PRESS RELEASE

Nearly 200,000 Gaza Children Take Part in UNRWA 'Summer Fun Weeks'



UNRWA students during their participation in the opening ceremony performances of the Summer Fun Weeks held in Al-Zaitoun Elementary Girls School, Gaza City.

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One hundred and eighty-six thousand children have registered to participate in a month-long programme of summer activities organized by the United Nations

Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The 'Summer Fun Weeks' (SFWs) will begin on 8 July and culminate in a series of closing ceremonies that end on 5 August.

According to the Director of the Summer Fun Weeks, Yousef Moussa, the event is well-balanced in terms of the gender of the participants: "50.3 per cent of participants will be girls and 49.7 will be boys. There will be football for the boys and basketball for the girls. We have also included mural painting and handicrafts, as well as bouncy castles and trampolines for the younger children."

The SFW events will involve 115 UNRWA schools across the Gaza Strip, including the Al-Nour Centre for the Visually Impaired in Gaza City and seven community-based rehabilitation centres. UNRWA has also devised area-specific activities such as 'Rethink and Recycle' in Rafah, the 'Expo Tech' exhibition in Khan Younis , English SFW activities in the Middle Area, 'Sea Messages' in the Gaza Area, and the 'Equity and Equality' initiative in the north. New activities include the Student Ambassador programme, the Students' Camp and the UNRWA School Choir.

The Summer Fun Weeks will culminate in the final week with the 'Gaza Champion's League': a football competition for boys and a basketball tournament for girls. There will also be an art competition based on the Agency's human development goals, which will be followed by a drawing and photo gallery.

"The pressures on children in the context of this decade-long blockade are immense," said the Director of UNRWA Operations in Gaza, Bo Schack. "A whole generation is being deprived of a normal childhood and we need to give them back a sense of fun and of simply being children. In the wider context, our Summer Fun Weeks will provide job opportunities for thousands of people in addition to empowering the local economy in a place where unemployment levels are among the highest in the world."

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Background Information

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. As a result, the UNRWA Programme Budget, which supports the delivery of core essential services, operates with a large shortfall. UNRWA encourages all Member States to work collectively to exert all possible efforts to fully fund the

Agency's Programme Budget. UNRWA emergency programmes and key projects, also operating with large shortfalls, are funded through separate funding portals.

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip achieve their full human development potential, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. UNRWA services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, protection and microfinance.

For more information, please contact:

Christopher Gunness
UNRWA Spokesperson
Mobile: +972 (0)54 240 2659
+44 758 769 89 90
Office: +972 (0)2 589 0267
c.gunness@unrwa.org
Twitter: @ChrisGunness

Sami Mshasha
UNRWA Arabic Spokesperson
Mobile: +972 (0)54 216 8295
Office: +972 (0)2 589 0724
s.mshasha@unrwa.org