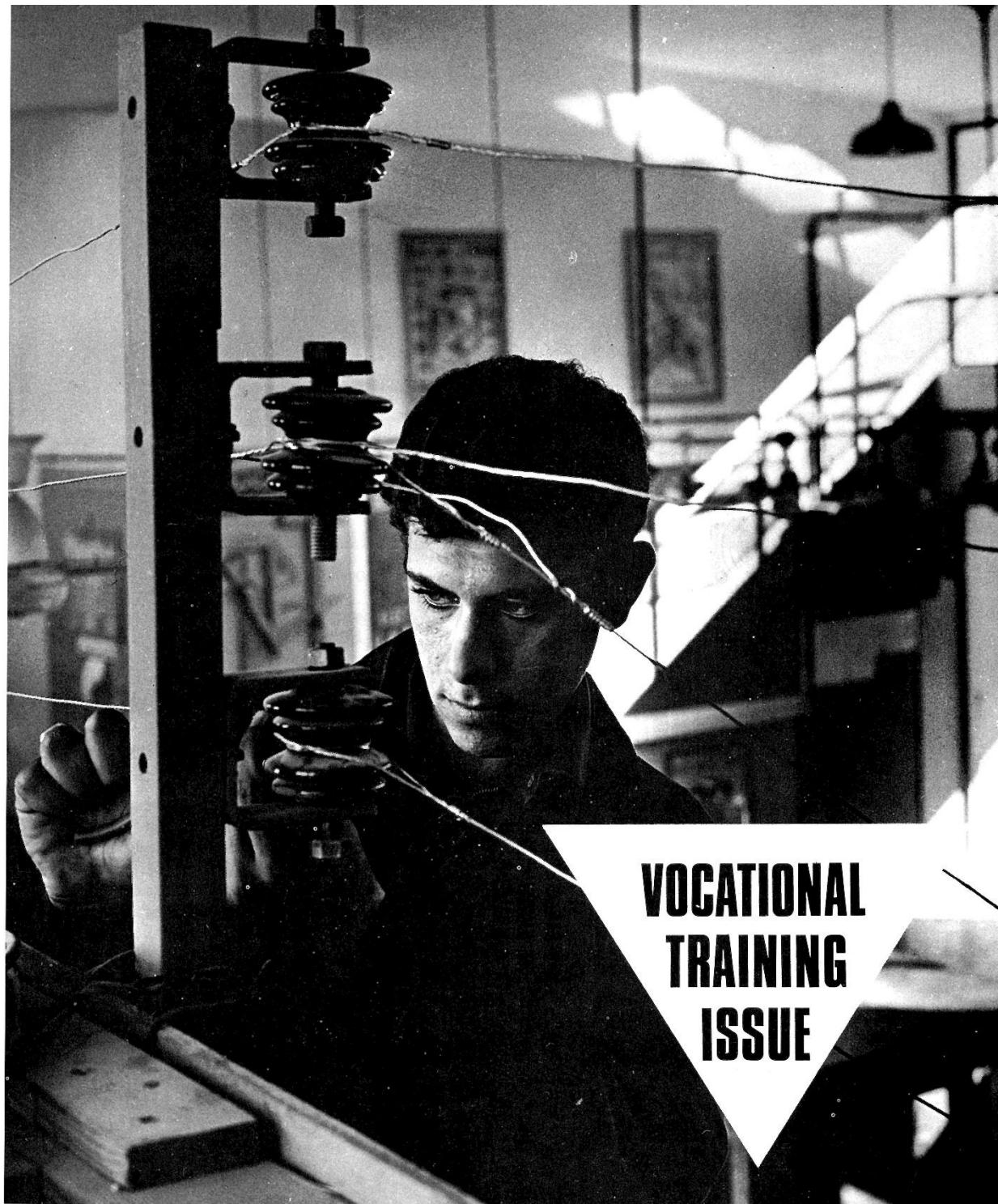


PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

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**VOCATIONAL
TRAINING
ISSUE**

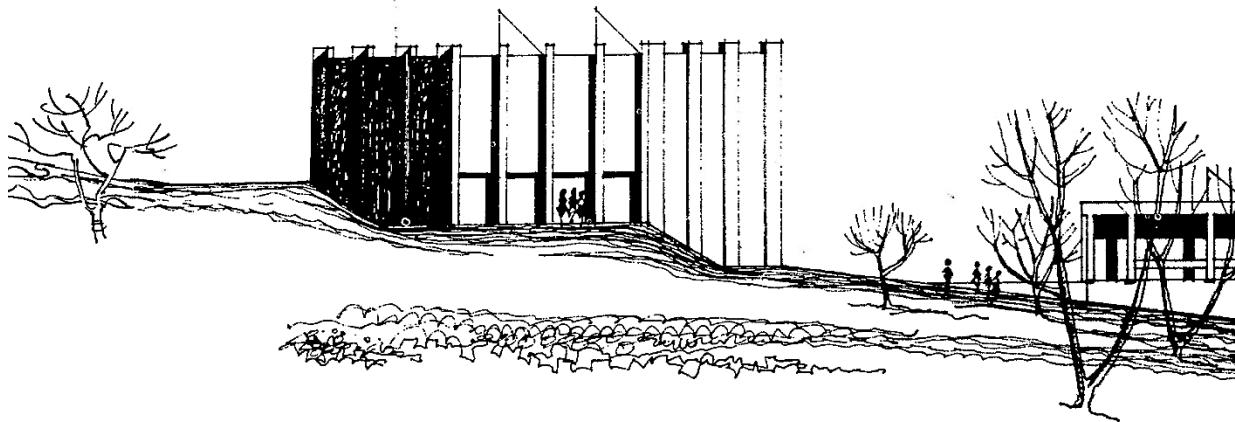


Work is well advanced on the extension to the Gaza Vocational Training Centre

UNRWA's training programme to expand by 50 per cent

UNRWA has always attached the greatest importance to its Vocational and Teacher-Training Programme, and indeed it perhaps offers more hope for the future of the refugees than any other of UNRWA's activities. From its inception, therefore, demand for places at the training centres was heavy, and by 1967 the time had come to expand. The fighting in June of that year rendered the situation still more acute, especially in Jordan, where the facilities were concentrated near Jerusalem at Kalandia (the Men's Vocational Training Centre) and Ramallah (the Men's Teacher-Training Centre and the Women's combined Centre). After these towns were occupied it became impracticable for students from east Jordan, Syria and Lebanon to attend the centres any longer. The problem was particularly serious in the case of the girls, as Ramallah was the only women's training centre operated by the Agency.

It may be well to explain at this point that the UNRWA training centres are residential, and that most courses last two years. At the end of their courses the trainees emerge as fully qualified teachers, secretaries, auto-mechanics,



Side elevation of the Joint Training Centre being built near Amman. The main administrative and teaching block is in the centre, the assembly hall on the left

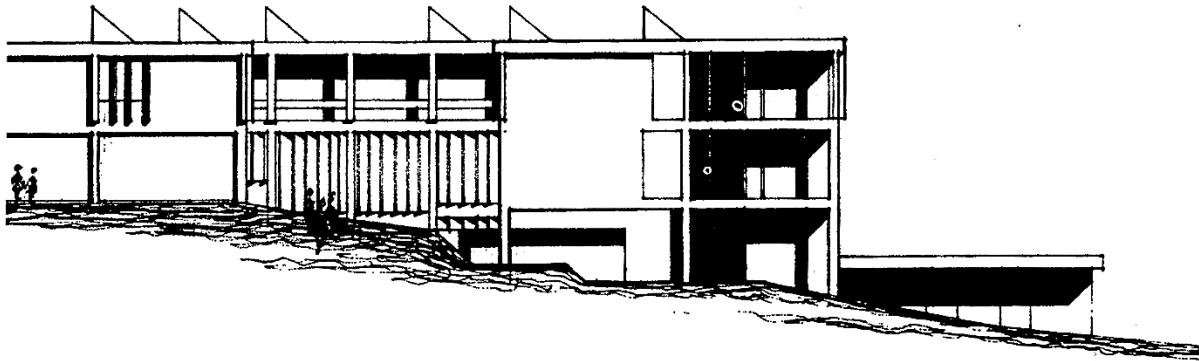
electricians or practitioners of any one of 33 other skills. With these qualifications they find worthwhile jobs all over the Arab world, providing themselves with a living and helping to support their families.

There are plans for expanding the training facilities by the construction of a new joint centre (with one section for men and another for women) near Amman, and the extension of the existing centres at Siblin (Lebanon), Wadi Seer (near Amman), at Ramallah (the Women's Centre on the West Bank) and in Gaza.

How is it that, at a time when UNRWA faces a deficit of four million dollars in 1969 and may have to cut other services, it can contemplate expanding the Vocational and Teacher-Training Programme?

The answer is twofold. First, donors have been willing to provide funds for capital expenditure for training purposes; second, the full impact of additional running costs will not be felt until 1972, so that the Agency has time to marshal further resources. Although UNRWA faces a deficit, therefore, these projects will not immediately add to it, and the money donated could not be used for any other purpose. Moreover, both governments and voluntary agencies, realizing the importance of education, have always been especially generous in their support of the training programme. The Danish, Swedish and Swiss governments, OXFAM and business corporations such as the Arabian American Oil Co. (ARAMCO) are among those prepared to contribute towards recurrent costs. The Federal German Government and the American voluntary organization NEED (Near East Emergency Donations) have also both shown a very practical interest. The former is considering funding an extension to the Men's Vocational Training Centre at Wadi Seer, and the latter is providing \$1,271,000 for the construction and equipment of the new joint centre near Amman, together with further substantial sums towards the extensions in Gaza and at Ramallah and Siblin, Lebanon.

The construction of the new Amman Joint Training Centre, as the NEED-financed



project is provisionally called, is a logical consequence of the policy of expansion which began in 1960-61 when World Refugee Year funds enabled UNRWA to increase its original four centres to ten. The point of having a combined men's and women's centre is to achieve economies by sharing certain facilities. Thus there will be a central kitchen serving separate dining-halls, a central book depot for the libraries, and some sharing of administrative offices. The men's section will hold 300 student teachers, the women's 250 student teachers and 150 vocational trainees. The first intake is planned for the 1970-71 school year, though the full complement will not be reached until the year after. Apart from classrooms and residential accommodation, there will be volley-ball courts, a football pitch, and other similar facilities.

It is proposed to increase the capacity of the Men's Vocational Training Centre at Wadi Seer from 450 to an eventual 792 in 1972-73, and also to introduce a number of new courses, for which there is known to be a demand, leading to diplomas as Tool and Die Maker, Precision Mechanic, Office Machine Mechanic and Advanced Office Machine Mechanic. A further six courses, already taught at other UNRWA vocational centres, will also be introduced for the first time at Wadi Seer.

The expansion being planned at the UNRWA centres in Gaza (for men) and Ramallah (for women) is less ambitious, but will increase capacity in both cases. There will also be a much-needed gymnasium at Ramallah.

These projects are an expression of UNRWA's and the donors' belief in the importance of vocational and teacher training for the refugees, both now and in the future. Although the Agency is not responsible for seeking a solution to the refugee problem, it does have a duty, within the limits of its means, to equip the refugees to benefit from any solution that may ultimately be reached. In the meantime, those trained contribute both to the support of their families and to the economic development of the whole region.

Thanks to OXFAM, this
little refugee girl
receives the comfort
of a hot meal every day

Photo : Odd Uhrbom

