Challenges facing UNRWA in an uncertain future

A Study for the Department for International Development, UK

March 2016
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The views expressed in this study are the sole responsibility of the author. They do not reflect the views of DFID or of UNRWA.
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>The Department for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>EiE</td>
<td>Education in Emergencies</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>The European Union</td>
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<td>FCO</td>
<td>Foreign and Commonwealth Office</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GRM</td>
<td>Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism</td>
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<td>HQ</td>
<td>Headquarters</td>
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<td>HRCRT</td>
<td>human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance</td>
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<td>ICAI</td>
<td>Independent Commission for Aid Impact</td>
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<td>ICJ</td>
<td>International Court of Justice</td>
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<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organisations for Migration</td>
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<td>IS</td>
<td>Islamic State</td>
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<td>MEPP</td>
<td>Middle Eastern Peace Process</td>
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<td>MTS</td>
<td>Medium Term Strategy</td>
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<td>NCD</td>
<td>Non-Communicable Disease</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>oPts</td>
<td>Occupied Palestinian territories</td>
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<td>PLO</td>
<td>Palestinian Liberation Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNA/PA</td>
<td>Palestinian (National) Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>TVET</td>
<td>‘technical &amp; vocational education’</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNGA</td>
<td>United Nations General Assembly</td>
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<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund</td>
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<td>UNRWA</td>
<td>The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
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Challenges facing UNRWA in an uncertain future

“Complexity is the norm in the Middle East, and prediction there has always been a fool’s game. However, the current level of uncertainty is an order of magnitude beyond anything that we have seen for at least a century.”

Executive Summary

1. This study delineates the main challenges facing UNRWA in the coming years in order to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the pressures on the Agency and to help DFID identify priorities in its support. The study is based upon over 100 interviews carried out during field visits in early 2016 to Israel, West Bank, Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, Jordan and Lebanon. There were also interviews at distance with the Syria staff. It furthermore draws upon secondary data as well as relevant academic literature. Its main conclusion is: given that for the next ten years at least, the continued existence of UNRWA is a prerequisite for the stability of the region, and taking into account the competing demands on aid resources as a result of the Syrian crisis, DFID’s support for UNRWA should be both consolidated and reconfigured to promote across the region the good practice that is already undertaken by the Agency for Palestinian refugees.

2. In order to disentangle the different challenges facing UNRWA, the study groups them into three concentric circles: shifts in global politics, regional developments and internal Agency-related changes.

3. The decline in the pre-eminence of the United States in the region and concurrent rise of other key actors including China and Russia will have an impact upon UNRWA. At the same time, despite the promise of the Lisbon treaty, the European Union has not developed a more coherent and confident foreign policy while the ongoing effects of the 2008 financial crisis have impacted upon the ability and willingness of donors to meet the increasing needs of bodies such as UNRWA. These facts, coupled with the rise of non-state actors including corporations, global religious ideologies and mega-cities or confederations of cities, underline the extent to which the global framework of UNRWA is rapidly changing. In turn, the shifting US role suggests alternative approaches to resolving the Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflicts which could leave UNRWA in a less vulnerable position in future disagreements with Israel.

4. The regional developments affecting UNRWA are four-fold: changes wrought by US policy in the region, the Syrian civil war with its impact on Palestinian refugee host countries within the context of a Saudi Arabia-Iranian rivalry, the Gaza blockade, and the deferment of a Palestinian state. The US has adopted a doctrine that sees it less willing to manage all the major crises in the region. At the same time, Iran has emerged as a more important regional power and Saudi Arabia is no longer wielding as much influence as it was, while the Islamic State (IS) has become a major destabilising force. Turkey and Israel are also consolidating their role as major players in the region, though the
latter is acting with a degree of restraint due to regional volatility that it might not be able to manage as well as due to an increased threat from Hizbollah.

5. The Syrian Civil War has led to major displacement of populations within and outside the country, as well as significant challenges for UNRWA in delivering services. The possible future political solutions for the conflict are likely include a mix of pro- and anti-Assad enclaves and it is not clear who will fund the reconstruction work that will be needed. Neither is it certain that the new situation in Syria will be supportive of Palestinian refugees, especially given the perceived support shown by some Palestinians for the rebels, and whether externally displaced Palestinian refugees will be allowed to or want to return. A further issue is that the civil war has greatly increased the dependency by the Palestinian refugee community in Syria on UNRWA, as well as their expectations of its role in post-conflict reconstruction. Also important is the situation in Jordan, which is in danger of being overwhelmed by the Syria crisis, and Lebanon, which is similarly at its limit.

6. The crisis in the Gaza Strip including the political isolation of HAMAS and the restrictions on access from Egypt have obliged UNRWA to take on additional responsibilities in the Strip. While it has responded well to this new set of demands, there are dangers arising from its enhanced role: it is seen as a shadow government, which would expose it to both additional expectations and criticism; yet its resources and mandate are relatively limited to deal with these expectations. Furthermore, it risks being seen as complicit with the rules of the blockade imposed by Israel. More fundamentally, donor efforts to encourage sustainability and reduce the funding that UNRWA requires in general, are undermined by the central role that it is obliged to play in the Strip.

7. Finally, while the establishment of a Palestinian state will not in itself be a just resolution of the refugee issue, its deferment as a result of the collapse in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations means that, in practice, the fulfilment of UNRWA's mandate is even further away. The lack of commitment to a two-state solution by the international community and in the region makes it important to look at alternatives, especially given how this might affect the work of UNRWA and the international support it receives. These alternatives include a binational state comprising Israelis and Palestinians, a “one-and-a-half state” option under which there would be a truncated, diminished Palestinian area, and finally a confederal arrangement with Jordan, Israel and Palestine.

8. The fundamental implication of these various developments for UNRWA and DFID is that UNRWA, for the foreseeable future is here to stay and, unless the international community is prepared to absorb the serious political and legal costs of discontinuing its financial support, funding by the international community will have to continue. There is also the possibility of more Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, as the PNA continues to decline, of more Palestinians turning toward services provided by UNRWA. Longer-term, there are questions as to whether the longevity of the Palestinian issue will change its nature and shift our perceptions of it, for example by having to take increasing account of the emergence of the rights of secondary occupants. Overall, it is clear that UNRWA
was set up as a short-term mechanism but that its longevity has implications for its funding model and its planning processes.

9. Turning to the final concentric circle for analysing the different challenges facing UNRWA, that of internal Agency-related changes, the study focuses upon four: funding, demography, refugee youth and the engagement with refugees.

10. As regards funding, UNRWA faces growing demands and refugee needs and simultaneously fragile revenue streams and no reserves. In response, UNRWA has sought to diversify its donor base, though the new donors may be relatively less stable in their commitment; at the same time, the current funding model is unstable or short-term. There are also shifts occurring in the population’s makeup, notably with increasing absolute numbers of old people who have particular sets of needs. A particularly urgent issue is that of refugee youth and their lack of employment opportunities. This is fuelling the sense of hopelessness, arising from stalled political progress and the lack of effective Palestinian leadership, which, in turn, is leading to fears of radicalisation and regional de-stabilisation. Finally, there are communication challenges with the refugee population, and the perceived lack of a transparent and participatory organisational culture within UNRWA.

11. DFID can play a major role in assisting UNRWA to face these various challenges. It has important reasons for prioritising such a commitment, both because of moral obligations but also because humanitarian aid brings political leverage and influence for the UK. Nevertheless, the study recognises the competing demands on DFID’s resources for the region and offers a perspective whereby a continued investment in UNRWA not only consolidates and builds on the existing years of fruitful partnership but also contributes to the development of human capital in the region. In a region of failed and failing states, UNRWA offers an alternative model in terms of the quality of its education, health and social assistance programmes. By positioning UNRWA close to the heart of DFID’s objectives for the region, DFID will be not only contributing towards a just resolution of the Palestinian refugee issue, to the political stability of the region but also to its reconstruction and development in a post-Syrian conflict situation. It in this context that the following recommendations are offered.

12. The first recommendation relates to the funding challenges facing UNRWA, including chronic shortages, a deteriorating situation over time particularly due to youth demographics, and challenges arising from the global financial crisis as well as potential changes in funder priorities. Given this, DFID should take the lead in facilitating a discussion amongst its donor partners regarding options for a more stable funding structure for UNRWA, focusing upon identifying options and outlining how to best advance preferred options. Four potential options that could be considered are: the establishment of an endowment, possibly called the Palestine Refugee Trust Fund; working towards some financial recompense arising from the human capital and skills Palestine refugees have brought to host countries (Jordan, Syria and the oPts in particular); encouraging UNRWA to approach the UN General Assembly to amend part
of its mandate so that it can receive funds from the UN assessed dues; and, pressing for a commitment from the main donors to a 10-year timeframe in budgetary assistance.

13. Recommendation two seeks to address the growing alienation, as well as lack of employment opportunities, experienced by Palestinian refugee youth. The recommendation here is that DFID builds upon its existing work by facilitating the coordination of donor and diplomatic pressure on host countries, on Israel and on the private sector to improve the quality of education, of training facilities, and to improve employment opportunities for this demographic. It should also facilitate the production and dissemination of information related to opening up the labour market for Palestinian youth. A final element in this recommendation is for DFID to consider supporting, in conjunction with UNRWA, a young leaders programme aimed at building a new generation of refugee leaders.

14. Recommendation three focuses upon the coordination and communication challenges related to engagement with refugees. DFID should take the lead on a process aimed at defining various avenues of engagement to improve coordination and communication, most likely in the form of an external body, as well as in piloting and designing a programme drawing upon international precedent and previous experiences to give substance and direction to this.

15. Recommendation four takes up the need for greater communication and coordination between UNRWA and the key stakeholders. It is recommended that DFID facilitate a process aimed at improving coordination and cooperation between UNRWA and donors as well as between UNRWA and host countries, including facilitating donor-donor coordination and inter-host country coordination. This could take the form of a dedicated unit within UNRWA or funding a programme similar to the one carried out by Chatham House in its Regional Dimension of the Palestinian Refugee Issue in the MEPP.

16. Recommendation five relates to the need for strategizing to cope with longer-term issues such as the exponential growth of the refugee population, the prospect of a Palestinian state not being established and the prospect of UNRWA continuing indefinitely. DFID should set up a mechanism to facilitate the exploration of these longer-term issues and to help inform strategic decision-making. Options to consider include funding a small unit at a British university or think tank to develop a series of discussion papers in which the issues are researched and discussed and a dialogue with Palestinian political actors and refugee groups is embarked upon.

17. Recommendation six is closely related to five. DFID should commit to its own monitoring process on an annual or biennial basis, in order to ascertain how the changes in the regional and international landscape are affecting UNRWA and in particular in its ability to carry out its various functions. This would provide time for contingency planning. Furthermore, the information could be used to inform UNRWA’s own planning process related to these changes.
Introduction

18. Throughout its 67 years of existence, UNRWA has been beset by political, financial and organisational crises. So much so, that its very continued existence is the strongest indicator of the profundity and urgency of the political demands it was set up to address. Despite the constant reiteration of its temporary nature, the tragedy of the Palestinian refugees and the lack of success of the international community in resolving their plight have meant that UNRWA has become embedded in the diplomatic, humanitarian and political architecture of the Middle East.

19. Each successive crisis has served as a crossroads in the direction of travel of the Agency as well as an opportunity for change and reform: in the 1950s we saw the transition from emergency relief to its consolidation as a development provider; following the 1967 war, we saw the expansion of the mandate of the Agency as a result of further displacements; 1982 saw the massive destruction of camps in south Lebanon by Israeli forces and after 1993 we saw the Agency engage with international support for Palestinian state-building with the real prospect of transferring some of its services to refugees to the nascent state administration. More recently, following the 2nd Intifada in 2000, new management structures and accountability processes of the Agency were introduced when it became clear that the road to a Palestinian state was strewn with greater political obstacles than envisaged.

20. The current crossroads, arising from the fragmentation of the Palestinian leadership, the collapse of the negotiations between Israel and the PLO in 2014 and the eruption of the Syrian civil war, has both resulted from and coincided with wider shifts in the international landscape. In this context, the recurring budgetary shortfall presents heightened dangers both to UNRWA, the host countries and the region in general. In many senses, this period could turn out to be as profoundly disruptive to the regional order and to the Palestinian situation as previous turning points in 1948, 1967, 1982 and 1993. One important result of this conjunction of many crises is the emergence of UNRWA as a key, if reluctant, player in the political discussions concerning the future of the region, which in turn has triggered greater scrutiny and political criticism of its perceived mandate, role and performance.

21. Thus the challenges confronting UNRWA in 2016 and the coming years are myriad and immense and it is important that donors and other stakeholders take stock of their roles and responsibilities in developing a strategy to address them and to support the agency in its efforts to deal with the challenges. This study is a contribution to that effort.
Objectives of the Study

22. In consultation with the Department for International Development (DFID), it was agreed that the objectives for this study are to focus upon elucidating the main challenges facing UNRWA in the coming years in order to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the pressures on the agency and to help DFID identify a set of priorities. The study does not comprise a critique or evaluation of UNRWA’s performance or of DFID’s support for the Agency, although it will draw on such studies where necessary for the task of delineating future options.

23. The context of the study is framed by the vision of DFID’s Palestinian programme which is “a negotiated settlement that leads to a sovereign, democratic and contiguous Palestinian state. This is based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, with Jerusalem as a shared capital, living in peace and security, with Israel.” The Rights and Refugees “pillar” of this programme supports “service delivery for Palestinian refugees and to protect vulnerable Palestinians”, “a just, fair and agreed settlement for Palestinian refugees” and to provide “assistance to UNRWA”.

24. The question this study seeks to answer is the extent to which DFID’s vision is still relevant in the light of changing circumstances. Have more pressing priorities appeared on the scene and how should DFID respond to them?

Approach taken by the Study

25. One way of disentangling the different challenges facing UNRWA is to group them into three concentric circles: shifts in global politics, regional developments and internal Agency-related changes. This has the advantage of separating out and clearly mapping the various relevant issues, and, in turn, drawing out their implications as well as related recommendations.
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The study will use this tripartite division to organise its analysis taking each circle in turn. The study will conclude by offering some observations on Fid’s role and recommendations for consideration. The study will not provide basic background on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Neither will it present a potted history of UNRWA nor DfID’s engagement with it. The study will presume that a degree of prior knowledge of the political circumstances in which the study is being undertaken and thus focus on the task in hand. It is based primarily on interviews, personal observation and an interrogation of the secondary literature and its methodology is spelt out in Appendix A.

26. As this study is not a formal evaluation of DFID’s Palestinian Programme, it does not require DFID to publish a management response to the recommendations outlined in the final section.

27. A note about terminology. “Short term” or “near term” refers to a period of time of less than five years, “medium-term” to between 5 and 10 years, and “long-term” to a period further away than 10 years. The descriptor “Palestine” refugee and “Palestinian” refugee are used interchangeably while noting that the former term is the correct legal usage for those registered with UNRWA. Finally, the title Palestinian National Authority and Palestinian Authority are used interchangeably.
Future Challenges Facing UNRWA

Global Shifts

28. Recent changes in the global context will have an impact upon UNRWA’s ability to function and fulfil its mandate. The first among these is the decline in the pre-eminence of the United States in the region as the world shifts from a uni-polar to a multi-polar world. This can most notably be seen in the rise of China and the re-orientation of US attention towards the Asia-Pacific region. There is much debate amongst academics and commentators over the significance and timing of this shift on the Middle East region, since the US still retains a strong military presence with airbases, ports and a powerful fleet of naval vessels in the Gulf. But it is clear that the imminence of China becoming the leading world power is likely to divert both US attention and resources from the region in the medium term as it seeks to counter China’s influence in the Pacific, Central Asia and Africa.⁴

Table 1: Balance of Power Forecasts, 2010-2050.⁵

29. Whether this will be matched by greater Chinese involvement in the issues of the Middle East that are traditionally the preserve of the US and its allies, it is too early to say, but it will be impossible to ignore the enormous influence that the Chinese economy can bring to bear on one or another side of the political conflicts in the region. The prospect of a greater Chinese involvement in the Middle East should not be ruled out.⁶ In February, 2016, the arrival in Tehran of the first freight train from Beijing, the Silk Train, was an event of more than just symbolic importance.

30. A similar check on US foreign policy dominance can be seen in the more activist and assertive Russian foreign policy in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, parts of South America, the Polar Regions and in the Middle East. Again it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which Russian involvement in the Syrian conflict is part of a wider game designed to extract negotiating chips over the conflict in Ukraine and a push-back with regard to US advances in Russia’s backyard in Central Asia, or whether, indeed, it
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heralds a more long-term engagement in the region. There is certainly great potential for Russia to emerge as a more significant player in the region as a result of its active support of the emerging Iran-Iraq-Assadist Syria-Hizbollah block against the expansive pretensions of Turkey and Saudi Arabia. At the same time, we should note that in 2015 the Russian contribution to UNRWA was a mere $2m (in contrast to $408m from the US in 2014) and is very unlikely to increase in the short to medium term.

31. The anticipated arrival of a more confident and coherent EU foreign policy through the structures created in 2007 by the Lisbon treaty (the European External Action Service) has not occurred. After some promising interventions in the Balkans, EU preoccupation with the continuing problems of integration of Eastern Europe and the threat to its eastern borders as a result of the partition of Ukraine has checked this momentum. The more recent refugee crisis has both severely impaired its decision-making processes and also its ability to project its values and interests through diplomacy and aid.

32. At the same time the influence of the EU lies much less with "force projection", that is, the number of tanks or missiles it can deploy to bolster a particular policy, but more with "normative power". Normative power is the power to set agendas in international fora, to impose benchmarks and protocols and to determine the terms of economic exchange. It is often overlooked that the EU is not an empire constructed by some 21st Century Bismarck or Napoleon, but is, instead, an association of states entering into a confederal arrangement by treaty. Despite many examples of political expediency over-riding certain agreements, particularly over setting the EU budget, the main result is that the European Union is nothing if it is not based on the rule of law. For all the failings of the EU, the most important and overarching factor in the relationship between the European Union and the Palestinian-Israel conflict is the grounding of its foreign policy in the rule of law and its adherence to international legal principles.

33. This has several important effects on the conduct of EU foreign policy. The coordination of 27 member states can only work if it is based on legal agreements and procedures and on international law. While this creates a slow, ponderous and reactive foreign policy, it is nevertheless, by virtue of its size alone, a powerful force, to which the success of the Paris Climate Change Conference in 2014 can attest. Without EU drive and support the agreement would not have been achieved. In the same way the EU’s strong backing for the international community’s legal position on issues such as the Palestinian refugees, while largely passive, is at the same time, legal bedrock upon which UNRWA and the donor community base their actions.

34. A further brake on the commitment of the international community to peace and development issues in the Middle East and hence on UNRWA has been the repercussions of the 2008 financial crisis. While most OECD countries avoided catastrophic meltdown, the impact of the lack of banking liquidity upon trade, investment...
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and employment has led to an environment where contributions to humanitarian and development aid extract high political costs domestically. At the same time, while overall multilateral contributions may not have decreased, a greater and greater proportion of aid is and will be directed to addressing the fallout of climate change. Thus lower surpluses in the wealthier countries and greater demand for emergency assistance as a result of natural and manmade disasters are combining, with the result that, in the medium to long term resources are likely to be allocated away from bodies such as UNRWA.

The role of non-state actors

35. Part of this overall picture is also the emergence of non-state actors as significant political players in the international system. The role of the multinational corporations and private foundations with wealth that exceeds the GDP of some medium size states is already well known. Their ability to divert investment, infrastructure, employment and taxable revenues to different territories in order to maximise profits is only partially offset by the philanthropy of some of their spin-off foundations. Nevertheless, they both remain important sources of humanitarian assistance and are less contingent on short-term political considerations that govern state assistance.

Table 2: The Top Ten Wealthiest Charitable Foundations, 2015

36. The emergence of global religious ideologies as a popular mobilising force has created new international alliances and movements. Be it Falun Gong of China or Gulen of Turkey, or one of the large Sufi branches or Christian evangelical movements, such movements are part of a transnationalism which both undermine the power of states and also constitute alternative sources of leadership and revenue. Accessing these sources for funds and for political support will be more complex and time-consuming for humanitarian agencies and may have costs in terms of their social and religious agendas, but nevertheless they are emerging as an additional feature on the international scene.
37. A similar but much overlooked non-state actor in international politics is the emergence of large cities (primate or mega-cities) or confederations of cities as the locus of political and financial power. Some cities now have “foreign policies” (the European Commission offices in Brussels are awash with city lobbyists) and project themselves as discrete entities in world fora. An example of how cities can intervene effectively is the concerted action taken by cities in the US who combined to agree on lower carbon emission targets before any action was taken by the individual US states or the federal government. The rapid urbanisation of the world’s population, 95% by the year 2035, is leading to the emergence of new actors and power centres affecting the network of supportive relationships upon which UNRWA could previously draw. At the same time it will also provide new opportunities for attracting support.

Implications for UNRWA

38. Thus the global framework within which UNRWA is operating is changing on all sides and very rapidly. The protective umbrella of the US and its allies under which UNRWA has traditionally sheltered is riven with holes and pointing in other directions than that of the oncoming rain. The cost of repair of that umbrella is beyond the means of many states beset by financial and security problems, while the possible replacement of the umbrella with another one provided by other sympathisers has not yet materialised as a real possibility. In this sense UNRWA is entering a new era of global politics and DFID need to take into account the additional strains it will have on the Agency.

39. More specific impacts of these shifts in the balance of power and influence in the region on UNRWA can be delineated. While US domestic support for Israel will continue for the foreseeable future, the US military and intelligence communities will be more circumspect. The US does not need Middle East oil to the same extent as before and it does not need Israel to act as the regional policeman for the US. Unlike in the past, in the future, Israel will have to argue for US support rather than assume or expect it. Unless Israel is confronted by an existential threat, in the broader US competition with China and Russia, it will need to prove it is a useful ally.

40. This is a nuanced shift but has more pronounced implications for US allies. They will feel less beholden to Israel and take advantage of the fact that the US will be reluctant to expend political capital to whip them into line when Israel is no longer such a priority. This will open up space for alternative approaches to resolving the Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflicts and is likely to place UNRWA in a less vulnerable position in future disagreements with Israel. At the same time, UNRWA’s capacity to capitalise on this possible development is severely restricted. It does not have the resources to devote staff time for the required research, extending contacts and lobbying to take advantage of these changes.
Regional developments affecting UNRWA

Impact of US policy in the region

41. The changing role of the US in the region has been profound. It can be seen in the transition from the containment policies of the Clinton era and the overtly interventionist policies of the Bush era to what has been termed as the Obama Doctrine: that is, no direct intervention unless there is an attack on the US homeland or on one of its key allies. The significance of this change is great and its impact is still being played out in the region, notably in Syria, but also in Yemen and Iraq. For many years US allies have been accustomed to rely upon it to manage major crises in the region but this is passing and despite the rhetoric of “making the US great again” in the current US election campaign, the traditional role of the US as a Middle East power is undergoing change.

42. The most salient impact of the US intervention in the Gulf has been to transform Iraq from a Sunni-dominated state to a Shia-dominated one, thus removing the main counter-balance to Iran in the region. Bear in mind this followed on from the removal of the Taliban (Sunni) from Afghanistan as a threat to Iran on its eastern border. Thus by the time Obama was elected in 2010, Iran had emerged as the superpower of the Gulf region.

43. It is at this point that a number of factors combined to facilitate the rise of Islamic State (IS) as a potent destabilising force with a territorial base: the popular anger against Arab dictators in the region, the resistance to the rise of Shi’ism by Sunnis in Iraq, the availability of large areas of ungoverned territory in north-western Iraq and north-eastern Syria. Thus what was a radical but essentially marginal jihadi group has capitalised on the erosion of the Sykes-Picot lines and provided an ideological and military platform for resistance to Shi’a domination of the Mashreq region and western interventionism.
44. IS may not survive as a political and territorial entity but its call for a Sunni caliphate has resonance and appeal across the Middle East and the Islamic world which is likely to manifest itself in different forms in the years to come. More importantly, IS has weakened Sunni Islam by exacerbating the many splits already in existence as a result of the Arab Spring just at the time when Shi’ism is in the ascendant and Saudi influence is in decline. Several observers consulted for this study have said that in order to broaden its appeal, IS needs “the Palestinian stamp” on its work and that it is only “a matter of time” before IS turns its attention to the Palestinian cause more fully and begins to enlist the disaffected, unemployed and poorly-educated and politically alienated younger Palestinian generation. In this context, credible and substantial steps towards the creation of an independent Palestinian state will be an important counterweight to the attractiveness of IS.

45. The decline of Saudi dominance over the Gulf and Yemen, and the waning of its influence in Syria and Lebanon have been accompanied by the dramatic fall in oil prices since 2014. While the Saudis have indicated for many years that they would no longer fill their traditional role of cutting production when prices fell, it is unlikely that they or others anticipated the prolonged nature of the fall in prices.

46. At the same time, a simple reversal of this policy will no longer have the desired effect of raising prices. Many experts predict that if Saudi production was cut in order to raise prices, that particular lever has lost its effectiveness: other sources of oil would immediately become available whether it is from shale oil and fracking, or from the surpluses in Iran, Iraq, Libya and Venezuela, as well as energy from renewables. The dominance of the Gulf, and hence of Saudi Arabia, over the world energy market has probably diminished for the foreseeable future.

47. While we are seeing the re-balancing of power between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the region, and the proxy wars in Yemen and Syria are a result of this, both Turkey and Israel are emerging as major players in the region. Israel as a regional hegemon is not a new development. Riding on the coat-tails of US supremacy, it has acted with impunity for several decades. What is different in the current period is that the traditional counterbalancing of Israel’s potential reach by the military forces of Iraq, Syria and Egypt no longer exists. Turkey excepted, there is no military power in the region that can match Israeli forces in an all-out conflict.

48. Nevertheless, apart from swatting aside HAMAS and the Palestinian Authority, it is noteworthy that even with a clear military dominance, Israel has acted with a degree of restraint in the region. This is due to two main reasons: Firstly, there is a recognition by Israel that the volatility in the Middle East and North Africa region is such that any provocative action on its part may have ramifications beyond that of its capacity to manage. A good example is Israel’s retreat over its unstated policy of incrementally increasing control over the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem.¹⁶
49. A second reason has been Israel’s failure to dislodge Hizbollah from south Lebanon in 2006. This has meant that the population centres in the north of Israel and more recently, the south as well, are in range of Hizbollah missiles.\textsuperscript{17} Militarily, Hizbollah may be containable by Israel, but the effect that another war with Hizbollah would have on the economy of Israel is too high a price for it to pay. A careful watching and build-up of intelligence has been the main Israeli response. If, however, as a result of waning Saudi influence in Lebanon, Hizbollah succeeds in taking over the remnants of the Lebanese state, see below, that calculation by Israel may change.

Impact of the Syrian Civil War

50. The second major change in the region which affects UNRWA and will continue to do so for many years to come is the break-up of Syria as a unitary state. The Syrian civil war and all its ramifications of displacement, destruction of property, unemployment, disease, suffering and ill-health, collapse of institutions, overburdened host countries etc. is well-documented elsewhere and this study need not enter into any great detail here. The UNRWA website provides up-to-date summaries of its emergency assistance and appeals. Suffice to say that of the 540,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria, 390,000 have been internally displaced by the conflict and another 110,000 are in exile mostly in Lebanon and Jordan.

51. While remarkable efforts have been made to continue to provide education, health and emergency assistance, the destruction and disruption to UNRWA operations and facilities has been overwhelming and an appeal for over $400 million has been launched. The ongoing conflict means that all the focus is on immediate needs but, given a political settlement in the future, the reconstruction of both UNRWA infrastructure and administration will be both expensive and time-consuming for many years to come.

52. Three key issues confront UNRWA with regard to Syria. First, a political solution is likely, at best, to result in a patchwork of pro-Assad and pro-opposition enclaves. Some will be in close association with each other to form blocs of territorial contiguity, while others will remain separate. Thus the result of the civil war will be the dismantling of the state as it hitherto existed which poses serious challenges to UNRWA’s work.

53. Delivering a coherent range of programmes across the range of enclaves similar to that provided prior to the civil war will be almost impossible to achieve. This is not necessarily a terminal situation. UNRWA has responded to wars and severe destruction before, as its work in Gaza over the past decade attests to, but the establishment of procedures and working accords with a myriad of unstable polities will complicate its
work significantly. But, in addition, there may be a need to think in terms of reconfiguring the Field of Operations to provide greater flexibility and decentralisation.

54. As importantly, if the Assad regime is able to extend and consolidate its recent gains, the question of who will pay for the reconstruction work is critical. Neither Russia nor Iran are economically strong enough to invest in the kind of reconstruction required and it is highly unlikely that Saudi Arabia and the other Arab Gulf states will be inclined to assist a predominantly Alawi state. Their funds are more likely to go to rebel held areas resulting, possibly, in a series of Lebanon-style enclaves. The possibility of an archipelago of Levantine Hong Kongs existing alongside an impoverished and, in infrastructural terms, barely functioning rump Syrian state will be another added complexity for UNRWA to engage in.

55. The second key issue is the question as to whether the new political system will be conducive to Palestinian refugees being present at all. It is quite likely that many who have left the country will not return to Syria. But of those who wish to, how many will be allowed to return?

56. Historically Syria has been a great defender of Palestinian rights and of all the host countries have extended a hospitality almost unparalleled in the Arab world. As a result, Palestinian refugees in Syria have largely remained in government-held areas. It is important to note that while virtually all Palestinian refugees who are Muslim are Sunnis, their identity in the eyes of the Syrian government is primarily that of Palestinian. To this end, the long defence of Palestinian rights by successive Syrian governments has increasingly become a basis for expectations that the Palestinian refugee community will back the Assad government and also contribute to the war effort by serving in the military.

57. Although there has been a draconian response against those Palestinians who were perceived as supporters of the rebels, it is largely the case that Palestinians are not being persecuted by the government. However, there has been a change in their situation. Unemployment amongst Palestinians is over 70% and a clear bias towards Syrians in recruitment has emerged.

58. At the same time, how welcome would UNRWA and Palestinians be in areas held by groups who have battled against the Assad regime while the Palestinians sat on the fence, their leaders avoiding any commitment to the resistance and with UNRWA in a position to offer Palestinian refugees greater assistance and protection than their own displaced compatriots?

59. The third key issue concerns the impact of these changes in the Palestinian refugee community in Syria for UNRWA. There is an almost total reliance on UNRWA for
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60. In this context of fragmented Syrian and Iraqi states becoming a new feature of the Middle East we should not overlook the role of Jordan and of developments in Lebanon, two countries most affected by the Syrian civil war. Jordan’s resilience and stability over the past few decades has been remarkable but it is clearly in danger of being overwhelmed by the Syrian crisis. Syrian refugees outnumber the local population in many of its northern cities and the drain on the country’s treasury and resources is only partially compensated by international assistance. To date it has managed to contain the challenge posed by radical Islam through a combination of coercion and co-optation, imprisoning some while drawing others into the regime’s orbit. But this may not be enough to withstand the siren-call of an IS victory or at least an IS-type entity establishing itself in the borderlands of Syria and Iraq.

61. In this context, if Saudi influence continues to wane in the region, there is a possibility of a revival of the notion of a Sharifian alliance. This would be a loose confederation of Sunni tribes in Syria and Iraq that associate themselves with the Hashemite regime as a counterbalancing force to the Shi’a axis emerging and with King Abdullah II acting as a respected and internationally recognised spokesperson for Sunni interests in the Mashreq. While this development can be dismissed as speculation at this stage since despite the vaunted presence of the Jordanian mukhabarat, the regime has neither the resources nor capacity to pin down the loyalty of these powerful and wealthy tribes. Nevertheless, in the desperate attempt to entice Iraqi Sunni tribes away from the Baathist core of IS, this long-dormant notion may gain greater currency in the future.

62. What is clear for UNRWA is that the possibility of a Jordanian willingness to consider taking on greater responsibilities for Palestinian refugees, has become even more remote. While in the past Jordanian resistance to this possibility was grounded in both the rhetoric of solidarity with Palestinian claims for justice and on the insistence that it should not bear the burden of an international responsibility, currently, the tenor of resistance is more existential: in the light of its economic situation, such a demand would be the straw that broke the camel’s back.

63. A similar conclusion can be drawn for Lebanon although for slightly different reasons, the main one being the paralysis in government decision-making that has continued for nearly 2 years and looks set to remain this way. Like Jordan, Lebanon has coped extraordinarily well in absorbing 1.4 million refugees from Syria but its capacity to continue to do so in terms of education, health and employment are at breaking point. The decline of Saudi and Gulf investment in both the government and the private sector has not yet reached critical levels yet but the omens for any significant increase are not promising.
64. In addition to the instability caused by the refugee crisis in Lebanon, the most serious impediment for any further Saudi and Gulf investment is the fear that Hizbollah is gradually taking over Lebanese state institutions. In the absence of a Syrian military presence, it is increasingly perceived, even among some opposing Christian groups, as the key protection against any radical Islamic incursions into the country. Tacit understandings and coordination between the Hizbollah military and the Lebanese Army, unheard of in past decades, have increased over the past few years.

65. For Palestinians this is not entirely welcome news as refugee leaders and activists have been outspoken critics of the Assad regime. For UNRWA, greater Hizbollah surveillance of its activities particularly in the camps of the south, which, one should note, are close to main roads and to Sunni areas in Tyre and Sidon, will become the norm. But it is a certainty that in the absence of a strong interlocutor in the Lebanese state, future coordination over the delivery of services to the Palestinian refugees will not rise above the current level.

The Gaza Blockade

66. Already a dominant player by virtue of the fact that 71% of the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip are refugees (43% of which live in camps), recent events have accentuated UNRWA’s central position. The Israeli blockade of Gaza since the installation of the HAMAS government in 2007, combined with the “no contact with HAMAS” policy of the international community, and combined, more recently, with the Egyptian destruction of the tunnel economy and Egypt’s own restrictions on access, have thrust UNRWA into an even more comprehensive role.

67. This is reinforced by the huge reconstruction needs as a result of the land, sea and aerial invasions by Israel in 2008-9, 2012 and 2014, which caused widespread destruction and longstanding disruption to the property, the economy and to services. The refusal of Israel to allow reconstruction material and funds into the Strip through the HAMAS government led to the creation by the donors (and facilitated by the UN) of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism (GRM) instead. This, in turn, has led to UNRWA to take on additional responsibilities in the Strip.

68. There is an irony in the Gaza situation: the same donors which have pressurized UNRWA to concentrate on its core services have, by refusing to deal with HAMAS, simultaneously obliged UNRWA to extend its work beyond its core services.
the inability of FATAH and HAMAS to reconcile their differences and the hostility of the Egyptian government to a HAMAS presence in the Strip.

Figure 2: Destroyed homes in Khuzaa, East of Khan Younis, Gaza Strip. Source: UNRWA Archives, Shareef Sarhan, August 2014.

69. UNRWA has responded to the blockade with imagination, commitment and professionalism. It is quite remarkable how in the midst of so much conflict and destruction, it has been able to pursue reforms and innovative projects in education, health, gender awareness, microfinancing, protection, job creation and technical training. Nevertheless, the enhanced role brings with its dangers and problems for the Agency which did will need to recognise and address.

70. There are four main ones. First, UNRWA has in its administration a parallel set of state structures delivering both core services and channelling large sums of overseas aid. As a result, these quasi-state functions place it in the position of being a kind of “shadow” government standing behind the non-recognised government of HAMAS. This may be an exaggerated characterisation, but, nevertheless, it is in danger of being seen to replace the existing Palestinian political leadership. The fact remains that UNRWA is unelected and a kind of UN or “donor dictatorship” in the way its leadership/management is not formally accountable to the people but to the UN General Assembly and to its donors.

71. In the aftermath of an emergency, this can be acceptable but as time passes and it becomes the new “normal”, UNRWA will also be the target of additional criticism and hostility, not only by the beneficiaries of its no-doubt dwindling services, but also by the Palestinian leadership who see themselves increasingly marginalised. Already, it has been noted, that at opening and other inaugural ceremonies, it is the UNRWA Director of Gaza Operations that is consistently being accorded the place of the closing speaker - in recognition of the primacy of the Agency’s role. In addition, one can argue, that the very presence of UNRWA and its ability to take up these quasi-state roles depletes, by default, the capacity of non-Agency institutions to engage in state-building projects.
72. A second danger flows from the first. If UNRWA remains in this dominant role in the Gaza Strip, expectations of the refugee and non-refugee population of its capacity to effect broader political change and socio-economic improvement will increase. But UNRWA’s capacity and mandate is limited. Unlike a real state, it has no force projection to protect and advance its interests. It has no army, police or militia at its disposal to remove the blockade and create access to the regional and global market which are both fundamental requirements to improve the lot of the inhabitants of the Strip. In this way, its many accomplishments on the ground in education, training, reconstruction are entirely contingent on Israeli and Egyptian goodwill and are easily reversible. There is a reinforced glass ceiling which without force cannot be broken. As a result it is dependent upon donor lobbying and will need more political pressure on Israel and Egypt from UNSCO and other international actors.

73. A third danger is closely connected to the above. Without progress on opening up the Strip, UNRWA will be forced to work with the existing arrangements imposed upon the Strip by the Israelis and Egyptians. It will therefore become complicit in the rules of the blockade, acting, in effect, as a contracted jailor and in danger of being accused, like the PNA is in the West Bank, as being a stooge of the Israeli state. That it has little option under the existing allocation of duties merely highlights the importance of a more assertive political role by its partners to prevent this happening.

74. A final danger is more connected to the strategizing discourse amongst donors, including DFID. UNRWA’s current role in the Gaza Strip blows a hole in their drive to encourage sustainability. UNRWA is clearly irreplaceable in the Gaza Strip for the time being and, unfortunately for the donors, this irreplaceability, becomes the strongest argument for continued international assistance to the Agency. If the centrality of UNRWA in the Strip continues, as it seems it must since both FATAH, the PA and the donor community have excluded other options, then the case for reductions in other Fields is weakened as the political costs to the donors and to the host countries of introducing differentiated range of services across UNRWA’s Fields of Operations becomes much higher. In essence, the Gaza situation, as it stands, makes it much more difficult for donors to argue the case to reduce provision, for example, in Jordan.

75. In addition to these issues, there are two further challenges which arise irrespective of political developments in Gaza. The first is the set of issues around the UN Gaza in 2020 Report which identified in detail the extent to which the Strip will gradually become uninhabitable as a result of population growth, water salinity and the lack of space and resources to meet the needs of the population. This study presumes DFID is already factoring the findings of the Report in its funding strategies for the Strip and merely notes that this projected scenario further adds to the strategic importance of UNRWA.
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76. The second additional challenge is the scenario described in more detail below of the unravelling of the PNA coupled, in Gaza, with the bankruptcy of HAMAS. In this scenario the irreplaceability of UNRWA becomes almost secondary to the likelihood of an even greater UN role across a wider set of functions, including UN peacekeeping forces mandated to control the borders and crossing points.

The Deferment of the Palestinian State

77. The failure of the US Secretary of State John Kerry initiative in 2014 to establish even a framework for the creation of a Palestinian state within recognised borders is probably the biggest diplomatic setback of the Obama era. For UNRWA, however, the lack of agreement was the final nail in the coffin of the Peace Implementation Programme set up after the Oslo Accords in 1993. Any prospect of a Palestinian state receiving refugees and gradually taking over the services the Agency provides was deferred for the foreseeable future. While the collapse of the negotiations begs the question of whether a two-state model would be sufficient to achieve justice for the Palestinian refugees, it was seen as an essential prerequisite to the fulfilling of UNRWA’s mandate and now that first step is even further away.

78. For some, it has taken until very recently for it to sink in that the two-state model of an Israel and a Palestine living side by side is no longer a political goal of Israel. As a result, little detailed thought has been given to how this might affect the work of UNRWA and the international support it receives. The fact that the alternatives to this model are also unclear has meant that inertia in strategic thinking has prevailed and there has been a great reluctance on the part of those countries wedded to the two-state model to reconfigure their diplomatic activities and their accompanying humanitarian assistance.

79. There is some justification in clinging onto the commitment to a two-state model: it may still return at some future date as the most feasible model available to the international community. At the same time, it is highly unlikely to return as the outcome of an agreement for at least five years, more likely close to ten years. In addition, the political developments that need to take place for it to be once again a feasible option – the political defeat of the Israeli right and nationalist camp, the re-unification of the Palestinian movement, the disavowal of terrorism by HAMAS, etc. – will have created a new political environment so that the features of the model that were envisaged after the Oslo Accords will probably need reconfiguration. In essence, version 2 of the Two-State Model may be significantly different to the original.

80. A number of alternatives to the two state model are being discussed. The first to be considered is a binational state comprising Israelis and Palestinians. Binationalism does not necessarily mean the eradication of national identity, and it can also have a territorial component.
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geographical areas. Thus Israeli Jews may predominate in certain areas and Palestinian Arabs in other areas but both are part of a confederal or federal state structure.

81. Often characterised as the unrealistic musings of idealists, there are, however, two perspectives which suggest that the binational vision should not be dismissed out of hand: firstly, it has emerged as the Palestinian default position if negotiations do not succeed, but more importantly the model comprises a number of versions of varying utility: For example, it has already been accepted that the two-state model in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will consist of a range of agreements which extend beyond intelligence and security cooperation but also encompass the economy and trade, the environment, regional urban planning, tourism, immigration etc. Already there are agreements in place for a single economic zone for Israel and Palestine which point to a merging of the two states at some fundamental levels. It is this degree of inter-state coordination which suggests that in essence what is being discussed in the peace negotiations is a sort of \textit{two-state plus}, which on further analysis looks remarkably close to some confederal variants of the binational state model.

82. Other alternatives to the two state model also exist. The “one-and-a-half state” would be an Israeli and a truncated, diminished Palestinian area. The “three-state” is envisaged as comprising Israel, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank as separate entities. What these models have in common is that they are both subject to Israeli military, political and economic dominance, but that also they are firstly, not solutions, but transitional situations which will lead either to greater Israeli control or absorption, and, secondly, they are outcomes which will not be based on agreement between Israelis and Palestinians but be imposed unilaterally. In this sense the alternatives will clearly be less stable and less permanent than an agreed binational, confederal or two-state model.

83. A final model that is occasionally discussed is a confederal arrangement with Jordan, Israel and Palestine. Again this probably would only come into existence as a framework that is imposed on Palestinians and they would be the junior partner. However, of the non-two state models, this may be more attractive to the Palestinian elite since a tie-up with Jordan would be preferable than a subordinate position in an arrangement that only comprises Israel.

84. It is unlikely that the Palestinian National Authority will be abandoned by the international community. Too much has been invested in it already which means that in the absence of a credible alternative, funds will still be made available to it. Indeed, the prospect of the 60-70,000 armed Palestinian security personnel not being paid and not being accountable to any recognised entity would greatly alarm Israel, the US, the EU, Jordan and Egypt, so that, at the very least, some sort of rump administration would be propped up to provide a framework for security issues. What is more likely to happen is the gradual withering away of funds as projects are completed and new ones are not
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embarked upon for fear of an unstable situation rendering the tracking of funds difficult.

85. This may take some years to occur but it will accelerate exponentially if the Presidential succession issue is not dealt with in a legitimate way in the eyes of the Palestinians. Without new elections for both the Presidency or the Legislative Council or the reconvening of the suspended HAMAS-dominated Legislative Council, it is quite likely that the different FATAH factions and HAMAS will attempt to assert control over certain PNA ministries in order to gain access to funds and patronage networks and use their supporters in the various branches of the security services to deter others. Without a political horizon leading to an agreement with Israel and without a legitimate succession process, it is quite likely that this struggle will turn violent which in turn will accelerate the withdrawal of funds from the international community.

Implications for UNRWA and DFID

86. What do these outcomes and possible developments mean for UNRWA and for DFID’s ongoing support for the Agency? It is important to note that even if a state of Palestine was established, this would not be sufficient in itself to fulfil the mandate entrusted to UNRWA by the UN General Assembly. The creation of a Palestinian state was only ever going to be a partial solution with many other issues concerning redress and compensation also requiring an agreement. Yet, even this partial solution is further away than ever. Thus without an alteration to the mandate or the devising of a new mandate, UNRWA is here to stay for the foreseeable future and, unless the international community is prepared to absorb the serious political, and – not to forget - legal costs of discontinuing its financial support, funding by the international community will have to continue either in current form or in some new forms.

87. In the shorter term, the lack of a political horizon for the resolution of the Palestinian refugee issue carries with it the potential for a new round of conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people, and also to some extent between Palestinian refugees and their host country governments. With the prospect of a political solution, people, mostly young Palestinians, are reluctant to risk death, or the loss of an eye or a limb by confronting the security forces containing their dissent. Without a political solution in sight, however, the deprivations they are experiencing and the feeling of hopelessness becomes intolerable and there is a sense of “when you have nothing, you have nothing left to lose” which galvanises them into action. At present, it is very probable that only the lack of credible leadership and disunity between the main factions is delaying a violent outburst by a new generation of disillusioned young Palestinians. We return to this below.
88. What this specifically means for UNRWA is that the tide which was flowing gradually one way, with more and more refugees accessing PNA services, will start to flow the other, back towards UNRWA and its services. Roughly 30% of the West Bank Palestinians are refugees, and of those roughly 30% live in camps. While all refugees are entitled to UNRWA services, there has been an increasing trend of refugees who have moved out of the camp turning to PNA schools and health centres. In a situation where PNA ministries are running out of funds, those who can, will return to UNRWA services, thus putting an even greater strain upon the Agency’s resources and capacities when it will be struggling to cope in any case with a rising population and a youth bulge, see section below.

89. In addition, in the probable absence of either an Israeli re-occupation or international intervention, there is a danger that a kind of “warlordism” may emerge in the West Bank. In this scenario, Tulkarm, Hebron, Nablus and Ramallah, etc., will operate as enclaves striving for ascendancy with varying degrees of collusion with the Israeli and Jordanian security services. This will have ramifications for UNRWA’s ability to offer consistent protection and services and may, like in Syria and Lebanon, indicate the need to have contingency plans for the re-configuration of its field operations.

90. At the same time as this may occur, an additional role will be thrust upon UNRWA of greater political sensitivity. One of the positive results that can be derived from the failure of the international community in advancing Palestinian rights has been the attempts by the PLO to insert the Palestinian issue into international legal fora. Despite the admonishments of the US, the PLO has become more assertive in using international legal instruments to advance its case for an Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territories (oPts). Appealing to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 2004, being given Non-Member Observer State Status in 2012, being voted on as a full member of UNESCO and Palestine being a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and 15 other conventions in 2014, have raised the profile of the PLO and made it an active player in this field.22

91. As a consequence of the PLO’s enhanced recognition and profile, this has opened up more space for UNRWA to also articulate the Palestinian case as defined by its mandate. Its advocacy, already given increasing emphasis by a clear mandate from the General Assembly and a more robust institutionalized approach to protection and promotion of human rights under successive Commissioner-Generals, is buttressed and complemented by the progress the PLO has made in the international legal arena. This is a sensitive path to tread. So far, with the experience of dealing with the critics of its neutrality and armed with the knowledge it has robust procedures to demonstrate its neutrality in place, UNRWA has managed to avoid some of the more egregious pitfalls and is not regarded by key players in the most influential diplomatic circles as a mouthpiece of the PLO.

92. However, if in the near future the PNA begins to wither and the PLO is beset by infighting, Palestinians and particularly the refugee groups will turn to UNRWA to be their main advocate and articulate their concerns. This will require very careful planning
and coordination. It is not that UNRWA will be advocating anything different than what he has already been saying over the past few decades. More it is that the context will have changed and the significance of what UNRWA advocates will be greater. Without a strong Palestinian leadership to put the case for the refugees, UNRWA’s voice may become the most authoritative and thus draw more attention and scrutiny than ever before.

Figure 3: UNRWA administering cash assistance as part of their humanitarian response to meet basic needs in Syria. Source: Taghrid Mohammad, 2015, UNRWA Photo.

Longer-term Implications

93. Another issue flowing from the lack of a Palestinian state concerns the longevity of the Palestinian refugee status. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has defined a protracted refugee situation as one which has exceeded 5 years. The Palestinian case which is over 65 years is therefore an extreme example of a protracted refugee situation. The question to be asked is: will it still be unresolved in 2030 or 2040? If so, does its status remain the same or does that kind of longevity change its nature and shift our perceptions of it, and, more importantly, how we devise policies to address it?

94. Another way of looking at the question of longevity is to ask whether at some point the rights of indigenous people as applied to the Maoris of New Zealand, or the First Nations in Canada and the US become more applicable in framing the policy responses to the Palestinian case, than the current international refugee law framework. And if this transition makes sense, then, when does it occur? Surely it will not be that long: 100 years of refugeedom for Palestinians will be 2048 – thirty-four years from now, which is half the lifetime of UNRWA to date.

95. In international law, refugee rights do not erode, they are not time-contingent. Yet, it is clear that in practice, the passage of time can obscure their primacy. Claims for restitution are the strongest in the immediate aftermath of a conflict. A year later they are still strong but there may be complications in effecting restitution. Ten or twenty years later, the rights of secondary occupants, however subordinate, start to emerge. Fifty years later those secondary occupants will have had children and grandchildren and
their rights enter the picture. It is not that Palestinian rights will no longer be applicable; it is just that the scene has become more crowded and the political costs of implementing those rights are correspondingly much higher.

96. Making this observation is not to condone the non-resolution of the Palestinian refugee issue, but to describe the obstacles in the way.\textsuperscript{24} It is also uncharted territory for the UN as a whole but needs to be factored in as fourth and fifth generations of Palestinian refugees take their place on the stage.

\textit{In international law, refugee rights do not erode, they are not time-contingent. Yet, it is clear that in practice, the passage of time can obscure their primacy.}

97. For UNRWA in particular, this long view is very problematic. Set up as short-term, interim mechanism, it has been forced to consolidate and adapt to growing needs and numbers. Projecting its role into the medium to long-term future, it will need to radically adapt both its funding model and its services to cope with both the growing numbers (see discussion in next section) changing needs and advocacy roles. The question is that if this change is coming, when will it be and when will it need to start planning and consulting. Furthermore, what legal framework will need to be put into place for it to carry out this additional twist to its mandate?

\section*{UNRWA itself}

98. More directly UNRWA also faces a range of challenges relating to its operations and the programmes it seeks to administer. Some of this detail will be well-known to DFID staff and this study will only touch briefly on the factual material and concentrate more on the implications for DFID support of UNRWA in the future. It will focus on funding, demography, refugee youth and the engagement with refugees as key priorities.

99. While this study focusses on the challenges facing UNRWA with the implication that they are mostly problems and failings which will need to be addressed, it is also important to note the broader context of the accomplishments of UNRWA. Many of these will be familiar to DFID and are displayed on the website, on UNRWA TV and via press releases. At the same time, the study acknowledges and, in the Recommendations Section that follows, will build on the fact that some of the agency’s achievements are really quite remarkable not only in themselves but particularly so in the context of the conflict, and in the volatility and political and social conservatism of the region.

100. Most noteworthy in this context have been the education reforms in which UNRWA has sought to upgrade teaching methods to match international standards across its five Fields of Operations. This involved switching from the practice of having serried ranks of children learning by rote and the use of corporal punishment to participatory methods
of teaching. It meant re-training 17,000 teachers and re-designing the use of classrooms and other ancillary spaces, all in a political landscape of poverty and conflict. The results have been recognised widely as a success. With such dedication, it is no accident that both Hanan al-Hroub, the winner of 2016 Global Teacher Award and Mohammed Assaf, the Arab Pop Idol winner of 2013, are both alumni of UNRWA schools.

101. Similarly, reforms in UNRWA’s health programmes have led to a family-centred health service which has adopted WHO benchmarks for primary healthcare. Other innovative and forward-looking initiatives include the introduction of human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance (HRCRT) education and training, of gender awareness training for its staff and extensive consultation with camp residents undertaken by the Camp Improvement Programme. To this extent UNRWA is an unusual promoter of both quality and equality in the region and part of the challenge for the donor community is to build upon these achievements while assisting the Agency in managing new political circumstances and pressures (See Appendix D).

Figure 4: Celebrating World Teacher’s Day in Dheisheh refugee camp in the West Bank. Source: Isabel de la Cruz, October 2015 UNRWA photo

Funding

102. The issue of most concern to DFID and other donors is clearly that of funding and the constant need to match supply with demand. This study will not cover ground which DFID is well-acquainted with but attempt to relate the political developments outlined in the previous sections to the question of funding. I will focus on two aspects: the diversification of donors and the implications of a Palestinian state not being established over the next 10 years. Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that as a result of previous shortfalls, UNRWA no longer has any working reserves. It does not have much lee-way if pledges are not converted into contributions. The education crisis in August 2015 was
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a very clear indication of the fragility of Agency’s revenue streams and its lack of reserves.

103. UNRWA has made great efforts to diversify its donor base. The long-held perception that its main funders are OECD countries and the EU is now only accurate in terms of contributions to the General Fund (now retitled as the Programme Budget). Non-OECD countries, particularly of the Gulf are now major funders of projects and emergency assistance. This policy has been adopted deliberately with a dedicated unit set up to plan approaches and to maintain relationships established. It has been one of the success stories of the Agency.

Table 3: Top 20 government donors to UNRWA in 2014


104. Nevertheless, meeting the growing needs of a growing refugee population means that even more efforts will need to be expended in this direction and more staff time and resources allocated. What this study also draws attention to is the likelihood that the most promising source of new funding – the Arab states of the Gulf – is unstable and may not be forthcoming in the near future. The task therefore, will be to not only consolidate its successes as much as possible with the Gulf States but to also develop or explore new and different directions such as city networks, religious foundations and corporate and private philanthropy. The current tentative moves made by UNRWA towards the international zakat funds are a promising example of this. Donations in kind such as the installation of renewable energy sources and waste disposal in refugee camps may also be another possibility. Twinning is also an area which holds out some promise.

105. However, this approach is based on the current funding model of relying on annual or biannual donations or project funding, no matter how recurring they are. The political landscape outlined in the sections above point to the need for a more long-term and stable funding structure. If the prospect of a Palestinian state has receded for at least
another ten years, possibly a lot more, then the spotlight is turned on whether the funding model is still viable.

Demography

106. One of the most important challenges facing the Agency is the demographic one. The Medium Term Strategy 2016-2021 estimates that the growth of eligible registered refugees will reach 6.46 million in 2021. This is a 17.1% increase on the 2014 figure. Based on this rate of growth, by 2030, we can expect approximately 8.5 million eligible refugees – almost double the 2014 figure. Not only does this raise serious political questions as to whether the international community has the willingness or capacity to support such an exponential increase, but also given the budget shortages already being experienced it raises the question of whether UNRWA itself will have the capacity as it is currently constituted to continue to meet the needs of such large numbers of refugees.

107. In addition, it is not just the absolute numbers which will pose challenges, it is the profile which will change and pose new and more demanding needs. One main area of concern is that while the refugee demographic is increasingly youthful, there is still an increase in the absolute numbers of middle aged Palestinian refugees which will lead to demands for different kinds of healthcare: more non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as hyper-tension, diabetes, obesity and mental disorders. One interviewee reported that the Palestinians refugee population comprises the largest of obese and diabetes patients in the world and over 70% of causal deaths are from NCDs. Per annum over $2m is spent on insulin alone. The challenge of addressing these needs will only increase over the years as the youthful population ages but also as the insecurity of their status is heightened due to the volatility of the region described in the previous sub-section

Refugee Youth

108. A second area is even more problematic: what is referred to by demographers as “the youth bulge”. Over 50% of Palestinian refugees are under 24 years of age and by 2021, over 1 million will be in the age bracket of 15-24. It is the lack of opportunities available to this section of the population which was of the greatest concern to almost all interviewees, “the ticking bomb” it was characterised more than once. There are three elements which pose serious challenges to UNRWA but all are inter-related.

109. The first is the lack of employment opportunities for different reasons in all the fields of operation: the Israeli blockade in Gaza, the ban of employing Palestinians in certain jobs and the public sector and the undercutting of wages by Syrian refugees in Lebanon, the restrictions in access to the Israeli labour market from the West Bank, the poor
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performance of the economy and the undercutting of wages by Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Jordan, and the war in Syria.

110. Second, in the past, Palestinians frequently found employment in the Gulf States and other parts of the Middle East. For political reasons, this option is no longer available on the scale which previously soaked up unemployment in the host countries and the indications are that opportunities will remain limited for the foreseeable future. Third, the knock-on effects of this are potentially very de-stabilising. Not only does this lack of employment account for the falling enrolling rates in UNRWA schools, particularly in Lebanon, but it also impacts upon the school culture itself. Poor attendance, ill-discipline, bullying and physical violence between students and between staff and students have become issues of great concern.

111. But of most concern for the purposes of this study is how the lack of job prospects, the lack of progress in the political domain and the lack of effective organisation by the existing Palestinian leadership all combines to create a momentum towards radicalism and nihilism that will be exploited by organisations such as IS and which could explode, turning Palestinian youth against the current Palestinian leadership and the host countries.\textsuperscript{30} It could also explode and turn them against UNRWA teachers, school principals, and other staff who will be perceived as representatives of the international community which has let them down. UNRWA is beset by problems from all sides but this seems to be the one which is most pressing and flagged up as urgent by virtually all those interviewed for this study.

Engagement with Refugees

112. UNRWA comprises a number of parallel worlds. There is the world of the HQ in Amman and its Jerusalem counterpart with its planning, communications, external relations departments; with the offices of the education, health and social services programmes. Strategies are discussed and policies are set, followed by evaluations and meetings with donors and host country officials. In effect it is operates like a minor state with protocols and procedures. Then there is the UNRWA at the front line of emergency assistance in the field, with staff braving extreme conditions and refugees desperately seeking help and protection. There is also the UNRWA of the busy schools with their double shifts of noisy children, the crowded health clinic, the congested camp with layer upon layer of rooms built on top of each other blocking out the sun. There is the UNRWA of the paternalistic middle manager dispensing posts and perks in a network of cronyism and nepotism. There is...
the UNRWA of the aid worker and the UNRWA of the clock-watching *muazzaf*, or government clerk.

113. Pulling all these people and structures into alignment so that they are in step and moving roughly in the same direction is an exercise of gigantic proportions. There are competing expectations of the role of the Agency by its different stakeholders with refugees expecting more evidence of progress towards a political resolution while donors are concerned with sustainability and dependency issues.

114. Creating convergence and cohesion at a time when resources are stretched so thin and when the political environment is so volatile is unlikely to be achievable. While the loyalty to UNRWA by the refugee community is remarkably strong, it has to be recognised that the search for protection is a constant survival strategy of the refugee.31 In the Palestinian case, political factions and other actors offer such additional protection and these dynamics influence the management of staff, in the operations of programmes and delivery of services.

115. To a large extent senior management has relied upon its staff to be its ambassadors and spokespersons in the refugee community, but as salaries have eroded over the decades, perceived cronyism and nepotism have led to some refugees to be mistrustful and resentful of UNRWA. Staff unions have not always played a constructive part, using disputes over salaries and conditions to consolidate their influence and score political points over opponents. At the same time, the divergence should not be overstated or should be put in the context of an underlying and generalised disaffection with authority and leadership structures. Many of UNRWA’s communication difficulties are replicated in the similar distance between the refugees and the Palestinian leadership in the PLO and PNA.32

116. Recently, initiatives to counteract this poor communication within the Agency have been set in train. The 2016-2021 Medium Term Strategy (MTS) has identified the importance of better communication within UNRWA, between the beneficiaries, frontline UNRWA staff and UNRWA senior management.33 One interviewee estimated that only 20% of UNRWA’s 30,000 staff could be contacted by email. Another observation is that its website, both English and Arabic versions, are more externally directed and less thought has been given to how it could be used to communicate more directly with the refugees themselves. Much of what the refugees hear about the Agency’s performance, reforms and plans are drawn from word of mouth, through various media channels and from junior staff. It is only very recently that “UNRWA TV” was established overcome the filters which diffuse the message being conveyed by UNRWA senior management to their staff and the refugees. Other ideas such as establishing various refugee consultation fora, or expanding the remit of the school Youth Parliaments have been brought forward for discussion.34
117. Senior management have correctly identified that if UNRWA is to weather the current and coming storms, a more transparent and participatory culture will have to be created between management, staff and the broader refugee community. DFID has also responded through its technical assistance package to help UNRWA improve, amongst other things, its internal communications. Clearly this is an area of priority and will require additional action.

Conclusion

118. A longer study would be able to examine a range of other internal issues which are also pressing on UNRWA. These would include the degree to which prescription drug use amongst refugees has been described as “a way of life”; it would include the urgency of rehabilitating refugee camps which have been characterised as “supersaturated” and also, given that the likelihood of a major earthquake in the region is rising by the year, a “timebomb”. It would also include a consideration of research that recognises the crucial importance of pre-school education in the cognitive development and health of children and which brings long-term benefits to society such as poverty reduction. The extent to which this is a missed opportunity that exacerbates the existing difficulties for refugees and UNRWA needs further discussion.

119. Recognising these and other issues, this study, nonetheless, has focussed upon, in the absence of a political solution to the refugee issue, on the urgent need for a more sustainable and consistent funding settlement for UNRWA. The need is acknowledged by other donors and suggests an area for productive exploration and cooperation. In addition, the increasing numbers and the ageing of the refugee population will continue to require additional resources. The introduction of the healthy lifestyle objectives across the programmes is an important attempt to manage this strain, but a more fundamental and long-term approach is also required. As one interviewee observed: “Peace is the best cure” for the ailments of most Palestinians.

120. Yet in the absence of peace, UNRWA will need help from its partners in thinking though and devising an approach that addresses the demography issue. The study has also highlighted the growing problems with disaffected and unemployed refugee youth and while the remedies lie in an area that is perhaps beyond DFID’s remit, there is scope for greater coordination with host countries and donor partners in presenting the argument for decisive action on this topic. Finally with regard to senior management’s engagement with the refugee community, much has already been initiated. At the same time, some sensitive areas may be best pursued by those outside the Agency and the donor community so that information about the future can be shared and discussed more widely.
Rationale supporting the Recommendations

Context

121. The continued support of UNRWA by DFID is an important contribution towards realising the objectives of DFID set out in the Programme Vision. In addition, there are a number of other reasons why such support is in the UK’s interests. As well as the moral obligation for the UK to do so, both as a former Mandatory power in Palestine and as a member of the international community, humanitarian aid brings political leverage and influence.

122. By supporting UNRWA, DFID ensures that the UK occupies a seat at the high table in the Arab-Israeli conflict. And by supporting UNRWA to the extent that it does, DFID is able to exercise a significant degree of influence of the strategies and programmes of the Agency. In sum, by adopting this course of action DFID is able to enhance the UK’s reputation globally, establish a moral standing, and also advance its policy of seeking stability and conflict resolution in the Middle East.

123. This study recognises the valuable work already carried out by DFID in supporting UNRWA. Areas highlighted in this study include its contributions to improve the quality of education, of healthcare services, social assistance delivery and management reforms. Other areas have been noted positively in the 2013 Independent Commission for Aid Impact report. Continuing, consolidating and expanding on these areas themselves are important investments in the Agency and a valuable undergirding of the long-term DFID-UNRWA partnership which brings dividends not only to the Palestinian refugees but also to the UK more generally.

The two approaches

124. Given the challenges facing UNRWA outlined above, DFID appears to have two avenues in which to respond to the challenges facing the Agency: a “steady-as-she-goes” approach and an “invest-for-the-future” approach.

125. The “steady-as-she-goes” approach is to continue more or less along the current policy of incentivising reforms and modernisation in key areas, providing technical assistance where there are weaknesses and ensuring that services delivered meet acceptable international standards. The advantage of this approach is that it provides consistency and is based on a deepening partnership between DFID and UNRWA. In face of all the uncertainties surrounding UNRWA, a degree of predictability is valuable and promotes trust and productive cooperation.

126. The disadvantage is that it is to a degree reactive and subject to buffeting by political circumstances. The demands and agendas of other actors impinge upon the ability of DFID to shape outcomes. In addition, to remain “steady” in this approach will require additional funds - just to remain steady.
127. The “invest-for-the-future” approach offers greater options for DFID to play a crucial role in shaping developments and contributing significantly to the stability in the Middle East. This approach is to view UNRWA and the Palestinian refugees less as a burden and more as opportunity for developing the human capital in the region. In a political landscape dotted with fragile, failing and collapsing states, where there is both open conflict and persistent low-intensity conflict, UNRWA can be seen as a transnational institution that, for all its inadequacies, is working pretty well.

128. To some extent, the donor-led reforms of the 2000s have paid off and the donors are the victims of their own success. The quality in education, health and other services are often regarded as amongst the highest in the region, the degree of external auditing and accountability ensures that in the most part its funds are dispense wisely and according to an agreed strategy. With its 30,000 staff and over 500,000 schoolchildren you have a core of human capital exposed to universal benchmarks and practices adopted which can serve as a model of professionalism.

129. One could go further and argue that UNRWA is an unexploited asset to the region; particularly at this moment when donors are gearing up for the reconstruction of Syria and to assist the damaged institutions and economies of the neighbouring states. Rather than seeing UNRWA through the lens of the past, that is, as a mistaken route taken in the management of displaced people, a more forward-looking approach would be to see it as an institution which has formidable record of learning from its own mistakes and adapting to extreme political conditions.

130. By investing in UNRWA, DFID would help precipitate a spill-over effect on the activities of host countries, on other UN agencies and on NGOs in the region. The two most salient areas in which the UNRWA experience has already had an impact upon host country programmes are in education and health where UNRWA practices are being adopted. See Appendix D for more details. But other areas such as protection and gender awareness are also having an impact.

131. These two approaches need not be discrete and incompatible approaches and it would be possible to select one or other of the approaches when dealing with specific issues confronting UNRWA or a mix of the two. Viewing them as different approaches is more in relation to the wider political and humanitarian context of the region. In the light of so many other needs and in the light of so much volatility, UNRWA can be encouraged to re-position itself as an asset to the region and not as a drain on resources in a humanitarian zero-sum game. Thus UNRWA can be given a role, for example, in the reconstruction of Syria in which it is able to disseminate good practice through training, placement and expert advice. This is a perspective that DFID can usefully adopt to try to square the circle of increased demand but finite supply.
Recommendations

132. These recommendations flow from the findings outlined in the main part of this report, and are aimed at identifying key areas where DFID can take action to advance its objectives in light of the challenges facing UNRWA. The key areas focused upon in the recommendations are: funding, refugee youth, coordination/communication, and longer-term strategizing.

Recommendation 1: Funding

133. One of the key issues outlined in this report has been the funding challenges facing UNRWA, including chronic shortages, a deteriorating situation over time particularly due to youth demographics, and challenges arising from the global financial crisis as well as changes in funder priorities. These challenges are having a very real impact upon UNRWA’s ability to deliver services and thus to fulfil its mandated role. Given this and in light of its interest in ensuring UNRWA’s continuing ability to carry out its role, DFID should take the lead in facilitating a discussion regarding options for a more stable funding structure for UNRWA, focusing upon identifying options and outlining how to best advance preferred options. In so doing, DFID could capitalize on its strong ability to coordinate and facilitate discussion on strategy and planning with stakeholders including the refugee community. Following on from those discussions, DFID should work with UNRWA and its partners to help move forward concretely on the preferred option(s).

134. There are four potential options that could be considered: the establishment of an endowment, possibly called the Palestine Refugee Trust Fund, working toward the provision of tax benefits arising from the human capital and skills Palestine refugees have brought to host countries (Jordan, Syria and the oPts in particular), as well as encouraging UNRWA to approach the UN General Assembly to amend part of its mandate so that it can receive funds from the UN assessed dues, finally, pressing for a commitment from the main donors to a 10-year timeframe in budgetary assistance. Each of these will be discussed in turn in what follows.

135. The establishment of an endowment, possibly called the Palestine Refugee Trust Fund, could be managed by an international board and be tasked with investing donations and other contributions to provide a regular revenue stream for the Agency. With the agreement of donors, some contributions to the Trust Fund could come from a percentage top-slice of contributions to the General Fund.

136. A more fundamental development, however, would be for UNRWA, or a designated party on its behalf, to open up discussions on linking the absence of a Palestinian state to which refugees can return, to the other avenue of reparation contained in UNGA Resolution 194, namely that of compensation. This is a complex and sensitive issue which would require much careful discussion with refugees, the host countries, the PLO and key international players in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Yet it should be noted, firstly, that compensation takes at least two forms: compensation for the loss or
damage of property, and compensation for the suffering caused by the conflict, or, in this case, for the experience of refugee-dom. And that the acceptance of compensation does not negate one’s right of return or for restitution.

137. In many of the peace negotiations and in Track 2 discussions on the refugee issue, (notably the two detailed Chatham House discussions supported by the UK Foreign Office and held in Minster Lovell in 2013 and 2014) concrete figures for compensation in the form of developments funds as well as per capita payments ranging between $10 billion and $50 billion were circulated. While there was no agreement between the parties, there was agreement that the international community should contribute.

138. In the absence of a Palestinian state to which these funds could be directed in order to receive refugees, a strong case could be made that a Palestine Refugee Trust Fund would be a legitimate recipient of such funds. The interest accruing could be allocated to UNRWA while the capital would be held in trust pending a peace agreement.

139. While UNRWA may have the expertise in-house to develop a strategy along these lines, it is unlikely to have the resources to allocate the personnel and time to do so. This is an area where additional support from DFID could be crucial in both providing the funds but also in identifying the expertise required and the mechanisms or channels through which a Trust Fund can be explored further. (See Strategizing recommendation below) There is some international experience for the establishment of such funds, notably the work of the International Organisation of Migration and the International Centre for Transitional Justice whose expertise could be enlisted.

140. In addition to possibly securing a more stable funding regime for UNRWA in the future, there are two other reasons why this would be a productive initiative. First, irrespective of any political agreement, UNRWA is burdened with $450 million in liabilities in the event of its mandate coming to an end. Just to close the Agency down under any scenario will cost the international community.

141. Second, in virtually all the negotiations and peace proposals put forward to date, the establishment of a fund for refugee compensation has been a pre-requisite for any progress. The separation of the issue of a) what per capita payments will be allocated to refugees or b) what development aid the host countries and the putative Palestine government will get in lieu of individual compensation, from the establishment of the fund itself, has the potential of removing an important obstacle in the negotiations and kick-starting this critical dimension of the peace process. In essence, front loading the negotiations with a refugee trust fund that simultaneously contributes to UNRWA’s operating costs, will not prejudice the amounts or the methods of disbursement.

142. A second option for stable long-term funding would also be controversial but can be explored sensitively. While host countries have suffered a great deal from the burden of supporting large numbers of refugees, it is nonetheless the case that they have also benefitted from the human capital and skills Palestine refugees have brought. Two generations of part of the workforce in Syria, Jordan and the oPt were educated and
trained in UNRWA schools and institutions. UNRWA has received no financial recompense for this investment in human capital which host states have benefitted from and it can make the case that it should. There will be strong opposition to this view by the host countries and, given the lack of funds available to them for different reasons, untimely. Yet armed with serious estimates of the gains accrued by host countries, donors and refugees would be able to make a strong case for some payback to UNRWA.

143. The third option is that given the lack of a Palestinian state in the medium term, UNRWA may consider approaching the UN General Assembly to amend part of its mandate so that it can receive funds from the UN assessed dues. The author understands that this has been attempted in the past and was frustrated largely by other UN agencies which objected to the privileging of UNRWA. Nevertheless, a stronger case can be made currently that the Agency is no longer a temporary institution but a permanent one – only four years younger than the UN itself – and that it would be more efficient to fund UNRWA in this way.

144. The fourth option, pressing for a commitment from the main donors to a 10-year timeframe in budgetary assistance, is a minimal option that would nonetheless give UNRWA a greater degree of budgetary certainty that would in turn allow it to plan more definitively for a longer period of time. Here, DFID could lead by example in making such a commitment itself and/or could use its political capital with other funders to make the case for such a commitment on their part.

**Recommendation 2: Demography and Refugee Youth**

145. This study has highlighted the growing problem of alienation among young Palestinian refugees which combined with the lack of employment opportunities in their host countries and elsewhere will lead to serious unrest, to the extent that it could destabilise the region. All UNRWA Field Offices are very aware of this trend and have embarked upon a number of initiatives to address it. This is an area in which DFID and other donor countries are already playing a role. The recommendation here is that DFID build upon its existing work by facilitating the coordination of donor and diplomatic pressure on host countries, Israel and the private sector to improve the quality of education, of training facilities, increasing employment opportunities within UNRWA.

146. The trend is potentially so destabilising, however, that assistance should also take the form of stronger political interventions to open up the labour market for Palestinian youth whether it be by lifting the blockade and freeing restrictions on construction in Gaza, or easing mobility in the West Bank, or lifting the restrictions on public sector employment in Lebanon and opening up the private sector, or incentivizing investment in infrastructure in Jordan. While this to some extent is beyond DFID’s remit, it can nonetheless play a crucial role through facilitation and coordination, as well as by commissioning studies which collate the information to advance the argument for
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targeting this demographic, fund their dissemination and assist in the mobilisation of opinion through workshops, meetings, as well as conferences in host countries and Israel. (See also Coordination below)

147. In addition, in the light of this trend, DFID should consider supporting in conjunction with UNRWA a young leaders programme aimed at building a new generation of refugee leaders. An underlying observation one can make regarding Palestinian society in general, but refugee community in particular, is the dearth, through assassination, incarceration, exile and lack of training opportunities, of emerging youth leaders. Such a project would provide a useful vehicle for enhancing the Palestinian refugee capacity to respond to the challenges Palestinian society faces, as well as giving youth some sense of future that would also, therefore, help to mitigate their sense of hopelessness. It would also neatly dovetail into support for UNRWA’s engagement with refugees objectives (see below) as graduates of such programmes could be linked together through follow-up activities into a wider network of young leaders.

Recommendation 3: Refugee Engagement

148. UNRWA has already identified that better communication and a more participatory approach to working with the refugees and other stakeholders is essential if its reforms and modernisation objects are to be successful. It also has a wealth of experience to draw on both historically and more recently through the work of the Camp Improvement Participation Committees. DFID, in turn, is providing technical assistance to support UNRWA’s engagement with refugees. But the scale of culture change required and the political sensitivities round the different kinds of representation that could be used are so fraught, that an external body to orchestrate some initiatives may provide the vehicle or instrument that is at present lacking.

149. DFID should take the lead on a process to define various engagement avenues such as a federation of youth parliaments, a rejuvenation of camp committees, a refugee consultation council, staff sectoral associations etc. then should pilot and design a programme drawing upon international precedent and previous experiences to give substance and direction to this. The vehicle for such a process could be a team comprising academics and relevant experts from UNHCR and IOM.

Recommendation 4: UNRWA - Donor - Host country coordination

150. A common theme running through many of the interviews conducted for this study and the key challenges identified was the need for greater coordination and consultation between UNRWA and the key stakeholders. The political situation in the region has made donor coordination almost impossible. Jordan does not consult with the Assad Syrian government; the Lebanese government is in suspension and the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee cannot function in a vacuum; the FATAH-dominated PNA will not discuss refugee issues with a HAMAS government in Gaza. The result is
that donor influence in the Advisory Committee is much stronger than before and that host country concerns, it can be argued, are given less prominence.

151. The education crisis in August 2015 also put a severe strain on UNRWA’s relations with both donors and host country representatives. “Unacceptable lack of consultation”, “they destroyed the MTS in one stroke”, “undermined any trust we had” are some of the comments the study’s author received. In virtually all the challenges identified, working in tandem with the donors and the host countries is a prerequisite for effective action for UNRWA, but UNRWA is also faced with an array of different agendas and changing policies, so that donor-donor coordination and inter-host country coordination is almost a preliminary step.

152. Greater cooperation is a common refrain in most multilateral endeavours and attempts to provide coordination can absorb considerable resources and time with little benefit. One reason is that cooperation requires a degree of staff continuity and a collective memory to be effective and in the humanitarian and diplomatic fields certainly, the churn in personnel is high. In addition, in a field where there are so many stakeholders who are acting at the behest of politicians with a domestic constituency to consider, political directives to field officers are constantly changing. The sudden withdrawal of Canadian contributions to the UNRWA General Fund is a dramatic example of this phenomenon.

153. The recommendation is that DFID facilitate a process aimed at improving coordination and cooperation between UNRWA and donors as well as between UNRWA and host countries, including facilitating donor-donor coordination and inter-host country coordination. This could take the form of a dedicated unit within UNRWA or funding a programme similar to the one carried out by Chatham House in its Regional Dimension of the Palestinian Refugee Issue in the MEPP. DFID is particularly well positioned to facilitate a degree of continuity and coordination, especially because of the cross-party consensus in the UK on the ring-fencing of its budget, which is one of its major strengths and should provide a degree of certainty for its commitments.

Recommendation 5: Long-term Strategizing

154. Many of the key challenges identified in this study concern longer-term issues such as the exponential growth of the refugee population, the prospect of a Palestine state not being established, the prospect of UNRWA continuing indefinitely and the likelihood of the primacy of Palestinian refugee rights being eroded through other competing claims. In the past, UNRWA established a “Futures Group” which was mostly concerned with managing the pace of implementation of the Peace Implementation Programme. The content of this group’s discussion was highly confidential and it was also constrained by the extreme sensitivity to the perception that UNRWA, at the behest of powerful donors, was planning its own demise.

155. This study has argued that the termination of UNRWA in the current to medium term is not envisaged. But it opens up the question of what shape will it take in the longer-term
and how can donors best provide support in that transition? This is a legitimate and pressing question to ask, but, given its central role, it is too sensitive for UNRWA itself to ask it. The anxiety and insecurity it would engender in the refugee community, with their political leaders and in the host communities would merely add to the Agency’s difficulties. But it is a task that, in close consultation with UNRWA, could be undertaken by an outside body.

156. In addition, the past decade has seen the dissipation of a corpus of knowledge and expertise on the Palestinian refugee issue. Comparative work, records of discussions and valuable archives and expertise that resulted from the work of the Refugee Working Group set up by the Madrid conference in 1990 and convened by Canada are in danger of being lost. DFID is in a good position to take up the baton and facilitate the exploration of these issues. It has a stake in the outcome, it is well-regarded by UNRWA management, other donors and the host countries. In addition, the UK has a track record of engagement in the MEPP and a hinterland of expertise to draw upon.

157. DFID should set up a mechanism to facilitate the exploration of these longer-term issues and to help inform strategic decision-making. Options to consider include funding, through the Conflict and Security Stability Fund, a small unit at a British university or think tank to develop a series of discussion papers in which the longer term issues are researched and discussed. By facilitating, amongst other things, access to contacts in the relevant host country and donor partner ministries DFID would be providing opportunities for a more transparent debate without a backlash from the region being directed against UNRWA.

**Recommendation 6: Regular Political Monitoring**

158. Recommendation 6 is more targeted development of Recommendation 5. DFID should recognize, as highlighted in this study, that UNRWA is entering a critical new phase in its existence and thus commit to its own monitoring process on an annual or biennial basis, to see how the changes in the regional and international landscape are affecting UNRWA. While future scenario planning is undertaken by UNRWA in its preparation for the MTS and this process is the basis of dialogue and DFID’s assessment of UNRWA’s changing environment, DFID would benefit from its own regular internal analysis of the changing political landscape.

159. Such regular monitoring would identify the pressures that are being exerted on UNRWA that could be significant to DFID and its concern regarding UNRWA’s ability to continue to carry out its various functions. Its main value would be to pre-empt major disruptive budgetary shortfalls in the event of a new development. For example, the end of the unipolar international system, the increasing engagement of other key actors, shifts in funding sources for the Agency, the ongoing fall-out of the 2008 financial crisis, the possibility of the Syrian crisis being resolved, the stalemate in Lebanon and the likelihood of a demise of the Palestinian Authority and the additional pressures this
would place on UNRWA would be picked up in a regular monitoring exercise and provide time for discussion and planning. Furthermore, the information could be used as part of DFID’s contribution to the MTS process and inform UNRWA’s own planning processes related to these changes.
Appendices

Appendix A

Methodology

1. The main source of data for the study was two fieldtrips conducted between 3rd-23rd February and 14-18th March 2016 in which the author visited, Israel, West Bank, Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, Jordan and Lebanon. Over 100 people were consulted for this study, drawn from the different stakeholder communities – donor, policy, diplomatic and beneficiary – and with UNRWA staff. See Appendix B for a list of interviewees. 55 of these consultations took the form of semi-structured interviews conducted on a non-attributable basis. Hand-written notes were taken on each.

2. There were four consultations with donors which comprised meetings comprising 3 people (Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development) and 2 people (DFID Jerusalem, and DFID Beirut; EU Jerusalem,) and two 2-person meeting with host country representatives (PLO, Ramallah) and with labour staff union representatives (Gaza). Meetings were also held with two Youth Parliaments, one in the Jenin Refugee Camp Basic School for Girls and the other in the Zeitoun Preparatory Girls B School in Tel el Hawa. There were also two briefings: one conducted with five of the UNRWA Chief Area Officers in Lebanon and one with staff from Gaza Gateway, Microfinance programme, Gender Awareness Initiative, Operations Support Office and the Economic Analysis Unit in Gaza.

3. There was also a visit and discussion with graduates from the al-Fajr Young Women’s Leader Programme in Khan Younis. Finally a number of informal meetings were held with youth in Nahr al-Bared refugee camp, teachers from Ain al-Hilwe camp, health workers, doctors and nurses, an archaeologist, residents in Nahr al-Bared camp, education officers in Jenin Camp and staff in the Khan Younis Area office.

4. A number of people who were interviewed asked not to be named. A field visit to Syria was not undertaken but a Skype meeting with the Director of the UNRWA Syrian Field Office was held.

5. The study also drew upon a review of secondary data including an examination of conference and workshop discussions regarding UNRWA that have taken place over the past decade; internal UNRWA reports; Commissioner-General speeches and documents; Advisory Commission documents; deliberations of the Academic Friends of UNRWA workshops; DFID reports and operational plans; think tank and media reports, as well as relevant academic literature. See Appendix C for a full list of documents consulted. Finally, the author also has had a long engagement with UNRWA in various capacities beginning in 1977. See Appendix E.
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### Appendix B

**List of persons consulted**

1) UNRWA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Mitchell</td>
<td>Deputy Commissioner-General, Amman Skype Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saahir Lone,</td>
<td>Deputy Director of the Executive Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sami Mshasha</td>
<td>Chief of Communications (Arabic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lance Bartholomeusz</td>
<td>Director of Legal Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felipe Sanchez</td>
<td>Director, UNRWA Operations, West Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammad Beidas</td>
<td>Deputy Director, UNRWA Operations, West Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakam Shahwan</td>
<td>Staff Relations Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazem Abu-Khalaf</td>
<td>Senior Advisor for Political and Local Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthias Burchard</td>
<td>Acting Director, External Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muawia Amar</td>
<td>Chief Area Officer, Nablus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Parliament</td>
<td>Basic Girls School, Jenin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Hurt</td>
<td>Director of Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lex Takkenberg</td>
<td>Chief Ethics Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Stryk</td>
<td>Coordinator of Programme Support, Evaluation Unit, Amman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonia DeMeo</td>
<td>Chief of Staff, Executive Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline Pontefract</td>
<td>Director of Education programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akihiro Seita</td>
<td>Director of Health programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam Rose</td>
<td>Deputy Director of Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laila Baker</td>
<td>Director, Relief and Social Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muna Budeiri</td>
<td>Deputy Director, Infrastructure and Camp Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vijay Neekhra</td>
<td>Senior Urban Planning Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omar Rifai</td>
<td>Head of Arab Partners Unit, Representative of Commissioner-General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Davies</td>
<td>Director, UNRWA Operations, Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Mohammedi</td>
<td>Senior External Relations and Projects Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre Krahenbuhl</td>
<td>Commissioner-General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Whyte</td>
<td>Camp Reconstruction Project Officer, Nahr al-Bared refugee camp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthias Schmale</td>
<td>Director, UNRWA Operations, Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Chardonnens</td>
<td>Special Assistant to Director, Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Mclean</td>
<td>Special Assistant to Director, Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zizette Darkazally</td>
<td>Chief, Communications and Public Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leila Kaissi</td>
<td>Chief, Relief and Social Services, Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie Travers</td>
<td>Head of Donor Relations and Projects Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed Abdel-Al</td>
<td>Chief, Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme, Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmad Mouh</td>
<td>Chief, Education programme, Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fawzi Kassab</td>
<td>Chief Area Officer, Tyre, Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammed Khalid</td>
<td>Chief Area Officer, Beirut,</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Location</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahmad Abdullah</td>
<td>Acting Chief Area Officer, Beqa’a, Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibrahim Khatib</td>
<td>Chief Area Officer, Saida, Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osama Baraka</td>
<td>Chief Area Officer, North, Lebanon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Kingsley-Nyinah</td>
<td>Director, UNRWA Operations, Syria. By Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bo Schack</td>
<td>Director of UNRWA Operations, Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melinda Young</td>
<td>Deputy Director of UNRWA Operations (Programmes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imad Okal</td>
<td>Deputy Chief of Area Office, North Area, Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamil Hamadd</td>
<td>Principal, Gaza Training Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rasha Abu-Safieh</td>
<td>Gateway, Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maher Safi</td>
<td>Manager, Job Creation Programme, Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzanne Leuenberger</td>
<td>Acting Team Leader, Operations Support Office, Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naser Jaber</td>
<td>Chief, Microfinance Programme, Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najwa Lobbad</td>
<td>Project Coordinator, Gender Initiative, Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattia Polvanesi</td>
<td>Programme Support Officer, Economic Analysis Unit, Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samah Abdel-Rahman</td>
<td>Economic Analysis Unit, Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farid Abu-Athra</td>
<td>Chief, Field Education Programme, Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naser El-Khaldi</td>
<td>Deputy Chief, Field Relief and Social Services Programme, Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muin Moqat</td>
<td>Shelter Coordinator, Field Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Programme, Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manal Al-Bardaweel</td>
<td>Programme Assistant, Gender Initiative, Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed El-Aydi</td>
<td>Chief of Area Office, Khan Younis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuad Faqawi</td>
<td>Mobile Security Officer, Khan Younis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Meinhausen</td>
<td>Special Assistant to the Director, Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Souhail El-Hindi</td>
<td>LSU Chairman, Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahmoud Hamdan</td>
<td>LSU teachers’ sector, Gaza</td>
</tr>
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2) Host Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Location</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kanaan King al-Jamal</td>
<td>Director, UNRWA File, Department of Refugee Affairs, PLO, Ramallah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmad Hanoun</td>
<td>Director General, Department of Refugee Affairs, PLO, Ramallah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasin Abu Awad</td>
<td>Director of Planning and Projects, Department of Palestinian Affairs, Amman, Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdelnasser al Ayi</td>
<td>Project Manager, Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, Beirut.</td>
</tr>
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Khaldoun Charif  
Member, Former Chair, 2012-14, Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, Beirut.

Mohammed Al- Sebakhi  
Director-General, Department of Refugee Affairs (PLO)

3) Donor Representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position and Institution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Mayer</td>
<td>Deputy Head (London), Palestine Team, DFID.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henrietta Hamilton</td>
<td>Team Leader – Rights and Refugees Pillar, Palestinian Programme, Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eillya Costandinides</td>
<td>Senior Programme Manager, Palestinian Programme, DFID, Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guy Lawson</td>
<td>Regional Refugee Coordinator, US State Department, Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segolene Adam</td>
<td>Deputy Director of Cooperation, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilia Pianigiani</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, SDC, Jerusalem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandre Ghelaw</td>
<td>Programme Manager, SDC, Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Mansour</td>
<td>Task Manager, Office of the EU Rep, (WBGS - UNRWA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Vogele</td>
<td>Head of Operations Section, EU Rep (WBGS – UNRWA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Russell</td>
<td>Humanitarian Adviser, DFID, Beirut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frances Ainley</td>
<td>Policy and Programme Manager, Conflict Stability and Security Fund (CSSF), DFID, Beirut</td>
</tr>
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4) Researchers, Analysts, NGO staff

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ardi Imseis</td>
<td>PhD Candidate, former UNRWA Legal Advisor, West Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig Larkin</td>
<td>Lecturer, Kings College London (Author on Lebanon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray Dolphin</td>
<td>Senior Barrier Researcher, UN-OCHA, Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ofer Zalzburg</td>
<td>Researcher, International Crisis Group, Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandy Turner</td>
<td>Director, Kenyon Institute, Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salim Tamari</td>
<td>Director, Institute for Palestine Studies, Ramallah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awad Mansour</td>
<td>Dept of Politics, al-Quds University, Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amneh Badran</td>
<td>Head of Dept, Dept of Politics, al-Quds University, Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menachem Klein</td>
<td>Bar Ilan University, Tel Aviv, Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Pollock</td>
<td>Independent Researcher, formerly Director of Micro-Finance Services, UNRWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caitlin Proctor</td>
<td>PhD Candidate, Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford. Fieldwork in Shuáfat Refugee Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalal al-Husseini</td>
<td>Researcher, Institute Francais de Proche Orient,</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tamam Mango</td>
<td>Partner, Leading Point Management Advisory Services, Amman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oroub al-Abed</td>
<td>Researcher, Council for British Research in the Levant, Amman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nawaf Tal</td>
<td>Ambassador, Political Advisor, Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Amman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasfi Kilaini</td>
<td>Director, Hashemite Foundation, Amman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasar Qatarneh</td>
<td>Formerly with Crisis Management Initiative, Chief Strategy Officer, Inforglobe, Amman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouin Rabbani</td>
<td>Independent Researcher, formerly International Crisis Group, Amman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia Midha</td>
<td>Researcher, PURSUE, Beirut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melek el-Nimer</td>
<td>Unite Lebanon Youth Project, Beirut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karim Makdisi</td>
<td>Issam Fares Institute, American University of Beirut, Beirut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaber Suleiman</td>
<td>Independent Researcher, formerly Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Kattoura</td>
<td>Senior Political Consultant, PURSUE, Beirut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalil Gebara</td>
<td>Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, Lebanon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sari Hanafi</td>
<td>Lecturer, American University of Beirut, Beirut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anwar Darkazally</td>
<td>Political Advisor, UN Special Coordinator on Lebanon, Beirut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perla Issa</td>
<td>Researcher, Institute for Palestinian Studies, Beirut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tariq Tell</td>
<td>Academic, Issam Fares Institute, American University of Beirut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen Maes</td>
<td>Head of OCHA sub-office, Gaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rex Brynen</td>
<td>Department of Political Science, McGill University, Montreal (Quebec)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Documents Consulted

- Academic Friends of UNRWA, Exeter workshop, Summary of discussions, Paper in author’s possession (December 2015).
- Bourtman, I., “Putin and Russia’s Middle Eastern Policy”, Middle East Review of International Affairs, 10 (2), (2006) pp. 30-44.
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- Resnick, U, UNRWA’s Self- Serving Agenda, Middle East Quarterly, (2012) pp. 45- 52
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Appendix D

Example of UNRWA’s regional impact - Education

1. With host countries there is engagement nationally in education committees, mostly through UNRWA Education Chiefs in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria but with the PA in the oPtsts it is at the level of Directors. There is also ongoing participation in committees on areas such as curriculum, teacher recruitment and training, ‘technical & vocational education’ (TVET) and training and reform.

2. UNRWA is an active member of the PA’s Education Sector Working Group meetings (HQ and Fields representation – i.e. Gaza and West Bank) and a member of specific Reform Committees. The PA Minister of Education has invited UNRWA to share experiences of the reform process with the top level Reform Committee which he chairs and UNRWA’s Director of Education was requested to continue to participate in this committee.

3. There is also an agreement with Jordan Ministry of Education in which it would provide textbooks at no cost (i.e. textbooks for a curriculum change) on the understanding that UNRWA would share the experience and products with regard to specific dimensions of the reform. Higher profile participation includes contributions to the Queen Rania regional forum, Jordanian Ministry of Education conferences and the PA Ministry of Education forum on UNRWA reforms or on specific dimensions of it.

4. On the regional level there is sharing through UNRWA’s UNESCO links (UNRWA’s Director of Education is seconded from UNESCO and her Deputy is funded by UNESCO). The director of Education has represented UNRWA at UNESCO’s Sustainable Development Goal (Education) Arab Regional Forum over the last two years conveying UNRWA’s experiences and practices and contributing to the SDG submission for the region. In addition, UNRWA also works closely with UNICEF and this collaboration has provided opportunities to contribute to regional and national fora and to update consultants and staff specifically on UNRWA’s experience and ideas.

5. UNRWA’s human rights, conflict resolution and tolerance (HRCRT) work and Education in Emergency work has attracted significant regional and global attention. UNRWA’s HRCRT Adviser and others have contributed to workshops and conferences internationally including in the US, EU, and Asia. For example, in 2015 UNRWA led a panel at the EU Development Days on its Human Rights education approach. Similarly there has been a lot of interest in its Education in Emergency (EiE) work. In February 2016, the EiE work of UNRWA was presented at the UNESCO Asia Education Summit in Bangkok, and UNRWA was represented at a workshop/forum on how to counter extremism in Paris.
Appendix E
About the Author


He first encountered the Palestinian refugee issue and UNRWA in 1977 when as a student; he was a volunteer English language teacher in Deir al-Balah refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. In the mid-80s, working for a number of NGOs he cooperated on projects in Gaza with UNRWA teachers and with the legendary Mary Khass. Later, as an academic, he was engaged in a number of conferences and workshops with UNRWA staff. In 2010, he initiated a series of workshops which have become known as the Academic Friends of UNRWA.

Professor Dumper is currently holder of a 3–year Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship comparing religious conflicts in cities.
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Notes


9 An example would be the EU’s policy on Jerusalem. Based both on UN Security Council Resolution 242 and UN General Assembly Resolution 181, the EU has never accepted the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem or the validity of the 1980 Israeli Basic Law on Jerusalem. Moreover, all European Union member states have all located their embassies to Israel in Tel Aviv, rather than in Jerusalem, indicating that the status of Jerusalem as a whole is yet to be resolved. In addition, the EU has accepted the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (2004) regarding the Barrier as being illegal and made representations to Israel to that effect. Both these actions provide powerful support for the Palestinian argument that East Jerusalem is occupied and should be returned to the Palestinians and that the question of sovereignty over West Jerusalem is still subject to negotiation.

enshrines the legal rights of Palestine refugees under that Convention.

22 reports against its own obligations, and the overall human rights narrative of Palestine is not conveyed


14 See for example the activities promoted by Sister Cities International


16 In late 2015, it was made aware in no uncertain terms by King Abdullah of Jordan and US Secretary of State John Kerry that this policy was almost certain to lead to the overthrow of the Hashemite regime by radical Islamists. The prospect of an Islamist neighbour on its long eastern border was enough for Israel to postpone any further actions in that direction.


22 Palestine ratification of human rights treaties is an important development in that it means Palestine reports against its own obligations, and the overall human rights narrative of Palestine is not conveyed through reports by human rights bodies.

23 As long as the 1951 Refugee Convention is not amended (which is highly unlikely) Article 1D enshrines the legal rights of Palestine refugees under that Convention.
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26 In terms of the core funding – that is, the General Fund/Programme Budget - the US, EU and DFID remain the top three donors.

27 UNRWA, Department of Planning, Medium Term Strategy 2016-2021 (UNRWA, Amman, 2015) p. 9


33 UNRWA, Medium Term Strategy 2016-2021 pp. 59-61

34 Academic Friends of UNRWA, Exeter workshop, Summary of discussions, Paper in author’s possession (December 2015).

35 UNRWA, Medium Term Strategy 2016-2021 p.15.


38 Ibid.


40 This is less of an issue in UNRWA itself where its senior management is relatively stable.