

Annex 4 : Action Fiche for Lebanon/ENPI/ EU Scholarship Fund for Palestinian refugees

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title/Number	EU Scholarship Fund for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (III)		
Total cost	€4,300,000 EC contribution		
Aid method/Method of implementation	Joint management with an International organisation		
DAC-code	11420	Sector	Higher Education

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Sector context

413 962 Palestinian refugees are registered by UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) in Lebanon¹ and according to estimates only 250,000 are actually living in Lebanon. For 60 years, more than half have lived in camps (currently 12) under very poor living conditions and have been denied civil rights, including the right to work and the right to own, inherit and register property (since 2001). They do not have access to the Lebanese public health care and only a very limited access to public education (basic services are provided by UNWRA).

Since 2005, a number of limited measures have been taken by the Lebanese Government to improve the social situation of the Palestinian refugees. One of them is the authorisation to issue to the Palestinians work permits for 50 of the 72 professions banned to foreigners.² Although not much change has been seen in practice, this legal step may bring new opportunities for the Palestinians in the Lebanese labour market.

For the moment, the legal restrictions coupled with discrimination, bring the unemployment of Palestinian refugees to extremely high levels. This has been traditionally offset by engaging on the black labour market and by labour migration (mainly within the region). One of the most effective tools, however, has proven to be university education: out of 150 graduates of the UNRWA scholarship programmes since 2002-2003, approximately 80 percent report to be employed in professions of their academic specialty.

Until August 1997, UNRWA operated its own scholarship programme. However the General Fund could no longer provide for education beyond the secondary cycle and the scholarship scheme was discontinued. Palestinian students in Lebanon are particularly disadvantaged as their access to the only public university in the country,

¹ (UNRWA, 2007): Under UNRWA's definition, Palestinian refugees are persons whose normal place of residence was Palestinian between June 1946 and May 1948, who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict.

² Minister of Labour, June 2006, confirmed March 2007

the Lebanese University, is limited and access to the private universities is restricted by high tuition fees (average annual fee of more than 5000\$/year).

2.2. Lessons learnt

The present project will build on the results and expertise gained through two EU-funded scholarship schemes through UNRWA: "EU scholarship fund for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon" (EUR 1.1 million, 2005, MEDA regional) and "EU scholarships for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon" (EUR 3 million, 2007, ENPI). These projects have offered excellent EU visibility and proven to be extremely relevant.

The past experience also shows that in the last three years only 20 percent of the applications received could have been awarded a scholarship within the available budget.³ The number of eligible candidates increases and the need for available scholarships is becoming fundamental for UNRWA. That is why at the beginning of 2009, UNRWA requested new support from EC to extend the current scholarship scheme to a further 150 students during the 2010-2013 period.

The present project takes into account recommendations of a ROM report from 2008 (MR-107063.01) which confirmed the relevance of the project but indicated shortcomings in activities linking academic degrees with employment. Therefore, the present project includes measures strengthening academic/job coaching, internship/job matching, utilisation of social capital (establishment of a student association and networking), widening of the scholarship scope to new academic fields, and building the capacity of the UNRWA Placement and Career Guidance Department.⁴

One further lesson learned, is the need to bring all UNRWA administered scholarship schemes under one umbrella. UNRWA annually administers two to three other small scholarship programmes, each having its specificities and limitations. The negotiations have started to find a common mechanism in order to streamline the work of the UNRWA Placement and Career Guidance Department and increase efficiency.

2.3. Complementary actions

Apart from its contribution to the UNRWA General Fund, since 2002 EU has provided support to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon through thematic budget lines (co-financing, rehabilitation, food security, ECHO), MEDA (EUR15 million), and ENPI (EUR 11 million), and recently also the Instrument for Stability (EUR 6.8 million). Most recently, EC engaged heavily in the efforts to reconstruct the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp levelled in the 2007 fighting and in supporting the recent Lebanese-Palestinian Camp Improvement initiative. The main implementing partners for the EC assistance have been UNRWA and European and Palestinian NGOs.

³ Out of 200 applications received for the academic year 2005-2006 only 54 could be selected, for 2007-2008 136 applications received and 41 selected, and for 2008-2009 286 applications received and 44 selected.

⁴ The ROM is attached, other conclusions/recommendations of the monitor have been discharged as not feasible by both EC program manager and UNRWA management.

In the sector of education, where needs are acute, EC has developed an integrated approach to target Palestinian youth and contribute to improving their employability prospects. The following projects are ongoing or finished in 2008:

- "Improve education of young Palestinian refugees in Lebanon for better employment opportunities", EUR 15 million, MEDA sub-regional, contract with UNRWA targeting pre-school, primary and secondary education;
- "Improvement of employability of young Palestinian refugees in Lebanon", EUR 4 million, MEDA sub-regional: support to VET providers, including UNRWA Sibline Training Centre;
- "Assistance to local initiatives targeting children and young Palestinian refugees in all camps in Lebanon", EUR 748,222, Co-financing NGO budget line, Save the Children Sweden with five Palestinian NGOs
- "EU scholarships for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon", EUR 3 million, ENPI, UNRWA

As mentioned above (2.2), other scholarship schemes have been implemented by UNRWA. Those have been recently funded by Japan, Canada, Holland and a number of NGOs.

2.4. Donor co-ordination

UNRWA organises annual donor coordination meetings, including field visits with representatives of the donor countries. In Lebanon, an informal coordination between main donors started in 2006 for the purpose of exchanging information on projects and partners (NGO's and UNRWA). As of 2008, UNRWA has significantly strengthened its donor coordination role, providing electronic weekly donor updates and regular donor meetings. UNRWA-led coordination of scholarships will be one of the results of the present project.

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

The overall objective of the project is to contribute to economic self-reliance of the young Palestinian refugees by improving their access to labour market.

The specific objective is to provide qualified Palestinian students with the opportunity to pursue academic education at Lebanese higher education institutions and benefit from complementary job-coaching and networking support.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

Result 1. Minimum of 150 Palestinian students obtain a first university degree

Activities: A merit-based scholarship scheme open to Palestinian refugees that graduate in Lebanon (UNRWA or Lebanese system). Approximately fifty scholars will be selected each year over three years (starting in the academic year 2010-2011,

ending in academic year 2012-2013) for the total duration of their studies. While the specific guidelines are yet to be negotiated and detailed in the Contribution Agreement, it is foreseen that the funding ceiling and duration of studies will be differentiated according to the field of study. A flat amount of ‘pocket money’ for books and other materials will be provided to each student.

Result 2. The capacity of the UNRWA Placement and Career Guidance (PCG)⁵ department is reinforced in order to:

- offer scholarship graduates (inclusive of the beneficiaries of the previous scholarship programmes) job-coaching services and internship and job search guidance (locally and in the region)
- provide students of UNRWA schools and School Councillors with academic coaching, with a particular view of the local/regional labour markets
- ensure effective management, coordination and promotion of all scholarship programmes run by UNRWA (with a hope for a future joint project)
- secure systematic follow-up and evaluation of all UNRWA scholarship schemes

Activities: Capacity building measures - which may include short term expertise for training and workshops, as well as job-shadowing - for the UNRWA Placement and Career Guidance Department will be developed. These measures will focus on increasing managerial skills and on providing new/enriched services in the area of academic guidance, job-coaching (including training in job-search strategies such as CV writing, interview techniques, and self-marketing), internship/job matching and set up of a student/alumni association. New tools and technologies, such as on-line application process, online communication platform for PCG and students, job-matching and student tracking databases, will be introduced.

Result 3. Networking among the scholarship graduates is initiated in order to strengthen social capital and sustainability (potentially also financial)

Activities: A student/alumni association will be established. Capacity building measures for the student/alumni association are foreseen and may include short term expertise for training and workshops, job-shadowing, and exchanges. PCG will play a principal role in achieving this result.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

The Project has been designed taking into consideration the following risk:

- The political environment does not deteriorate to the extent that it will affect UNRWA’s operations significantly;

Main assumptions are:

⁵ The PCG unit is one of the main pillars of UNRWA’s Education Programme. Its policy aims at giving equal opportunities to fresh graduates Palestinian refugee who seek guidance to enter the job market

- UNRWA allocates necessary resources;
- Students are sufficiently motivated to join the student/alumni association

3.4. Crosscutting issues

In relation to gender equality, particular attention will be paid to the principle of equality of treatment of both male and female students. Currently, out of the total number of 85 students awarded under the "EU scholarships for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (II)" program 35 are women. Some of the other donors have been targeting female students only (e.g. Japan, Canada Fund). That is why EC does not intend to do so. However, female enrolment will be encouraged.

3.5. Stakeholders

The direct beneficiaries of this programme are Palestinian students that are granted a scholarship and the graduates of previous and future UNRWA scholarship programmes who will benefit from the student networking and improved functions of PCG. Indirectly, the families of awarded students and the community at large will benefit from the expected increased employment rate among the direct beneficiaries.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Implementation method

The project will be implemented by the joint management with an international organisation method through the signature of a contribution agreement between the EC and UNRWA. UNRWA is the only entity mandated with the provision of education services to the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

Management of the project will be carried out by the UNRWA Placement and Career Guidance (PCG) department. An Advisory Committee will be set up to oversee the project implementation. It will be chaired by the Director of UNRWA Affairs (DUAL) with members Chief of Field Education Program (CFEP), Placement and Career Guidance Assistant (PCGA), two representatives of civil society, the president of the Forum for Palestinian NGOs and the president of the education sub-committee within the forum, a university professor and an EU representative (as an observer).

4.2. Procurement and grant award procedures

All contracts implementing the action must be awarded and implemented in accordance with the procedures and standard documents laid down and published by the International Organisation concerned.

4.3. Budget and calendar

The total financial contribution of the EC to the project amounts to **EUR 4.3 million**.

Indicative break-down is as follows:

Cost breakdown	Total Amount (EUR)
----------------	--------------------

Scholarships	3,830,000
Staff costs (PCG and Alumni Association) – salaries and entitlements	290,000
Equipment (PCG and Alumni Association)	40,000
Alumni Association - Office rent, running costs, etc.	25,000
Capacity building measures (PCG and Alumni Association)	50,000
Visibility	15,000
Evaluation	50,000
TOTAL	4,300,000

The implementation of the programme will last **48 months** from the date of the signature of the contribution agreement between UNRWA and EC. There will be three intakes of students: academic years 2010/2011, 2011/2012 and 2012/2013.

No provision for overheads is foreseen. Specific costs generated by the activities of this project (including salaries and entitlements) are covered, as they represent extension of the UNRWA regular tasks and thus cannot be financed from the UNRWA General Fund.

4.4. Performance monitoring

Achievements will be monitored regularly by the Advisory Committee and by UNRWA and the results will be reported annually to EC. Follow-up of students and their employment situation will be done by PCG, in cooperation with the alumni association. The key performance indicators will be detailed only in the Contribution Agreement, but there are foreseen to include the academic results of the students, the number of students receiving a degree, and graduates' employment levels.

4.5. Evaluation and audit

The project will have an evaluation that will be directly managed by the EC in agreement with UNRWA. All auditing issues related to this project are governed by the Verification Clause annexed to and forming an integral part of the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement between the European Commission and the United Nations (FAFA).

4.6. Communication and visibility

The European Commission will ensure that adequate communication and visibility is given by UNRWA to the EC funding (press conference, brochures/flyers, media reports, etc.). The experience from the previous two phases of the scholarship programme suggests that visibility prospects are indeed high.