

Annex V
Action Fiche for West Bank and Gaza Strip / ENPI

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title/Number	Provision of Quality Education Services in the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)		
Total cost	€10,000,000		
Aid method / Method of implementation	Project approach – joint management with UNRWA		
DAC-code	72030	Sector	Aid to refugees

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Sector context

Following its establishment on 8 December 1949, The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has been attending to the education, health care, social needs and economic productivity of 4.56 million Palestine refugees in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The year 2009 marks the 60th anniversary of UNRWA's creation. Until the goal of a durable and just solution is reached, the Agency will continue to play its unique role in providing for the human development needs of Palestine refugees. In doing so, UNRWA exerts a stabilising influence among refugees and through them on the communities, the host countries and the region in which they live.

The last few years have witnessed growing concern among the refugee community and in the region generally over the decline in UNRWA services (US\$200 per capita in the 1970s compared to US\$70 in the 1990s). Successive funding shortages and subsequent austerity measures and cost reductions have prevented programmes from expanding at a rate commensurate with the growth in the refugee population, necessitated curtailments in ongoing programme activities, and precluded certain actions which normally would be part of UNRWA's regular programme of work. Most seriously, these measures have led to increased class sizes in UNRWA schools, and rising patient/staff ratios in the health services.

The current on-going global financial crisis and its impact on the income of the Agency, as well as the increasing demand on UNRWA services have left UNRWA in a challenging situation in 2009, where available financial resources are not sufficient to continue core services at their existing levels.

The continuing support of the EC for the UNRWA is a key element in the Community's strategy of contributing actively to reducing tension and providing a

minimum of stability in the Middle East, which would allow the parties to pursue their quest for peace.

The rationale of the intervention is to ensure that UNRWA maintains the level of education services provided to generations of Palestine refugee children. Given the financial crisis that the Agency is facing in 2009, it is crucial to channel support in order not to jeopardise the delivery of education during the 2009-2010 school year. In addition, the education sector reflects the Agency's main and long-term investment in human development, and paves the way for refugees to becoming productive and self-sustainable members of a Palestinian society.

One of the main human development goals of UNRWA is to empower refugees with appropriate knowledge and skills through universal primary education. Today, education is UNRWA's largest programme, accounting for over 50% of the Agency's budget. Across its five fields, UNRWA operates 668 elementary and preparatory schools for some half a million children. The education programme includes training of teachers, technical and vocational training and work placement and career guidance geared towards improving the employability of young Palestinians.

2.2. Lessons learnt

Since 2007, UNRWA and the Commission have conducted two joint reviews of the Agency's core services - Education, Health and Social Relief services-. Based on a set of indicators established within the framework of the Commission's annual contribution agreements between UNRWA and the EC, this review process has proven to be invaluable in identifying specific challenges that UNRWA is facing in carrying out its mandate. The structure of this joint review channels broad discussions between UNRWA, interested donors, and host countries on results achieved.

With regard to the specific field of Education, a recent mid-term review of the Commission's support to Education in Lebanon identified the main problems and characteristics undermining UNRWA's efforts to improve the quality of UNRWA's education system in the schools it operates. This report also detailed the major challenges that the Agency must embrace to ensure that investments made possible via this support, both in terms of human resources and infrastructure and equipment, will be to the long-term benefit of Palestine refugee school children and their communities. The reports conclusions and recommendations have been carefully reviewed by the Agency and remedial measures are currently being taken in this regard.

2.3. Complementary actions

Since 2000, the European Commission has provided close to €1 billion to UNRWA's operations making it the largest contributor to the Agency.

The proposed EC-funded operation is in addition to the non-earmarked contribution of €66 million to UNRWA's General Fund decided under the first tranche of the ENPI 2009 financial assistance to the West Bank and Gaza Strip in December 2008.

This takes into consideration the special needs of the Agency in 2009, currently providing services for 70% of the population in Gaza.

The total EC contribution in 2009 currently amounts to €43.8 million. This includes already committed support to the Agency's General Fund mentioned above as well as UNRWA's Organisational Development (OD) plan, Humanitarian support, and the Commission's tentative decisions to mobilise funds made available via the Instrument for Stability (for both Gaza €13 million and Nahr el Bared camp €5 million) as well as additional support of UNRWA's Social Safety Net Programme (€5 million from the Food Security Thematic Instrument and €39.7 million from the Food Facility).

The present grant agreement takes into consideration the support UNRWA is receiving from the international community, including EU member states.

This action concerning refugees is fully complementary to the PEGASE programmes supporting the PRDP and the PA administration.

2.4. Donor coordination

The EC has been an observer of the UNRWA Advisory Commission since 2006, the main body where donors and host countries coordination takes place. This structure was expanded and reinvigorated and should play a vital role in enhancing the dialogue between the various stakeholders, providing advice and assistance to the Agency, for the final benefit of the refugees.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

UNRWA's operations focus on the achievement of four Human Development Goals: a long and healthy life; acquired knowledge and skills; a decent standard of living, and human rights enjoyed to the fullest extent possible.

Working towards the achievement of the second MDG - achieving universal primary education, UNRWA provides free basic education to half a million Palestine refugee children through its 668 elementary and preparatory schools. The Education Programme is among the highest priorities of all the Agency's services.

Therefore the overall objective of the Operation is to help the Agency attain its stated mission of serving Palestine refugees to achieve their full potential in human development, by enhancing the quality and effectiveness of UNRWA's education programme across the five fields of its operations.

The specific objectives of the Operation are:

- (1) To ensure universal access and provide general basic education to Palestine refugee children during 2009-2010 school year.
- (2) To enhance education quality and outcomes towards international standards, with a particular focus on Lebanon.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

The principal anticipated results of the programme are:

With regard to access to education:

- (1.1) Educational opportunities will be maintained to provide all children with access to quality education in a conducive learning environment.
- (1.2) Number of children dropping-out from schools will be decreased.
- (1.3) Ensure that students at UNRWA schools graduate from Grade 9.

With regard to quality of education:

- (2.1) Curriculum quality and content will be delivered in accordance with best practice.
- (2.2) Education services will be managed and delivered in line with the results of the Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) test.
- (2.3) Quality of school management will be improved.

The main activities which will be implemented in order to reach the results mentioned above follow:

- (1) Continue to provide access to quality basic education and learning opportunities, in line with host authorities' education systems for Palestine refugee children.
- (2) Provide education services with particular focus for reduced drop-out rates and future employability.
- (3) Implement a comprehensive school-leaver programme that attempts to prevent students from leaving school early and that supports early school leavers through vocational skills training and employment-related services.
- (4) Monitor the quality of education services delivered through the administration of the MLA and school inspections.
- (5) Taking into consideration the results of the MLA, school administrative inspections and the Education review, UNRWA will adjust its management of education service delivery.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

Deterioration in the political and security environment could affect UNRWA's operations, especially in Gaza.

3.4. Crosscutting Issues

Good governance is integrated through the ongoing reforms of UNRWA administration and management. UNRWA is prioritising human development

including protection of refugees in its reform agenda within the Organizational and Development Process. UNRWA is highly committed to mainstreaming gender concerns in all of its activities.

3.5. Stakeholders

The end beneficiaries of this programme are Palestine refugees, principally school-age children, in UNRWA's fields of operations.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Method of implementation

Joint management through the signature of a standard contribution agreement with UNRWA in accordance with article 53d) of the Financial Regulation.

West Bank and Gaza Strip is facing a crisis, as defined in Article 168(2) of the Implementing Rules of the Financial Regulation. As a result negotiated contracting procedures or grant direct award may be used in accordance with applicable provisions.

4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures

For agreements with international organisations, all contracts implementing the action must be awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by the international organisation concerned.

4.3. Budget and calendar

The total budget of the project is €10 million indicatively broken down between the 6 main components as follows:

- Provide access to quality basic education: €4.5 million
- Ensure schooling at Grade 9: €3.6 million
- Provide education services focused on reducing drop-out rates and future employability: €0.5 million
- Implement a comprehensive school-leaver programme: €0.8 million
- Monitor the quality of education services: €0.5 million
- Results based management of education services: €0.1 million

The overall Operation has an implementation period of 12 months.

4.4. Performance monitoring

Achievements will be monitored regularly by UNRWA and the results will be reported regularly to the EC.

UNRWA main programmes have been monitored since 2007 through a Joint Annual Performance Review. The review is based on a predefined set of result-based indicators and targets set to them, as well as milestones identified for implementing the Organisation Development process within UNRWA.

The next review will be conducted in the last quarter of 2010 and will examine the activities implemented under this Operation. As of 2011, the internal department of the Agency for monitoring and evaluation will be responsible for the review, for which a system is being put in place in the framework of the ongoing institutional reform of the Agency (Organisational and Development Process).

The cost of the review in 2009 will not be supported by the present contribution to the Operation.

4.5. Evaluation and audit

The annual EC-UNRWA Joint Review of performance indicators, initiated in 2007, will cover the evaluation of this action.

All auditing issues related to this project are governed by the Verification Clause annexed to and forming an integral part of the FAFA.

4.6. Communication and visibility

UNRWA will ensure that adequate communication and visibility to the all activities carried out with EC funding (press conference, brochures/flyers, media reports, etc.) in accordance with the joint EC-UN guidelines on visibility.