarian and socio-economic conditions, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable**

### **Food and cash assistance**

The food assistance provided every quarter by UNRWA is a lifeline for one million Palestine refugees in Gaza. In response to the outbreak, in March 2020, UNRWA rapidly adjusted its food distribution modalities to a home-to-home delivery system, to avoid overcrowding and ensure safety of staff and beneficiaries. Based on context developments in the last two quarters of 2020, the Agency plans to return to the use of its distribution centres for the provision of food assistance. To ensure the safety of staff and beneficiaries, a number of protective and risk mitigation measures will be introduced at distribution centres, including through the provision of PPE, deep cleaning and disinfection, hiring of additional surge staff under the Cash for Work programme to support these hygiene measures. Opening hours will also be extended to allow for enhanced social distancing. Quality assurance will remain central to the implementation of this modality through regular monitoring. Flexibility will also be retained to rapidly adjust the Agency's food operation to any change in the context.

In order to mitigate the additional socio-economic hardship caused by the COVID-19 crisis, the Agency also plans to continue and expand the special one-off unconditional cash transfer of US\$ 40 per person to 20,000 extremely vulnerable Palestine refugee households (about 100,000 individuals) to help cover their essential needs. This will be done after reviewing the cash distribution currently implemented as part of the COVID-19 response, in order to collect lessons learned and improve the intervention as appropriate. The targeted population will be selected based on a system that takes into account all vulnerable groups, including female-headed households, persons with disabilities, and persons with special requirements. Hotlines will be established in support of the relief operation to minimize the footprint at UNRWA RSS offices, and to be ready to provide assistance in case of lockdown.

## **Strategic Objective 3: Palestine refugees continue to access quality, inclusive and equitable education within the context of the COVID-19 crisis**

### **Education in Emergencies**

#### **Students and Installations**

UNRWA in Gaza provides basic education to more than 282,000 students at 277 schools and technical and vocational training to around 1,900 young people.

On 8 August 2020, UNRWA re-opened its educational facilities in Gaza and students went back to in-person education. However, programmes were halted following the confirmation of the first local cases in Gaza in late-August. The Agency will continue to adjust its approach to delivery of education as the situation evolves.

#### **Physical Distancing**

UNRWA is currently reviewing risk mitigation and safety measures for its education programmes in Gaza, including in relation to physical distancing inside classrooms. Where schools are able to open, enhanced hygiene measures will apply in addition to preventing gatherings in school yards and other facilities within the premises.

#### **Nature of Learning**

In parallel to the recent re-opening of schools and TVETs, UNRWA is working to ensure that self-learning printed materials are available, should access to educational facilities be impacted by changing conditions. UNRWA had begun a one-month catch up to bridge any gaps incurred during the school closure in the past scholastic year and to support students under performing with extra exercise, but this was halted following the confirmation of the first local cases in late August. The Agency is also making plans to support a blended or a distant learning approach, depending on context developments.

Funding mobilized under this appeal will allow UNRWA to continue to develop and disseminate self-learning materials and distribute learning devices and tools, for students and families who



suffer from electricity rationing and have limited internet access, with immediate attention to students with special needs including the visually impaired. Where possible, semi-professional elements of TVET will continue through self-learning materials and website links to relevant resources.

### Hygiene and Physical Safety

In order to support COVID-19 containment efforts, 650 additional school attendants and clerks are needed to ensure that enhanced health and safety measures are undertaken in all schools and TVET centres.

UNRWA will also continue to strengthen awareness messages to students on preventing the transmission of COVID-19 and actively engage them in developing and sharing their own messages. Prior to the re-opening of schools, UNRWA has undertaken deep cleaning and disinfection of its facilities to ensure a safe learning environment. Additional supplies are required to maintain these practices for the next months. Moreover, further funding is required to enable rehabilitation and upgrading of hand-washing, bathrooms and other necessary facilities to ensure a safe environment for students and teachers.

### Psychosocial support

Where schools are open, psychosocial (PSS) support will be provided in person by school counsellors inside the schools through individual and group

sessions. If the situation requires, the counsellors will continue providing their services through alternative means of communication, including via telephone and through UNRWA online platforms to address new challenges created by the COVID-19 crisis.

### TVET

The TVET COVID-19 emergency response will focus on implementing physical distancing in TVET centres, development of remote learning support, addressing health and hygiene needs, and providing TVET students with PSS support. Where possible, semi-professional elements of TVET will continue through self-learning materials and website links to relevant resources.

### Strategic Objective 4: Palestine refugees are protected from the most severe impacts of the pandemic

#### Protection

COVID-19 may exacerbate social isolation and exclusion, leading to increased protection risks. Domestic violence may increase as a consequence of lockdowns; the risk of GBV and child abuse also increase, as women and girls are further isolated and unable to access support. Legal advice and counselling for vulnerable individuals is essential during this period.



Sanitization and disinfection labourers clean the UNRWA New Gaza Prep School, Gaza. © 2020 UNRWA Photo by Khalil Adwan

Under this appeal, UNRWA Legal Assistance Counsellors will continue to work closely with the Agency's Protection and Relief and Social Services programmes to provide the needed legal advice via telephone to vulnerable and at-risk individuals. These consultations will address GBV, physical assault, child abuse, sexual exploitation and abuse, denial of resources, early/forced marriage, child protection, divorce and custody issues. Cases will be documented and tracked using disaggregated data; the analysis will inform future interventions to respond to the needs of at-risk populations.

## West Bank

Since June 2020, an increased number of COVID-19 cases has been reported in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with serious public health consequences, stretching local response capacities to the limit.

As of 12 August, the Ministry of Health had reported 20,093 confirmed cases in the West Bank and 114 fatalities, while more than 17,693 Palestinians were in quarantine (at home or in designated facilities) to prevent the further spread of the disease. More than 2,391 cases had been recorded amongst Palestine refugees, including 1,691 amongst refugees living in camps. All 19 densely populated refugee camps in the West Bank have recorded COVID-19 cases. The risk of spread of the virus is high due to overcrowding, poor infrastructure and socio-economic conditions. Further, at the time of writing, 25 UNRWA staff had contracted the virus and 200 staff were under quarantine.

In addition to the current COVID-19 outbreak, Palestine's economic contraction, increased loss of livelihoods amongst Palestinians as a consequence of COVID-19, along with Israel's threatened annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank, present significant hardship and uncertainty.

Through this appeal, UNRWA seeks funding for its current response and on-going preparedness requirements for the West Bank refugee population, including those living in East Jerusalem, in light of the recent resurgence of COVID-19. Focusing on the continuation of basic services to Palestine refugees and prevention of further transmission of the virus,

the UNRWA West Bank field office (WBFO) continues to operate and provide primary health care in all 43 health centres and health points in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as at the UNRWA Qalqilya Hospital. At the request of the Palestinian Authority, and in coordination with the humanitarian community, UNRWA will support isolation centres, set up by communities in Palestine refugee camps, and approved by the Ministry of Health (MoH), with the provision of non-food items, hygiene materials and food assistance. These isolation centres have been established within or close to camps in the West Bank and are managed by the MoH. The majority have between 10 to 20 beds available for individuals who have contracted COVID-19, who are asymptomatic or with mild symptoms but cannot self-isolate at home due to lack of space. Many families in the camps live with extended family in small homes.

To respond to increased unemployment and livelihood losses related to movement restrictions, curfews, and other virus-mitigation measures, the Agency is also providing food assistance and inclusive hygiene kits<sup>10</sup> to the most vulnerable Palestine refugees affected by this crisis. This ensures that vulnerable families are provided with the means to stay at home when in home quarantine.

Furthermore, UNRWA has increased the provision of existing solid waste management services and supplementary environmental health activities in all camps, to avoid any additional public health hazards. In order to continue to provide services in the West Bank in such a challenging environment, and where required scale these up, the Agency requires additional funding to ensure that PPE are available to frontline staff, to procure infection control materials, and to hire additional daily paid staff. Funding is also needed for staff rotation in health centres, and to replace critical staff who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or who need to isolate or quarantine.

Finally, funds are urgently needed to strengthen the ability of UNRWA schools to operate in a COVID-19 environment, including through increased cleaning, enhanced physical distancing, extra psychosocial support, and a reduced number of students per class, amongst others. This will require additional teachers and cleaners.

class, amongst others. This will require additional teachers and cleaners.

### Strategic Objective 1: Contain the spread of COVID-19 and decrease morbidity

#### Health

UNRWA will continue operating all 43 primary health centres and health points in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as its hospital in Qalqilya. In all health centres, the Agency will extend the triage system that defines a patient pathway for those with respiratory symptoms, as well as the rotation of staff that ensures health centres are sufficiently staffed at all times. UNRWA will continue operating information health lines that aim to limit beneficiaries' visits to health clinics by providing remote health advice. All health staff, including daily paid staff, will be provided with PPE and health centres will be regularly disinfected.

To respond to the needs of vulnerable communities unable to reach health services due to COVID-19 related movement restrictions and pre-existing protection concerns, UNRWA health teams will be deployed to provide urgent health support for up to 14,107 individuals in remote communities. This service is critical given that many refugee communities have had very limited access to primary health care services due to COVID-19-related movement restrictions and closures. This has been compounded by continued protection concerns, including settler violence, home demolitions and ISF incursions, which have continued unabated during the COVID-19 emergency. Home deliveries of NCD medication will also be expanded in order to minimize visits to health centres for all patients (including for vulnerable communities). Finally, UNRWA, together with other humanitarian actors, will support the MoH-approved isolation centres, as needed.



Maryam Alqam, a six month old refugee from Ras al-Amud, receives her fourth vaccination at the UNRWA Bab al-Zawwiyyeh Clinic in the Old City, Jerusalem. © 2020 UNICEF Photo by Ahed Izhiman

## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

In response to the recent spike of cases in the West Bank, the Agency's environmental health teams will provide increased solid waste management services and additional sanitation campaigns in all 19 Palestine refugee camps and perform other emergency environmental health tasks (sewerage/water testing). Continuation of these services requires the provision of PPE, infection control material and additional daily paid staff. Hiring supplementary sanitation labourers will cover the increased demand for maintaining cleaning and sanitation in camps and mitigate for staff shortages. In some camps, equipment and services will be outsourced to minimise disruption of services.

To prevent further transmission of the virus, the Agency will also provide hygiene materials to up to 12,000 vulnerable refugee households in camps, including diapers, sanitary and incontinence pads, focusing on COVID-19 hotspot areas. Non-food items, hygiene kits and cleaning materials will also be provided to community led isolation centres in the camps that are approved by the MoH. When needed, urgent maintenance of sanitation facilities of these centres will be undertaken.

## Shelter

Significant numbers of Palestine refugees suffer from the effects of living in substandard shelter conditions characterized by overcrowding, poor ventilation, dampness and mould. Refugees with pre-existing health conditions, the elderly and children are particularly affected. These factors, combined with the increased number of COVID-19 cases currently reported in the West Bank, represent an additional health hazard for the Palestine refugee community and may be a vector for a further spread of the virus.

To respond to the negative impact of poor and unsanitary shelters in the camps, and to mitigate any additional risks related to the COVID-19 outbreak, UNRWA will support 120 targeted vulnerable refugee households living in housing units that are inadequate and/or unsafe. UNRWA will help these households to carry out self-help repairs, including for the improvement of water and sanitation facilities. While the proposed intervention will be completed by December 2020, depending on funding availability, this activity is part of a larger

shelter support project to be carried out over a period of 12 months for which UNRWA will continue to fundraise through different channels.

**Strategic Objective 2: Palestine refugees are able to meet their basic needs, preventing a further deterioration in their humanitarian and socio-economic conditions, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable**

## Food and cash assistance

Regulations implemented by the Palestinian and Israeli authorities to contain the COVID-19 outbreak have progressively limited movement into and within the West Bank. Increased unemployment related to movement restrictions and curfews has negatively affected refugee livelihoods and resulted in increased food insecurity. UNRWA will address food insecurity among highly vulnerable Palestine refugees by providing food assistance through cash transfers and food baskets to up to 18,000 vulnerable households including families under home quarantine. Targeting criteria include families who have lost their livelihood due to COVID-19, families facing increasing needs due to the outbreak (for example, female headed households, families with persons with disabilities), families in camps and in areas affected by COVID-19, and families who are under home quarantine, amongst others. Moreover, UNRWA will support 135 families from Bedouin and Herder communities in Area C affected by COVID-19 and currently not receiving assistance through the joint UNRWA-WFP food distribution included in UNRWA oPt Emergency Appeal (EA). To mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19, UNRWA will provide these families with food parcels, in collaboration with WFP. Support in the form of cash-for-food will also be provided to community based organizations (CBOs) that provide food to patients in community led isolation centres endorsed by the MoH.

According to the preliminary estimates of the World Bank on the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is expected that the share of poor households in the West Bank will increase from 14 to 30 per cent. A substantial reduction in the wage income of workers who can no longer travel to Israel is also expected.<sup>11</sup> To mitigate the additional socio-economic hardship, UNRWA plans to provide emergency cash assistance to 24,218 abject poor

refugees through an e-card modality. Eligible refugees will receive 125 New Israeli Shekels (approx. US\$ 36.45) per person per quarter to cover their most basic needs.

Emergency cash assistance to this caseload is also part of the UNRWA oPt Emergency Appeal (EA); however, the current underfunding of the EA is putting at stake the continued availability of this vital assistance. Failure to provide this support in the current circumstances would increase Palestine refugees' vulnerability and negatively impact their food security.

### **Strategic Objective 3: Palestine refugees continue to access quality, inclusive and equitable education within the context of the COVID-19 crisis**

#### **Education in Emergencies**

##### **Students and Installations**

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, UNRWA provides education for 46,000 students in 96 schools and 1,600 trainees in three training centres.

##### **Physical Distancing**

In order to maintain physical distancing, additional resources are required to ensure that students are learning in safe and hygienic spaces. Accordingly, and in line with the announcement by the Ministry of Education that schools will open on 6 September, WBFO has drafted a "Field Back to Learning" plan based on blended learning that is an integral part of this Appeal. The Back to Learning plan combines face to face education and self-learning. Students in grades 1-3 will attend face to face education and students from grades 4-10 will continue their education through a blended approach. Without funding for this plan, UNRWA will lack the resources to ensure compliance with COVID-19 social distancing and health and safety requirements.

If implemented, the Back to Learning plan would envision a reduction in the number of students per classroom to 25 and keeping UNRWA schools open for six days/week as opposed to the current five days/week. Some 275 extra teachers will be needed to cover the increased number of classes.

Outdoor class spaces would be created in the school courtyards and other spaces to help sustain the reduced class sizes and ensure hygienic class spaces. Large sun-blocking awnings, chairs, portable

spaces. Large sun-blocking awnings, chairs, portable whiteboards and other related materials are needed to facilitate this intervention.

##### **Nature of the Learning: Blended, Remote**

For the 2020/2021 school year, UNRWA expects to implement a blended approach. Self-learning will continue to be a key modality to support children's education during the days in which they will need to study at home. Field specific self-learning materials will be developed, and families and students will be supported to access these materials.

##### **Hygiene and Health Safety**

One hundred and nine additional school attendants will be hired to maintain increased hygiene requirements. Urgent maintenance of schools' sanitation facilities is also needed to ensure the implementation of proper hygiene measures.

##### **Psychosocial Support**

Psychosocial support (PSS) will continue to be provided for students under the blended modality, in order to help them cope with the COVID-19 situation and challenges. For this purpose, UNRWA is seeking funds to hire fifty additional counsellors.

##### **TVET**

The TVET COVID-19 response will focus on implementing social distancing in TVET centres, the development of remote learning support, addressing health and hygiene needs, and providing TVET students with PSS support. Where possible, semi-professional elements of TVET will continue through self-learning materials and website links to relevant resources.

### **Strategic Objective 4: Palestine refugees are protected from the most severe impacts of the pandemic**

#### **Protection**

During the COVID-19 crisis, UNRWA WBFO protection teams will continue to respond to the needs of at-risk communities across the West Bank through dedicated hotlines. Protection teams will support core UNRWA programmes and area-level staff with technical guidance to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are met throughout the COVID-19 response.

Provision is made to provide dignity kits to high risk GBV cases. UNRWA has also continued public and private advocacy on key humanitarian issues exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis, including through the issuance of public statements, coordination with key stakeholders and private advocacy with duty bearers. Remote documentation procedures have also been developed, using digital technologies, to document protection incidents remotely and ensure continuity of human rights monitoring during the crisis.

## Headquarters

### Risk communication and Community Engagement

Providing updated information to and raising awareness within the Palestine refugee community about the risk of COVID-19 remains a crucial aspect of the Agency's response to the pandemic. As part of risk communication and community engagement efforts, from April to July 2020, youth volunteers were engaged to raise awareness in Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Lebanon and Gaza on preventive measures that communities should comply with to reduce the risk of transmission. Youth volunteers showed significant commitment to help their own communities, and messages were widely well accepted.

Over the next five months, UNRWA will strengthen community engagement in all fields to support behavioural change and increase adherence to preventive measures to limit the transmission of COVID-19.

Communication materials will be developed, produced, and provided by the health programme in each field. Inside refugee camps, the Agency will continue to work with Palestine refugee youth, in coordination with camp committees, to raise awareness of COVID-19. Youth mobilizers will be trained on the contents of the communication messages, while mentoring and on-site supervision will be managed by UNRWA area offices, camp improvement committees and programme staff. Risk communication activities will target people in public spaces, including those in crowds where physical distancing may be compromised. Group sessions with no more than ten participants, keeping proper physical distance, will also be conducted in

open spaces, and tailored messages and health education on COVID-19 will be provided. Community leaders and Imams may also be involved in the process to communicate effectively with Palestine refugees.

## Education in Emergencies

### Development of a Content Hub for remote learning materials

The need for remote learning support is expected to continue in the 2020/2021 school year, with different modalities implemented across UNRWA fields. In this regard, the Agency is planning to develop a secure, well-organized Agency-wide Content Hub through which students and their parents can access remote learning materials. This platform would eventually be updated to become (or to be replaced by) a more interactive Learning Management System (LMS), where students could login with IDs linked to the Education Management Information System (EMIS) to facilitate enhanced teacher-student interaction as well as to support the monitoring of students' engagement with online learning materials.

Funds requested through this intervention will allow UNRWA to develop the Agency-wide Content Hub platform and subsequent LMS, to support the immediate COVID-19 Education response and contribute to "building back better". This effective use of technology will also contribute to support education services in the longer term.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

UNRWA will evaluate activities delivered under this appeal through a dedicated external evaluation.

## Health

UNRWA will continue to ensure that health standards are met at its HQ premises (Amman, Jerusalem, Gaza) and Representative Offices (Brussels, Cairo, New York, Washington) by equipping them with adequate hygiene and sanitation items and ensuring the availability of PPE for staff in direct contact with the public. Where necessary, telecommuting modalities will be implemented as a risk mitigation measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19, in line with host government and UNCT recommendations.

# footnotes

- 1 A report against the UNRWA March-July COVID-19 Flash Appeal is currently under preparation.
- 2 39.12 Agency-wide, rising to 41.2 students per class in Gaza.
- 3 Source: WFP Market Price bulletin, June 2020.
- 4 AUB survey 2015.
- 5 Based on the rate of incidence of infected breadwinners until July 2020, LFO estimates 10 families per month will be affected from August till December 2020.
- 6 Various analysis on the socio-economic ramifications of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable population groups in Jordan including, <https://www.jo.undp.org/content/jordan/en/home/library/impact-of-covid-19-on-house-holds-general.html>, [https://www.ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/news/WCMS\\_743388/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/news/WCMS_743388/lang--en/index.htm), [https://www.ilo.org/beirut/information-resources/factsheets/WCMS\\_743393/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/beirut/information-resources/factsheets/WCMS_743393/lang--en/index.htm), <https://jordan.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/rapid-assessment-of-the-impact-of-covid19-on-vulnerable-women-in-jordan>
- 7 <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/04/14/weo-april-2020>
- 8 <http://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/19-0-the-unemployment-rate-during-the-fourth-quarter-of-2019/>
- 9 <https://www.fafo.no/en/publications/fafo-reports/item/progress-challenges-diversity>
- 10 Inclusive hygiene kits respond to the specific needs of women and girls, older persons, persons with disabilities and infants.
- 11 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/westbankandgaza/publication/economic-monitoring-report-to-the-ad-hoc-liaison-committee-june-2020>



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وكالة الأمم المتحدة لإغاثة وتشغيل  
اللاجئين الفلسطينيين في الشرق الأدنى