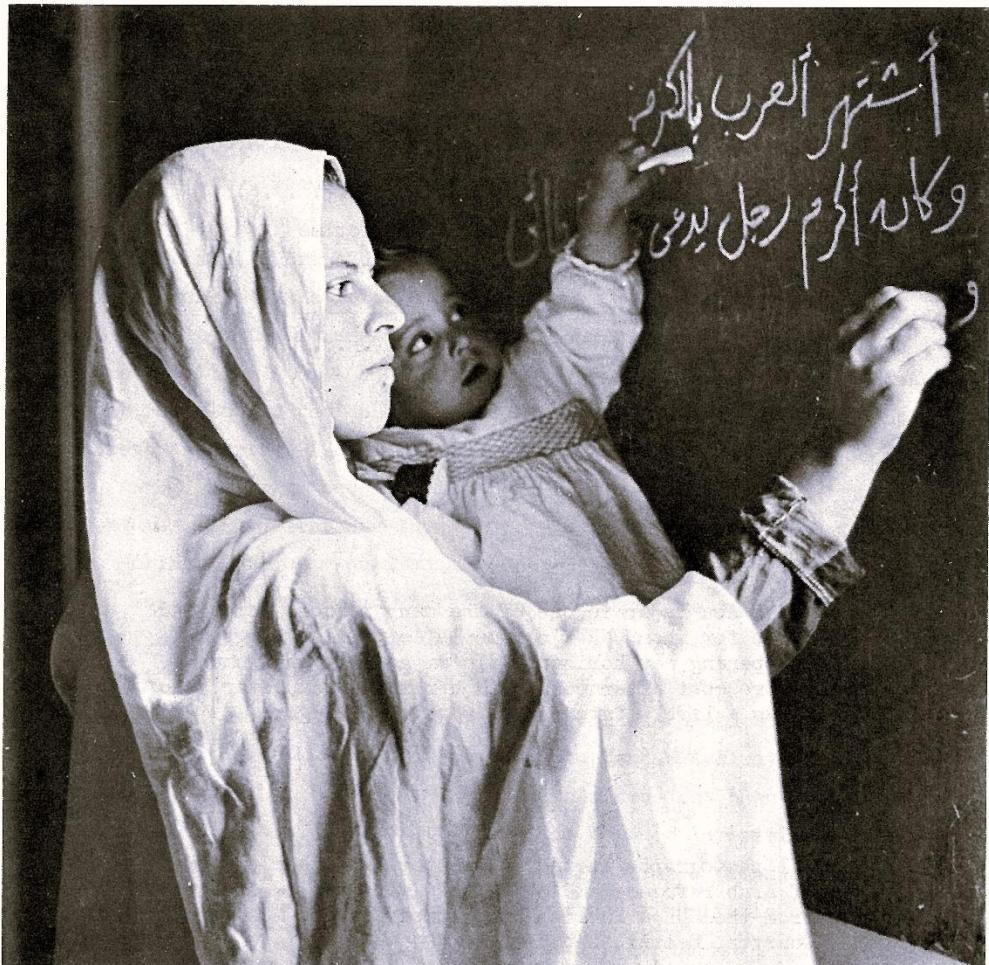




# PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

## An UNRWA Newsletter

No. 39 January—February 1965



### FOR REFUGEE WOMEN: NEW HORIZONS

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### THE COVER PICTURE . . .

In'am Abu Hajar is one of the many refugee women and girls for whom UNRWA's Women's Activities Programme is opening new horizons. In'am goes to the women's centre most afternoons with her infant daughter, who takes a lively interest in the proceedings.

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All photographs in the Newsletter and other pictures of Arab refugees and of UNRWA's work may be obtained from the UNRWA Public Information Office, Museitbeh Quarter, Beirut, Lebanon.

The text of all articles in this Newsletter may be reproduced without acknowledgment.

## FOR REFUGEE WOMEN: NEW HORIZONS

Yusra Mohammed Audeh began her education at the age of 55 to prevent private letters from becoming public gossip--and thus made a small contribution to a major social revolution taking place today in the Middle East.

Yusra, who lives in Khan Younis refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, had never been to school. Because she could neither read nor write, Yusra had to ask a neighbour to translate the letters from her son, a teacher in Kuwait, and to write her letters to him.

Her friends told her that she should learn to read and write, instead of allowing the family letters to become neighbourhood gossip. At first she thought they were joking. "Where would an old woman like me learn to read and write?" she asked. They told her about the UNRWA Women's Activities Centre in the camp. After much coaxing, she went to the centre to see what it was all about.

In less than six months Yusra was able to read her son's letters and to write simple letters back to him.

For hundreds of refugee women and girls as for Yusra Mohammed Audeh, UNRWA's Women's Activities Programme has been a means of extending their horizons and of

benefiting from the social revolution that is taking place as the status of women undergoes a significant change. In the past, Arab women have traditionally led secluded lives. Widespread illiteracy among women has been a major barrier to the reception of new ideas, for until recently, education for women was the exception rather than the rule.

In many parts of the Arab world, however, the old traditions are rapidly changing. Today almost as many refugee girls as boys are attending UNRWA-UNESCO elementary and preparatory schools, and an increasing number are continuing on to secondary school.

But for a large number of refugee women and girls, this recent revolution in education has come too late. They had either never gone to school or had dropped out at an early age, and they could not now go back to school. However, thanks to the Women's Activities Programme many of them have not been left behind.

The Women's Activities Programme aims to help refugee women and girls, primarily those with little or no education, to extend their horizons and thinking beyond their restricted refugee environment and to give them an opportunity to acquire

new skills and interests. Through a variety of educational, social and recreational activities, the programme raises the standards of many refugee women and thus contributes toward raising the general level of enlightenment of the communities in which they live.

The programme was started on an experimental basis with two centres in 1962.

The refugees were so enthusiastic that more centres were started, and now there are 14 women's activities groups: six in Jordan, five in the Gaza Strip, two in Lebanon, and one in Syria. The centres have a total registration of more than 800 women and girls, most of them in their late teens or twenties. The groups meet every afternoon, using the premises of the UNRWA sewing centres, which operate only in the mornings. The members attend whenever they can, and many come every afternoon.

One of the most popular aspects of the programme is the literacy classes. In Jabalia camp in the Gaza Strip a group of seven Bedouin girls have discovered the magic of words through the Women's Activities Centre. None of them had ever been to school, and seven months ago they were completely illiterate. Now they can all read and write. They are so enthralled with their new command of Arabic that

they spend hours at the blackboard, one dictating from a book and another writing. An UNRWA welfare worker described the Bedouin girls as having keen intelligence and "completely uncluttered minds that absorb knowledge like sponges." Most centres have classes in Arabic, and some in Jordan and Lebanon have English classes as well.

The teaching of household skills is an important part of the Women's Activities Programme. Housekeeping in the refugee camps is at best an arduous struggle in often primitive conditions. At the Women's Activities Centres the women learn to make the most of what they have. They are taught the elements of nutrition, and they learn to prepare nutritious meals

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THE PICTURES (opposite). Top left: A group of Bedouin girls in the Gaza Strip has learned to read and write at the Women's Activities Centre. Illiterate a few months ago, they now spend hours at the blackboard, one dictating, another writing. Top right: Using a doll, refugee girls practice the correct method of bathing a baby. Bottom left: In the Women's Activities Centre in Hebron, in Jordan, the UNRWA area nurse gives a lecture on health and hygiene. Bottom right: The Women's programme gives opportunities for healthy recreation, and the refugee girls find their flowing robes no hindrance in a high-spirited game of volleyball.











using only the basic UNRWA rations and whatever fresh foods are available locally. As a result, many refugee girls are now reversing the age-old pattern by teaching their mothers to cook.

The remodelling of clothes is both a popular and useful part of the programme. Many refugee families depend largely for clothing on the used garments collected throughout the world and distributed in co-operation with UNRWA. Much of the clothing requires alteration, and the girls learn to remodel it to suit the needs of themselves and their families. Lessons in knitting and embroidery are also given at many centres.

Instruction in child care, hygiene, health care and first aid is given regularly. UNRWA doctors and nurses volunteer their time to teach the members to avoid sickness by preventive measures and to prepare them for motherhood by teaching them the principles of infant care. In Amman New Camp in Jordan, the sister

of one of the members contracted tuberculosis. The girls at the centre were curious about the disease, so the supervisor arranged a trip to the government tuberculosis hospital in Amman, where a doctor told them about the disease and how to prevent it. Khadra Assaf, a member of the Women's Activities Centre at

Kalandia Camp near Jerusalem, Jordan, became so enthusiastic about nursing after a visit by the group to the St. John's Ophthalmic Hospital that she was accepted by the hospital for training as a practical nurse.

A number of the members are married, and some bring their infants with them to the centres. In'am Abu Hajar and her daughter, whose picture appears on the cover of this Newsletter, illustrate the importance of instruction in child care. At the Women's Activities Centre, In'am has learned to raise her daughter in a more enlightened fashion than that in which she was brought up. A scar on each temple mars In'am's pretty face and testifies to the harm of many of the old traditional remedies. When she was a child, In'am complained of a pain in her eyes. Her mother consulted the local village "doctor," whose remedy consisted of applying a red-hot iron to each temple of the child.

The women's groups also participate in a variety of activities in the social and cultural spheres, once again with the aim of enabling them to broaden their hitherto narrow horizons. Lectures and discussions on a wide variety of topics are held in many centres, and some groups have made excursions to nearby places of interest.

Social committees have been formed in some centres to aid families in need, giving assistance in times of sickness, reading to blind persons and caring for children to enable busy mothers to attend classes at the women's centres.

Active and constructive recreation is something new to many of the refugee women who attend the centres. Volleyball, badminton, table tennis and a variety of indoor games have been enthusiastically received. Most of the centres have a radio and a small library of books and magazines.

UNRWA's Women's Activities Programme has already produced marked results. UNRWA welfare staff in the field have reported on the high morale of the members and on the higher standards by which they are running their homes.

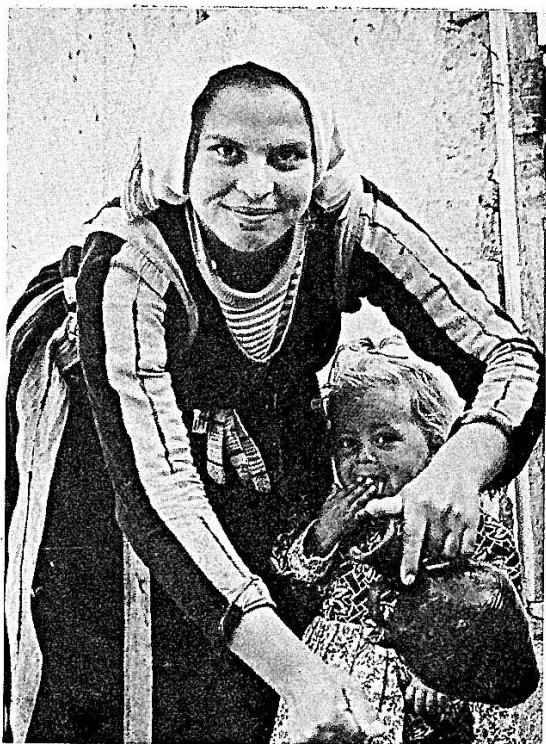
A good indication of the success of the programme are the visits made regularly by older women to the centres. They come not to participate in the activities but to find wives for their sons, knowing that the girls who attend the centres will be well qualified as wives and mothers.

Right: In'am Hajar puts into practice what she has learned about child care at the Women's Activities Centre.





## A N A P P E A L



Above: Conditions in the refugee camps are often primitive, but In'am has learned at the women's centre the importance of hygiene and cleanliness. Only additional contributions can enable UNRWA to continue the Women's Activities Programme.

tinue or to cut back the Women's Activities Programme if contributions are not received. A voluntary agency has undertaken to pay the operating costs of the women's centres until 30 June 1965. After that the fate of the Women's Activities Programme depends largely on the response to this appeal.

UNRWA needs almost \$4,000 to maintain the programme for the year beginning 1 July 1965. The money is required to finance the operation of eleven centres (three have already been "adopted" by a voluntary agency) at a cost of \$350 per centre per year. This amount includes \$300 for the salary of the part-time supervisor and \$50 for a minimum of supplies: material and thread, paper, copybooks, pencils and games.

It is hoped that readers of this Newsletter will be encouraged to make donations to save the Women's Activities Programme. The Agency particularly invites the attention of women's groups and voluntary agencies to this appeal. Contributions or further inquiries may be sent to the addresses on the last page of this Newsletter.

UNRWA's Women's Activities Programme, described in the previous article, has already done much to improve the lives of many refugee women and their families. However, the programme, limited though it is already, may have to be curtailed owing to a severe shortage of funds. Because of the Agency's critical financial situation and of the importance of its major programmes of assistance (the provision of basic food rations, shelter, medical services and education), UNRWA is only able to allocate funds for the Women's Activities Programme if special contributions are received for that purpose. The Agency has no funds available from its regular income.

There is therefore an urgent need for contributions to enable the Women's Activities Programme to continue. Many of the women's groups have made efforts to raise money themselves: in the Hebron centre, the proceeds from a theatrical performance enabled the members to buy two knitting machines, with which they hope to earn a little money; in the Gaza Strip, a number of centres produced hand embroidered Christmas cards to sell to members of the United Nations Emergency Force; in Amman, one group raised funds by arranging a benefit film show. But the fund-raising potential of the women's groups is limited, and donations from outside are urgently needed. UNRWA will have no other alternative but to discon-



1965: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION YEAR

The United Nations has designated 1965 as International Cooperation Year to mark the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and to focus world-wide attention on the present extent of the cooperation between nations and on the need for increased international cooperation.

In the words of the General Assembly resolution which gave birth to International Cooperation Year: ". . . increased public awareness of the extent and significance of existing everyday cooperation would lead to a better appreciation of the true nature of the world community and of the common interests of mankind."

In concrete terms, the work of UNRWA is a vivid example of international cooperation, as is illustrated by Wafik Hariri, a young Palestine refugee from Jordan. Assistance from half a dozen specific nations and indirect aid from more than 40 countries have enabled Wafik to lay the foundations of a productive life.

Wafik is presently spending a year working and training in Sweden, under a technical assistance agreement between UNRWA and the Government of Sweden. Last year he graduated from UNRWA's Wadi Seer Vocational Training Centre in Jordan, where he had spent two years training to be a telecommunications mechanic. During his training, Wafik was sponsored by the Government of Switzerland, which provided training scholarships for him and a number of other trainees as part of a technical assistance contribution to UNRWA. Wafik was able to attend the Wadi Seer centre only because it had been expanded in 1962. The expansions were financed by donations to UNRWA from Kuwait, Morocco and Australia.

Wafik grew up in a refugee camp near Amman, where, like most of the Palestine refugees, his family depended for the necessities of life on assistance from the international community. More than 40 governments make regular contributions to UNRWA to enable the Agency to provide aid to the refugees. These governmental contributions, together with donations from many voluntary agencies and individuals throughout the world, are made on a voluntary basis, illustrating the extent of the international cooperation involved in UNRWA's operations.

The assistance of the international community has relieved much suffering among the Palestine refugees and, as in the case of Wafik Hariri, has enabled many refugees to build fruitful lives. But as International Cooperation Year begins, it is worth recalling that UNRWA can only continue its humanitarian task with sustained or increased assistance and cooperation from the community of nations.

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IN BRIEF

Swedish Troops Aid Storm Victims

The Swedish Battalion of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in the Gaza Strip has organized an emergency fund-raising drive to assist refugees whose shelters were damaged by the recent severe storms in the Gaza area. The campaign was started after officers of the Battalion visited the damaged shelters and learned that UNRWA has only limited funds at its disposal for shelter maintenance. The campaign is being conducted both in the Gaza Strip, where members of the Battalion are contributing, and in Sweden, where an appeal has been launched in cooperation with the newspaper, GOTEBORGS-POSTEN in Goteborg. Letters have also been sent to most of the 10,000 men who have served in the Gaza Strip with previous Swedish Battalions. The funds will be used by UNRWA to purchase cement and other building materials to repair the damaged shelters.

Visitors

Mr. Per-Erik Ronquist, Acting Secretary-General of the Swedish Agency for International Assistance (NIB), visited Lebanon in late November. He held discussions with senior UNRWA officials and paid a visit to UNRWA's Siblin Technical and Teacher Training Centre, which was established with a technical assistance grant from NIB.

Congressman William E. Ryan of New York City saw UNRWA's operations in the Jericho area during a recent visit to Jordan.

Miss Ruth Tomlinson (United Kingdom), a former vice president of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW), met seven "IFBPW girls" in Beirut when she visited Lebanon in December. The seven girls had been sponsored by the IFBPW during their two years at UNRWA's

Women's Training Centre in Ramallah, Jordan. They graduated last summer from the clerical and secretarial course and are now putting their training to good use in Beirut.

Mrs. Helvi Sipila, vice president of Zonta International, visited UNRWA Headquarters in Beirut to discuss new proposals for assistance from Finland and, accompanied by Mrs. Leo Jouhki, chairman of Zonta (Finland), saw UNRWA's two training centres at Siblin. Zonta, a world-wide women's organization, is giving generous support to UNRWA's Ramallah Women's Training Centre in Jordan through the donation of training scholarships. A further donation from Zonta has been received recently (see Donations).

#### Donations

A further £15,300 (\$43,000) has been received from the United Kingdom Freedom From Hunger Campaign Committee, completing its original pledge of £31,700 (\$88,750). In addition, £7,250 (\$20,300) has been received through the United Nations Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The funds have been raised by a number of local Freedom From Hunger Campaign Committees and channelled to UNRWA through these two organizations. The money is being used by UNRWA to provide vocational training scholarships for young refugees in the diesel plant site mechanics and agricultural training courses at UNRWA training centres. Both courses fall within the terms of the Campaign.

The Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (Oxfam) in the United Kingdom has made a donation of \$18,200 to cover the cost of establishing two re-hydration nutrition centres in Jordan and operating them for one year. These centres will treat refugee infants who are severely dehydrated by gastro-enteritis, an ailment which is common during the summer months.

Another four vocational training scholarships have been provided for refugee girls by a donation from Zonta International. Some \$60,000 has now been contributed by Zonta, which has adopted support of UNRWA's Women's Training Centre at Ramallah, Jordan, as its international project.

The AMF Foundation has made a further contribution of \$1,000 to provide a university scholarship for a young refugee studying at the American University of Beirut.

The Daimler-Benz Company of Stuttgart, Federal Republic of Germany, has renewed its sponsorship of two young refugees for their second year of training in the auto mechanics course at UNRWA's Gaza Vocational Training Centre.

The Robert Bosch Company, also of Stuttgart, has sponsored three new refugee trainees at UNRWA vocational training centres with a contribution of \$1,500. The company also provided training scholarships for three young refugees last year.

ASSISTANCE TO THE HANDICAPPED

Abdul Karim Hassouneh is a 12-year-old refugee boy whose life was changed by a rumor.

Some months ago, Abdul Karim, crippled in childhood by polio, limped up to an UNRWA clinic in Jerusalem and asked if it was the place to which crippled children were to report.

It was. Abdul Karim was taken inside and examined by a three-man team of specialists from an institute for the disabled in Cairo. The team was brought to Jordan by UNRWA to examine crippled young refugees between the ages of 12 and 18 and to select those fit for rehabilitation.

All known crippled youngsters in the Jerusalem area had been brought to the clinic in UNRWA buses and cars. But Abdul Karim had not been among them, for his parents had never told UNRWA health or social workers that their son had been afflicted by polio. Fortunately, Abdul Karim's mother had heard a rumor that all crippled refugee children were to report to the UNRWA clinic, and Abdul Karim had limped there on foot.

The team of specialists examined every known crippled refugee youngster in Jordan and found 30 to be suitable for rehabilitation and training. Among them was Abdul Karim.

Last autumn, the 30 young refugees, together with 29 blind or deaf/mute youngsters, flew from Jerusalem to Cairo to be placed in training institutions. They are among the 189 handicapped young refugees being given training by UNRWA this year--the highest number since the Agency began its programme of training handicapped refugees in 1957. Last year 135 refugees benefitted from this programme.

Handicapped refugees suffer under a double burden. A healthy refugee seeking to live a normal, productive life faces many obstacles. For a handicapped refugee the barrier is almost insurmountable without special assistance.

UNRWA endeavours to give education and special training to as many young handicapped refugees as its limited funds will permit, in an effort

to assist them to become self-supporting. Since 1957, some 305 have received or are now receiving training with assistance from UNRWA. The Agency has spent or allocated about \$410,000 for this purpose, some of which was donated specifically for this programme.

Handicapped refugees (blind, deaf/mute or crippled) are placed by UNRWA in training institutions in the Middle East where they receive remedial treatment if necessary, general academic education and training in vocational skills such as carpentry, rug-making, tailoring, radio repairing, basketwork and leatherwork. Blind and deaf/mute children spend an average of eight years in an institute, and crippled children, about two years.

In addition to those receiving training and education at UNRWA's expense, some 230 handicapped refugees are presently receiving training free of charge at various institutions, including 150 at the Pontifical Mission Centre for the Blind in the Gaza Strip, which is administered in cooperation with UNRWA.

It costs UNRWA approximately \$2,000 to give training to a blind or deaf/mute refugee child and \$850 for a crippled youngster. Further donations are needed for this purpose, for only limited funds are available from UNRWA's regular budget. With this training, handicapped refugees have an opportunity to become self-supporting, no longer burdens, but assets to their families and communities.

This is particularly important to Abdul Karim Hassouneh, whose father died recently in a car accident. The training he receives through UNRWA will enable him to help support his family despite his handicap.

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The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a special, temporary, nonpolitical body established by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1949.

In cooperation with the "host" governments (Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Republic, it carries out its two-fold task: first, to provide food, health and welfare services and shelter for the refugees; second, to provide education and training to refugee children and young adults, including general education, vocational and teacher training and university scholarships.

UNRWA began work in May 1950; its current mandate expires on 30 June 1965.

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Further information may be obtained from

UNRWA Liaison Office

United Nations

New York

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In the United States, the United States Committee for Refugees and American Middle East Rehabilitation, Inc., are organizations cooperating with UNRWA