



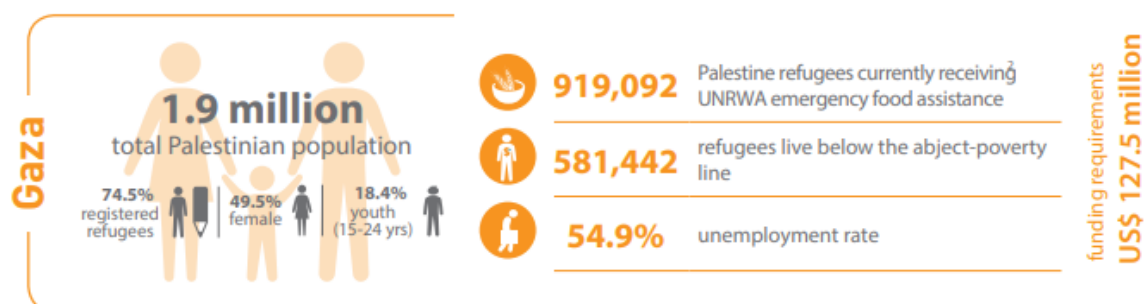
providing psychosocial support to gaza's children

Result area from UNRWA's Strategic Plan	Strategic Priority 3: Protection of Palestine refugees from the effects of the conflict and violence through access to services and advocacy, awareness-raising and the provision of mental health assistance
Field	Gaza
Total Proposed Budget	\$483,640
Time needed to achieve the expected result	Seven months (six months for implementation and one month for data collection and reporting)
Specific Expected Results to be achieved with this funding	<p>Total expected beneficiaries: 5400 individuals (children and adults).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual counselling sessions are conducted for 1,200 children. • Group counselling sessions are conducted for 1,000 children. • Approximately 2,000 parents are supported through parental awareness sessions and approximately 1,200 teachers are supported through teacher orientation sessions.

1. problem statement and project justification

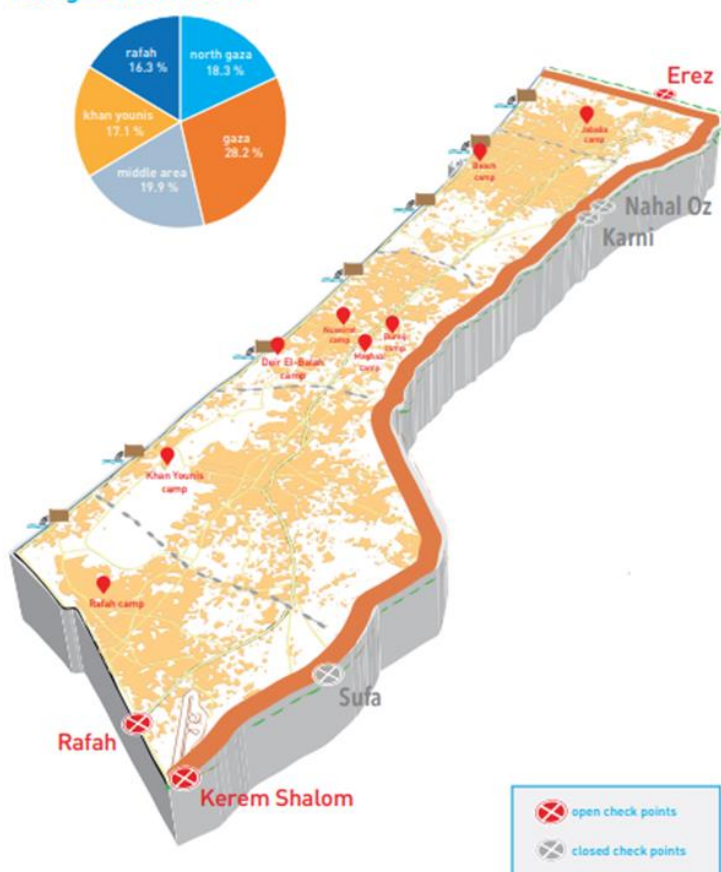
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“War causes severe trauma and has a terrible effect on society’s children.” --- Ola Badawi, Acting Principal, UNRWA School, Gaza



The roughly one million Palestine refugee children living under continued Israeli blockade in the Gaza strip, a 365 square-kilometer enclave, are growing up amidst a decade of recurrent conflict, deepening poverty and increasing restrictions on movement. Most of Gaza’s children have lived through three major conflicts in six years and have never been able to leave Gaza.

Refugee distribution



Even in the absence of armed violence, the ongoing blockade has had a devastating impact on Palestine refugee children affecting their physical and mental health, as well as their learning environment. Increasing poverty, school closures, utility outages, food shortage and restrictions on their movement, all take a toll on these children as they try to have a normal childhood and educate themselves for their future.

Their parents struggle to provide consolation and assure them everything will be fine but know in their hearts that conditions are unlikely to improve. Gaza’s security situation could easily deteriorate, and the cease-fire agreed in August 2014 was open-ended and did not address the underlying causes of the conflict. In 2018, during the Gaza

border protests of the “Great March of Return” violence erupted again, exposing even more children and their families to the precariousness of their existence in the Strip.

In the absence of a solution, and considering the current political stalemate and dire economic outlook, further escalations of violence and civil unrest appear likely.

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However, Gaza's children cannot wait and need help now!

Children living in the Gaza Strip have been constantly exposed to and are suffering from trauma and abuse, which can severely impact their mental health not just in childhood but into adulthood as they themselves become parents.

students suffering from emotional and behavioural difficulties



grade 9 students

14%



grade 3 students

36%

UNRWA's school-based counsellors report that the most common behavioral symptoms amongst children in Gaza are intense fear, violence, bed-wetting, poor concentration, eating disorders, sleeping disorders, irritability, and hyperactivity.

With your support, UNRWA will provide psychosocial support to reduce the impact of the stresses of their environment on children and strengthen their coping skills to minimize any future psychological issues. UNRWA's school counsellors provide a holistic and integrative approach which includes individual and group counseling, focused on strengthening coping issues and reinforcing social support, for the most vulnerable children in UNRWA schools



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Mona Amoudi is one of 274 school counsellors who work in the 275 UNRWA schools.

"I have been working as a school-counsellor in UNRWA for 17 years. There are about 1,000 Palestine refugee students in this school. Most of them are living in the refugee camps. Most of them are living below the poverty line. The girls are often exposed to domestic violence and they need extensive follow up," Mona says.

2. objective

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To help achieve UNRWA's Strategic Priority 3: Protection of Palestine refugees from the effects of the conflict and violence through access to services and advocacy, awareness-raising and the provision of mental health assistance.

We aim to strengthen the psychosocial coping skills of children and families affected by the ongoing protracted humanitarian crisis in Gaza through the work of our school counsellors. UNRWA's school counsellors play a critical role in supporting students. This support includes mainly the provision of individual and group counselling, as well as parent and teacher education.

3. action

With your support, we can accomplish the following for Gaza's children:

individual counselling

Students are referred to counsellors by teachers, parents or through self-referral. **Individual support between the child and the counsellor is developed based on each student's specific situation and vulnerabilities.** Counselling will also address the needs and aspirations of students in relation to education, rehabilitation, roles in the family and community and relationships with peers.

group counselling

Group interventions are topic-based group counselling which focus on specific problems or issues. **They may target students who are vulnerable because of persistent difficulties impacting on their functioning/learning and well-being.** The group sessions vary in duration, depending on the nature of the group and its needs.

parent and teacher awareness sessions

Parents will receive information sessions that will enhance their knowledge and skills on how best to support their children, at school and at home. These interactive sessions are designed to be accessible and inclusive, and will include information on positive parenting and discipline; supporting their children in their studies and homework; promoting pro-social behaviours and reducing aggression; enhancing children's coping during distress; and providing parents with coping strategies to help them to manage their own stress levels. Teachers will also receive awareness orientation sessions on how best to support children during their studies.

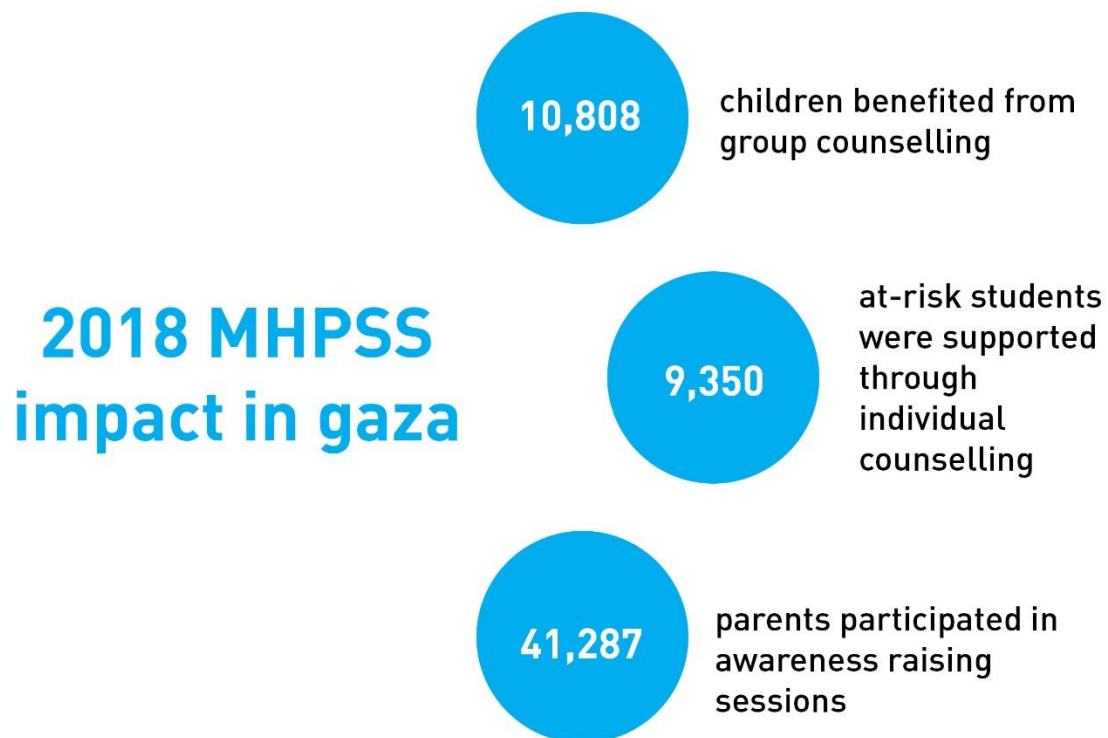
During the project period:

- Approximately **1,200** students will receive **individual counselling sessions**;
- **1,000** students are expected to participate in **group counselling sessions** during the project duration;
- Some **2,000** parents will be supported through **parent education sessions** and **1,200** teachers through **teacher orientation sessions**.

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4. impact of psychosocial support

Through individual sessions and group sessions focused on play, children have a safe, nurturing and trusting space to seek the support and comfort they need to overcome their anxieties, so they can learn, play, grow and achieve in spite of the obstacles they face. Since the start of the programme, UNRWA has seen greater academic focus and confidence in the children who have received support. Through parent and community engagement, UNRWA counsellors are also changing the perception of mental health in Gaza, with Palestine refugees beginning to recognize the value of seeking support. This has encouraged an environment of greater acceptance, helping children, and their parents, receive the mental health support they need to lead positive, happy and fulfilled lives.



5. monitoring and evaluation

The supervision team of UNRWA's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) works closely with school counsellors to support, guide and monitor interventions in schools. This includes regular individual and group supervision meetings with counsellors, trainings for staff, as well as ongoing technical supervision to support at-risk or protection cases. Monitoring and evaluation tools are applied including a database to regularly track client information, reasons for seeking assistance, counselling interventions (individual and group), as well as its structured group interventions. In

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addition, the Projects Office maintains close follow up on project's financial and operational performance through budget checks, and review meetings for the purpose of ensuring full adherence to agreement terms and donor expectations.

6. budget

Your generous support can enable up to 50 full time counsellors to help children and their families try and make sense of the violence and destruction they have witnessed, enabling them to better cope with the daily challenges they face as well as providing hope for the future.

Activity/Item	# of schools/ Counselors	# of months	monthly salary – US\$	Total amount
School counselors	50	6	1500	450,000.00
Visibility (Press release, banners)				2,000.00
Total direct cost				452,000.00
Project Support Costs - 7%				31,640.00
Total Amount				483,640.00

Note: UNRWA is a unique UN Agency, in that it directly implements all programmes, including education, healthcare and social services, without subcontracting to implementing partners. The majority of UNRWA's 30,000 staff members (99 per cent), are Palestine refugees themselves and proudly deliver all the programmes mentioned. UNRWA maintains its own entire infrastructure and support structures, and covers the full indirect costs associated with security, oversight functions, legal support, HR, finance, project offices, monitoring and evaluation, external relations, public information, ethics office etc. International staff (1 per cent) at UNRWA are covered by funding from the UN Regular Budget. Moreover, the Agency's programs rely majorly on voluntary annual contributions from UN Member States, and multilateral organizations as well as collaboration with the private sector, foundations and the philanthropic community, including Islamic social financing.

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