THE GAZA STRIP: UNRWA LAUNCHES "BACK TO LEARNING" ACTIVITIES

01 August 2024



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UNRWA's Director of Operations, Scott Anderson visited Khan Younis Preparatory Schools for Boys and Girls as part of UNRWA's back to learning activities for children in Gaza that were kicked off on 1 August. © 2024 UNRWA Photo

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(https://www.dropbox.com/sh/k86ongs2zlsilfe/AAASDoPRSJyXDc0YPJoyZHqTa?dl=0)

KHAN YOUNIS, 1 August 2024 - Children in the Gaza Strip make up half the population, or over 1 million people. Since the war began in October last year, they have been witnessing what no child should live through. They were forced to flee their homes and have lost loved ones.

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"Children in Gaza are traumatized and shocked" said Scott Anderson, Director in Gaza. "We are launching the back to learning programme today, to help children cope and just be children. It will give them safe spaces to play, learn, grow, re-unite with old friends and make new ones" he added.

In its first phase, UNRWA will expand the ongoing psychosocial support activities, focusing on arts, music and sports – as well as raising awareness on the risks of explosive ordnance.

"I feel that my children are returning to a part of their lives they have missed. This is a good chance for my three children to do recreational activities. They have seen enough misery, and they need some fun", says Rodina, a displaced mother of three living in a shelter in Nuseirat, in Gaza's middle area.

In its second phase, the programme will transition to include informal learning activities, with reading, writing and math lessons.

"My house was destroyed, and my family went to Rafah; now we are in Khan Younis. My tent is near this shelter. I came to join recreational activities as soon as I heard that this programme was on. I am so happy that I met my friends and teachers" said Reem, (10), displaced multiple times. She joined the activities at one of the UNRWA schools in Khan Younis.

UNRWA plans to provide formal education for children in Gaza as soon as the situation permits. "For this, Gaza urgently needs an immediate, durable ceasefire for the sake of children and their futures." concluded Anderson.

UNRWA is seeking the support of donors including governments, the private sector, and individuals to support the education programme for children in Gaza.

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Notes to Editors:

- UNRWA is running this programme in partnership with UNICEF, Education Cannot Wait, and the World Food Programme in addition to local civil society organisations.
- In the second phase, the learning activities will be scaled-up and include learning spaces outside UNRWA shelters including in Al-Mawasi area and other locations. In cooperation with WFP and other partners, UNRWA plans to provide children with high-energy food to complement these learning activities.
- More than 600,000 children have been out of school since the beginning of the war in Gaza on 7 October 2023. Half of them went to UNRWA schools.
- Two thirds (or over 120) UNRWA schools have been damaged or destroyed since the war began. UNRWA has been rolling out repair and maintenance works in the shelters to create safe spaces for children.
- The UNRWA back to learning programme is starting with 45 schools and will gradually expand to 94 schools (approximately 28,000 children).

- Restarting informal learning activities does not in any way replace formal education for children of Gaza, it is a step in the right direction to address learning loss among children.

Background Information:

UNRWA (https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.unrwa.org%2F&data=05%7C01%7CHQ-PIO%40UNRWA.ORG%7C7edfcbc8399c400e4a6c08dafba2254d%7C262f6a4120e941408d3efdf the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The United Nations General Assembly established UNRWA in 1949 with a mandate to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to registered Palestine refugees in the Agency's area of operations pending a just and lasting solution to their plight.

UNRWA operates in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, The Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Tens of thousands of Palestine refugees who lost their homes and livelihoods due to the 1948 conflict continue to be displaced and in need of support, nearly 75 years on.

UNRWA helps Palestine Refugees achieve their full potential in human development through quality services it provides in education, health care, relief and social services, protection, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance, and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.

Your support is crucial to help us provide emergency aid (https://bit.ly/3rXMZ0P) to displaced families in Gaza (https://bit.ly/3rXMZ0P)

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