



Participants in the walk/run organized by the UNRWA Relief and Social Services Programme in Gaza, in cooperation with seven Woman Programme Centres, to draw the attention towards gender equality issues in Palestinian society, to break stereotypes and to encourage sports activities for women. © 2017 UNRWA Photo

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HIGHLIGHTS

- On 8 March, International Women’s Day (IWD), under this year’s theme “[Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50:50 by 2030](#)” ([#BeBoldforChange](#)), the UNRWA Relief and Social Services Programme (RSSP) in Gaza, in cooperation with seven Woman Programme Centres, organized a race for girls and women on the sea road of the Gaza Strip. The event aimed to draw the attention of the community towards gender equality issues in Palestinian society, to break stereotypes and to encourage sports activities for women. The walk/run was also designed to advocate for non-government organizations working in the field of women’s empowerment to support sports activities for women. 150 women aged 18-25 participated. On 12 March, RSSP also organized a football match, in collaboration with the Rafah Youth Activity Centre, for girls under 15 years of age. The objective of the game was to encourage increased access of all children and youth – girls and boys – to social, cultural, recreational and sports activities. The RSSP IWD sports activities complemented the UNRWA Gender Initiative [seminar](#) held in the same week, entitled: ‘Equal opportunities for women in the private sector in the Gaza Strip’, and organized in cooperation with UN Women.
- The UNRWA Education Programme in Gaza invests great efforts to provide Palestine refugee children with access to equitable and inclusive quality education. More than 262,000 students currently benefit from an UNRWA education, facilitated by 8,500 dedicated UNRWA teachers in 267 UNRWA schools across the Gaza Strip. As part of the Agency’s commitment to this important service, and in acknowledgment of increasing student numbers, in early March 2017 UNRWA [launched its recruitment campaign](#) for teacher posts in Gaza. This year, UNRWA is introducing a number of changes to its

specializations for two years and introducing the part-time modality. Candidates are selected to fill these posts based on their rankings within a list after passing the technical test and the interview phases. Two-year waiting lists will enable the Agency to continue to consider the growing number of applications. Similar to previous years, this campaign started with a vacancy announcement with a one-month deadline. The high number of qualified applicants for teacher vacancies – expected to be in the region of 30,000 in 2017 – reflects the ongoing unemployment crisis prevailing in Gaza. A large number of highly educated individuals are limited to finding employment opportunities only in the Gaza Strip. This is due to the almost ten-year long blockade, which severely restricts the movement of people and goods.

- On 14 March, UNRWA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) [signed an amendment to their memorandum of understanding](#), which was signed [12 months ago](#), entailing a new contribution of US \$17,091,744 from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through the Saudi Fund for Development. Director of UNRWA Operations, Gaza, Mr. Bo Schack, and UNDP Special Representative of the Administrator – Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, Mr. Roberto Valent attended the ceremony with the Palestinian Minister of Public Works and Housing, Mr. Mofeed Al-Hasayneh. To be implemented by UNDP, the new funding will cover the rehabilitation of 281 totally damaged houses for Palestinian non-refugees affected by the 2014 hostilities in the Gaza Strip, in addition to the construction and rehabilitation of 5 field playgrounds and a culture centre. UNRWA will administer the grant and be involved in monitoring of the project, advising on construction based on its vast experience in the Gaza Strip. The programme will prioritize female-headed households and will take into consideration family size and current socio-economic status of targeted population.
- From 5 to 13 March 2017, UNRWA Gaza Field Office delivered a Social Media and Neutrality training for its area staff in managerial and supervision positions. Participants comprised 207 staff members from the Gaza Field Office and 19 from HQ Gaza. Additional sessions will be held at a later date for those unable to complete the training last week. The agency-wide training, which was conducted in Gaza by six senior staff members, was held as a complement to UNRWA mandatory online course which all staff must complete before taking office. Topics focused on definitions, such as the principle of neutrality, the agency's use of social media for public advocacy, social media guidelines and policies, examples of clear violations of the Regularly Framework and the Agency's approach to breaches of the Regulatory Framework. The training was dynamic using plenary, groups and pairs discussions, practical tips and scenarios.
- A diplomatic delegation from China visited Gaza on 7 March. The Representative of the People's Republic of China to the Palestinian National Authority, Ambassador Chen Xingzhong and other diplomatic staff visited UNRWA Shajaiya Elementary Co-Education School, where the Director of UNRWA Operations, Gaza, Mr. Bo Schack, and the Chief, field Education Programme, Mr. Farid Abu-Athra, provided a briefing on UNRWA activities. The delegation also met with members of the student parliament and donated to the children some school materials and stationery. The Chinese delegation also visited Rimal Health Centre, in central Gaza, and met with the Chief, field Health Programme, Ms. Ghada Al-Jadba and a Senior Medical Officer who gave the visitors an overview of the UNRWA Health Programme and the services available to Palestine refugees. The Ambassador and other guests toured the facility and engaged with health staff in the various services. The People's Republic of China first contributed to UNRWA in 1964. In recent years, it has rapidly increased its contributions to the Agency, and in recognition of the important partnership, the UNRWA Commissioner-General made his first official visit to the country on 5 July 2015.

During the week under review, Israeli forces fired towards Palestinian areas along the perimeter fence and/or towards Palestinian boats on a daily basis. One injury was reported.

Civilians, mostly youth, staged protests near the perimeter fence in different areas of Gaza to express their eagerness to defend Al Aqsa Mosque and in solidarity with Palestinians in the West Bank. When some of them approached the fence and threw stones towards Israeli observation posts, Israeli forces responded with gunfire and teargas. One injury was reported. Other protests that took place included those in solidarity with Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, against the security coordination between the PA and Israel, in protest of the PA handling of the demonstration in the West Bank in support of Bassel Al Araj, on the blockade and regarding the reconstruction process.

During the reporting week, from 9-14 March, the UNRWA Local Staff Union (LSU) positioned against international staff in the UNRWA Gaza Field Office compound. International staff were able to enter the compound after working hours on each day (from 1530) and over the weekend. The Gaza Field Office Business Continuity Preparedness Plan for emergencies was implemented, and a temporary office for internationals set up offsite in Gaza city.

Four Israeli bulldozers entered approximately 60 metres from the security fence, and four entered 100 metres from the security fence respectively. The Israeli troops conducted a clearing and excavation operation. They withdrew on the same day. On 7 March, Israeli troops positioned at the security fence fired a stun grenade towards the Palestinian area. One injury was reported.

Militants fired one rocket towards Israel; the rocket landed in an open area inside Gaza. No injuries or were reported. Israeli forces positioned at the security fence fired tank shells on two occasions, towards the Palestinian area; no injuries were reported.

Four Palestinians, including three minors, were arrested by Israeli forces after they entered Israel through the perimeter fence. An unexploded ordnance UXO exploded in an open area east of Zaitoun, east of Gaza city. One injury was reported.

UNRWA RESPONSE

ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: PROMOTING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN THE GAZA STRIP



Deputy Director of UNRWA Operations in Gaza, Ms. Melinda Young, gives opening remark at the International Women's Day seminar in Gaza city, organized by the UNRWA Gender Initiative, in cooperation with UN Women. © 2017 UNRWA Photo by Tamer Hamam

This year, the theme for International Women's Day, which falls annually on 8 March, was '[Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50:50 by 2030](#)' ([#BeBoldforChange](#)). On this occasion, the UNRWA Gender Initiative, in cooperation with UN Women in Gaza, organized a seminar entitled 'equal opportunities for women in the private sector in the Gaza Strip', targeting representatives from international and local humanitarian organizations, civil society and the Palestinian private sector. The seminar opened with remarks by the UN Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid and Development Activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, Mr. Robert Piper, as well as by Deputy Director of UNRWA Operations in Gaza, Ms. Melinda Young.

"Women's economic empowerment is about economic equality, such as increasing job opportunities, access to loans or closing the gender pay gap; and it's also about breaking down barriers that hold women back - from discriminatory laws, structural barriers, to an unfair share of home and family care," said Ms. Young at the event.

The seminar involved an audience of approximately 150 and aimed to increase understanding of the opportunities and the current situation of gender equality in the labour market, and provide concrete recommendations and ideas to improve women's participation and access to the private sector. The seminar included sessions on topics such as women and the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector and international standards for gender equality in the labour sector, presented by guest speakers from the Palestinian private sector.

"Through the seminar, we tried to encourage women to participate in the private sector by sharing other women's success stories and by gathering representatives from the private sector and other organizations in the same room in order to exchange opinions and experience. Furthermore, we aimed to establish recommendations to support increasing women's

participation in the private sector,” said UNRWA Gender Initiative Programme Officer, Ms. Najwa Lobbad,

Each session was followed by discussions and the floor opened for questions from the audience, which included private sector representatives, university students and graduates, as well as representatives from Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and United Nations (UN) agencies. The seminar resulted in the development of different recommendations to support and encourage women’s participation in the private sector, including orientation and training for female graduates in line with needs of the labour market, and the addition of a practical training in higher education systems.

FUNDING NEEDS

UNRWA is confronted with an increased demand for services resulting from a growth in the number of registered Palestine refugees, the extent of their vulnerability and their deepening poverty. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions and financial support has been outpaced by the growth in needs. UNRWA encourages all Member States to work collectively to exert all possible efforts to fully fund the Agency’s Programme Budget in 2017. UNRWA emergency programmes and key projects, also operating with large shortfalls, are funded through separate funding portals.

Following the 2014 conflict, US\$ 257 million has been pledged in support of UNRWA’s emergency shelter programme, for which an estimated US\$ 720 million is required. This leaves a current shortfall of US\$ 463 million. UNRWA urgently appeals to donors to generously contribute to its emergency shelter programme to provide displaced Palestine refugees in Gaza with rental subsidies or cash assistance to undertake repair works and reconstruction of their damaged homes.

As presented in UNRWA’s occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) Emergency Appeal for 2017, the Agency is seeking US\$ 402 million to meet the minimum humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees in the oPt.

The Gaza portion of the Emergency Appeal amounts to US\$ 355 million for 2017, to address protracted, large-scale humanitarian needs. Read more in the [oPt Emergency Appeal for 2017](#).

CROSSINGS

Longstanding restrictions on the movement of people and goods to and from Gaza have undermined the living conditions of 1.9 million Palestinians in Gaza. [Israel prevents all access to and from the Gaza Strip by sea and air](#). Movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza is restricted to three crossings: Rafah crossing, Erez crossing and Kerem Shalom crossing. Rafah crossing is controlled by the Egyptian authorities and technically allows for the movement of a number of authorized travellers, Palestinian medical and humanitarian cases only. Erez crossing is controlled by Israeli authorities and technically allows for the movement of aid workers and limited numbers of authorized travellers, including Palestinian medical and humanitarian cases. Kerem Shalom crossing, also controlled by Israeli authorities, technically allows for the movement of authorized goods only.

- Rafah crossing was open on 7 and 8 March. It was closed 9-13 March.
- Erez crossing is usually open six days a week. This week it was open for National ID

from 7-9 March and 12 March. On 10 March it was open for emergency medical cases. It was closed on 11 and 13 March.

- Kerem Shalom crossing is the only official crossing open for the transfer of goods into and out of the Strip and is usually open five days a week. It was open on 7, 8 and 9 March and closed 11-13 March.