

New Shelters for Rafah Homeless



On 3 February, UNRWA handed over 122 new homes to 135 families (697 persons) from the Rafah Camp, Gaza, whose shelters have been destroyed by the Israeli military during the last four years. The fourth of a five-phase project

was funded by Canada, Belgium, Norway and with unearmarked contributions to UNRWA's Emergency Appeals. According to UNRWA's statistics, by end of December 2004, a total of 2,991 shelters, home to over 28,483 people, had been demolished or damaged beyond repair in the Gaza Strip since the start of the strife. (Related press release: See www.un.org/unrwa/news/releases/pr-2005/hqg02-05.pdf)



This issue includes:

- New shelters handed over in Rafah
- Commissioner General's visit to Europe
- International Year of Microcredit



UNRWA launched its Arabic website last year
www.un.org/unrwa/arabic/

International Year of Microcredit 2005



International Year of
Microcredit 2005

In 1998, the General Assembly proclaimed 2005 as the **International Year of Microcredit**, recognising that microcredit and microfinance could play a crucial role in poverty eradication. UNRWA's Microfinance and Microenterprise Programme (MMP) is contributing to the Year by working with various partners and stakeholders to build sustainable microfinance that will contribute to achieving its objectives.

Five key objectives of the Year

- Assess and promote microfinance to help realise the Millennium Development Goals
- Increase understanding of the role of microfinance and microcredit as a vital part of the development equation
- Promote inclusive financial sectors for the poor
- Support sustainable access to financial services
- Encourage innovation and new partnerships by promoting and supporting strategic partnerships to build and expand the outreach of successful microfinance

Since it was established in 1991, MMP has disbursed almost 86,000 loans valued at US\$ 90 million. It provides credit to its customers through a network of ten branch offices that will grow to thirteen during the year. These offices enable the programme to make as many as 1,800 loans each month worth a total of US\$1.25 million.

In addition to its planned provision of over 24,000 loans during 2005, UNRWA's MMP contributes to the Year with an ambitious plan for expansion and development in Jordan and Syria.

The OPEC Fund for International Development made a generous donation of US\$2.5 million to UNRWA's MMP to establish a Palfund Trust Fund to support the development and growth of microenterprises in the West Bank and Gaza. The trust fund has already disbursed 586 microenterprise and solidarity group loans to male and female businesses from the first installment of US\$0.5 million to the trust fund. (For more information: www.un.org/unrwa/publications/pdf/mmp_ar2003.pdf)

UNRWA Commissioner-General Peter Hansen Visits Europe

The Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Mr. Peter Hansen, visited Brussels on 24-28 January on an invitation from the EU Presidency to brief officials on the implications for UNRWA of the planned disengagement from Gaza by Israel; the continuing humanitarian emergency situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and the Agency's five-year Medium Term Plan (MTP). The most updated version of the MTP was presented at a meeting of the Humanitarian Liaison Working Group in Geneva by Mr. Hansen on 28 February. (Related Information: www.un.org/unrwa/news/releases/pr-2005/hqg05-05.pdf)

News from the Fields You can join the project!

◆ Thanks to the contribution of US\$ 25,444 from the **Campaign for the Children of Palestine** for the Toy Library Project, UNRWA opened two toy libraries, one at the Khan Younis



Women's Programme Centre and the other at Palestinian Association for Rehabilita-

tion of Disabled (PARD) in the Beach Camp, Gaza.

At PARD, disabled and able-bodied children, few of whom have toys at home, play together. (To **join the project**, see: www.un.org/unrwa/emergency/toys/)

◆ In **Syria** UNRWA has also collaborated with NGOs and other UN agencies to benefit refugee children. The opening of the Nimreen Children's Music Centre was made possible by a US\$42,000 donation from **Music in Me, Rotary International** and **UNESCO**. The Center provides professional music tuition on classical Arabic instruments for 40 gifted pupils from in UNRWA elementary schools in Yarmouk.





UNRWA MMP & MCSP

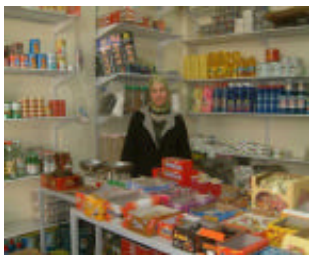
Providing access to credit opportunities

**Microfinance and Microenterprise Programme
Keys to Success in Business
Clients in Nablus**

The success of UNRWA's MMP has shown how sustainable microfinance services can grow while helping poor families earn more, build up assets and better protect themselves against sudden setbacks and losses. In the past four years of crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory, it has helped thousands of Palestinian refugees to survive and helped many move beyond day-to-day survival. It has provided poor refugees with the ability to create income and so improve the health, assets and housing their families and the education of their children.

For example, in **Nablus, the West Bank**, where the local economy has been severely damaged since September 2000, UNRWA has managed to make a success of one of its key MMP products, the **Microenterprise Credit (MEC)** scheme. This makes short-term working capital loans to microenterprises. There are currently 2,500 active MEC clients served by UNRWA.

Fatmeh Jarad, Askar Refugee Camp



In 1991, Fatmeh's husband Adnan was standing in front of his little falafel stall in Askar camp, when he was shot and killed by an Israeli soldier. The Israeli military claimed it had been chasing a wanted man, even although Adnan had not been armed. When Fatmeh lost her husband,

she and her five small children also lost what little income they had and were forced to register as a Special Hardship Case (SHC) with UNRWA. In 2001, she applied for a Microenterprise Credit loan to start a mini-market in the camp. Although she finds it difficult to run a business while looking after her family, Fatmeh says she is doing it for her children. Her greatest hope is that she can help pay for a good education for them so that they will have a better chance in life.

Fryal Qatwni, No. 1 Refugee Camp

Fryal's husband retired in 1997 and immediately her family's income plunged. It was then that she obtained a sewing certificate at the local YMCA. In 2003, she applied for a Microenterprise Credit (MEC) loan to develop a curtain business. She invested three loans she borrowed through the MEC scheme not only on raw materials and a new sewing machine, but also on a computer to design curtains, make a catalogue for customers and so that she could study new designs on the internet.

To provide access to a variety of microcredit opportunities for Palestine refugees, UNRWA has taken two different but complementary approaches: a special credit programme run by the **Microfinance and Microenterprise Programme (MMP)** and the **Microcredit Community Support Programme (MCSP)** under the Relief and Social Services Department. The market-oriented financial products of UNRWA's MMP provides resources by which small businesses, women and the poor can improve their lives and livelihoods through their own entrepreneurship and enterprise. The MCSP targets the most vulnerable refugees, those from UNRWA's Special Hardship Case (SHC) families, who require financial services combined with social intervention.

Her reputation as a curtain-maker has spread by word-of-mouth and she thinks the keys to her business success are maintaining good quality of products, keeping strict deadlines and keeping prices down. But more than anything else, she likes her job and works hard. Her husband is also helpful.



Her positive, innovative attitude for work makes a difference

She currently works in her family home but hopes to expand into a workshop, where she can employ some of the neighbours who want to work with her as assistants.

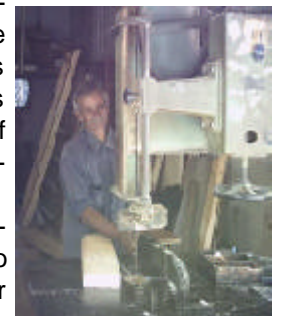
**Relief and Social Services Programme
Painting a Brighter Future: Ahmad
Microcredit Community Support Programme**

The **Microcredit Community Support Programme (MCSP)** run by UNRWA's relief and social services programme works to increase the social and economic security of the poorest refugees through the lending of soft loans either directly to refugees registered as SHCs or indirectly through community-based organizations - particularly women's centres.

Ahmad Hussein Salem (**El-Buss Camp, Lebanon**) has a family of 13 to support. He was a casual carpenter with only primitive tools and was the sole breadwinner for his family. Unfortunately the limited work available to Ahmad did not bring in enough income to support his family. Hence, Ahmad's family was registered as a SHC in 1987.

In 1999, he applied for a soft loan combined with a grant to reinvigorate his business. After he repaid his first loan successfully, he applied for two more loans so that he could invest in machinery to cope with growing demand and improve the quality of his output.

Ahmad now has a stable income. Besides supporting his own family, he also created two job opportunities for two labourers. At the same time, Ahmad supported one of his sons through medical college and he has now qualified as a physician. One of his other sons is working with his father as an experienced carpenter. MCSP not only helped him and his family help themselves financially, but also helped them have confidence in their life and hope for a better future.



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