



Australian assistance to the Palestinian territories

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Palestinians continue to face significant poverty and disadvantages prolonged by the complex nature of the regional conflict and repeated failures in the peace process in the Middle East. Of Gaza's 1.6 million people, nearly 40 per cent are living in poverty and 75 per cent depend on aid for survival. Thirty-one per cent of the workforce is unemployed.

Australia is committed to helping Palestinians reduce their poverty and build a stable, self-sufficient and peaceful society that can underpin a future Palestinian state.

Since 2007, Australia has provided around \$190 million to support the Palestinian people, mostly through the:

- Palestinian Authority in cooperation with the World Bank
- UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA)
- Australia Middle East NGO Partnership Agreement (AMENCA).

Australian support to the Palestinian Authority (PA) was boosted under a \$120 million five-year partnership arrangement signed by former Foreign Minister Rudd and the Palestinian Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad at the UN in New York in September 2011. Australian aid is also helping to build Palestinian government institutions and civil society systems necessary for the delivery of basic services such as health and education, and good governance.

Results from AusAID's Palestinian Territories Program

Australian aid to the Palestinian Territories has:

- helped more than 470,000 Palestinian refugees attend school in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan through support to the PA and UNRWA - 50 per cent of school enrolments were girls
- supported 4200 health workers provide health care to Palestinian refugees in 134 centres across the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan in partnership with the PA and UNRWA
- improved water and sanitation facilities in 105 schools and constructed seven kilometres of sewerage networks in the West Bank and Gaza in cooperation with UNICEF and Australian NGOs

Partnership Framework Agreement between AusAID and UNRWA

Some of the areas of UNRWA work where Australian funds have assisted include:

In 2011-12, UNRWA's education program comprised:

UNRWA operates one of the largest school systems in the Middle East and has been the main provider of free-of-charge basic education to Palestine refugees for more than 60 years. Since the 1960s, girls have made up around half of UNRWA's students.

- Trade (vocational) courses lasting one or two years.

These courses are organised in response to local needs, in cooperation with NGOs. Most trainees succeed in securing employment.

As of 31 December 2010, UNRWA's health program supported:

Ensuring equity in access to health care can be particularly difficult where UNRWA works, because of violent conflict, restrictions on movement and refugees' entitlements under the different host governments. Despite these challenges, UNRWA now has 137 health centres, significantly reducing the physical and economic barriers to health care for Palestine refugees.

Since February 2003, five mobile health teams have operated in those areas in the West Bank affected by closures, checkpoints and the Barrier. The teams offer a full range of essential medical services to around 13,000 patients a month, in more than 150 isolated locations.

Upsurges of violence, such as in Lebanon and more recently in the Gaza Strip, continually challenge UNWRA. In response, new services that deal specifically with the consequence of protracted violence and insecurity have been established. These include mental health care, physiotherapy and rehabilitation. UNRWA also provides counselling and referral services to help victims of gender-based violence.

In the Gaza Strip, movement restrictions continue to hinder patient referrals to Israel for medical treatment. During the conflict, UNRWA provided temporary shelter to more than 50,000 Palestinians who sought refuge in the agency's schools. Although security constraints severely limited the movement of staff, UNRWA continued to deliver its health services, adjusting to the needs of displaced people.

Relief services

UNRWA's relief services program works to provide social safety-net assistance that includes basic food support, cash subsidies and additional family income supplement (FIS) to the most vulnerable Palestine refugees caught in the cycle of abject poverty. Over the years, the relief services program has had to overcome numerous obstacles, but its recent achievements include:



- More than 58,100 women refugees benefit each year from the agency's work strengthening their role and participation in the community.
- Helping more than 20,000 refugees with disabilities to receive direct rehabilitation services each year, with more than 80,000 services provided.
- Providing, through community-based organisations, education and recreation activities for more than 99,500 children and young people, consistent with the objectives of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Providing US\$1.4 million in loans to help more than 8000 vulnerable refugees build their household assets. More than 70 per cent of beneficiaries are women, through 33 community-managed funds.
- Rolling out a new, multi-million dollar, web-based refugee registration information system (RRIS).
- Issuing a new generation of family registration cards in both Arabic and English.
- Digitally scanning and preserving more than 17.5 million documents, including birth certificates, property deeds and residence documents dating back to pre-1948 British mandate Palestine.

Social services at a glance

- 288,405 special hardship cases assisted
- 62 women's program centres
- 36 community rehabilitation centres
- 707 staff.