



UNRWA

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

Committee: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

Topic: Developing measures to improve the effectiveness of UNRWA operations in Lebanon

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I. Committee Background

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established in December 1949. It was created to provide direct relief and works programmes for Palestinian refugees. Currently, the committee offers assistance and protection to over 5.5 million people in the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the West Bank. UNRWA defines a refugee as a “person whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period of June 1st, 1946 to May 15th, 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.” Furthermore, the descendants of Palestinian refugees are also eligible for registration as a refugee with UNRWA (Who We Are, UNRWA, 2020). The committee is the largest agency within the United Nations (UN) system and employs 30,000 people. As a subsidiary of the UN General Assembly, its mandate must be renewed every three years. Most recently, the General Assembly renewed UNRWA's mandate until June 30th, 2023 (Nicholas, Reuters, 2019). The committee is led by a Commissioner-General and supported by an Advisory Commission. The Advisory Commission is composed of 24 countries and three observer bodies. Moreover, each region of operations is overseen by a Director who is in charge of distributing humanitarian aid and managing the committee's budget. The majority of UNRWA's funding comes from voluntary contributions from UN Member States (Who We Are, UNRWA, 2020).

II. Topic Information

A) History of the Topic

Between 1947 and 1949, around 720,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes during the creation of the State of Israel. An estimated 100,000 Palestinians fled to neighbouring Lebanon. As a result, the United Nations established the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) which focuses on helping Palestinian refugees in areas such as health care, education, social services and micro-credit loan programmes (Who We Are, UNRWA, 2020). UNRWA's operations in Lebanon are based in Beirut and are led by the Director of UNRWA Affairs in Lebanon, Claudio Cordone (UNRWA Launches, UNRWA, 2020).

According to the United Nations, there are currently over 470,000 Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA in Lebanon. About 45 percent of them live in the country's 12 refugee camps. Due to a large number of refugees and a lack of funding, UNRWA has struggled to provide services for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. For example, conditions in the camps are "dire and characterized by overcrowding, poor housing conditions, unemployment, poverty and lack of access to justice" (Where We Work, UNRWA, 2020). Moreover, a 2015 AUB Survey on the Socioeconomic Status of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon found that "nearly 90 percent live in poverty (cannot meet their basic food and non-food needs), and nearly 10 percent live in extreme poverty (are unable to meet essential food requirements)." Also, the Lebanese government has made it difficult for Palestinian refugees to integrate into the local society. They have limited civil, political, social and economic rights. This means that they are not permitted to access the government's public health and educational facilities, public social services and have significant restrictions on their right to work

and own property. Refugee camps for Palestinians in Lebanon have been further burdened by the influx of Palestinians fleeing refugee camps in Syria due to the ongoing civil war. In 2019, there were 29,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria residing in UNRWA-run camps in Lebanon (Overview, UNRWA, 2019).

As a result, the refugees rely solely on the aid provided by UNRWA. In Lebanon, the organization operates 65 schools, two vocational centres and 27 health centres. In 2019, 205,000 people utilized UNRWA services in the country. UNRWA's operating budget in Lebanon for 2019 was US\$132,240 (Budget, UNRWA, 2018). However, budget shortfalls due to the United States' withdrawal from UNRWA in 2018 have meant that many of the organization's initiatives have been limited or cancelled altogether. In order to maximize its resources, UNRWA's Evaluation Division was established to analyze the effectiveness of the services provided in Lebanon. The evaluation division assesses the situations related to the policies and strategies by scrutinizing the processes, results, and achievements of the continuing and completed activities. Areas of opportunity included in the Evaluation Division's annual report included increased collaboration with the Lebanese government, the tackling of internal corruption and mismanagement within UNRWA and the sharing of personnel and resources with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) (UNRWA, 2019).

B) Current Issues

France: France is a member of UNRWA's Advisory Commission. It helps the committee make decisions about programs, humanitarian aid and the annual budget. Each year, France donates US\$5 million to UNRWA (Confirmed Pledges, UNRWA, 2019). However, in 2019, the country pledged an additional 500,000 euros for UNRWA operations in Lebanon. The money will be used in the reconstruction of the Nahr el

Bared refugee camp (which had been badly destroyed in 2013) and for supplies in UNRWA-run schools. France hopes that with an increase in funds that the organization will be able to provide more effective services to those in need (France Contributes, UNRWA, 2019).

Pakistan: In the past decade, Pakistan has been working with UNRWA in order to improve its educational facilities and opportunities in Lebanon. In addition to monetary donations, Pakistani schools have linked up with UNRWA schools via online platforms such as Skype. The students have been able to learn about new topics, share ideas and receive feedback. Moreover, teachers are now sharing resources and lesson plans. They are also receiving training online. This has helped to increase the quality of education provided by UNRWA to Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon (Taking on the World, UNRWA, 2020).

Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia contributes US\$49 million every year to help UNRWA (Confirmed Pledges, UNRWA, 2019). In 2019, the country donated an additional US\$2 million in order to provide additional education and health services in areas of extreme need such as the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. Furthermore, in order to help increase UNRWA's effectiveness in Lebanon, the government of Saudi Arabia has pledged to increase its annual donations each year. It hopes that additional funding will be able to educate more Palestinian refugee children, making it more likely that they will be able to obtain employment when they become adults which could help alleviate the strain currently placed on UNRWA (The Kingdom, UNRWA, 2019).

C) UN Action

While UNWRA specifically focuses on helping Palestinian refugees, the United Nations has recognized the extraordinary challenges the committee currently faces due

to funding concerns and the increasing number of those in need. So, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has stepped in to increase the effectiveness of services provided by UNRWA through budget and personnel sharing. Moreover, the two committees are also working together to “advise the Lebanese government on documentation issues, refurbish and update schools and bakeries, and offer initial humanitarian aid to enable integration.” Appeals for additional monetary support for UNRWA have also been launched with various member states donating in order to sustain schools, medical clinics and food aid (UNHCR, 2019).

III. Essential Questions

1. What is UNRWA?
2. According to UNRWA, who is a refugee?
3. Why is there a large population of Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon?
4. What services does UNRWA provide to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon?
5. What challenges do Palestinian refugees face in Lebanon? How have these challenges impacted the effectiveness of UNRWA?
6. Has your country contributed to services and/or programs provided by UNRWA in Lebanon? If so, in which way?

IV. Quorum

- Afghanistan
- Brazil
- Canada

- China
- France
- India
- Indonesia
- Iran
- Mexico
- Pakistan
- Russia
- Saudi Arabia
- South Africa
- Syria
- Turkey
- United Kingdom
- United States

V. Resources

“2019 Confirmed Pledges to UNRWA's Programmes.” United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). United Nations, 2019. Web. 08 Jun. 2020. <https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/list_of_2019_contributions_all_donors.pdf>.

“FRANCE CONTRIBUTES TO THE UNRWA SOCIAL SAFETY NET PROGRAMME SUPPORTING THE MOST VULNERABLE PALESTINE REFUGEES IN LEBANON.” United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). United Nations, 2019. Web. 08 Jun. 2020. <<https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/france-contributes-unrwa-social-safety-net-programme-supporting->

Web. 08 Jun. 2020. <<https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/kingdom-saudi-arabia-provides-additional-us-2-million-support-unrwa-services>>.

“UN High Commissioner for Refugees calls for continued support for Lebanon.” United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). United Nations, 2019. Web. 08 Jun. 2020. <<https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/3/5c83e0664/un-high-commissioner-refugees-calls-continued-support-lebanon.html>>.

“Where We Work: Lebanon.” United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). United Nations, 2020. Web. 08 Jun. 2020. <<https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>>.

“Who We Are.” United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). United Nations, 2020. Web. 08 Jun. 2020. <<https://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are>>.