RECONSTRUCTION OF NAHR EL-BARED REFUGEE CAMP
This is a post-war reconstruction project involving the rebuilding of Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp after it was destroyed during the 2007 war that led to the displacement of 26,000 individuals (5,000 families). Founded during the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1948, it is the oldest and largest Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon and is located 16 kilometres north of the city of Tripoli on the shores of the Mediterranean.

The primary aim behind the reconstruction was to preserve the Camp’s pre-destruction neighbourhood layout and social fabric, augmented by an improved urban environment (common area upgrading and infrastructure) and living conditions (proper ventilation and open space). To these ends, a community-based grassroots committee from within the Camp drafted a set of principles and guidelines stating the community’s vision for reconstruction and initiated a massive asset-mapping operation; large-scale, walk-in maps were made to help residents indicate the precise locations of their houses, the neighbourhoods, landmarks, schools and so on, and these became a master plan for reconstruction.

In 2008, the work, divided into eight geographical construction phases, was begun by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), with about 80% of the labour force Palestinian, aiding socio-economic recovery in the Camp. To make more public open space available and to increase natural light and ventilation, the footprint of buildings was reduced, but this deduction in plot area was made up for vertically in increased building height, up to a maximum of four storeys. Roads have been widened, pedestrian routes improved, open courts introduced and, most importantly, infrastructure networks laid – for water supply, storm water, sewage, electricity and telecommunications. Two layout options have been designed for each apartment type and roof terraces have been reintroduced to provide private outdoor space and views of the sea, as well as to house water tanks. Buildings are made of cast-in-place reinforced-concrete columns, steel beams, slabs and CMU blocks for the walls. Adjacent walls are set with a 5-centimetre air space between, thus aiding insulation as well as possible future expansion vertically as families increase in size but desire to remain in one building.

The phased construction approach means that displaced people can return as soon as their new homes are ready, while lessons learned in early phases can be incorporated in later ones: the first families returned in 2011.
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RECONSTRUCTION OF NAHR EL-BARED REFUGEE CAMP
Akkar, Lebanon

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PROJECT DATA
Site area: 196,300 m²
Cost: 171,150,000 USD
Commission: July 2007
Design: July 2008–ongoing
Construction: December 2009–ongoing
Completion: April 2011–ongoing

UNRWA
UNRWA provides assistance, protection and advocacy for some five million registered Palestine refugees. UNRWA’s human development and humanitarian services encompass primary and vocational education, primary health care, a social safety net, community support, infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance and emergency response, including in situations of armed conflict.

NBRC
NBRC is a local community grassroots initiative that was launched by predominantly local professionals and activists in 2007 during the destruction of Nahr el-Bared. Its main aim was to develop local consensus, studies and designs for the Camp’s reconstruction, while opposing top-down planning for its post-war reconstruction. After the master plan was approved and the reconstruction initiated, the NBRC was disbanded by 2011.

WEBSITE
www.unrwa.org/index.php