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# UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST BACKGROUND GUIDE 2016

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# NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS





# THE 2016 NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2016 National Model United Nations Conference in New York (NMUN•NY)! We are very pleased to introduce you to our committee, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This year's staff is: Directors Estefani Morales (Conference A) and Stéphanie Toschi (Conference B). Estefani completed her B.A. in International Relations at San Francisco State University in 2011, and spent a year studying abroad in Florence, Italy, learning about European Politics and Italian language and culture. She recently completed her M.Sc. in Environment, Politics and Globalization at King's College London. This is her second year on staff. Stéphanie received a B.A. in Political Science and Sociology from the University of Bonn, Germany, and is currently completing her M.A. in International Relations, with a focus on international law at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium. This is her second year on staff.

The topics under discussion for UNRWA are:

- I. Addressing the Needs of Palestinian Women and Girls in Gaza
- II. Improving Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance and Relief for Palestinian Refugees in Syria
- III. Strengthening Access to Education through the Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance (HRCRT) Policy

UNRWA is an important organization within the UN system, as it plays a vital role in providing relief works and population development services to Palestinian refugees around the world. Established by the UN after the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, the Agency is primarily focused on the direct delivery of services to Palestinian refugees within its five fields of operation: Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. These services include the provision of educational facilities and health services, as well as emergency relief services during times of crisis.

Please note that UNRWA is a report-writing committee, and will thus produce a report, rather than resolutions, in its work at the conference. The work of the committee will be programmatic and policymaking in nature. Information about report writing can be found in the [Delegate Preparation Guide](#).

We hope you will find this Background Guide useful as an introduction to some of the most pressing issues UNRWA is facing. However, please use this document as merely a starting point from which to build individual research. We highly encourage you to richly explore your Member State's policies, especially in regards to the support they have given to UNRWA in the past, and the Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography. In preparation for the conference, each delegation will submit a [position paper](#). Please take note of the [NMUN policies](#) on the website and in the [Delegate Preparation Guide](#) regarding plagiarism, codes of conduct, dress code, sexual harassment, and the awards philosophy and evaluation method. Adherence to these guidelines is mandatory.

The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#) are available to download from the NMUN website. This document includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure. It is thus an essential instrument in preparing for the conference, and a reference during committee.

If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the conference itself, feel free to contact the Under-Secretaries-General for the Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs Department, Moritz Müller (Conference A) and Claudia Sanchez (Conference B). You can reach either USG by contacting them at: [usg.hr\\_ha@nmun.org](mailto:usg.hr_ha@nmun.org).

We wish you all the best in your preparations, and look forward to seeing you at the conference!

Sincerely,

**Conference A**

Estefani Morales, *Director*

**Conference B**

Stéphanie Toschi, *Director*

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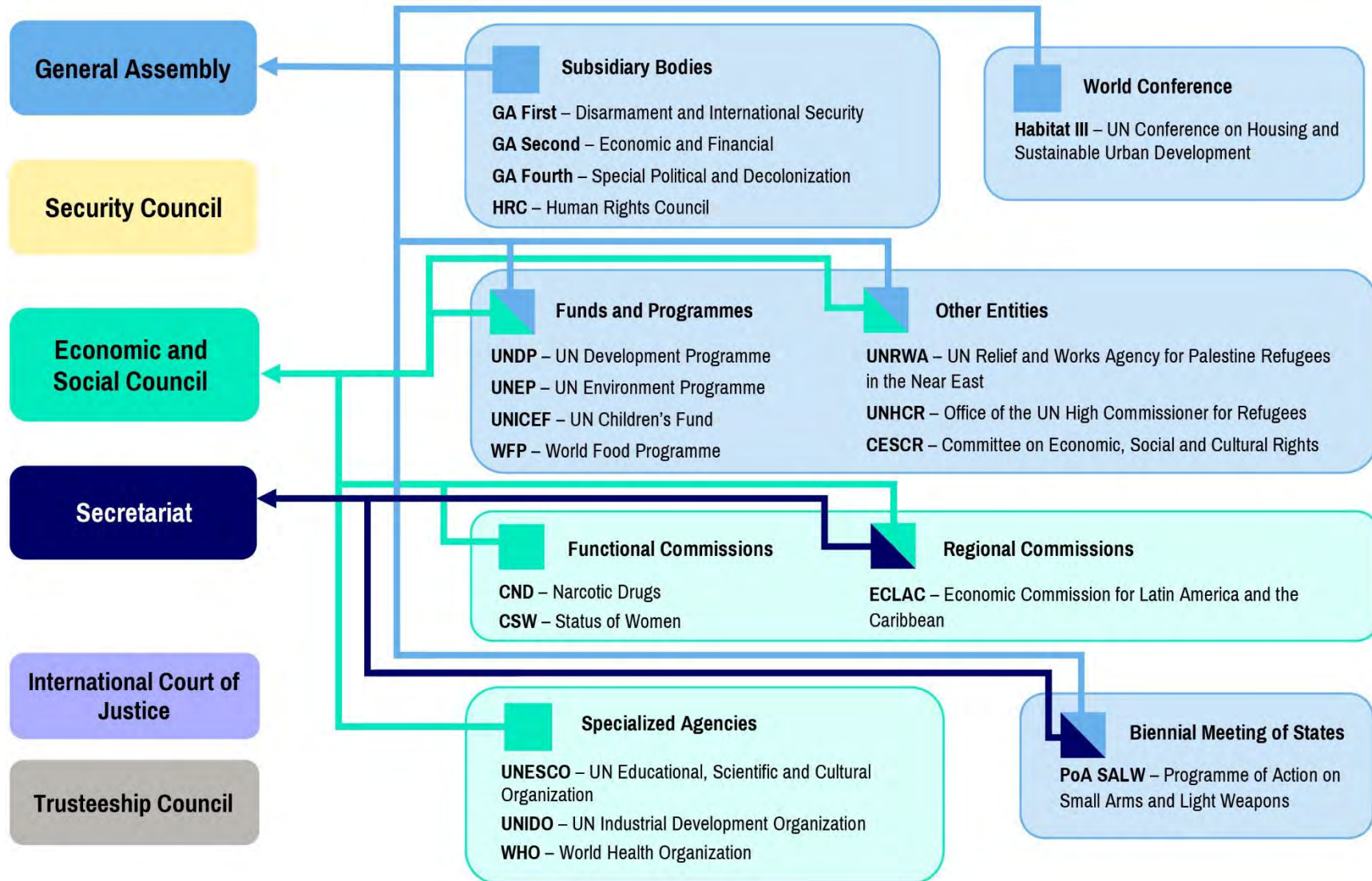


## Abbreviations

<b>3RP</b>	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
<b>AdCom</b>	Advisory Commission
<b>CBOs</b>	Community-based organizations
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>EFA</b>	Education for All
<b>GA</b>	General Assembly
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>HRCRT</b>	Human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance
<b>ICCPR</b>	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<b>ICESCR</b>	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
<b>IGO</b>	Intergovernmental organization
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>ISCCG</b>	Inter-Sector/Cluster Coordination Group
<b>IT</b>	Information technology
<b>MTS</b>	Mid-Term Strategy
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>NRC</b>	Norwegian Refugee Council
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>OPAC</b>	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict
<b>oPt</b>	Occupied Palestinian territories
<b>PCBS</b>	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
<b>PCHR</b>	Palestinian Center for Human Rights
<b>SARC</b>	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
<b>SRP</b>	Strategic Response Plan
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
<b>UDHR</b>	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<b>ULYP</b>	Unite Lebanon Youth Project
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
<b>UN-Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>WDF</b>	World Diabetes Foundation
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WoS</b>	Whole of Syria
<b>WPC</b>	Women's Programme Centre

## United Nations System at NMUN·NY

This diagram illustrates the UN System simulated at NMUN·NY. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system, to help understand the reportage and relationships between the entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee's position, purpose, and powers within the UN System.





## Committee Overview

### Introduction

The United Nations (UN) Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) provides five million registered Palestinian refugees in the Middle East with humanitarian and development assistance, and is the UN's primary relief service for this population in the Middle East.<sup>1</sup> The Agency's official mandate, created by UN General Assembly (GA) resolution 302 (IV) in 1949, is to provide "direct relief and works programmes" to Palestinian refugees.<sup>2</sup> This mandate encompassed carrying out relief and works services, consulting with governments for international relief efforts in support of Palestinian refugees, and to plan for a time when relief would no longer be needed.<sup>3</sup> This mandate was initially created as a temporary solution for the relief of the suffering of Palestinian refugees affected by the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1948.<sup>4</sup> Seeing a continued need for the existence of the Agency, its mandate has been continuously renewed by the GA, and is currently renewed until 30 June 2017.<sup>5</sup> Today, UNRWA serves a critical purpose in providing many relief services, including food rations and shelter, but has expanded over the years to provide development works including financial services, educational programs, and basic health care services.<sup>6</sup> They are the largest UN operation in the Middle East, with five field offices located in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, and a staff of over 30,000.<sup>7</sup> In addition to the field offices, UNRWA has headquarters located in Gaza City, Amman, and in East Jerusalem.<sup>8</sup> The Agency also has representative offices in New York, Washington D.C., and Brussels, with a liaison presence in Cairo.<sup>9</sup>

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is an UN agency established to provide relief to Palestine refugees.

Established after the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, the GA directed the Agency to carry out direct relief programs for Palestinian refugees.<sup>10</sup> The Agency began these operations on 1 May 1950.<sup>11</sup> At the beginning, 69% of the Agency's funding went directly to financing relief, which included distributing mass food rations such as cheese, flour, and rice.<sup>12</sup> As their assistance grew, the Agency also provided clothing, bedding, and other domestic items that were needed.<sup>13</sup> As time progressed, UNRWA added other services for Palestinian refugees including: education services, health care services, micro-financing, infrastructure and housing development assistance, and emergency response services during crises.<sup>14</sup>

Over the course of its existence, most of the Agency's work has centered on the occupied Palestine territories (oPt), currently recognized as the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, and Lebanon.<sup>15</sup> In subsequent years, the Agency has also expanded to provide relief services for Palestinian refugees affected by conflict in various other territories, including Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.<sup>16</sup> Specifically, UNRWA has provided relief in the West Bank and Gaza since 1950, in northern Lebanon and Jordan, and increasingly during the recent Syrian conflict.<sup>17</sup> As a result of these relief efforts, the Agency currently operates in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the oPt.<sup>18</sup> The Agency has served as a powerful manager in mitigating the effects of war by continuing to provide relief services in territories where conflict exist.<sup>19</sup> Most recently, the Syrian crisis has quickly become one of the largest

<sup>1</sup> New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2014-2015*, 2014, p. 255.

<sup>2</sup> UN General Assembly, *Assistance to Palestine Refugees (A/RES/302(IV))*, 1949.

<sup>3</sup> UNRWA, *FAQ*.

<sup>4</sup> New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2014-2015*, 2014, pp. 255-256.

<sup>5</sup> UNRWA, *FAQ*.

<sup>6</sup> UNRWA, *What We Do*.

<sup>7</sup> New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2014-2015*, 2014, p. 255.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*; UN General Assembly, *Assistance to Palestine Refugees (A/RES/302(IV))*, 1949.

<sup>11</sup> New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2014-2015*, 2014, p. 255.

<sup>12</sup> UNRWA, *Start Operations*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> UNRWA, *What We Do*.

<sup>15</sup> UNDP, *About the Occupied Palestinian Territory*.

<sup>16</sup> UNRWA, *What We Do*.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2014-2015*, 2014, p. 255.

<sup>19</sup> UNRWA, *Emergency Response*.

challenges faced by the Agency in its over 60 years of operation.<sup>20</sup> This conflict alone has displaced over 50% of the registered Palestinian refugee population, as well as over 270,000 Palestinian refugees within Syria.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Governance, Structure and Membership***

Given this regional positioning and relief work, UNRWA has become one of the largest agencies for crisis intervention within the region.<sup>22</sup> UNRWA is comprised of 27 Advisory Commission (AdCom) Members, composed of UN Member States, and 3 observers: Palestine, the European Union, and the League of Arab States.<sup>23</sup> Since 2005, the Member States expanded to include countries whose contributions to the Agency have averaged a total of \$5 million per year for three consecutive years. The AdCom is headed by the Commissioner-General, who is appointed by the UN Secretary-General in consultation with UNRWA's AdCom Members, and who is the only head of a UN body that reports directly to the GA.<sup>24</sup> The Commissioner-General position is held for three years and is a renewable appointment.<sup>25</sup> The Commissioner-General is also supported by a Deputy Commissioner-General.<sup>26</sup> Together, the AdCom and Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl work to implement the programs of UNRWA.<sup>27</sup>

The AdCom meets twice a year, usually in June and November.<sup>28</sup> Their main purpose is to advise and assist the Commissioner-General in carrying out the Agency's mandate as set out in GA resolution 302 (IV).<sup>29</sup> Specifically, the AdCom will meet to advise the Commissioner-General on issues regarding the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the programs the Agency delivers across all of its regions to Palestinian refugees.<sup>30</sup> Together, the AdCom and Commissioner-General review issues affecting the work of UNRWA, allocate funding to programs, and the AdCom reviews the Commissioner-General's annual report before its submission to the General Assembly.<sup>31</sup> The AdCom also strives to reach consensus in its decision-making on substantive and organizational matters.<sup>32</sup> However, in the event of significant differences existing within AdCom members, a Summary Record of the meeting will be compiled to reflect, more fully, the various opinions expressed within the meeting.<sup>33</sup> The officers of the AdCom include a Chair and a Vice-Chair position, which rotates and is represented by a host country and donor country.<sup>34</sup> The AdCom Secretariat works closely with the Bureau of the Sub-Committee.<sup>35</sup> The Secretariat of the AdCom facilitates an effective partnership between the Advisory Commission and UNRWA Secretariat.<sup>36</sup>

### ***Mandate, Functions and Powers***

UNRWA supports Palestinian refugees, which are defined "persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict;" descendants are registered through the male line, and this includes those adopted by registered Palestinian refugee men.<sup>37</sup> To be eligible for UNRWA services, a person must be living in this areas in which UNRWA works, meet the definition of a Palestinian refugee, be registered with the agency, and need assistance.<sup>38</sup> Currently, UNRWA provides assistance to an estimated five million Palestinian refugees across these territories.<sup>39</sup>

Following its primary mandate to provide relief services to Palestinian refugees, the Agency has adopted further

<sup>20</sup> UNRWA, *Emergency Response*.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> UNRWA, *Advisory Commission*.

<sup>24</sup> New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2014-2015*, 2014, p. 256.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> UNRWA, *Advisory Commission*.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> UNRWA, *Organizational Structure*.

<sup>30</sup> UNRWA, *Advisory Commission of the UNRWA Rules of Procedure (UNRWA/2006/06)*, 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> UNRWA, *Advisory Commission*.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2014-2015*, 2014, p. 255.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

goals in human development to further their assistance to Palestinian refugees, which include assisting individuals in gaining knowledge and skills, living healthy lives, having good standards of living, and having full access to human rights.<sup>40</sup> This is done through direct delivery services provided by the Agency's over large staff, 95% of whom are refugees themselves, who work as nurses, doctors, teachers, or aid distributors.<sup>41</sup>

As an aspect of its work, UNRWA produces reports on topics related to significance for the committee; the reports work to summarize the status of the Agency's programs, recent developments within them, any issues it faces in delivering their programs and services, and often highlights the barriers they continue to face.<sup>42</sup> The Commissioner-General also produces reports for the GA on the work of UNRWA, and in the 2014 report to the Assembly, this report outlined UNRWA's major goals, consisting of providing a long and healthy life; a decent standard of living; acquired knowledge and skills; human rights enjoyed to the fullest, as well as how they were being reached within their programs; and future planning.<sup>43</sup>

One example of the Agency's programmatic work includes providing education to nearly half a million Palestinian refugee children in a system of over 685 schools.<sup>44</sup> Providing this requires a consistent stream of funding as well as a safe environment, which currently remain the Agency's biggest challenges throughout the entire region.<sup>45</sup> In particular, the conflicts in Syria, the blockade in Gaza, and occupation of the West Bank present often violent environments that prevent many children from being sent to and actively participating in school.<sup>46</sup> The second largest factor is providing quality education by well-trained teachers.<sup>47</sup> Currently, reforms to delivering education services focus on teacher training through a school-based teacher development program.<sup>48</sup> These programs, also being delivered and implemented in host countries, train teachers in more holistic and active learning approaches in teaching.<sup>49</sup> The teaching of human rights, conflict resolution, and tolerance (HRCRT) in UNRWA-run schools is another method of delivering services which aim at empowering Palestinian refugees to both exercise their rights and respect the rights of others.<sup>50</sup>

To achieve long and healthy lives, UNRWA delivers primary health care services through a network of facilities and mobile health trucks, which provide preventive care, general medical care, and specialist care to ensure Palestinian refugees are supported through every stage of their lives.<sup>51</sup> This care is often provided at health centers at camps, through a mobile health clinic service, and promoted through health education taught in schools.<sup>52</sup> Currently, UNRWA operates 139 health centers; 70 are located within Palestinian refugee camps, as well as five mobile health clinics within the West Bank.<sup>53</sup> These mobile clinics are especially important in providing outpatient care when barriers such as closures in road access and checkpoints can exist.<sup>54</sup> Barriers to achieving better health include poor sanitation and water services in places where Palestinian refugees live.<sup>55</sup> Unsafe facilities, including schools themselves which lack heating during colder months, cracked walls and ceilings, can all pose additional health hazards.<sup>56</sup> Other challenges include lack of facilities due to conflict impacted regions of service, an increase in the need for specialized care which can be costly and an increase in population which puts higher demands on medical professionals.<sup>57</sup> All of these factors severely impact the delivery of health care within the five regions of service.

The Agency also provides emergency cash funds as well as income generating opportunities through their

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<sup>40</sup> UNRWA, *What We Do*, 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> UN General Assembly, *Report of the UNRWA Commissioner-General to the UN General Assembly 2013 (A/69/13)*, 2014.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> UN DPI, *Half a million Palestinian children can return to UN-run schools this year thanks to 'tireless' fund-raising*, 2015.

<sup>45</sup> UNRWA, *Harmonized Results Report*, 2014.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Education Reform Strategy 2011-2014*, 2011.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Policy on Education Reform for Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance (HRCRT)*, 2013.

<sup>51</sup> UNRWA, *Human Development Goals*.

<sup>52</sup> UNRWA, *School Health Strategy*, 2013.

<sup>53</sup> UNRWA, *Health Reform*, 2015.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> UNRWA, *School Health Strategy*, 2013.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> UNRWA, *Health Reform*, 2015.



Microfinance Department.<sup>58</sup> The Agency's work in microfinance contributes to the ability of entrepreneurs to open and operate small informal businesses which generate income and help to alleviate poverty.<sup>59</sup> This microfinancing can provide cash and credit loans to entrepreneurs, for home loans and other expenses.<sup>60</sup> These microfinance programs are administered through 21 branch offices located in Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, and Gaza.<sup>61</sup>

Partnerships are also an important vehicle for the delivery of many of UNRWA's work and have included partnerships with private organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other UN bodies and Member States.<sup>62</sup> Member States voluntarily donate funds to UNRWA's annual budget, while its partnerships with NGOs and other UN agencies can be financially beneficial and can contribute to the creation of further reports or investment in human development projects.<sup>63</sup> The World Diabetes Foundation (WDF) and UNRWA partnered to prevent and treat diabetes amongst Palestinian refugees; the agency's partnership with Islamic Relief from the United States has led to funds being contributed to alleviate poverty through food aid.<sup>64</sup> In Damascus, UNICEF and UNRWA partnered to provide a playground for Palestinian refugee children living in the nearby camps.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, in February 2015, the UNDP, UNICEF, and NGO Al Fakhoora teamed up to rebuild schools that had been destroyed in Gaza to reinstate the capacity to provide educational services to Palestinian refugee children.<sup>66</sup> While these are just some of the many partnerships the Agency has had over its history, they are exemplary in highlighting UNRWA's purpose as a true delivery service of many different human development programs to Palestinian refugees in the Middle East.

### ***Recent Sessions and Current Priorities***

Recently, UNRWA has faced many challenges, the most recurring of which is continued disruption in services due to increased violence within their regions of services, which takes a toll on infrastructure, human health, and can strain finances. Accordingly, the Agency is highly concentrated on finding more efficient ways to deliver its services to Palestinian refugees.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, one of the main issues involve the escalation of violence in Gaza, the West Bank, and Syria.<sup>68</sup> Specifically, the situation in Syria has continued to be a large priority for UNRWA.<sup>69</sup> Approaches to this include reforming its delivery services, with special concentration on organization development reform to achieve education reform, health reform and relief, and social services reform.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, UNRWA has developed the Mid-Term Strategy (MTS) 2010-2015 to be a blueprint for the functioning of the organization through 2015. The MTS, in particular, highlights the Agency's main obstacles as being able to adapt to new situations, high staff costs, the need for data to reflect its work, as well as its continued risk at interrupting services due to underfunding.<sup>71</sup>

In order to address the increasing violence in Syria and the resulting challenges, UNRWA published a Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal in 2015 to highlight some of the struggles that UNRWA continues to face in the region and to ask for help in mitigating the suffering of Palestinian refugees within the 12 camps located in Syria.<sup>72</sup> The appeal was made primarily to raise awareness to the UN about the financial crisis being faced by UNRWA and explain the potential disruption in services if this financial shortfall was not met.<sup>73</sup> Currently, the Agency estimates that 95% of the 480,000 Palestinian refugees still residing in Syria are in need of continuous assistance due to their exposure to the conflict.<sup>74</sup> Some of the suffering has been made acute by the closure of borders to Palestinian

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<sup>58</sup> UNRWA, *Health Reform*, 2015.

<sup>59</sup> UNRWA, *Microfinance*, 2015.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> UNRWA, *Government Partners*.

<sup>63</sup> UNRWA, *NGO Partners*.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> UNRWA, *Reaching for the Sky*.

<sup>66</sup> UNICEF, *Al Fakhoora, UNDP, UNICEF and UNRWA to launch USD 40 million project on Education, Reconstruction and Psychosocial Support in Gaza*.

<sup>67</sup> UNRWA, *Who We Are*, 2015.

<sup>68</sup> El-Shamayleh, *UNRWA fund crisis worries Palestinian refugees*, 2015.

<sup>69</sup> UNRWA, *Syria: Palestine Refugees Humanitarian Snapshot*, 2015.

<sup>70</sup> UNRWA, *Who We Are*, 2015.

<sup>71</sup> UNRWA, *Adcom News*, 2015.

<sup>72</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal*, 2015.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.



refugees from Syria by Jordan and Lebanon.<sup>75</sup> This has resulted in Palestinian refugees seeking other means of escaping the conflict in Syria, with many people trying to make passage to Turkey and other neighboring Member States.<sup>76</sup> The appeal drew focus to the lack of sufficient funding for UNRWA's budget and underscored this financial importance, as it threatens the scaling back and denial of essential services, including health care services, cash assistance, and emergency education services.<sup>77</sup>

UNRWA has pointed to an unsustainable situation existing in Syria, Lebanon, and beyond for Palestinian refugees as a primary reason for this population risking their lives to flee to Europe.<sup>78</sup> In March 2015, nine Palestinian refugees drowned off the coast of Sicily while part of a large group attempting to reach European shores.<sup>79</sup> This prompted UNRWA to stress the importance of the international community's assistance in providing better services for Palestinian refugees, that the international community needs to respect international laws and populations fleeing crisis, as well as continued focus on reaching peaceful solutions to the Israel-Palestine conflicts and the violence in Syria.<sup>80</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

UNRWA is primarily mandated with the care of Palestinian refugees through the provision of emergency relief services and long-term development programs. While UNRWA plays a critical role in the delivery of direct relief services, it strives to also provide opportunities for further development. It remains focused on the Palestinian refugee population and continues to conduct work to uplift and empower these members of society to lead healthy lives. Stable funding is important to ensure the delivery of UNRWA's services, as it continues its work with Palestinian refugees.

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<sup>75</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal*, 2015.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> UNRWA, *Statement by UNRWA Spokesman, Chris Gunness: Drowning of Palestinians off the Coast of Sicily a 'Clear and Tragic Sign' of Untenable Situation on 19 March 2015*, 2015.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.



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*The Report to the General Assembly by the Commissioner-General highlights both the internal and external factors influencing the region including conflict, the blockade in Gaza, and increasing cost of food and other commodities. It discusses the specific operations being implemented by UNRWA with a particular focus on the Syrian conflict. The report also provides a detailed description with specific numbers in terms of number of people assisted and costs and also information on specific policies that have been implemented in the last year. This report illustrates concrete examples of the operations and programs being implemented by UNRWA. Delegates will benefit from knowing the kind of information relayed to the General-Assembly by UNRWA Secretariat. This can help to provide a guide as to what delegates could include in their report writing for the committee at the conference.*

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2010). *UNRWA Medium Term Strategy*. Retrieved 20 July 2015 from: <http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/201003317746.pdf>

*This report ties together UNRWA's mandate with its strategic objectives and four human development goals and the overall strategy to improve UNRWA. This is an excellent source in understanding UNRWA's work especially in the context of vulnerable groups. Delegates will also be able to understand how UNRWA's reform may impact its work in the future. This report also delves into UNRWA's work within specific countries and regions.*

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2015). *2014 Opt Emergency Appeal: Annual Report*. Retrieved 16 July 2015 from:

[http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/2014\\_opt\\_emergency\\_appeal\\_report\\_0.pdf](http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/2014_opt_emergency_appeal_report_0.pdf)

*This report focuses on a number of difficulties faced by UNRWA and illustrates how tension and conflict in the Middle East directly impacts the work of the Agency. The report highlights the peace talks between Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the ongoing conflict in Gaza, economic difficulties in Gaza, West Bank occupational policies, and how UNRWA has responded to these issues. Through this report, delegates will be able to see the true cost of program implementation in the region and how increased tensions in the area can drive the cost of programs.*

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2015). *2014 Syria Crisis Response: Annual Report*. Retrieved 3 September 2015 from:

[http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/syria\\_crisis\\_response\\_annual\\_report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/syria_crisis_response_annual_report_2014.pdf)

*This report highlights the challenges that UNRWA has faced in its attempt to mitigate the suffering of Palestinian refugees within Syria. In particular, it speaks to the most relevant events that have caused severe displacement and movement of Palestinian refugees as well as underscores the lack of full funding to continue the successful implementation of its programs. Delegates will gain a valuable synopsis of the efforts done by UNRWA within Syria in the past year to help mitigate the suffering of Palestinian refugees, as well as insight into some of the most important barriers to the success of UNRWA's work within the region.*

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2015). *The Harmonized Results Report*. Retrieved 4 September 2015 from:

[http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/harmonized\\_results\\_report\\_2014\\_0.pdf](http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/harmonized_results_report_2014_0.pdf)

*This report highlights the achievements made by UNRWA with particular focus on its achievements towards its work in achieving the human development goals. It provides a qualitative and quantitative analysis on field offices with special regard to results achieved. The report is important in specifically outlining the status of specific programs under UNRWA with reports on its status towards achievement of goals and further outlooks. For delegates, this can provide a succinct look at the current status of many of the Agency's initiatives with special regard for how their new attempt at implementing results based reporting will and can contribute to the increased efficiency of the Agency.*

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## I. Addressing the Needs of Palestinian Women and Girls in Gaza

### *Introduction*

Gaza, which is a part of the occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt), is a narrow territory that borders on the Mediterranean to the West and Israel to the West and North.<sup>81</sup> For several decades, Israel has occupied the Gaza Strip and the rest of the oPt, and since 2007 Israel has imposed a blockade on Gaza.<sup>82</sup> Due to the blockade, the situation for the people within the Gaza Strip is precarious.<sup>83</sup> Roads are regularly blocked, and as such both people and goods are prevented from entering or leaving the territory, which leads to electricity, water, and fuel shortages.<sup>84</sup> This often forces citizens to evacuate or abandon their homes because of life-threatening circumstances, as was the case most recently in summer 2014.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, due to the Israeli occupation, and because Palestine is ruled by a governing authority (as opposed to a unified sovereign government), people living in the oPt are not protected by any sovereign state with the credentials necessary to sign and ratify international treaties; they are thus reliant on the protection of the international community, especially the United Nations (UN).<sup>86</sup>

In every political climate, and even more so during times of conflict, it is imperative to keep in mind that women and girls have different needs.<sup>87</sup> The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is the main agency responsible for promoting and ensuring the rights and needs of women and girls in Gaza.<sup>88</sup> UNRWA's areas of involvement include: relief and social services such as education, microfinance, emergency response, infrastructure, and camp improvement.<sup>89</sup> Gender-based violence (GBV) is also an issue under Israeli occupation.<sup>90</sup> UNRWA strives to alleviate these issues for Palestinian refugees in Gaza through its activities in the education sector, the health sector, and programs to counter GBV.<sup>91</sup> As a result, UNRWA efforts in all of these areas have recognized the importance of gender mainstreaming.<sup>92</sup> Gender mainstreaming is a way to achieve gender equality through "the process of assessing the implications [of policies and decisions] for women and men of any planned action."<sup>93</sup> This focus is important for policy-making in Gaza, but the oPt has little autonomy from the external pressures exercised by Israel and other actors, meaning that actions to mainstream gender have little room to be reviewed and implemented.<sup>94</sup> As a consequence, the Palestinian authority has no set budget to promote gender equality, leading to restrictions in the choices women and girls can make.<sup>95</sup> These restrictions can include: the choice of where to study, who to marry, and considerations in family planning, amongst others.<sup>96</sup>

Women and girls have a right to food, clothing and work, and UNRWA directs efforts to make sure that those needs are fulfilled, despite the challenges from the blockade and the lack of funding.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, UNRWA encourages special focus on women and girls' health needs, especially with regards to sexual and reproductive rights, as well as

<sup>81</sup> UNEP, *Environmental Assessment of the Gaza Strip Following the Escalation of Hostilities in December 2008 – January 2009*, 2009, p. 6.

<sup>82</sup> De Ville de Goyet, et al., *Report of a Field Assessment of Health Conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, 2015, p. 5.

<sup>83</sup> UN-Women, *Towards Gender Equality in Humanitarian Response: Addressing the Needs of Women & Men in Gaza. A Guidebook for the Humanitarian Sector*, 2010, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> UN HRC, *Report of the Independent Commission of Inquiry Established Pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution S-21/1 (A/HRC/29/52)*, 2015, p. 6.

<sup>86</sup> UNICEF, *The situation of Palestinian Children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon*, 2010, p. 9.

<sup>87</sup> UN-Women, *Towards Gender Equality in Humanitarian Response: Addressing the Needs of Women & Men in Gaza. A Guidebook for the Humanitarian Sector*, 2010, p. 9.

<sup>88</sup> UNICEF, *The situation of Palestinian Children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon*, 2010, p. 9.

<sup>89</sup> UNRWA, *Where We Work: Gaza Strip - At a Glance*.

<sup>90</sup> UNICEF, *Occupied Palestinian Territory: MENA Gender Equality Profile*, 2011, p. 3.

<sup>91</sup> UNRWA, *Where We Work: Gaza Strip - At a Glance*.

<sup>92</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Medium Term Strategy 2010 – 2015*, 2009, p. 22.

<sup>93</sup> UN General Assembly, *Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997 (A/52/3)*, 1997, p. 28.

<sup>94</sup> UN-Women, *Building Ties: Towards Integrated Strategies and Policies for Empowering Palestinian Women*, 2013, p. 8.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Medium Term Strategy 2010 – 2015*, 2009, p. 32.

protection against GBV.<sup>98</sup> Given the specific circumstances in which women and girls in Gaza live, streamlining a gender perspective into policy-making is crucial to ensure they have equal access to goods and services.<sup>99</sup>

### ***International and Regional Framework***

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), adopted by the General Assembly (GA) in 1948, is the core document referring to the rights of all individuals worldwide, including women and girls.<sup>100</sup> These rights include the right to work (Article 23), the right to health and associated rights (Article 25), and the right to education (Article 26).<sup>101</sup> Moreover, international documents directly relevant to the rights of girls are: the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) (1989), especially Articles 24, 28, and 19; and the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict* (OPAC) (2000).<sup>102</sup>

Additionally, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) (1979) is of great importance within the framework of human rights, specifically for women.<sup>103</sup> The Convention offers a holistic overview of the basic human rights necessary to achieve gender equality; however, it makes no mention of violence against women, or women's rights in times of conflict.<sup>104</sup> The UN adopted its first document on the issue of violence against women in 1993, with the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* (A/RES/48/104).<sup>105</sup> The Declaration formulates a concise definition of what violence against women is, and reiterates the basic human rights of women.<sup>106</sup> According to the Declaration, violence against women “means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (1995), the outcome document of the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women, includes both policy options to end violence against women and girls, and more specific strategies to end discrimination against girls.<sup>108</sup>

Relevant within the international framework of the rights of women and girls, specifically during armed conflict, is Security Council resolution 1325 on *Women, Peace and Security* adopted in 2000.<sup>109</sup> Paragraph 8 of resolution 1325 calls for special attention to be paid to women's and girls' needs during and after conflicts.<sup>110</sup> Subsequent Security Council resolutions include resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), and 2242 (2015).<sup>111</sup> Of note, resolution 2122 (2013) in paragraph 11 calls for “sustainable assistance to women and girls affected by armed conflict and post-conflict situations.”<sup>112</sup>

Addressing the needs of women and girls in Gaza also falls within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were adopted by the General Assembly in September 2015.<sup>113</sup> SDG 2, “[e]nd hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture” is of special relevance, as food insecurity is a result of the blockade imposed on Gaza.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, Goal 3, “[e]nsure healthy lives and promote well-being

<sup>98</sup> UNRWA, *What We Do: Family Health Teams*.

<sup>99</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Medium Term Strategy 2010 – 2015*, 2009, p. 22.

<sup>100</sup> UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*, 1989; UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child: Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (A/RES/54/263)*, 2000.

<sup>103</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*, 1979.

<sup>104</sup> UN-Women, *Global Norms and Standards: Ending Violence against Women*.

<sup>105</sup> UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (A/RES/48/104)*, 1993.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 1-3.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 1-3.

<sup>108</sup> UN Fourth World Conference on Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 1995.

<sup>109</sup> UN Security Council, *Women, Peace, and Security (S/RES/1325(2000))*, 2000.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 8 (A).

<sup>111</sup> UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1820(2008))*, 2008; UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1888(2009))*, 2009; UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1889(2009))*, 2009; UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1960(2010))*, 2010; UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/2106(2013))*, 2013; UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/2242(2015))*, 2015.

<sup>112</sup> UN Security Council, *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/2122(2013))*.

<sup>113</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*



for all at all ages” directly relates to the achievement of health needs of women and girls in Gaza.<sup>115</sup> Goal 4, “[e]nsure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”; Goal 5, “[a]chieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”; and Goal 8, “[p]romote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all” are interconnected and relate to the restrictions imposed on the free choice of women and girls in Gaza.<sup>116</sup>

### ***Role of the International System***

UNRWA’s main task within its mandate is the protection of Palestinian refugees against possible threats, such as GBV and food insecurity; but also to develop policies to alleviate these grievances, and to raise awareness about them through reports and appeals.<sup>117</sup> One example is the 2014 report on the health sector in Gaza, identifying its strengths and weaknesses.<sup>118</sup> The report concluded that due to the blockade, the health sector in Gaza lacks the needed infrastructure and doesn’t offer adequate training for professionals, which is necessary for them to be able to cope with the number of patients.<sup>119</sup> UNRWA’s work in the health sector is additionally guided by its life-cycle approach.<sup>120</sup> This approach aims to offer a range of health services to from prenatal and postnatal services to care for the elderly.<sup>121</sup> Education is also central to UNRWA’s work. As of 1 January 2015, UNRWA operated eight official camps for Palestinian refugees in Gaza, and 252 schools, in which female enrollment is 48.4%.<sup>122</sup> The blockade, however, has had an impact on the right to education for children, mostly due to a lack of the material needed to renovate existing educational facilities.<sup>123</sup> This has led to an overcrowding of schools; according to UNRWA, 94% of the schools in the Gaza Strip operate in double shifts, welcoming two different school groups per day.<sup>124</sup> UNRWA’s 2007 “Policy on Gender Equality” is the main framework for action to ensure the needs of girls and women in Gaza.<sup>125</sup> This policy reiterates UNRWA’s commitment to establishing gender mainstreaming as the core of all its actions.<sup>126</sup> UNRWA also operates seven Women’s Programme Centers, which aim at enhancing women’s participation in society.<sup>127</sup>

Similarly, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) Field Office for Palestine, a partner of UNRWA, raises awareness on specific issues related to women and girls by publishing newsletters on a regular basis; the latest one discussed the introduction of a gender perspective in post-crisis response.<sup>128</sup> A 2013 study conducted by UN-Women assessing the “gender differentiated impact of crises in the Gaza Strip” showed that women and men set very different priorities when coping with crisis and conflict.<sup>129</sup> In this context, UN-Women’s key finding was that one of the main mechanisms for women is to try to find alternative ways through which to secure the household.<sup>130</sup> Thus, it is important to consider women’s role as care-takers, and organizations should enact strategies to empower women in education and in the labor market.<sup>131</sup>

UNICEF is also a mentionable contributor, most notably with its 2010 report on the implementation of the CRC and OPAC in the oPt and the rest of the Near East.<sup>132</sup> Within the UN Secretariat, there is a high focus on women and

<sup>115</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*; UNICEF, *Occupied Palestinian Territory: MENA Gender Equality Profile*, 2011, p. 3.

<sup>117</sup> UNRWA, *Protecting Palestine Refugees*, 2015, p. 5.

<sup>118</sup> Gilbert, *The Gaza Health Sector as of June 2014*, 2014.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>120</sup> UNRWA, *About UNRWA*, 2015, p. 7.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>123</sup> UNICEF, *The situation of Palestinian Children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon*, 2010, p. 19.

<sup>124</sup> UNRWA, *Education in the Gaza Strip*.

<sup>125</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA’s Policy on Gender Equality*, 2007.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>127</sup> UNRWA, *About UNRWA*, 2015, p. 14.

<sup>128</sup> UN-Women, *UN-Women in Palestine Newsletter, Issue 10*, 2014.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>131</sup> UN-Women, *Building Ties: Towards Integrated Strategies and Policies for Empowering Palestinian Women*, 2013, p. 70.

<sup>132</sup> UNICEF, *The situation of Palestinian Children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon*, 2010.

girls as well.<sup>133</sup> The Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences, is a valuable resource, and his last report on the situation in the oPt dates back to 2005.<sup>134</sup> The report specifically highlighted how the security measures put in place, and the patriarchic structure of the society in the oPt, both contribute to GBV.<sup>135</sup>

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society also play an important role in creating awareness of the needs and rights of women and girls in Gaza by supporting UNRWA's activities.<sup>136</sup> In April 2015, Defense for Children International Palestine, an NGO primarily concerned with human rights violations directed at children, released a report on the toll taken by children during the attacks on Gaza in summer 2014.<sup>137</sup> The report highlights which UNRWA educational facilities were destroyed during the attacks, and offers a general overview of the precarious situation of children's rights due to the attacks.<sup>138</sup> The Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) and their Women's Rights Unit is also actively involved in the oPt through the facilitation of thematic workshops.<sup>139</sup> The most recent were held in Gaza in September 2015 and discussed the right to health and the relevant provisions in international law, which guarantee access to health services.<sup>140</sup> The PCHR also organized lectures in 2013 to raise awareness among Palestinian women of their legal rights guaranteed through national and international frameworks.<sup>141</sup> Within these lectures, women were also informed about the rights of the child, and the legal grounds to protect themselves against GBV.<sup>142</sup>

### ***Education, Training, and Labor***

#### *Access to Education and Vocational Training*

Prior to the hostilities in summer 2014, the educational system in Gaza was fragile and schools were overcrowded.<sup>143</sup> During the hostilities of July 2014, a large number of UNRWA schools were used as safe shelter for the civilian population, which severely limited the access to education for Gaza's children.<sup>144</sup> Girls' participation in primary and secondary schools is proportionally high in Gaza compared to the global average, with 90% of all girls enrolled in either primary or secondary schools.<sup>145</sup> However, although girls' enrollment is fairly high, women's representation in higher education is incredibly low, with a female doctorate percentage of only 9% in 2010.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, their enrollment in vocational training and prospects for employment are significantly low compared to the high enrollment rates in primary and secondary education.<sup>147</sup> According to UNESCO, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), "comprises formal, non-formal and informal learning for the world of work", and is a crucial factor for sustainable development.<sup>148</sup> Yet, in the oPt, the system of TVET is still fragmented and lacks both the resources and the direct links to the labor market, which would guarantee students enrolled in such programs direct access to employment later on.<sup>149</sup> TVET should not only be an option for girls and boys still enrolled in schools, but also for women and over-aged students, meaning those that have previously failed grades in primary and secondary school.<sup>150</sup> TVET can help women and over-aged students learn new skills helpful to actively participate in the labor market, which ultimately empowers them and increases their independence.<sup>151</sup>

<sup>133</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective: Violence Against Women* (E/CN.4/2005/72/Add.4), 2005.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>136</sup> UNRWA, *About UNRWA*, 2015, p. 13.

<sup>137</sup> Defense for Children International Palestine, *Operation Protective Edge: A war waged on Gaza's children*, 2015.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>139</sup> Palestinian Center for Human Rights, *Annual Report 2013*, 2014.

<sup>140</sup> Palestinian Center for Human Rights, *PCHR Organizes 2 Awareness Raising Workshops on the Right to Health*, 2015.

<sup>141</sup> Palestinian Center for Human Rights, *Annual Report 2013*, 2014, p. 155.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> UNESCO, *Gaza's Education System in Crisis*, 2014.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> UNESCO, *UNESCO Country Programming Document for Palestine, 2014-2017*, 2014, p. 12.

<sup>146</sup> UN-Women, *Building Ties: Towards Integrated Strategies and Policies for Empowering Palestinian Women*, 2013, p. 30.

<sup>147</sup> UNESCO, *UNESCO Country Programming Document for Palestine, 2014-2017*, 2014, p. 22.

<sup>148</sup> UNESCO, *Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)*, 2015.

<sup>149</sup> UNESCO, *UNESCO Country Programming Document for Palestine, 2014-2017*, 2014, p. 14.

<sup>150</sup> UNRWA, *"From Failure to Success": UNRWA Vocational Training Courses for Over-Aged Students*, 2015.

<sup>151</sup> UNESCO, *Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET): Strategy*, 2015.

### *Employment Opportunities*

The employment situation in Gaza is unique because of length of the occupation in the oPt, which causes an external control of borders and corporations, and impacts economic growth.<sup>152</sup> As a consequence, there is a general lack of paid employment opportunities, which obstructs women's ability to find paid labor, leading to a women's labor force participation of only 19.4% in Palestine.<sup>153</sup> The labor market also shows a structural problem.<sup>154</sup> Contrary to popular belief, it is mostly women with average education (9-12 years of education) that have restricted access to the labor market.<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, women's participation in the labor market is impeded because their employment is concentrated only in certain sectors, such as the education and agricultural sectors.<sup>156</sup> These sectors are considered as "feminine," and thus access to them is facilitated because they are considered socially acceptable.<sup>157</sup> This restricts women from engaging in other opportunities and fulfilling their employment potential.<sup>158</sup> One recommendation to address the shortage of employment opportunities promoted both by UN-Women and the International Labor Organization (ILO) is the further development of women's cooperatives, which already have a strong foundation in Gaza, and which could be helpful to better coordinate the needs of the community.<sup>159</sup> A cooperative is an association that is completely organized and ruled by its constituents, thus allowing it to adapt efficiently to their economic, social, and cultural surroundings and requirements.<sup>160</sup> As such, cooperatives are a useful tool to empower women; they encourage self-reliance and independence, and offer women the possibility to organize themselves in the labor market and overcome gender stereotypes.<sup>161</sup>

### *Women's and Girls' Health Needs*

Stunting, defined as being of low height for a child's age, is very dominant among children in Gaza, and is often caused by malnutrition.<sup>162</sup> Stunting rates in Gaza are approximately 13%, with local discrepancies reaching 30% in the North of Gaza.<sup>163</sup> Due to power shortages and blockades, children in Gaza also lack continuous access to water, limiting their ability to drink and bathe.<sup>164</sup> Both of those shortages also have consequences for pregnant women and childbirth; due to malnutrition, one third of pregnant women in Gaza suffer from anemia, which can have negative impacts on childbirth, like maternal hemorrhage, and consequently on the development of the child.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, unclean drinking water, which in Gaza shows high levels of nitrates, poses a high risk both to children and pregnant women.<sup>166</sup> Gaza also suffers from severe food shortages, with refugee food insecurity standing at 57% as of 2013.<sup>167</sup> Refugee families also reported that not only do they lack access to food, but they also lack the economic means to afford the quality and quantity of food that they need.<sup>168</sup> The blockade on the points of entry and exit at the borders of Gaza has had an impact on the availability and accessibility of medicine.<sup>169</sup> In 2007, the UN fact-finding mission in Gaza reported that only a small number of trucks delivering medicine actually reached Gaza.<sup>170</sup> More recently, in a situation report from September 2015, UNICEF stated that although the Ministry of Health in Palestine ordered medicine, it is still in Israel waiting to be allowed into Gaza.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>152</sup> ILO, *Mainstreaming Gender Equality Concerns in Palestinian Cooperatives. Policy Brief No. 10*, 2011, p. 1.

<sup>153</sup> PCBS, *The Labour Force Survey Results Second Quarter*, 2014.

<sup>154</sup> UN-Women, *Building Ties: Towards Integrated Strategies and Policies for Empowering Palestinian Women*, 2013, p. 56.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63; ILO, *Mainstreaming Gender Equality Concerns in Palestinian Cooperatives. Policy Brief No. 10*, 2011, p. 7.

<sup>160</sup> International Co-operative Alliance, *What is a Co-operative?* 2015.

<sup>161</sup> UN DPI, *Cooperatives can and do benefit women worldwide, Secretary-General says*, 2010.

<sup>162</sup> UNICEF, *The situation of Palestinian Children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon*, 2010, p. 13.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> Save the Children, *Gaza's Children: Falling Behind*, 2012, p. 10.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>167</sup> UNRWA, *oPt Emergency Appeal 2015*, 2015, p. 7.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> WHO, *Gaza Strip: Joint Health Sector Assessment Report*, 2014, p. 36.

<sup>170</sup> UN HRC, *Human Rights in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories: Report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (A/HRC/12/48)*, 2009, p. 267.

<sup>171</sup> UNICEF, *State of Palestine : Humanitarian Situation Report #10*, 2015, p. 6.

### *Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights*

Reproductive rights are often considered a human right in the modern era.<sup>172</sup> According to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), reproductive rights include the right to decide freely when to reproduce and how many children to have, the right to benefit from complete reproductive health, and the right to have access to the information needed to make a decision.<sup>173</sup> UNRWA's services related to reproductive health care include pre-natal and post-natal care, as well as pre-conception and family planning services, which are all accessible to women in Gaza.<sup>174</sup> However, these services don't reach every woman and, when they do, their quality is often questionable.<sup>175</sup> One of the concerns is the high number of medical consultations doctors have to conduct each day.<sup>176</sup> UNRWA is making efforts to reduce this number in order to allow each doctor to spend more time on each consultation.<sup>177</sup> Across UNRWA's fields of operation, pregnant women are screened for hypertension and other possible irregularities.<sup>178</sup> Hypertension during pregnancies was the highest in the Gaza Strip with 10% of pregnant women showing signs of high blood pressure.<sup>179</sup>

Likewise, ensuring adolescent sexual and reproductive health rights is one of the four investment priorities of UNFPA's "Framework for Sexual and Reproductive Rights."<sup>180</sup> Sexual and reproductive health rights education for adolescents, key especially for young girls, is also part of UNRWA's life-cycle approach to health.<sup>181</sup> However, the UNFPA framework emphasizes that in 2008, the global contraceptive need for sexually active adolescents was far from met, leading to, among others concerns, a high transmission of sexually-transmitted diseases and infections.<sup>182</sup> Additionally, findings from a 2010 survey conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) show that the percentage of unmet need of contraception among married women in the oPt is higher for those aged 15-19 and 20-24.<sup>183</sup> In fact, in the oPt, around 21.7% of women between the ages of 15-19 and 22.3% of women 20-24 have an unmet need for contraception, with the unmet need being higher in Gaza than in the West Bank.<sup>184</sup> Moreover, data from 2014 indicates that 11% of women aged 15-49 years don't have access to family planning.<sup>185</sup>

### *Violence Against Women and Girls*

Both in Gaza and the rest of the oPt, there is no consensus on the applicable definition of violence against women in Palestinian penal and civil law.<sup>186</sup> According to the 2005 Child Law adopted in the oPt, the Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for recording cases of child abuse.<sup>187</sup> However, there are no provisions for other ministries, like the Ministries for Justice or Health, to support the Ministry of Social Affairs in handling the cases.<sup>188</sup> Additionally, there is no body primarily charged with the collection of data on domestic violence or violence against women, making the full extent of the issue hard to grasp.<sup>189</sup> A 2014 report of the UN Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2015/5) on the "Situation and Assistance to Palestinian Women" from October 2013 to September 2014, highlighted that women and girls experienced episodes of sexual harassment and GBV, especially in shelters.<sup>190</sup> Steps have been taken both by the Palestinian government and by UNRWA to raise awareness of GBV amongst its personnel; UNRWA has offered training to 311 of its staff members and 1000 community members during that period of time.<sup>191</sup> However, GBV is rising constantly in Gaza, from January to May 2015, 533 cases of GBV were

<sup>172</sup> UNDP, *Gender Approaches in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations*, 2002, p. 11.

<sup>173</sup> UNFPA, *Reproductive Rights are Human Rights: A Handbook for National Human Rights Institutions*, 2014, p. 18.

<sup>174</sup> UNRWA, *What We Do: Health - Services*.

<sup>175</sup> UN-Women, *Building Ties: Towards Integrated Strategies and Policies for Empowering Palestinian Women*, 2013, p. 14; WHO, *Nutrition: Micronutrient Deficiencies*, 2015.

<sup>176</sup> UNRWA, *Health Department Annual Report 2014, 2015*, p. 22.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> UNFPA, *Making Reproductive Rights and Sexual and Reproductive Health for All*, 2008, p. 4.

<sup>181</sup> UNRWA, *Health Department – Annual Report 2012, 2013*, p. 20.

<sup>182</sup> UNFPA, *Making Reproductive Rights and Sexual and Reproductive Health for All*, 2008, p. 7.

<sup>183</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Palestinian Family Survey 2010: Final Report*, 2013, p. 88.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *International Women's Day 2015*, 2015.

<sup>186</sup> UN-Women, *Building Ties: Towards Integrated Strategies and Policies for Empowering Palestinian Women*, 2013, p. 119.

<sup>187</sup> UNICEF, *The situation of Palestinian Children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon*, 2010, p. 27.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> UN-Women, *Building Ties: Towards Integrated Strategies and Policies for Empowering Palestinian Women*, 2013, p. 119.

<sup>190</sup> UN CSW, *Situation of and Assistance to Palestinian Women: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2015/5)*, 2014, p. 4.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

detected by UNRWA health centers.<sup>192</sup> In 2013, Palestinian authorities organized a conference on GBV to find ways to combat violence against women in a more effective way.<sup>193</sup> One of the conclusions of this conference echoes conclusions drawn by the 2013 report by UN-Women; not only is there a lack of penal law to target the issue in Palestine, but women and girls are often not offered the access to justice needed in order to bring about consequences for the offender.<sup>194</sup>

### ***Case Study: UNRWA's Women's Programme Centers***

One way in which UNRWA is addressing most of the problems women and girls still face in Gaza is through its Women's Programme Centres (WPCs), built throughout the oPt and the Near East.<sup>195</sup> Throughout UNRWA's fields of operation, 62 WPCs are active.<sup>196</sup> More specifically, in Gaza in 2012, 28,486 women were reached through UNRWA's WPCs.<sup>197</sup> The first version of WPCs were already launched by UNRWA in 1953, when it developed sewing centers for women to be trained in artisanal labor, and to have a space where they could develop skills that were valuable for the labor market.<sup>198</sup> In the 1980s, UNRWA combined those sewing centers and other women's activity centers to create the WPCs.<sup>199</sup> Within the WPCs, UNRWA's Relief and Social Services department actively encourages women to organize themselves and to interact with their communities.<sup>200</sup> In order to allow working women to attend WPC activities, UNRWA also established nurseries and kindergartens for the children of the women participating.<sup>201</sup> Recently, with the help of the WPC in Deir El Balah, Gaza, Adwated Batar, a 50-year-old woman, developed her embroidery skills to the extent that she can sustain her family economically with her artisanal work.<sup>202</sup> She is now teaching these skills to her daughter, to make sure that she will be able to support herself at a later stage in her life.<sup>203</sup> WPCs not only aim to offer women a safe place to share and communicate, but also to encourage women to actively participate in their community by learning new skills and taking on active roles in community-based organizations.<sup>204</sup> Further, WPCs empower women like Adwated to act as mentors, whether it be to a young girl in their own family or to other women and girls in the community.<sup>205</sup> Another major achievement, which has been implemented only in Jordan thus far, is the establishment of Internet cafés to familiarize women with new technologies and connect them to the world.<sup>206</sup> Although there are Internet cafés in other fields of operation, like for example the West Bank, those are not yet specific to women, and are not developed as part of the WPC initiative.<sup>207</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

The conflict in Gaza and the ongoing blockade are an impediment to the empowerment of women and girls, and to the fulfillment of their needs and basic human rights.<sup>208</sup> Considering the education sector in Gaza, although girls' enrollment in primary and secondary school is proportionally high compared to the global average, their representation in TVET and their prospects for employment are low.<sup>209</sup> The health needs of women and girls, especially with regards to sexual and reproductive health, are also of concern when promoting their empowerment.<sup>210</sup> Additionally, due to food insecurity and malnutrition, women and girls in Gaza are prone to suffer

<sup>192</sup> UNRWA, *Gaza Situation Report 98*, 2015.

<sup>193</sup> UN-Women, *UN Women in Palestine, Issue 6*, 2014, p. 3.

<sup>194</sup> UN CSW, *Situation of and Assistance to Palestinian Women: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2015/5)*, 2014, p. 17.

<sup>195</sup> UNRWA, *What We Do: Relief and Social Services*.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> UNRWA, *RSS in the Gaza Strip*.

<sup>198</sup> UNRWA, *Relief and Social Services – Women's Programme*, 2010, p. 1.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>202</sup> UNRWA, *Gaza Situation Report 108*, 2015.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> UNRWA, *Relief and Social Services – Women's Programme*, 2010, p. 1.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>207</sup> UNRWA, *OFID Progress Report*, 2010, p. 18.

<sup>208</sup> UN-Women, *Towards Gender Equality in Humanitarian Response: Addressing the Needs of Women & Men in Gaza. A Guidebook for the Humanitarian Sector*, 2010, p. 3.

<sup>209</sup> UNESCO, *UNESCO Country Programming Document for Palestine, 2014-2017*, 2014, p. 22.

<sup>210</sup> UN-Women, *Building Ties: Towards Integrated Strategies and Policies for Empowering Palestinian Women*, 2013, p. 12.

from iron deficiencies and stunting among other significant health concerns and unique health needs.<sup>211</sup> Lastly, the lack of a specific entity in charge of monitoring cases of violence against women and a common definition of GBV in the oPt, makes it difficult to assess the extent of GBV in Gaza.<sup>212</sup> Thus, women and girls in Gaza still face many restrictions impeding their full and complete enjoyment of rights, especially their right to make independent and informed choices.<sup>213</sup>

### ***Further Research***

Keeping in mind the considerable amount of work that UNRWA has done thus far, and the challenges the organization still faces today to cater to the needs of women and girls in Gaza, delegates should consider: how can UNRWA and other UN bodies create opportunities for vocational training for girls? Through what incentives can the participation in those trainings be strengthened? What are cost-efficient ways to allow women and girls access to the health care they need? What are strategies can be applied to strengthen the implementation of adolescent reproductive and sexual health rights in the different communities in Gaza? What opportunities do the WPCs in Gaza present for women, and how can they further be strengthened to empower women in their communities? How can UNRWA further deepen its cooperation with community-based organizations, especially to create employment opportunities for women and adolescent girls? What more can be done to assess, protect, and prevent cases of GBV in Gaza?

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<sup>211</sup> Save the Children, *Gaza's Children: Falling Behind*, 2012, p. 2.

<sup>212</sup> UN-Women, *Building Ties: Towards Integrated Strategies and Policies for Empowering Palestinian Women*, 2013, p. 120; UN CSW, *Situation of and Assistance to Palestinian Women: Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2015/5)*, 2014, p. 4.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

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*This report, published in 2015 by the NGO Defense for Children International Palestine, describes the high toll paid by children in Gaza during the Israeli offensive in the summer of 2014. It begins with a general description of the situation leading up to the events of 2014. It also mentions relevant documents of international law, and describes the direct effects the attack had on children. It is a useful resource, as it mentions which UNRWA schools were under attack, and the consequences the attacks had on specific families.*

Global Campaign for Education. (2012). *Gender Discrimination in Education: The Violation of Rights of Women and Girls*. Retrieved 21 July 2015 from:

[http://campaignforeducation.org/docs/reports/GCE\\_INTERIM\\_Gender\\_Report.pdf](http://campaignforeducation.org/docs/reports/GCE_INTERIM_Gender_Report.pdf)

*This is a sectorial report focusing on the human right to education and the existence of a gender gap in access to education. It outlines the problems that stem from this gender gap, and how education empowers women. Although the case studies are not directly pertinent to UNRWA, there are lessons to be drawn from them, especially the linkages made between violence and access to education. It is a helpful resource for delegates who want to delve into aspects related to education. As women's and girls' access to education in Gaza is limited due to conflict and resource shortages, this report shows what long-term effects the lack of access to education can have.*

United Nations Children's Fund. (2010). *The situation of Palestinian Children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon* [Report]. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from:

[http://www.unicef.org/oPt/PALESTINIAN\\_SITAN-final.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/oPt/PALESTINIAN_SITAN-final.pdf)

*Published in 2010 by UNICEF, this report considers the situation of children in the oPt and the other fields of operation of UNRWA. It is described as an "assessment" of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, one of the main documents underpinning the work of UNRWA. It is structured by region, with its first chapter addressing the oPt. Within the chapters, the report offers an assessment of the different human rights and how they apply to children. It is an interesting resource for delegates, as it refers directly to the international framework pertaining to children's rights and describes the shortfalls in specific regions.*

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2014). *UNESCO Country Programming Document for Palestine, 2014-2017*. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from:

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002302/230212E.pdf>

*This report was specifically developed by UNESCO for the socio-economic development of Palestine between 2014-2017. It offers an overview of past cooperation between UNESCO and national stakeholders, as well as NGOs in the fields of education, culture, communication, information, and gender equality. It also gives recommendations on how to move forward. The document makes useful references to the work that UNRWA is doing, especially in the field of primary and secondary education, as well as TVET. The document lists data on how many schools are operated, and how many students are helped by UNRWA compared to the Ministry of Education and private facilitators.*

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment. (2009). *Towards Gender Equality in Humanitarian Response: Addressing the Needs of Women & Men in Gaza. A Guidebook for the Humanitarian Sector*. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2009/1/towards-gender-equality-in-humanitarian-response-addressing-the-needs-of-women-and-men-in-gaza-a-guidebook-for-the-humanitarian-sector>

*This guidebook suggests strategies to mainstream gender in crisis resolution and emergency humanitarian aid. The different areas addressed include: education, food security, health, and protection. Delegates will find it useful to study the the problems identified that are specific to regions confronted with conflict. It also shows how these problems have different consequences for women and girls and offers policy options on how to counter gender inequalities.*

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2013). *Building Ties. Towards Integrated Strategies & Policies Empowering Palestinian Women* [Report]. Retrieved 21 July 2014 from: [http://palestine.unwomen.org/~media/field\\_office\\_palestine/attachments/publications/2014/buildingties\\_en.pdf](http://palestine.unwomen.org/~media/field_office_palestine/attachments/publications/2014/buildingties_en.pdf)

*Important to understand are the implications the conflict in Gaza has had for the empowerment of women, which this report synthesizes. It particularly emphasizes 10 aspects of how to empower Palestinian women. These areas include: health, education, labor, and violence against women. More specifically, it also offers explanations as to why strategies to tackle those issues have to be uniquely designed to fit the special needs of Palestinian women.*

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. (2014). *UN Women in Palestine, Issue 6* [Newsletter]. Retrieved 21 July 2015 from: [http://palestine.unwomen.org/~media/field\\_office\\_palestine/attachments/publications/2014/newsletter\\_6\\_en.pdf](http://palestine.unwomen.org/~media/field_office_palestine/attachments/publications/2014/newsletter_6_en.pdf)

*One of UN-Women in Palestine's core newsletters, this offers a great overview of the obstacles to empowerment facing women in the oPt and more specifically in Gaza. It offers an overview of policies employed to fully implement the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence Against Women and to combat violence against women. It is a short, yet concise paper that offers a great introduction to the implications of the conflict in Gaza for women's empowerment. It also mentions the lack of access to justice for victims of GBV, as well as the outcome of the 2013 Conference on Gender-Based Violence held in Gaza.*

United Nations Population Fund. (2014). *Reproductive Rights are Human Rights: A Handbook for National Human Rights Institutions*. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from: <http://www.unfpa.org/publications/reproductive-rights-are-human-rights>

*The first chapter of this handbook is a great resource for delegates, as it offers an overview of key definitions of associated terms, like reproductive health care and respect for bodily integrity, as well as concise examples on how these rights can be implemented. This handbook overall emphasizes that reproductive rights are human rights. It explains in-depth what rights are comprised within the term "reproductive rights." UNFPA also outlines throughout why and to what extent adolescents' reproductive health rights should be targeted in a holistic approach.*

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2010). *Relief and Social Services – Women's Programme* [Background Note]. Retrieved 17 August 2015 from: <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/20100119141655.pdf>

*This document offers an overview of the history of UNRWA's women's program. It also describes what changes have been undertaken in recent years, in which region, and how the program helped women to empower themselves and become active members in their communities. It also highlights achievements of the program, which is a great resource to see what prospects UNRWA work has for the future.*

United Nations, Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2015). *Health Department Annual Report 2014*. Retrieved 21 July 2015 from: [http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/health\\_department\\_annual\\_report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/health_department_annual_report_2014.pdf)

*The annual report of UNRWA offers an overview of accomplishments and challenges that its Department of Health encountered in the year 2014. Chapter 2, on maternal and child health, focuses on issues that are still very present in the oPt, for example coverage for pre- and post-natal care. This report outlines not only the strategies employed by UNRWA, but also to what extent they were successful. It also offers a set of data related to health, for example the number of patients served and the rate of child mortality in UNRWA's fields of operation.*

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## II. Improving Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance and Relief for Palestinian Refugees in Syria

### *Introduction*

Humanitarian needs in the Syrian Arab Republic have increased dramatically since the beginning of the armed conflict in 2011.<sup>214</sup> With over 250,000 people killed and over one million injured due to the conflict, the crisis in Syria has become a focal point of many humanitarian aid relief efforts globally.<sup>215</sup> Much of Syria is riddled by daily violence, road closures are frequent, air raids kill many, and the conditions have worsened with no clear end in sight.<sup>216</sup> Food and water resources are scarce, less than half of the country's hospitals are functioning, schools have been heavily disrupted, and outbreaks of diseases have spiked.<sup>217</sup> The suffering of those in Syria is exacerbated by the blocking of movement disallowing refugees to flee into neighboring countries: Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Lebanese Republic; both countries have now closed their borders as a response to already hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing the violence.<sup>218</sup> Such border closings have given Palestinian refugees (already refugees from their homeland) in Syria fewer options to avoid harm and have forced millions to find other means of moving to safety, including dangerous attempts to cross into the Republic of Turkey and beyond.<sup>219</sup>

Syria currently has 12 recognized refugee camps located near Damascus, Aleppo, and the Jordanian border.<sup>220</sup> The Syrian conflict has impacted all 12 Palestinian refugee camps and all 560,000 registered Palestine refugees, with 95% of the remaining 480,000 refugees in Syria in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>221</sup> Palestinian refugee camps are defined by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) as “a plot of land placed at the disposal of UNRWA by the host government to accommodate Palestine refugees and set up facilities to cater to their needs.”<sup>222</sup> UNRWA has been providing services and assistance with specific focus on Palestinian refugees displaced within Syria and to those who have fled to Lebanon, Jordan, and the Gaza Strip.<sup>223</sup> Presently, UNRWA estimates that \$415.4 million in funding is needed to meet the minimum needs of the Palestinian refugees in Syria, which would cover the provision of food aid, basic health services, and education.<sup>224</sup> However, in 2014 only 50% of those funds were available because of the lack of funding from voluntary donations.<sup>225</sup>

A primary function of the United Nations (UN) since its creation has been to provide humanitarian assistance during times of crisis, such as the current case in Syria.<sup>226</sup> Humanitarian aid is the provision of goods and services to relieve the suffering of populations as a result of manmade or natural catastrophes.<sup>227</sup> It is usually provided by UN agencies, such as UNRWA, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or other civil society actors.<sup>228</sup> This makes the need for coordination of aid imperative to ensure its effectiveness.<sup>229</sup> Coordination of humanitarian aid can include the sharing of staff, resources, communication systems, and logistics across UN agencies, NGOs, and other actors to ensure service delivery.<sup>230</sup> Technology is playing an increasing vital role in this coordination and delivery of humanitarian aid; in particular, increased communications have led to more cohesive partnerships in delivering the aid and responding to crises.<sup>231</sup>

<sup>214</sup> UN OCHA, *2015 Strategic Response Plan*, 2015.

<sup>215</sup> UN OCHA, *About the Crisis*, 2015.

<sup>216</sup> UN OCHA, *2015 Strategic Response Plan*, 2015.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> IRIN, *A Timeline of Syria's Closing Borders*, 2015.

<sup>219</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal 2015*, 2015.

<sup>220</sup> UNRWA, *Where We Work – Camp Profiles*, 2011.

<sup>221</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Crisis*, 2015.

<sup>222</sup> UNRWA, *Palestine Refugees*.

<sup>223</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Crisis*, 2015.

<sup>224</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal*, 2015.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> UN DPI, *Deliver Humanitarian Aid*.

<sup>227</sup> UN DPI, *Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Assistance*, 2015.

<sup>228</sup> UN DPI, *Deliver Humanitarian Aid*.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*; UN OCHA, *What is the Cluster Approach?*

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> UN General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization*, 2013.

However, challenges that hinder coordination efforts exist. Among some of the most difficult challenges remain risks to personal safety for aid workers and refugees, disruptions in and/or lack of funding for services and goods, lack of preparation for crisis and disagreement in humanitarian coordination approaches.<sup>232</sup> In one Palestinian refugee camp located in Yarmouk, Syria, attacks by armed militants effectively stopped vital medical services provided by the health clinic and put volunteer medical professionals in life or death situations daily.<sup>233</sup> Dangerous situations point to the need especially for protective services not only for Palestinian refugees themselves but also to humanitarian personnel present in the area.<sup>234</sup> Overall, these conditions have not only placed extreme pressures on providing emergency relief assistance, but have also severely threatened to derail long-term development programs that are aimed at alleviating poverty and empowering Palestinian refugees in Syria.<sup>235</sup>

### ***International and Regional Framework***

Humanitarian assistance has its legal roots in both international humanitarian law, which specifically works to protect those affected by armed conflict, and international human rights law, which is aimed more specifically at the responsibilities of the state to provide basic human rights to its people.<sup>236</sup> Among the seminal documents establishing international humanitarian law are the *Hague Convention* (1907), the four *Geneva Conventions* (1949) and *Additional Protocols I and II* (1977).<sup>237</sup> These documents establish that it is the responsibility of those involved in the armed conflict to provide humanitarian assistance to the civilians within their control.<sup>238</sup> However, they stipulate that in times of armed conflict where an occupation exists, it is possible for humanitarian organizations to take over the responsibility of providing this work to ensure a minimal level of humanity is afforded.<sup>239</sup>

Additionally, international human rights law sets out to establish the basic right to human life, freedom from torture, freedom of movement, rights to social and economic needs, and an adequate status of living.<sup>240</sup> These are established through the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide* (1948), the *International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) (1966), the *Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) (1966, and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) (1979).<sup>241</sup> While these do not directly point to the right to humanitarian assistance, some argue that the basic establishment of the rights to life and a certain standard of living could give individuals the right to hold their states accountable for providing these rights or allowing other entities to do so, which leaves room for humanitarian agencies to become a relevant factor.<sup>242</sup> The ability to cite internationally accepted norms for the basic provisions of life and dignity provide a framework and serve as a point of reference for the kinds of goods and services humanitarian agencies can provide.<sup>243</sup>

One of the most important documents concerning the rights of refugees is the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*.<sup>244</sup> This document, in accordance with Article 14 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948), provides the definition and rights of refugees.<sup>245</sup> It establishes the term refugee as referring to someone unable or not willing to return to their country of origin due to a fear of persecution due to their political opinions, race, religion, nationality or membership to a specific social group.<sup>246</sup> Key to this is the concept that refugees are not subjected to the same observance of borders and immigration laws as a result of their status as a refugee.<sup>247</sup> They

<sup>232</sup> UN DPI, *Top UN relief official warns humanitarian workers facing 'increasingly complex' situations*, 2015; Humphries, *Improving Humanitarian Coordination: Common Challenges and Lessons Learned from the Cluster Approach*, 2013.

<sup>233</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria: Red Cross Red Crescent is calling for greater support for refugees*, 2015.

<sup>234</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl visits Syria*, 2015.

<sup>235</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal 2015*, 2015.

<sup>236</sup> Hader, *International Legal Frameworks for Humanitarian Action*, 2013.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>244</sup> *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1967.

<sup>245</sup> *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*

shall not be subjected to three particular issues: discrimination, penalization, and/or expulsion back to the country from which the refugee legitimately fears for their safety and well-being.<sup>248</sup> In December of 2014, the UN General Assembly (GA) adopted resolution 69/88 on “Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.”<sup>249</sup> This resolution specifically calls on Member States to continue supporting the efforts of UNRWA in providing relief and aid to Palestinian refugees immersed in the crisis in Syria.<sup>250</sup> In particular, the resolution calls for continued observance of the *Convention of the Rights of the Child*, the CEDAW and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.<sup>251</sup> By underlining these conventions the GA highlights the special need for women’s and children’s health services, educational services, and specialized treatment to be provided where possible, as these needs can often be especially overlooked in times of crisis.<sup>252</sup>

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs’ (OCHA) 2015 Strategic Response Plan and the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) and the 2015 Strategic Response Plan (SRP) from OCHA provide a brief overview of the crisis with both qualitative and quantitative data and analysis on the people that are food insecure, displaced, and impoverished.<sup>253</sup> The SRP focuses on five areas of concentration for better delivery of services including: “protection of and access to affected people;” delivery of emergency “life-saving and life-sustaining assistance;” strengthening the resilience of affected communities and institutions; ensuring “harmonized coordination” mechanisms; and capacity building and support to all humanitarian responders.<sup>254</sup> In particular, the strategy raises awareness of the inability for many Palestinian refugees to move about freely since many Palestinian refugees suffer from insufficient travel documents.<sup>255</sup> In addition to highlighting key challenges and areas for improvement, the 3RP outlines the humanitarian assistance response plans created by the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Republic of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey created as a coherent regional strategy for tackling the issue of refugees in Syria as well as sets a good example for coordination efforts.<sup>256</sup>

### ***Role of the International System***

The international system has played a key role in the response delivered to Syria’s refugee populations. OCHA is the UN Secretariat’s primary body tasked with coordinating responses to humanitarian crises.<sup>257</sup> OCHA’s work has included the provision of the SRP that attempts to bring together regional partners as well as other humanitarian agents in concerted efforts to both mitigate and end the crisis in Syria.<sup>258</sup> As an active participant in the SRP for the Whole of Syria (WoS) approach, and a part of the 3RP, UNRWA is continually named as the single, largest organization charged with coordinating efforts with other organizations to specifically address the needs of Palestinian refugees.<sup>259</sup> Given the large need for assistance and difficulties in maintaining permanent, operational camps for Palestinian refugees in Syria, UNRWA has established presences in neighboring countries including Jordan and Lebanon, which UNRWA hopes will contribute to the strengthening of support of services provided within Syria.<sup>260</sup>

Other UN bodies working to provide humanitarian relief in Syria include: the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the UN World Food Programme (WFP), and the World Health Organization (WHO).<sup>261</sup> The WFP is particularly focused on delivering

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<sup>248</sup> *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951.

<sup>249</sup> UN General Assembly, *Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/RES/69/88)*, 2014.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>253</sup> UN OCHA, *2015 Strategic Response Plan*, 2014.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> UNHCR, *Regional Refugee & Resiliency Response Plan 2015-2016: In Response to the Syria Crisis; Regional Strategic Overview*, 2014.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> UN DPI, *Deliver Humanitarian Aid*.

<sup>258</sup> UN OCHA, *2015 Strategic Response Plan*, 2014.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>260</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal*, 2015.

<sup>261</sup> UN DPI, *Deliver Humanitarian Aid*; UN WFP, *Syria – Brief*, 2015; WHO, *Keeping Syrian children free from polio at home and across the border*, 2015; UNICEF, *Syrian Crisis*, 2015.



food to those affected by the conflict, especially women, nursing mothers, and children.<sup>262</sup> The WFP in particular is a large food aid provider for emergency assistance and provides nutritious meals for students.<sup>263</sup> Critically, UNRWA has received large donations from the WFP for food aid targeted for use by Palestinian refugees from Syria.<sup>264</sup> Donations of food aid from the WFP can often help to provide key rations when UNRWA's funding is insufficient.<sup>265</sup>

With the instability of operations within Syria, UNRWA has had to also strengthen its partnerships with intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and NGOs in the region, including in neighboring countries such as Lebanon and Jordan.<sup>266</sup> Local NGOs, such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), have played a large role in providing humanitarian assistance in the Syrian crisis.<sup>267</sup> A particular hardship for coordination, however, is the constant inaccessibility for many organizations into Syria.<sup>268</sup> Currently, only 14 NGOs are allowed to provide aid in Syria while 107 national NGOs have the permission by the Syrian government to operate.<sup>269</sup> This decreases the amount of assistance available to refugees in remote locations and areas where roads have been compromised due to extreme violence and road closures by rebel groups.<sup>270</sup> As such, cross-border operations have been set up by UNRWA with other UN agencies to allow for regional partnerships to expand in the hopes of reaching more remotely located refugees within Syria.<sup>271</sup> The IFRC provides access for IGOs to remote areas within Syria and SARC helps to transport and distribute 60% of all UN relief aid moved into Syria.<sup>272</sup> The UN's largest partner in transferring aid and carrying out logistics works to provide services is SARC.<sup>273</sup> The conflict itself has cut off access to roads that are necessary to transport food aid, medicines, and other goods, making the work of organizations like the IFRC and SARC imperative.<sup>274</sup> At times, roads will open for a short period of time due to "localized truces." To capitalize on these openings, UN agencies, NGOs, IGOs, and other actors have had to work together to provide the maximum amount of services in the shortest amount of time.<sup>275</sup> Critically, UN agencies have established hubs from which services can be provided.<sup>276</sup> These hubs are located in Aleppo, Homs, Quamishli, and Tartous; they provide stability for humanitarian aid relief workers to work from deliver services within and throughout Syria.<sup>277</sup>

### ***Challenges to Coordinating Humanitarian Assistance***

Coordinating responses to international crisis can be difficult.<sup>278</sup> Under-Secretary-General for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, touched on some of these difficulties in an address to the UN Security Council.<sup>279</sup> Road closures, hostilities and funding continue to be a hindrance to the delivery of goods.<sup>280</sup> Yet while official UN envoys face challenges in reaching Syrian civilians, UNRWA has found more success in working in concerted efforts with local partnerships.<sup>281</sup> The camp at Yarmouk in Syria, for instance, once was an important point of delivery as it was an unofficial camp adopted and created by Palestinian refugees and held one of the largest populations of Palestinian refugees.<sup>282</sup> In late 2012, the refugee camp of Yarmouk was

<sup>262</sup> UN WFP, *Syria Emergency*, 2015.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>264</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA and WFP Partner to Secure Food Assistance for Palestine Refugees from Syria in Lebanon*, 2015.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> UN DPI, *Palestinian refugee crisis a 'time bomb' for Middle East region*, 2015.

<sup>267</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Emergency Appeal Operation Update*, 2014.

<sup>268</sup> UNHCR, *Updated Overview: 2015 Syria Response Plan and 2015-2016 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan*, 2015.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>272</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Emergency appeal operations update: Syria: Complex emergency*, 2015.

<sup>273</sup> UNHCR, *Updated Overview: 2015 Syria Response Plan and 2015-2016 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan*, 2015.

<sup>274</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Emergency Appeal Operation Update*, 2014.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>276</sup> UNHCR, *Updated Overview: 2015 Syria Response Plan and 2015-2016 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan*, 2015.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>278</sup> UN DPI, *Syria: humanitarian efforts falling short, UN relief chief warns, calling for end to violence*, 2014.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Response - Whole of Syria*, 2014.

<sup>280</sup> UN DPI, *Syria: humanitarian efforts falling short, UN relief chief warns, calling for end to violence*, 2014.

<sup>281</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal 2015*, 2015; UNRWA, *Where We Work – Camp Profiles*, 2011.

<sup>282</sup> UNRWA, *Where We Work – Camp Profiles*, 2011.

struck with air raids and suffered a sharp escalation in violence that meant a drastic deterioration in the conditions of life for the camps residents.<sup>283</sup> Governmental agencies and NGOs were crucial in coordinating the relief aid that eventually reached Yarmouk by negotiating truces and ensuring safe and easy access to the area.<sup>284</sup> Beyond violence and hardships, redundancies are prevalent in humanitarian work and can often lead to the wasteful spending of resources during crisis as was seen in the earthquake crisis in Haiti in 2010.<sup>285</sup> Lack of leadership and frameworks to create common goals and lack of communications can create gaps in services that are essential for refugees.<sup>286</sup>

### *Protection*

The need to provide protection for Palestinian refugees and UNRWA staff within Syria has grown substantially.<sup>287</sup> Providing the population with services is increasingly difficult due to the dangers posed to UNRWA personnel and other humanitarian staff.<sup>288</sup> UNRWA has repeatedly asked all parties involved in the Syrian conflict to cease all aggressive actions as it has caused further displacement of Palestinian refugees and caused mental, physical, and social harms to the Palestinian refugee population.<sup>289</sup> In response to the escalating violence in Syria, Palestinian refugees have sought alternative living arrangements that promise more safety, by fleeing the country; yet this has become more challenging of a solution as Jordan and Lebanon have both closed their borders to refugees from Syria.<sup>290</sup> Palestinian refugees are taking higher risks to escape and are exposing themselves to the dangers of traveling through sea traffickers, resulting in more deaths at sea by drowning.<sup>291</sup> Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt are also often denied basic rights, such as access to basic social services because they have no legal status.<sup>292</sup> Currently, the UNHCR is calling on the international community to allow for permanent resettlement plans, which enable Syrian refugees to be relocated to safer territories.<sup>293</sup> Issues concerning protection have resulted in service disruption because humanitarian aid workers are injured or killed, Palestinian refugees are continuously displaced forcing movement of the population, and at times Palestinian refugees are forced into even more remote locations where it can be significantly harder to reach.<sup>294</sup>

### *Insufficient Funding*

UNRWA has estimated that the total cost of providing the minimum amount of care for Palestinian refugees in Syria stands at \$415.4 million.<sup>295</sup> Meeting this funding goal has been a challenge considering that the year prior, a proposed budget of a different amount was only 50% fulfilled by the international community.<sup>296</sup> As UNRWA receives most of its funding from voluntary contributions, it has led to a chronic issue of underfunding for its services.<sup>297</sup> The insufficient funding has also led to the decrease in services provided to Palestinian refugees within Syria by reducing the amount of individual assistance provided.<sup>298</sup> These shortages have caused unhealthy coping mechanisms including reduced food intake.<sup>299</sup> In-kind donations of food and shared resources through partnerships established within the SRP help to lessen the impact that insufficient funding has had on Palestinian refugees, but these partnerships are recent developments and have been slow to take effect.<sup>300</sup>

<sup>283</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Successfully Delivers Aid to Yarmouk*, 2014.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> Patrick, *Haiti Earthquake Response: Emerging Evaluation Lessons*, 2011, pp. 1-14.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>287</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Response January-December 2014: Mid Year Review*, 2014.

<sup>288</sup> UN DPI, *Top UN relief official warns humanitarian workers facing 'increasingly complex' situations*, 2015.

<sup>289</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal 2015*, 2015.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>293</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Projected Resettlement Needs 2016*, 2015.

<sup>294</sup> British Red Cross, *The Joint Call: Protecting aid workers in Syria*, 2015.

<sup>295</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal 2015*, 2015.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>300</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal*, 2015.

### *Strategies for Implementation of Coordinated Humanitarian Assistance*

Some of the solutions towards improving the coordination of humanitarian assistance include enhanced information sharing, communications, and joint planning and monitoring schemes.<sup>301</sup> The first Regional Response Plan in 2012 by the UNHCR was an effort to create coordinated responses to the humanitarian crisis in Syria.<sup>302</sup> It pulled together seven UN agencies and 28 NGOs working across Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey to appeal for joint funding to collectively address the humanitarian crisis in Syria.<sup>303</sup> As the crisis expanded, so did the number of those affected and, subsequently, the funding required to cope with the amount of refugees (in total from Syria not only those of Palestinian origin).<sup>304</sup> This resulted in an updated plan supported by 44 national and international agencies.<sup>305</sup> The funds were asked to ensure the implementation of various protections including guaranteeing entry to the general population of Syrian refugees into neighboring countries and that provisions would be there for refugees, which include food rations and shelter.<sup>306</sup> Additionally, the plan asked for more concerted communications.<sup>307</sup> This request resulted in the formation of a web portal created by the UNHCR that would provide weekly, updated reports on the situation in Syria as well as within neighboring countries.<sup>308</sup> In subsequent years, the Regional Response Plans have been renewed.<sup>309</sup>

Roads are essential for large amounts of relief supplies such as food aid, water, and other goods to enter a conflict region.<sup>310</sup> The UN Security Council has called for the opening of access to once-forbidden roads into Syria through SC resolution 2165 and resolution 2191.<sup>311</sup> While challenges persist in this regard, with the adoption of resolution 2165, the SC accomplished an important task; it calls for the collaboration between humanitarian operations being led by Syria's internal operations, cross-border assistance with Turkey, and cross-border assistance from Jordan.<sup>312</sup> This call to action from the UN body in charge of the maintenance of international peace and security was crucial support.

One of the most concerted and recent developments at regional coordination has been the development of the WoS approach.<sup>313</sup> The establishment of the WoS approach was introduced by the adoption of SC resolution 2165 in September 2014.<sup>314</sup> Notably, this approach garnered support from over 100 humanitarian actors.<sup>315</sup> This approach attempts to consolidate the efforts being done by so many humanitarian actors, including UNRWA, within Syria and neighboring areas, to work more efficiently together providing aid.<sup>316</sup> It also seeks to reduce duplication of work and projects, ensure greater accountability, and increase the effectiveness of the programs being implemented and provided to refugees within Syria.<sup>317</sup> The WoS follows a "cluster" approach for addressing issues with coordinating humanitarian relief.<sup>318</sup> This cluster method was adopted after the 2005 Humanitarian Response Review, which highlighted the existence of gaps in cooperation in the delivery of humanitarian aid.<sup>319</sup> Towards the full operation of this approach, the WoS Inter-Sector/Cluster Coordination Group (ISCCG) was created.<sup>320</sup> The WoS coordinating communication systems have included the establishment of two levels of coordination efforts: the WoS

<sup>301</sup> UNHCR, *2015 Syria Response Plan and 2015-2016 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan*.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> UNHCR, *Revised Syria Regional Response Plan*, 2012.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>309</sup> UNHCR, *Syria Regional Response Plan (January - December 2013)*, 2013.

<sup>310</sup> UN WFP, *WFP Airlifts Bring Aid To Most Vulnerable In Northeast Syria Amid Growing Challenges*, 2014.

<sup>311</sup> UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Bulletin*, 2015; UN Security Council, *Middle East (S/RES/2165 (2014))*, 2014; UN Security Council, *Middle East (S/RES/2191 (2014))*, 2014.

<sup>312</sup> UN Security Council, *Middle East (S/RES/2165 (2014))*, 2014.

<sup>313</sup> UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Response - Whole of Syria*, 2014.

<sup>314</sup> UN Security Council, *Middle East (S/RES/2165 (2014))*, 2014.

<sup>315</sup> UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Response - Whole of Syria*, 2014.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>317</sup> UN OCHA, *Terms of Reference Whole of Syria (WOS) Inter-Sector/Cluster Coordination Group (ISCCG)*, 2015.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>319</sup> Harvard University, *Humanitarian Coordination*, 2014.

<sup>320</sup> UN OCHA, *Terms of Reference Whole of Syria (WOS) Inter-Sector/Cluster Coordination Group (ISCCG)*, 2015.

Coordination group and the Hub-Level Coordination system.<sup>321</sup> Between these two groups, efforts have been made to enhance and streamline communications between the larger Syria Coordination and their Hub-Level (country level) counterparts.<sup>322</sup> Some of the major WoS coordination points include: camp coordination and camp management, education, protection and community services, food security, health, and logistics.<sup>323</sup> These efforts in joint planning and communication are being done in the hopes of creating more effective humanitarian responses for refugees throughout Syria.<sup>324</sup> Among some of the successes reported by enhanced cooperation efforts, is the dispatching of 2,027 trucks carrying vital food, medical, water, and hygiene and sanitation supplies across the borders from Turkey and Jordan.<sup>325</sup> This type of collaboration for cross-border assistance is crucial for providing quick delivery of goods to refugees in Syria; as such, cooperation with neighboring countries can often be vital in providing life-saving aid.<sup>326</sup>

#### *UNRWA Internal Review*

In addition to its participation in regional frameworks and with the adoption of the WoS approach for external coordination, UNRWA is highly focused on streamlining its internal monitoring and planning through their results-based monitoring framework.<sup>327</sup> These efforts are being specifically aimed towards its work in Syria.<sup>328</sup> Focusing inwards on streamlining efforts will hopefully lead to more efficient spending of resources and better serve Palestinian refugees in Syria.<sup>329</sup> Of important concern is UNRWA's efforts to develop internal standards and frameworks.<sup>330</sup> Such emphases are being placed on management reforms, especially in relation to results-based management; the improvement of health reforms like their family health team approach; increasing budget clarity to better communicate needs with donors; and efforts to further implement considerations for gender and disability needs within the populations they serve.<sup>331</sup> By increasing efficiency of UNRWA, it is hoped that the agency will continue to function at a high-level as a reliable partner within the WoS approach and as an operator of the SRP and 3RP throughout the Syria.<sup>332</sup>

#### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, while there are many challenges facing enhanced coordination of humanitarian relief and assistance for Palestinian refugees, such as issues of safety, insufficient funding, disagreements on common coordination processes, and difficulties in preparing for crises, there are steps being taken to create more cohesive work with key stakeholders. International bodies and regional partners are establishing cohesive working groups to communicate on projects and streamline the management of aid to refugees, information sharing and the implementation of advanced technologies are enhancing the delivery of services, and political processes are leading to brief truces in violence that allow for goods to be delivered to the most vulnerable. However, there is a gap in the active participation of UNRWA within these more concerted regional efforts as outlined by the SRP, 3RP, and the WoS approach. Due to UNRWA's focus on a specific population within the crisis, it has at times become a barrier to in partnerships and to finding solutions for the problem as a whole. In spite of such barriers and challenges all humanitarians face, the coordination of humanitarian efforts is paramount to decreasing the duplication of services, in increasing efficiency, in providing the safest environments possible for staff, and in ensuring the largest amount of people are assisted and provided relief.

#### **Further Research**

Services continue to flow and be distributed within Syria to assist Palestinian refugees, however these challenges have temporarily disrupted, and in some cases, completely halted critical aid from helping those most in need. What

<sup>321</sup> UN OCHA, *Coordination for the Whole of Syria*, 2015.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> UN OCHA, *Terms of Reference Whole of Syria (WOS) Inter-Sector/Cluster Coordination Group (ISCCG)*, 2015.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

<sup>327</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal*, 2015.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> United States, *Framework for the Cooperation between the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the United States of America in 2015*.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal*, 2015.



are some ways UNRWA could work more effectively with pre-established partnerships and groups to enhance the aid going to Palestinian refugees? What sorts of partnerships would help a body like UNRWA work efficiently to achieve its goals with regards to supporting Palestinian refugees? Does the Cluster Approach outlined within the SRP seem like an appropriate mechanism for UNRWA to abide by? Are there other things that could be done to provide more safety to UNRWA volunteers and staff in Syria? How can UNRWA adapt its services to provide more rapid responses to the plight of Palestinian refugees? Which are some of the partners best positioned to assist UNRWA in these efforts? What types of technologies could potentially be used to enhance services aimed at serving Palestine refugees in Syria? In examining external coordination processes and internal mechanisms, what areas should UNRWA focus on to best serve Palestinian refugees in Syria?



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*This foundational document establishes the rights and privileges afforded to civilians during times of war and armed conflict. It stipulates that the occupying power of a territory under conflict has the obligation to provide basic human rights to civilians underneath their control. This is an important document for delegates to familiarize themselves with, as it provides the framework from which many humanitarian aid organizations base their obligations.*

Human Rights Watch. (2015). Syria. Retrieved 21 July 2015 from: <https://www.hrw.org/middle-east/n-africa/syria>

*Human Rights Watch highlights a number of human rights concerns related to the situation in Syria including arbitrary arrest, disappearances, and torture of people. This source outlines the difficulties that UNRWA has in implementing humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, delegates will be able to understand how refugees should be protected in protracted relief situations by reviewing the situation in Syria with this source.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-ninth session. (2014). *Report of the Commission-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (A/69/13)*. Retrieved 20 July 2015 from: <http://undocs.org/A/69/13>

*Providing a contextual overview of UNRWA's work in the Middle East including Syria, this source is a vital. The report provides a comparison of how UNRWA's services in Syria are unique especially in comparison to Jordan or Gaza where the focus is on immediate humanitarian assistance such as food or water, sanitation, and hygiene programs rather than long-term strategies around health care and education. Delegates will also gain a greater understanding of how UNRWA's goals translate to concrete outputs and will see a comparison of what was hoped to have occurred and, ultimately, was able to be accomplished the year before.*

United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance. (2014). *2015 Syria Response Plan: Summary December 2014*. Retrieved 16 July 2015 from:

[https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Syria/RM\\_Syria\\_20141217\\_upd20150223.pdf](https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Syria/RM_Syria_20141217_upd20150223.pdf)

*This document produced by OCHA provides a quick information sheet on the situation in Syria, the overall strategy being taken by the UN, and the status of the response plan. It will provide information to delegates regarding the the number of displaced persons, the number of people infected with vaccine-preventable diseases, and the number of people requiring water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance. It also highlights the importance of coordinated efforts and responding collectively to the situation.*

United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance. (2015). *2015 Strategic Response Plan*. Retrieved 28 September 2015 from:

[https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/2015\\_SRP\\_Syria\\_EN\\_AdvanceCopy\\_171214.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/2015_SRP_Syria_EN_AdvanceCopy_171214.pdf)

*This document details the specific plight of Palestinian refugees within Syria as well as the various coordinated efforts being organized to meet the needs of all those affected by the crisis in Syria. Additionally, it contains important tables that underscore the integrated humanitarian response plan decided upon by the organizations and agencies involved in the Strategic Response Plan. Specific objectives set forth by the SRP and how to reach and measure the success of those goals are outlined. Delegates will find this an easy way to see what those involved in the SRP and Whole of Syria approach are looking for as signs of the improvement of conditions in Syria for Palestinian refugees.*

United Nations Relief and Works for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2010). *UNRWA Medium Term Strategy*. Retrieved 20 July 2015 from: <http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/201003317746.pdf>

*This document outlines UNRWA's strategies for the period 2010-2015. When this report was drafted, the situation in Syria was more stable, however the political climate has changed since its development and its time period concludes at the end of 2015. In spite of this, the report highlights a number of strategies for managing humanitarian assistance in conflict areas. This report will*

*provide delegates with a crucial overview on how UNRWA first envisioned its response to humanitarian aid how it would be conducted. Additionally, delegates will be able to use this source to determine if UNRWA has been successful thus far in planning their strategic responses to their most current challenges.*

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2015). *2014 oPt Emergency Appeal: Annual Report*. Retrieved 16 July 2015 from:

[http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/2014\\_opt\\_emergency\\_appeal\\_report\\_0.pdf](http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/2014_opt_emergency_appeal_report_0.pdf)

*While this report is principally focused on the situation in Gaza, it provides statistics on the cost of supporting the humanitarian assistance and where funding comes from for the Agency. The report also highlights the vulnerabilities and strategies that are frequently taken in supporting Palestinian Refugees in Gaza. A number of the strategies that are proposed here could be used in discussing the situation of Palestinian refugees in Syria. Delegates will find this useful in gaining a quick overview of the status of the Palestinian refugee within the occupied Palestinian territories – a situation many of the refugees present in Syria have likely fled.*

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2015). *2014 Syria Crisis Response: Annual Report*. Retrieved 16 July 2015 from:

[http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/syria\\_crisis\\_response\\_annual\\_report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/syria_crisis_response_annual_report_2014.pdf)

*As an executive summary of UNRWA Annual Report, this document provides an overall description of the situation in Syria especially in the context of Palestinian Refugees. The report describes the various ways that UNRWA has adapted to the situation in Syria to continue providing aid and support to the region. This includes establishing health check points to provide access to health care services to Palestinian refugees without health care because previous facilities have become inoperable and displacement issues in neighboring countries as a result of the Syrian crisis. Furthermore, the report provides concrete statistics on the situation.*

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2015). *Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal 2015*. Retrieved 16 July 2015 from: <http://www.unrwa.org/resources/emergency-appeals/syria-regional-crisis-emergency-appeal-2015>

*This report provides specific examples of how the Syrian crisis has impacted UNRWA's work in Syria. The funding appeal further highlights the need for additional financial support in the region. The report provides concrete and detailed examples of the programs currently being implemented in Syria and the targets that UNRWA has set for 2015. Delegates can gain an in depth look at some of UNRWA's key programs in Syria with emphasis on the areas they most need extra funding with in order to successfully provide.*

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2015, June 17). *Food Assistance Offers Critical Support to Palestinian Refugees in Syria* [Press Release]. Retrieved 21 July 2015 from:

<http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/features/food-assistance-offers-critical-support-palestine-refugees-syria>

*This article demonstrates how food assistance impacts the lives of refugees in Syria. It focuses on how the program supported a mother of seven and ensures that her family receives the minimum nutritional requirements. This example will help illustrate to delegates how programs such as cash and food assistance can help those in need and what measures should be taken to ensure that these programs continue to be available to refugees.*

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### III. Strengthening Access to Education through the Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance (HRCRT) Policy

*“Education must do more than produce individuals who can read, write and count. It must nurture global citizens who can rise to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”*<sup>333</sup>

#### **Introduction**

Access to education is defined as the ability of students to enroll in classes, and to remain enrolled without being excluded on the basis of personal characteristics like gender, race, social and economic position of their family, disability, or other factors.<sup>334</sup> Promoting the right to education is crucial, as it is a prerequisite for developing sustainable societies and for ensuring prosperity.<sup>335</sup> However, universal access to basic education is a challenge that the international community still faces today.<sup>336</sup> Despite international efforts, the number of children of primary school age that do not attend school rose drastically between 2010 and 2013 compared to the years before, leading to a total of 59 million children around the globe out of school.<sup>337</sup> Almost half of those children live in countries affected by armed conflict.<sup>338</sup>

Access to education in emergency situations is of utmost importance, especially in the context of education for refugees, as they are considered a vulnerable group, and they are the main beneficiaries of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East’s (UNRWA) educational facilities.<sup>339</sup> One of the main challenges to access to education in UNRWA’s fields of operation is the number of drop-outs, which has been increasing due to the blockade on Gaza and the hostilities in Syria.<sup>340</sup> The drop-out rate in UNRWA’s fields of operation (excluding Syria) for the school year 2013-2014 was at 3.38% for male students, compared to 2.62% for the school year 2012-2013.<sup>341</sup> The female dropout rate was at 1.78% compared to 1.33% in the year before.<sup>342</sup> In addition, access to education in UNRWA’s field of operation is constantly restricted due to the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, as well as the conflicts in neighboring regions.<sup>343</sup>

The Human Rights, Conflict Resolution, and Tolerance Policy (HRCRT) introduced by UNRWA during its 2011 Education Reform, is a specific tool designed by UNRWA to implement human rights education into the curricula of its schools.<sup>344</sup> Human rights education is essential in the United Nations’ (UN) efforts to promote access to education, as its goal is the fulfillment of the right to education for everyone.<sup>345</sup> The definition of human rights education, as laid out in the “Plan of Action on the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education 1995-2004”, is “training, dissemination and information efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights through the imparting of knowledge and skills and the moulding of attitudes.”<sup>346</sup> Human rights education is crucial in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in the establishment of democratic processes, as it gives students the skills to become informed and active citizens.<sup>347</sup> Students can use this human rights framework to play

<sup>333</sup> Ban, *Remarks at the World Education Forum on "Sustainable Development Goals and Education"*, 2015.

<sup>334</sup> Dryden-Peterson, *Refugee Education: A Global Review*, 2011, p. 26.

<sup>335</sup> UNESCO, *The Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments*, 2000, p. 45.

<sup>336</sup> UNESCO & UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, 2007, p. 1.

<sup>337</sup> UNESCO, *A Growing Number of Children and Adolescents are out of School as Aid fails to meet the Mark*, 2015, p. 1.

<sup>338</sup> UNESCO & UNICEF, *Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All: Findings from the Global Initiative on Out-of-school Children*, 2015, p. 45.

<sup>339</sup> UN General Assembly, *Human Rights Questions: Human Rights Questions, Including Alternative Approaches for Improving the Effective Enjoyment of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Note by the Secretary-General (A/51/506/Add.1)*, 1996, p. 8; UNRWA, *What We Do: Education - Human Rights Education*.

<sup>340</sup> UNRWA, *Harmonized Results Report 2014*, 2015, p. 12.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>344</sup> UN General Assembly, *World Programme for Human Rights Education (A/RES/59/113)*, 2004, p. 1; UNRWA, *Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance Education*, 2013, p. 1.

<sup>345</sup> UNESCO & UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, 2007, p. 30.

<sup>346</sup> UN General Assembly, *Human Rights Questions: Human Rights Questions, Including Alternative Approaches for Improving the Effective Enjoyment of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Note by the Secretary-General (A/51/506/Add.1)*, 1996, p. 5.

<sup>347</sup> UNESCO & UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, 2007, p. 27.

an active role in conflict resolution processes because this education will enable them to be respectful and compassionate towards the human rights of others.<sup>348</sup> Fostering a community that recognizes basic human rights, including the right to education, is a way to develop a society that will continue to promote access to education and find ways to keep children in schools.<sup>349</sup> Human rights education, thus, has been a part of UNRWA curricula for years, however, the HRCRT policy introduced in 2011 is also anchored in international best practices and the complete framework of international human rights standards.<sup>350</sup>

### ***International and Regional Framework***

Access to education is one of the basic human rights enshrined in many different human rights instruments, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948) and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) (1966).<sup>351</sup> The UDHR and the ICESCR are the main documents providing the basis of the HRCRT and other efforts to improve access to education.<sup>352</sup> Additionally, the 1989 *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) reiterates education as a basic right, and further includes human rights education as an essential part of education as a whole.<sup>353</sup> In addition to these foundational documents, an important milestone of the international community in improving access to education in all aspects was the establishment of the Education For All (EFA) movement.<sup>354</sup> EFA is an initiative launched by Member States at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in 2000, aiming to achieve education for all through six goals.<sup>355</sup> Through the EFA movement the international community began streamlining their efforts to make education a public good, accessible for every child.<sup>356</sup> Furthermore, the *Dakar Framework for Action*, adopted at the forum, showed a commitment to strengthen access to education in times of conflict, which is especially important for the mandate of UNRWA.<sup>357</sup>

In 2000, a thematic study on “Education in Situations of Emergency and Crisis” was developed, within the context of the Dakar World Education Forum.<sup>358</sup> In 2004, Human Rights Day, which is celebrated on 10 December, was dedicated to Human Rights Education, thus concluding the Decade for Human Rights Education, and launching the World Programme for Human Rights Education.<sup>359</sup> In 2007, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), jointly developed a “Human Rights-based Approach to Education for All.”<sup>360</sup> The framework included not only the right to education for all, but also emphasized the importance of a basic quality of education, as well as the protection of children in educational facilities.<sup>361</sup> According to this approach, human rights education allows for the empowerment of people, who are then able to claim their rights in a more determined way.<sup>362</sup> The framework is a compilation of recommendations and best practices for Member States to introduce a human rights-based approach to their educational policies.<sup>363</sup>

Additionally, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) continued the research on refugee education by publishing a report on “Refugee Education” in 2011.<sup>364</sup> The report emphasizes that refugee education should not only focus on access and quality, the main pillars of the EFA initiative, but also on protection.<sup>365</sup> In this case, protection refers to educational facilities becoming a safe haven for children, where they can find shelter and

<sup>348</sup> UNRWA, *Policy Education for Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance*, 2012, p. 10.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>350</sup> UNRWA, *Education Department Newsletter, Issue 4*, 2012, p. 8.

<sup>351</sup> UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948, art. 26; UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966, art. 13.

<sup>352</sup> UNESCO & UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, 2007, p. 7.

<sup>353</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*, 1989, art. 29.

<sup>354</sup> UNESCO & UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, 2007, p. xi.

<sup>355</sup> UNESCO, *Education for All Movement*.

<sup>356</sup> Dryden-Peterson, *Refugee Education: A Global Review*, 2011, p. 19.

<sup>357</sup> UNESCO, *The Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments*, 2000, p. 9; UNESCO, *Education in Situations of Emergency and Crisis: Challenges for the New Century*, 2000.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>359</sup> UN General Assembly, *World Programme for Human Rights Education (A/RES/59/113)*, 2005.

<sup>360</sup> UNESCO & UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, 2007.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, p. vii.

<sup>364</sup> Dryden-Peterson, *Refugee Education: A Global Review*, 2011.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

stability.<sup>366</sup> And in 2012, the General Assembly adopted the *Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training* with three main components to human rights education: “education about human rights,” “education through human rights,” and “education for human rights.”<sup>367</sup> These components reflect the main learner competencies of the HRCRT policy, which are “knowledge and understanding”, “attitudes and values”, and “skills.”<sup>368</sup>

Finally, the post-2015 development agenda has placed education as one of its crucial Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>369</sup> Goal 4 promotes universal access to primary and secondary education by 2030, and thus aims at reducing the number of out-of-school children.<sup>370</sup> Furthermore, access to education involves access to quality education, which means that it is also crucial to train educational personnel properly.<sup>371</sup> Goal 4 thus also aims to ensure qualitative education at all levels, for boys and girls, as well as life-long learning opportunities.<sup>372</sup> In its “Education Reform Strategy 2011-2015”, UNRWA recognized the importance of quality education; it serves as an incentive to further enhance access to education, and it prevents children that are already enrolled in school from dropping out.<sup>373</sup>

### ***Role of the International System***

UNRWA draws on the expertise of the international system to strengthen its own work and facilitate its daily tasks.<sup>374</sup> In this context, UNICEF and UNESCO are two important partners, especially with regards to the EFA initiative.<sup>375</sup> UNESCO prepares the monitoring reports of the EFA initiative.<sup>376</sup> The latest monitoring report from 2014, for example, focuses on different ways to finance access to education and the direct benefits education has.<sup>377</sup> Together with UNICEF, in 2015 UNESCO published a report entitled “Fixing the Broken Promise on Education for All”, which offers a comprehensive set of data on out-of-school children, and then contextualizes it by presenting the challenges that restrict access to education.<sup>378</sup>

UNRWA developed the HRCRT policy and related programs to echo the goals formulated in the *Plan of Action for the Decade for Human Rights Education*, and aims at strengthening observance and awareness of human rights and fundamental freedoms in order to build a sustainable and strong society.<sup>379</sup> The HRCRT policy also strengthens cooperation with human rights-related non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs).<sup>380</sup> For example, in 2012, UNRWA cooperated with Human Appeal International (a charity organization) to build additional classrooms in Gaza.<sup>381</sup>

For the implementation of its programs, UNRWA is supported by various NGOs, as was the case recently in Lebanon, where it received support from the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the Unite Lebanon Youth Project (ULYP).<sup>382</sup> The Norwegian Refugee Council is a NGO focusing on refugees and internally displaced persons in five specific areas, one of which is education.<sup>383</sup> ULYP is an active coordinator of education programs for underprivileged youth, including refugee children and children from low-income families.<sup>384</sup> Its programs include

<sup>366</sup> Dryden-Peterson, *Refugee Education: A Global Review*, 2011, p. 32.

<sup>367</sup> UN General Assembly, *Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (A/RES/66/137)*, 2012.

<sup>368</sup> UNRWA, *Policy Education for Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance*, 2012, p. 10.

<sup>369</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>371</sup> UNHCR, *Improving Access to Education for Asylum-Seekers, Refugee Children and Adolescents in Central Europe*, 2011, p. 29.

<sup>372</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, p. 7.

<sup>373</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Education Reform Strategy 2011-2015*, 2011, p. iv.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>375</sup> UNESCO, *Incheon Declaration, Education 2030: Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All*, 2015

<sup>376</sup> UNESCO, *Monitoring*.

<sup>377</sup> UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2014 3/4, Teaching and Learning: Achieving quality for all*, 2014.

<sup>378</sup> UNESCO & UNICEF, *Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All: Findings from the Global Initiative from Out-of-school Children*, 2015, p. 17.

<sup>379</sup> UNRWA, *Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance Education*, 2013, p. 1.

<sup>380</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Education Reform Strategy 2011-2015*, 2011, p. 55.

<sup>381</sup> UNRWA, *Human Appeal International and UNRWA Launch Education Project in Gaza*, 2012.

<sup>382</sup> UNRWA, *Education in Lebanon*.

<sup>383</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, *The NRC at a Glance: Rights Respected and People Protected*, 2015.

<sup>384</sup> Unite Lebanon Youth Project, *About ULYP*, 2013.

activities for pre-school aged children, which are organized three times a year and help develop children's math and English skills amongst others.<sup>385</sup> They also hold seminars for non-working mothers, teaching them English and introducing them to information technology (IT) and the Internet.<sup>386</sup> UNRWA explicitly plans to extend its cooperation with local academic institutions and NGOs in order to implement the HRCRT policy.<sup>387</sup> However, some challenges remain, like adequate and efficient teacher training, and the lack of communication and cooperation with the wider community.<sup>388</sup>

#### *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East*

UNRWA is the prime facilitator of primary education for Palestinian refugees in its five regions of action, and as such its HRCRT policy has the potential of reaching a high number of children and having a vast impact.<sup>389</sup> UNRWA's goal within the HRCRT policy is to offer Palestinian children the opportunity to educate themselves on human rights, and use conflict resolution and tolerance as tools to act as advocates for their needs and interests.<sup>390</sup> Furthermore, students within the HRCRT policy will have learned that in order to construct a sustainable and democratic society, it is not only important to advocate for their personal rights, but also to uphold and respect the rights of others in their own community and beyond.<sup>391</sup> This is important in the Palestinian context, as the HRCRT policy is designed to empower Palestinians when developing their identity and to promote their sense of community.<sup>392</sup>

In October 2011, UNRWA started a reform of its overall education policy, to better address the needs and requirements of the youth in its five fields of operation: the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.<sup>393</sup> Within its "Education Reform Strategy 2011-2015," UNRWA decided to further promote the implementation of HRCRT programs to strengthen its overall objective of providing better access to quality education.<sup>394</sup> The reform is in line with the EFA directives and further promotes access to education.<sup>395</sup> For example, in areas where UNRWA did not have enough educational facilities to allow access to the classroom for all students, it started operating in double shifts, offering morning classes and afternoon classes.<sup>396</sup> Finally, the Syrian conflict continues to be a factor affecting UNRWA's policy-making, as it forces people to move across territories, further restricting UNRWA's activities and services.<sup>397</sup> Recently, UNRWA emphasized in its "Emergency Appeal on Syria," that it would continue in its efforts to provide Palestinian refugees with access to education as well as vocational training throughout the Syrian conflict.<sup>398</sup>

#### ***Promoting Access to Education through HRCRT in Schools***

Human rights education is an integral part of the new human rights-based approach to education, in which the HRCRT policy is enshrined.<sup>399</sup> The aim of a human rights-based approach to education is to give children the tools with which they can defend and uphold their human rights, while respecting the rights of others.<sup>400</sup> Thus, two integral elements of the HRCRT policy are the curriculum in primary and secondary schools, and the training of teachers.<sup>401</sup>

#### *HRCRT in Primary and Secondary Schools*

<sup>385</sup> Unite Lebanon Youth Project, *Our Programs: Happy*, 2013.

<sup>386</sup> Unite Lebanon Youth Project, *Our Programs: MOMs*, 2013.

<sup>387</sup> UNRWA, *Policy Education for Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance*, 2012, p. 8.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>389</sup> UN OHCHR, *UNRWA Submission to Reports mandated by Human Rights Council: "Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of human kind: best practices"*, 2013, p. 1.

<sup>390</sup> UNRWA, *Policy Education for Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance*, 2012, p. 8.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>393</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Education Reform Strategy 2011-2015*, 2011, p. iv.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. iv, 19.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>397</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal 2015*, 2015, p. 2.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>399</sup> UNESCO & UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, 2007, p. 3.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>401</sup> UNRWA, *Policy Education for Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance*, 2012, p. 13.

The “Plan of Action for the Decade for Human Rights Education” included components on how to mainstream a human rights-based approach into educational programs in primary and secondary schools.<sup>402</sup> UNRWA is one of three central providers of primary and secondary schools in its field of operation, besides national Ministries of Education and private schools, and thus it has a great impact on curricula in schools.<sup>403</sup> Its education programs reached a total of 472,165 children in the school year of 2013-2014.<sup>404</sup> By adopting a human rights-based approach in primary and secondary schools, the Plan of Action invited governments and other education stakeholders to create welcoming and inclusive classrooms, that would encourage children to attend school, strengthening access to education while reducing the rate of drop-outs.<sup>405</sup>

However, UNHCR notes that refugee education, including its human rights curriculum, is restrained by a lack of resources of both financial and human nature.<sup>406</sup> Since the quality of the education and the protection of the students within the schools are two important factors of refugee education, these restrictions pose a severe challenge to the deliverance of education for refugees.<sup>407</sup> UNRWA faces similar challenges in its fields of operation; due to the hostilities of 2014 in Gaza, many schools now serve as shelters, and the schools that still operate work on double or triple shifts.<sup>408</sup> As a result of this, school days had to be reduced, limiting curricula to a minimum.<sup>409</sup> Although the school year in UNRWA schools officially started on 19 August 2015, UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl noted that funding remains a major concern, and the agency needs to make efforts to ensure that it stays financially stable and prepared for the future.<sup>410</sup>

#### *Training of Teachers and other Education Professionals*

To train its education professionals adequately, in 2013, UNRWA developed a toolkit in cooperation with human rights NGOs and other civil society actors.<sup>411</sup> The toolkit offers practical information to UNRWA’s teaching staff, including 40 exercises they can directly use in their classroom.<sup>412</sup> The toolkit also aims to give staff guidance on how to create a tolerant classroom and how to resolve conflict effectively.<sup>413</sup> This strategy aims to remove “the sources of exclusion,” ultimately keeping students from dropping out.<sup>414</sup> The toolkit also outlines ways to relate every school subject back to human rights and access to education.<sup>415</sup> This is shown for example through the subject of mathematics; one of the questions teachers can discuss in their classroom is how to establish and evaluate statistics on access to education, and what consequences these have for Palestinian refugees.<sup>416</sup> The activities are designed to illustrate with real examples how human rights can be useful in the everyday life of the students, particularly in relation with their Palestinian identity.<sup>417</sup> However, a recent report on classroom practices, published by UNRWA, shows that teachers often lack the necessary training to create inclusive classrooms that encourage effective participation by students and that draw on students’ experiences.<sup>418</sup> In fact, according to the report, the atmosphere in the classrooms throughout all of UNRWA’s fields of operation was not participatory enough and lacked dialogue,

<sup>402</sup> UN General Assembly, *Human Rights Questions: Human Rights Questions, Including Alternative Approaches for Improving the Effective Enjoyment of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Note by the Secretary-General (A/51/506/Add.1)*, 1996, p. 12.

<sup>403</sup> UNICEF, *The situation of Palestinian Children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon*, 2010, p. 14.

<sup>404</sup> UNRWA, *Harmonized Results Report 2014*, 2015, p. 15.

<sup>405</sup> UN General Assembly, *Human Rights Questions: Human Rights Questions, Including Alternative Approaches for Improving the Effective Enjoyment of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Note by the Secretary-General (A/51/506/Add.1)*, 1996, p. 12; UN OHCHR, *Plan of Action for the Decade for Human Rights Education – First Phase*, 2006, p. 40.

<sup>406</sup> Dryden-Peterson, *Refugee Education: A Global Review*, 2011, p. 39.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>408</sup> UNRWA, *oPt Emergency Appeal 2015*, 2014, p. 6.

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>410</sup> UNRWA, *Statement of the Commissioner-General at the high-level ministerial meeting on the financial sustainability of UNRWA in New York*, 2015.

<sup>411</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Policy on Education for Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance: Teacher Toolkit*, 2013.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>414</sup> UNESCO, *Addressing Exclusion*.

<sup>415</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Policy on Education for Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance: Teacher Toolkit*, 2013, p. 60.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>418</sup> UNRWA, *Baseline Study of Classroom Practices in UNRWA Elementary Schools*, 2014, p. 40.



posing a barrier for children's access to education.<sup>419</sup> UNRWA concluded within this study that its toolkits have been an effective and a cost-efficient way to train its educational personnel; however, investments should be made to make up-to-date communication technologies available, and a more concise monitoring mechanism has to be developed to follow the implementation of both the policy and the toolkit.<sup>420</sup>

### ***Promoting Access to Education through the HRCRT Policy in the Wider Community***

Human rights education, and conflict resolution and tolerance as tools to facilitate it, also need to be accessible beyond elementary education.<sup>421</sup> Doing so will foster human rights observance in the wider community, including parents and civil society actors.<sup>422</sup> The HRCRT policy envisages human rights education will trigger a spillover effect from students on to their families, and from families onto the whole community.<sup>423</sup>

#### *Parental Education*

The importance of parents in promoting access to education was already recognized in the "Recommendation on Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms" adopted by UNESCO in 1974.<sup>424</sup> Parents are crucial in creating an enabling environment for their children, making them want to go to school and preventing them from dropping out.<sup>425</sup> In fact, UNRWA reported that in Jordan two of the main factors for students dropping out were related to either the parents being too busy, or the household not offering an enabling studying environment.<sup>426</sup> Furthermore, if parents did not have access to basic education, chances are proportionally higher that their children will not have access to education.<sup>427</sup> One efficient way to include parents is to contact them in case their child fails in school or indicates the wish to drop out, a strategy which so far has not been implemented by UNRWA.<sup>428</sup> Additionally, cooperation between schools and parents lacks implementation; on the one side because parents do not have the knowledge or the skills to communicate with school personnel, and on the other side because the schools are not committed enough to push for cooperation with parents.<sup>429</sup> At present, the potential that cooperation with parents bears for the human rights education of their children is not recognized in the HRCRT policy statement.<sup>430</sup> Nonetheless, UNRWA is committed to including parents in its education policy, which was shown in May 2015 in Syria, where the Parent Teacher Association organized workshops for parents and students as well as other members of the community who are stakeholders or participants in the HRCRT policy.<sup>431</sup>

#### *The involvement of civil society in human rights education*

Community-based organizations (CBOs) play a crucial role within UNRWA's broader education strategy, and more specifically within the HRCRT policy.<sup>432</sup> The HRCRT toolkit, for example, was developed in close cooperation with CBOs.<sup>433</sup> Those partnerships are an effective way to share knowledge between UNRWA and academic and community-based actors, who have a deeper understanding of the local population.<sup>434</sup> The relationship is mutually beneficial, as CBOs help spread good practices, which are essential for the implementation and harmonization of UNRWA's HRCRT policy; and UNRWA helps CBOs to manage themselves more efficiently.<sup>435</sup> CBOs are also helpful in engaging the wider community in human rights observances, thus helping to develop a hospitable

<sup>419</sup> UNRWA, *Baseline Study of Classroom Practices in UNRWA Elementary Schools*, 2014, p. 41.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>421</sup> UNESCO & UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, 2007, p. 17.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>423</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Policy on Education for Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance: Teacher Toolkit*, 2013, p. 22.

<sup>424</sup> UNESCO, *Recommendation on Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, 1974.

<sup>425</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA School Dropout: An Agency Wide Study*, 2013, p. 21.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>427</sup> UNESCO & UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, 2007, p. 89.

<sup>428</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA School Dropout: An Agency Wide Study*, 2013, p. 32.

<sup>429</sup> UNESCO & UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, 2007, p. 90.

<sup>430</sup> UNRWA, *Policy Education for Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance*, 2012, p. 15.

<sup>431</sup> UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Response Update 87*, 2015.

<sup>432</sup> UNRWA, *Policy Education for Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance*, 2012, p. 8; UNRWA, *UNRWA Education Reform Strategy 2011-2015*, 2011, p. 32.

<sup>433</sup> UNESCO, *Education in Situations of Emergency and Crisis: Challenges for the New Century*, 2000.

<sup>434</sup> UNRWA, *Policy Education for Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance*, 2012, p. 8.

<sup>435</sup> UNRWA, *Relief and Social Services: Community Based Organizations*, 2010, p. 3.

environment in which human rights, like the right to education, can be promoted.<sup>436</sup> UNRWA education reform, however, notes that partnerships with NGOs and CBOs still need to be strengthened and harmonized.<sup>437</sup> One of the problems that UNRWA still faces is that most of the cooperation with CBOs is informal in nature and is not based on clear guidelines that are common to all five fields of operation.<sup>438</sup> UNRWA is making efforts to formalize this cooperation, however, due to ongoing instabilities in fields of operation, this has proven to be difficult.<sup>439</sup>

### ***Case Study: School Parliaments in UNRWA's Fields of Operation***

One strategy that has been effective in enhancing access to education through the HRCRT policy is illustrated by the commitment of UNRWA to promoting the establishment of school parliaments (student governments or parliaments).<sup>440</sup> More specifically, during HRCRT teacher trainings, education personnel are shown ways to introduce school parliaments and guide students to create a human rights-based culture.<sup>441</sup> Additionally, a section of the Teacher Toolkit is dedicated to the creation of school parliaments.<sup>442</sup> The section highlights that school parliaments can promote participation and links with the community, describes areas within which students can address problems like barriers to accessing education, and discusses strategies to alleviate them.<sup>443</sup> According to UNRWA's 2014 Harmonized Results Report, a total of 648 schools in all five fields of operation launched school parliament projects.<sup>444</sup>

The school parliament conference organized in 2014 in the Irbid Camp in Jordan offered over 80 students the possibility to discuss human rights considerations and present thematic papers they prepared in advance.<sup>445</sup> Three papers, on peace, the right to education, and combating violence, were prepared and presented by schools from three different refugee camps in Jordan.<sup>446</sup> After presenting the papers, the students formulated recommendations on how to guarantee and promote human rights and education in the future.<sup>447</sup> In Lebanon, a Student Parliament Forum was organized in cooperation with the NRC.<sup>448</sup> At this forum, 250 students from different schools parliaments of UNRWA schools in Lebanon were represented.<sup>449</sup> Through this forum, UNRWA successfully raised awareness about the HRCRT Toolkit and the importance of school parliament as an educational activity.<sup>450</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

Access to education for all is a crucial topic for the international community, as evidenced in the newly adopted SDGs, which will shape the UN's work for the next 15 years.<sup>451</sup> UNRWA's HRCRT seeks to create a safe and welcoming environment inside schools and in the wider community to strengthen access to education, by removing the factors that may lead to drop-outs.<sup>452</sup> However, UNRWA faces a range of challenges that the HRCRT policy so far has not been able to solve, including ensuring inclusiveness of the most vulnerable individuals, and a lack of cooperation with actors outside of school, like parents and CBOs.<sup>453</sup> Some of these issues can be addressed through the HRCRT policy, as it foresees a stronger cooperation with the wider community, and others must be addressed outside of it through wider-scale development and peacebuilding efforts.<sup>454</sup> Finally, given that teachers are pivotal

<sup>436</sup> UNESCO & UNICEF, *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All*, 2007, p. 98.

<sup>437</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Education Reform Strategy 2011-2015*, 2011, p. 32.

<sup>438</sup> UNRWA, *Harmonized Results Report 2014*, 2015, p. 29.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>442</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Policy on Education for Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance: Teacher Toolkit*, 2013, p. 205.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>444</sup> UNRWA, *Harmonized Results Report 2014*, 2015, p. 35.

<sup>445</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Holds Fourth School Parliament and Human Rights Activities in Irbid Camp*, 2014.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>448</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA and NRC launch Student Parliament Forum*, 2014.

<sup>449</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, *NRC and UNRWA Launch Student Parliament Forum*, 2014.

<sup>450</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA and NRC launch Student Parliament Forum*, 2014.

<sup>451</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, p. 7.

<sup>452</sup> UNRWA, *Policy Education for Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance*, 2012, pp. 4, 14.

<sup>453</sup> UNRWA, *2014 Syria Crisis Response Annual Report*, 2015, p. 18; UNRWA, *oPt Emergency Appeal 2015*, 2015, p. 6; UNRWA, *Harmonized Results Report 2014*, 2015, p. 29.

<sup>454</sup> UNRWA, *UNRWA Policy on Education for Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance: Teacher Toolkit*, 2013, p. 34.

actors in this effort, their training is of utmost importance.<sup>455</sup> They must incorporate into their classroom the aims and goals that UNRWA set for its education policy, in order to guarantee that more children will have access to a quality education.<sup>456</sup> Access to education has the potential to positively impact the long-term peace and security and stability of the lives of Palestinian refugees; the HRCRT policy can help make that difference.

### ***Further Research***

Moving forward, UNRWA can still adapt its policy to further strengthen inclusiveness and access to education. Delegates should then consider: how can UNRWA further include parents as significant actors in the process of enhancing access to education? To what extent might human rights education for adults be a pivotal factor to make access to education for younger generations possible? What other factors lead to drop-outs, and how can the HRCRT policy prevent them? How can UNRWA teach parents and other members of the community more effectively about human rights through the HRCRT policy? What are strategies to strengthen the cooperation with NGOs and CBOs, and what active role can they take in further implementing the HRCRT policy? How can UNRWA further benefit from broader UN support, for example through the EFA initiative? How can UNRWA address the constant budget constraints hindering efforts to implement the HRCRT policy?

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<sup>455</sup> UNHCR, *Improving Access to Education for Asylum-Seekers, Refugee Children and Adolescents in Central Europe*, 2011, p. 29.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*



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Dryden-Peterson, S. (2011). *Refugee Education: A Global Review* [Report]. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Retrieved 25 August 2015 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/4fe317589.pdf>

*This report is a crucial for understanding how to ensure access to education for refugees. As children under the mandate of UNRWA are refugees, their educational needs differ slightly from other children. UNHCR identifies one major difference, namely that the right to education of refugees does not only include access and quality, but also protection. This means that schools also have to fulfill the task of being a safe space for everyone involved in educational activities. The report is a great resource since it describes how schools can fulfill those tasks; lessons that can be translated into UNRWA education activities.*

United Nations Children's Fund. (2014). *Child-friendly Schooling for Peacebuilding* [Report]. Retrieved 25 August 2015 from: [http://learningforpeace.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/CFS-Full-Report\\_FINAL\\_web11.20.14.pdf](http://learningforpeace.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/CFS-Full-Report_FINAL_web11.20.14.pdf)

*Published in 2014 by UNICEF, this report concentrates on the importance of child-friendly schooling for peacebuilding. This aspect is especially important for UNRWA, as students attending UNRWA schools are refugees and are in need safe spaces, which the school can provide for them. Furthermore, since there are families living in conflict zones, they can be vital for building a peaceful society in the future. The report starts by explaining what child-friendly schooling is: the two main components: schooling that is child-centered and schooling that is child-seeking. It also describes the connection between schooling and peacebuilding. It is an important resource since it can be used as a framework to better adapt UNRWA's education program to the conflict situation in its fields of operation.*

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization & United Nations Children's Fund. (2007). *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All* [Report]. Retrieved 24 August 2015 from:

[http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/A\\_Human\\_Rights\\_Based\\_Approach\\_to\\_Education\\_for\\_All.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/A_Human_Rights_Based_Approach_to_Education_for_All.pdf)

*This report, published by UNESCO and UNICEF in 2007, is pivotal for human rights education and the EFA movement in general. It advocates for a human rights-based approach to education, meaning that education should not only be a right, but that rights should also be a part of education. It officially gives human rights education a core place within the EFA movement. Furthermore, it recapitulates what the right to education should consist of: access to education and quality education; as well as dignity and respect within the classroom. Chapter 4 of the report describes other actors that can promote the right to education: parents and the wider community in which the child grows up. This report is a useful resource as it touches upon various aspects of the right to education, providing practical examples on how to implement those aspects.*

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization & United Nations Children's Fund. (2015). *Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All: Findings from the Global Initiative on Out-of-school Children* [Report]. Retrieved 24 August 2015 from:

<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/oosci-global-report-en.pdf>

*The reasons why children in the age to attend primary and secondary schools are in fact out-of-school are the focus of this report. The first chapter offers comprehensive data on how many children are out-of-school, why and when they dropped, and they if they ever plan on attending school again. The second chapter describes barriers to access to education, including communities that are too far away from schools to allow students to commute everyday. It also mentions conflicts as one of the main reasons why students stay out of school. It then offers policy solutions to those barriers. This report is helpful as it illustrates its findings with case studies, which delegates can use as an inspiration for policy options for UNRWA.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-sixth session. (2012). *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (A/RES/66/137)*. Adopted on the Report of the Third Committee (A/66/457). Retrieved 21 July 2015 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/66/137>

*This Declaration, adopted by the General Assembly in 2012, is a resourceful document, since it offers clear guidance on the aspects that human rights education should include, and how governments can transform those aspects into national policies. It also offers a range of best practices to guide policy-makers in order to make human rights education an integral part of*

*school curricula. This resource compiles all the information on human rights education and training that has been discussed in previous UN documents into one concise declaration.*

United Nations, Human Rights Council. (2009). *Promotion and Protection of All Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Including the Right to Development: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/12/36)*. Retrieved 21 July 2015 from: <http://undocs.org/A/HRC/12/36>

*Submitted by the HRC in 2009 this report offers different perspectives of human rights education, from governments, civil society, and national human rights institutions. This helps to create a holistic view of how different actors envision human rights education to be implemented. The last chapter of the report describes conclusions that can be drawn from the different accounts and statements. It shows, for example, that many of the actors express concerns regarding the human rights education of civil servants and teachers, as they require human rights knowledge to uphold the human rights of others. This report is a helpful resource as it points out the weaknesses in human rights education, as they are perceived by different actors, as well as their priorities for human rights education.*

United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2015). *The Right to Human Rights Education - A compilation of Provisions of International and Regional Instruments dealing with Human Rights Education* [Website]. Retrieved 21 July 2015 from:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/Listofcontents.aspx>

*This website, created by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, lists every document pertaining to human rights education, and is therefore a fundamental resource when starting research on the topic. Not only does it include all international documents, but also regional instruments. UN documents are grouped on the basis of whether or not they are specific to human rights education or to human rights in general. The website then lists documents from UN specialized agencies and regional organizations. It also offers a holistic view of the existing framework, making it easier to identify the gaps within.*

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2013). *Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance Education: Teacher Toolkit*. Retrieved 25 August 2015 from:

[http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/full\\_toolkit\\_english.pdf](http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/full_toolkit_english.pdf)

*This document elaborates on the different components of teacher training within the Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance (HRCRT) policy, and offers examples of classroom activities that can be used by teachers. It also offers a whole range of complementary information on the practical implementation of the HRCRT policy, thus helping delegates to visualize the aims of the policy. Within the activities, teachers are shown how to illustrate specific rights, such as the right to participate, and how students can claim this right and why it is important.*

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2013). *UNRWA Policy on Education for Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Tolerance* [Report]. Retrieved 21 July 2015 from:

<http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/2013060632316.pdf>

*This short report developed by UNRWA offers a concise overview of the goals, methods and effects of the HRCRT policy. It highlights the main international documents that influenced its implementation, and offers ideas on how to move it forward to make a program out of the HRCRT policy. It begins with the aims and goals underlying the HRCRT policy and later discusses how the policy can be implemented practically. It is a helpful resource as it is the short-form document explaining the core ideals of the longer policy.*

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2015). *Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal 2015*. Retrieved 25 August 2015 from:

[http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/syria\\_regional\\_crisis\\_emergency\\_appeal\\_2015\\_english.pdf](http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/syria_regional_crisis_emergency_appeal_2015_english.pdf)

*This report was published by UNRWA in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. The chapters are divided according to countries, beginning with Syria, and then continuing onto Lebanon and Jordan. The chapter on emergency education is relevant for the specific topic at hand, as it describes the staff that is mobilized to guarantee education during armed conflict, and offers data on how many refugees benefit from this help. It also addresses challenges that are being faced, thus offering starting points from which policies can be adapted.*

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