



Q3 Progress Report: Implementing the Colonna Report at UNRWA

July 2025 – September 2025

Safeguarding Neutrality,
Strengthening Trust

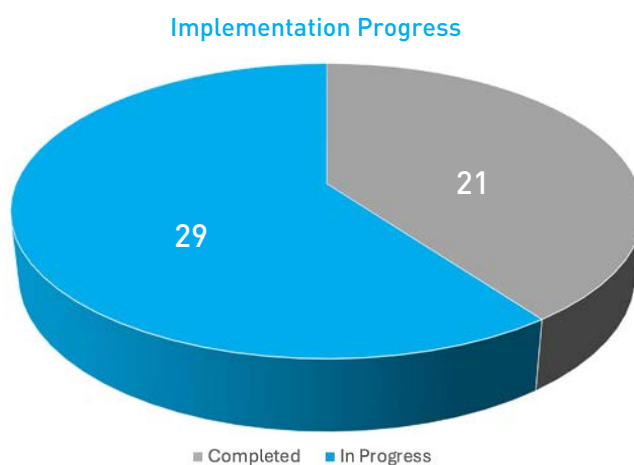


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Quarterly Implementation Progress Overview

This Quarterly Colonna Progress Report provides a summary of major milestones and developments during the third quarter of 2025 in the Agency's implementation of the 50 recommendations of the *Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality*.¹ It also provides an updated overview of progress across thematic categories and funding requirements.

Following the completion of the first year of implementation in June 2025, UNRWA has maintained steady momentum in translating the Colonna Report's recommendations into institutional reform.² As of the end of Q3 2025, 21 out of 50 recommendations have been completed, with formal acknowledgement of completion pending by the Advisory Commission (AdCom). The newly completed recommendation since Q2 pertains to strengthened oversight functions and enhanced governance mechanisms within the Agency (Recommendation 2).



Each completed recommendation undergoes a formal review and endorsement process through both the internal Neutrality Task Force and the AdCom Sub-Working Group on Neutrality and Integrity. The sustainability of completed recommendations is ensured through continuous monitoring, integration into policy and operational systems, and follow-up reviews. Progress remains a standing item for regular reporting to Member States through the Working Group, the full AdCom, and the biannual Integrity Briefings.

During Q3 2025, the Agency advanced important structural and procedural milestones. The Advisory Commission formally convened the *Working Group on Neutrality and Integrity* under Recommendation 2, marking a key step toward embedding neutrality oversight within an intergovernmental framework. The Working Group now serves as the main platform for structured dialogue, policy exchange, and oversight of implementation progress. Progress reporting will continue on a quarterly basis through meetings of the Working Group, covering both newly closed and ongoing recommendations.

Implementation of the remaining 29 recommendations continues on schedule, with targeted sequencing across all eight thematic categories: Engagement with Donors; Governance; Management and Internal Oversight; Neutrality of Staff; Neutrality of Installations; Education; Unions; and Cooperation with other UN Agencies. Based on current projections, an additional 10 recommendations are expected to reach completion by the end of 2025, with a total of 43 recommendations anticipated to be completed by the end of 2026. Adjustments to completion timelines will be communicated in subsequent reporting, reflecting operational developments, interdependencies, and resource availability.

¹ [Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality: https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/unrwa_independent_review_on_neutrality.pdf](https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/unrwa_independent_review_on_neutrality.pdf)

² https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/ist_082025_annualreport_final.pdf

Highlights by Category

Category 1: Engagement with Donors, Recommendation 1

Impact Headline: UNRWA has significantly enhanced transparency and strengthened trust with donors through structured and regular communication on integrity and financial matters.

Showcasing Impact: In 2024–2025, UNRWA institutionalized “Integrity Briefings” for donors in New York and Geneva, providing regular updates on neutrality measures, oversight, and the Agency’s financial situation. These complement quarterly reporting through the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) portal and dedicated sessions at AdCom and SubCom meetings. In Q3 2025, UNRWA presented progress at the AdCom Working Group on Neutrality and Integrity on 8 September and the SubCom meeting on 10 September, alongside targeted briefings to German parliamentarians, further reinforcing transparency and trust with Member States.

Status: 1/1 recommendation completed

Category 2: Governance, Recommendations 2–3

Impact Headline: UNRWA has strengthened strategic oversight and donor engagement by embedding neutrality into the governance framework of its AdCom.

Showcasing Impact: Neutrality remains a standing item on the agenda of the AdCom’s biannual meetings, ensuring sustained Member State oversight of integrity and reform. On 8 September 2025, the AdCom convened its dedicated Sub-Working Group on Neutrality and Integrity, which reviewed evidence for the closure of 20 recommendations. While the Group’s formal endorsement is still pending, Member States have acknowledged the establishment of this mechanism as a key step toward institutionalizing multilateral oversight, thus completing all requirements for closure of Recommendation 2. Under Recommendation 3, the Agency continues its review of governance models as part of the ongoing Strategic Assessment process, which is exploring modalities to strengthen strategic direction and external communication.

Status: 1/2 recommendations completed; 1 in progress



Category 3: Management and Internal Oversight, Recommendations 4–18

Impact Headline: UNRWA has continued to strengthen its internal oversight, ethics, and accountability mechanisms, consolidating neutrality and integrity across all levels of management and operations.

Showcasing Impact: While no new recommendations were formally closed during Q3 2025, the Agency achieved tangible progress across several fronts of its internal oversight and ethics reform agenda. The Terms of Reference for the external peer review of the investigation function were finalized and approved by the Advisory Committee on Internal Oversight (ACIO), with the UNEG/OECD-DAC review mission scheduled for October 2025. The Ethics Office expanded its field presence through newly recruited officers and advanced the rollout of in-person ethics training, while development of an online refresher course continued. In parallel, preparatory work progressed on the new Personnel Directive on managerial accountability for staff neutrality, integrating neutrality principles into leadership, anti-fraud, and supervisory training. Seven additional cohorts of Supervisory Skills Training were delivered across headquarters and field offices, embedding neutrality and integrity into daily management practice. Further, the Project Procedures Manual (PPM) was fully rolled out to enhance project traceability and accountability, with the accompanying transparency dashboard scheduled for rollout by late 2025.

Status: 8/15 recommendations completed; 7 in progress

Category 4: Neutrality of Staff, Recommendations 18–28

Impact Headline: UNRWA continues to strengthen systems ensuring that staff uphold neutrality throughout recruitment, employment, and conduct.

Showcasing Impact: While no new recommendations were formally closed during Q3 2025, implementation advanced across several safeguards. The updated Neutrality Framework (including social media provisions) progressed through internal review mechanisms, with endorsement planned in Q4 2025, alongside expanded field trainings. The continuous vetting pilot and commercial screening are underway to inform considerations of a costed Agency-wide rollout. The social media monitoring tool completed its Lebanon pilot and is being expanded to other fields. Whistleblower protections are being socialized with bystander training. Disciplinary systems were strengthened with professional leadership trainings across fields, and the 2023 Disciplinary Digest was finalized and shared with the Senior Management Team and Field Legal Offices. Staff care capacity continues under interim arrangements while recruitment of international counsellors proceeds, subject to security and funding. Previously completed actions include consolidated SOPs on misconduct/neutrality (Rec 21), early-stage screening at recruitment (Rec 22), and regular sharing of staff lists with Hosts and Israel (Rec 23).

Status: 3/10 recommendations completed; 7 in progress

Category 5: Neutrality of Installations, Recommendations 29–33

Impact Headline: UNRWA continues to strengthen safeguards to protect the civilian nature of its installations through enhanced monitoring, staff training, and community engagement.

Showcasing Impact: Implementation under this category has advanced steadily across all related recommendations, although none have been fully closed this quarter. The mandatory e-learning course on humanitarian principles has now replaced the previous neutrality and social media module, with more than 8,500 staff having completed the course and an additional 3,000 staff currently enrolled. UNRWA is pushing for higher compliance rates. Community awareness campaigns on the civilian character of UNRWA premises have expanded across all fields, including murals, posters in installations, and outreach sessions in Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza. Installation inspections have been strengthened through quarterly integrated assessments using updated questionnaires and standard operating procedures that now capture incidents of potential military misuse. Sustaining these efforts will require continued funding to retain Humanitarian Principles Officers in each field.

UNRWA has also enhanced bilateral engagement with host countries and Israel, including the regular issuance of protest letters and follow-up on inspection findings. Work continues to develop clear and transparent reporting materials for Member States on neutrality and inviolability breaches by external actors.

Status: 1/5 recommendations completed; 4 in progress

Implementation in Action: Safeguarding Neutrality in UNRWA Installations

- In Jordan, Associate Protection and Neutrality Officer Mohammed Al Mansi leads neutrality trainings to UNRWA teachers and principals, jointly implemented by the UNRWA Protection and Education Departments under Colonna Report Recommendations 29 and 30.
- The sessions emphasize the inviolability of UNRWA schools and installations and promote the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence—embedding these values in classroom culture.
- “Our goal,” says Mohammed, “is that UNRWA installations have zero neutrality breaches.” Teachers report valuing the clarity of the training and its direct relevance to their daily work.



Category 6: Education, Recommendations 34 – 41

Impact Headline: UNRWA is strengthening the adherence to neutrality of its education system in alignment with UN values and UNESCO standards through textbook reviews, enhanced teacher training, and expanded digital learning.

Showcasing Impact: As of Q3 2025, four recommendations have been completed: Recommendation 37 on empowering women in managerial education roles, Recommendation 38 on establishing a dedicated reporting channel for problematic teaching content, Recommendation 39 on introducing randomized classroom inspections, and Recommendation 41 on regular training for teachers and principals on neutrality, human rights, and humanitarian principles. While no new recommendations were closed this quarter, progress continues across several key areas. The textbook review process in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria has been finalized, with findings shared with host countries and further dialogue under way to address outstanding issues in line with UN and UNESCO standards. UNRWA's Community of Practice continues to provide tailored guidance and peer learning opportunities for teachers, supporting the Critical Thinking Approach and neutrality-focused pedagogy. At the same time, the Agency is expanding its Digital Learning Platform to centralize educational resources, promote transparency, and integrate innovative tools into teaching practices. Engagement with UNESCO remains ongoing to consolidate cooperation under the 2023 Recommendations on Education for Peace, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development, ensuring continued alignment with international benchmarks.

Status: 4/8 recommendations completed; 4 in progress

Category 7: Neutrality of Unions, Recommendations 42 – 47

Impact Headline: UNRWA is pursuing union reform to strengthen neutrality, gender equality and independent oversight in staff representation, aligned with UN standards.

Showcasing Impact: While no recommendations have yet been closed, progress is continuing. Preparatory work is underway to reform the 1990 Staff Union Statute, with a consultant being recruited to lead the comparative review of UN system union frameworks and propose reform options. This process will include negotiations with unions to ensure broad ownership and alignment with international best practices. Efforts to promote gender balance in staff representation continue through the Women's Advisory Forum, which will be a key mechanism for amplifying women's participation in union structures and ensuring women are equipped to participate meaningfully. In parallel, and also as part of recommendation 24, UNRWA is exploring modalities for independent neutrality vetting of union representatives, beginning with senior positions, and developing procedures for continued vetting following elections. The Agency continues to assess options for outsourcing salary-setting and related benefits to an independent entity, comparable to the International Civil Service Commission, and has begun engaging external consultancies in the region to identify feasible solutions. Finally, additional models for staff representation are under review to ensure more inclusive and accountable staff governance mechanisms.

Status: 0/6 recommendations completed; 6 in progress

Category 8: Enhanced Cooperation, Recommendations 48–50

Impact Headline: UNRWA has deepened its integration into the humanitarian coordination system, enhancing partnerships and redefining its role with inter-agency mechanisms.

Showcasing Impact: In early 2025, UNRWA secured a new P-5 Senior Humanitarian Affairs Officer post through the UN Regular Budget to lead strategic engagement with the humanitarian system. This complements the Agency's strengthened participation in cluster mechanisms, Humanitarian Country Teams, and regional emergency preparedness fora. UNRWA also formalized partnerships with WFP, UNFPA, and IOM, in addition to ongoing partnerships with, inter alia, WHO, UNESCO, and UNICEF, and expanded staff training on pooled funding and coordination. Internally, a cultural shift is underway to reposition UNRWA as a proactive partner in joint planning and response.

Status: 3/3 recommendations completed

Looking Ahead

UNRWA remains firmly committed to implementing the 50 recommendations of the Colonna Report.

UNRWA expresses its gratitude to Member States and partners, including Germany, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Denmark, Canada, Japan, Norway, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and Austria, for their continued contributions to neutrality and integrity reforms.

Sustained donor support remains critical to maintaining momentum. While several recommendations have been implemented within existing resources, others, particularly those related to education reform, oversight, and digitalization, require additional and predictable funding for long-term institutionalization.

During Q4 2025, UNRWA will focus on achieving all recommendations scheduled for completion within the year while preparing the groundwork for the next implementation phase. The Agency will continue aligning Colonna implementation with the UNRWA Strategic Assessment, ensuring that neutrality, accountability, and governance reform are embedded into its future vision and operational model.³

Despite ongoing operational challenges across all fields, UNRWA will continue to manage risks proactively, uphold transparency with Member States, and sustain engagement through regular reporting and the AdCom Working Group on Neutrality and Integrity.

Funding

Funding secured to date		
Member State	Project	Amount
Austria	Multiple categories	US\$ 349,000
Canada	Multiple categories	US\$ 711,500
Denmark	Multiple categories	US\$ 1,400,000
European Union	DIOS and Ethics	US\$ 5,817,000
Germany	Multiple categories	US\$ 1,163,000
Germany	IST staff support	US\$ 240,000
Japan	LEAP	US\$ 250,000
Norway	HRD staff support	In kind
Luxembourg	IST staff support	In kind
Switzerland	Multiple categories	US\$ 1,253,000
United Kingdom	Multiple categories	US\$ 1,338,000
Total	-	US\$ 12,521,500

³ https://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/109/2025/07/2025-07-07_PGA-letter_UNRWA-strategic-report.pdf



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for palestine refugees in the near east

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UNRWA is the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The United Nations General Assembly established UNRWA in 1949 with a mandate to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to registered Palestine refugees in the Agency's area of operations pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. UNRWA operates in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Tens of thousands of Palestine refugees who lost their homes and livelihoods due to the 1948 conflict continue to be displaced and in need of support, nearly 75 years on.