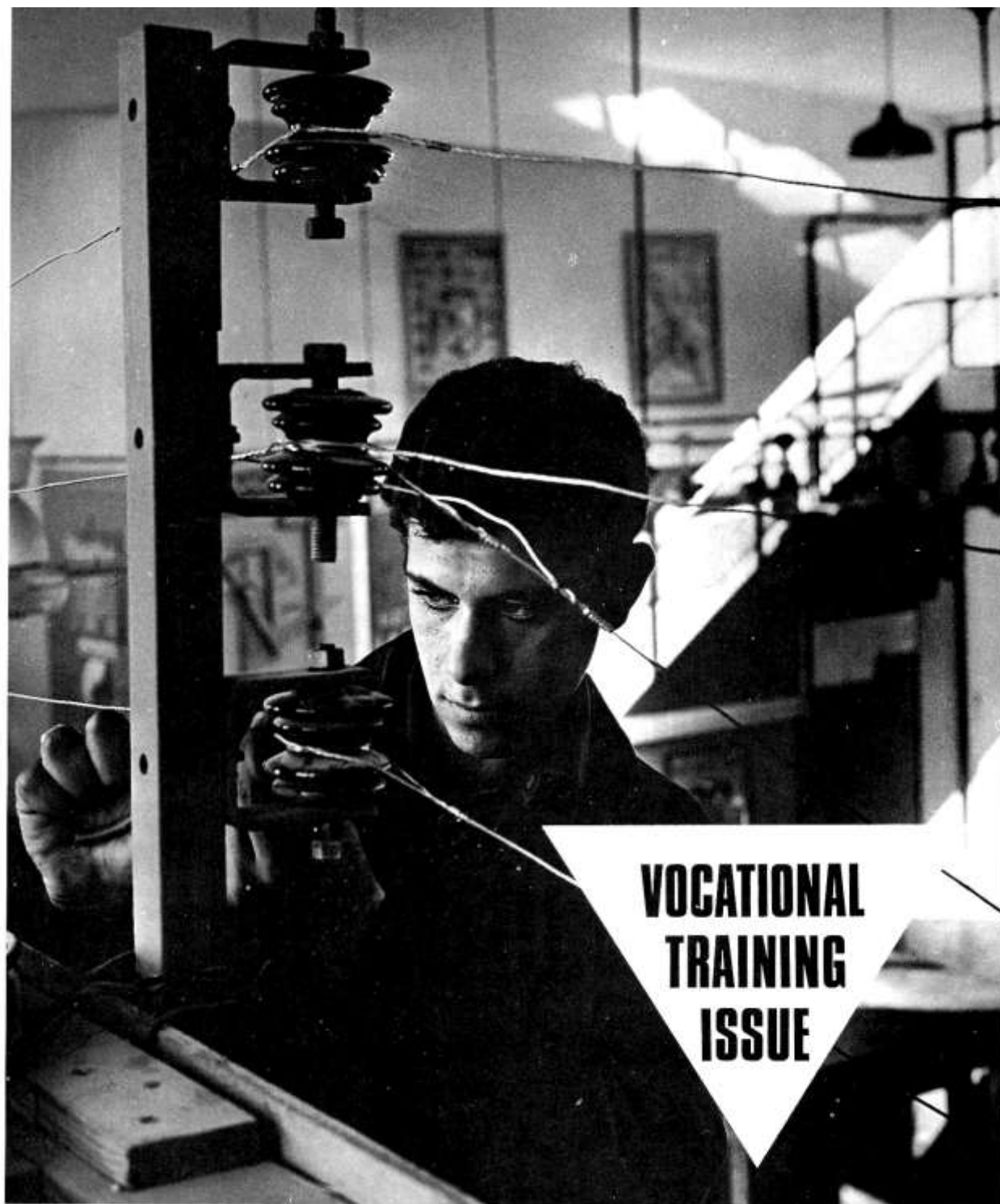


# PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

UNRWA NEWSLETTER 59 · FEB. MAR. APR. 1969





*UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST*

**CONTENTS**

- 1 UNRWA's Training Programme to expand by 50 per cent
- 4 Sami wins through - Wadi Seer Graduate 1964
- 6 Among the 1969 trainees
- 8 Ramallah Women's Training Centre - success and portent
- 11 OXFAM's Aid to UNRWA

**FURTHER INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM**

UNRWA Public Information Office, Museitbeh Quarter, Beirut, Lebanon.	UNRWA Liaison Office, Palais des Nations, Genève, Switzerland.	UNRWA Liaison Office, United Nations, New York, U.S.A.
---	---	---

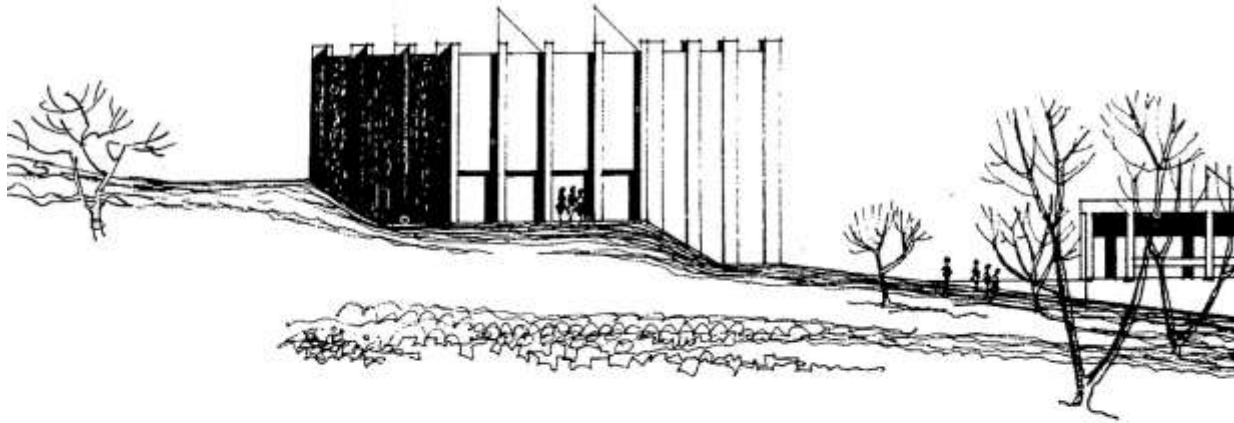


Work is well advanced on the extension to the Gaza Vocational Training Centre

## 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

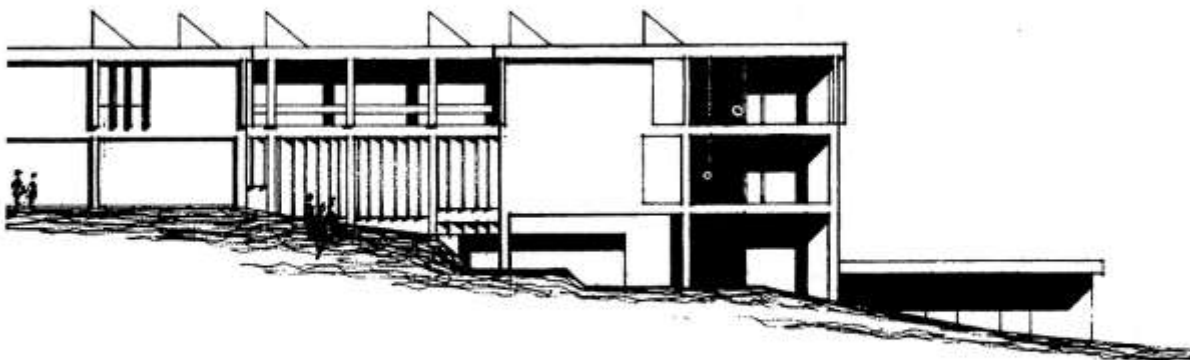
electricians or practioners of any one of 33 other skills. With these qualifications they find worthwhile jobs all over the Arab world, providing themselves with a living and helping to support their families.

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.



(Above) Sami today at work in his shop  
(Right) Sami at the time of his graduation,  
a serious student





# Sami wins through - WADI SEER GRADUATE 1964

Sami Farah Azara is a Palestinian refugee who fled with his family from Jerusalem during the 1948 hostilities. His childhood and early youth were spent in typically poor refugee circumstances in Madaba, near Amman, Jordan, where his father, Farah Salem Azara, found work as an army clerk. Imbued with the conviction that the only hope for their children's future was education, the parents kept them at school although they might otherwise have been earning. When at the age of 16 Sami was accepted by the UNRWA Vocational Training Centre at Wadi Seer, Jordan, for a two-year course in radio and television, it was the first step toward their goal.

When Sami graduated from Wadi Seer, he was a serious young man who looked forward eagerly to relieving the hardships of his family. As he had done well in his studies, he quickly got a job as an electrician with the municipal electrical department in Madaba. At last he was able to begin to fulfil his dream of helping his parents and his younger brothers and sisters. The future seemed very bright indeed.

Then tragedy struck. One Friday, on his day off, walking down the little street near his home, he saw a group of children playing near an electric pylon. As he got closer, he could see that they were dancing around a broken cable which had fallen to the ground. Sami had no safety equipment with him but, regardless of the danger to himself, he climbed the pole and tried to mend the cable. He had almost managed it when the wire broke again and touched him, so that he fell to the ground paralyzed by the shock.

Sami spent the following eighteen months in the military hospital at Marka, on the outskirts of Amman. He fought for his life with the same tenacity he had shown toward his studies. When it finally became clear that he would never have the use of his legs again, he learned to use a wheelchair. It was only when he was discharged from the hospital that his spirits began to flag. He was home again, useless, a burden on the family that he had been so determined to help.

His mother, who had been a tower of strength during his hospitalization, was naturally in anguish, yet she tackled this new problem as she had tackled so many others throughout the years. And fate was with her. One day she happened to meet the UNRWA Area Officer walking down the street, and told him the story. Remembering Sami's good record at Wadi Seer, he promised to help. The Area Officer was as good as his word, and gave details of Sami's plight to the Lutheran World Federation in Amman. For Sami this brought a new lease of life. He might not be able to walk, but there was nothing wrong with his head or his hands. So the LWF gave him a grant to enable him to start a small radio/television repair shop of his own on Karachi street, Madaba. Once again he has become a useful citizen, able to use his training, to earn a living, and above all to help his family.

Anyone could be excused for feeling bitter at facing life in a wheelchair at the age of 22, but not so Sami. "I don't need sympathy", he says. "The future will be wonderful." And his first ambition is to help his sixteen-year-old brother Joseph go to UNRWA's Wadi Seer Vocational Training Centre to be trained as a carpenter.

among the 1969 trainees















## Ramallah Women's Training Centre - success and portent

In a part of the world where frustration and destruction are only too common, it is pleasant to find a project which has not only been realized but can be called an unqualified success: Ramallah Women's Training Centre.

In 1959, the United Nations General Assembly directed UNRWA to expand its vocational and teacher-training programme. The construction of a women's training centre was an essential part of the programme, and the town of Ramallah in Jordan donated a magnificent 28-acre site amid an olive grove at the top of a hill from which, on a clear day, you can see the Mediterranean. The United Kingdom World Refugee Year Committee gave \$310,000 for the Centre's construction, and the Government of the United States followed up with \$440,000. A further \$14,000 came from other sources. The Danish Government makes a handsome contribution to the annual running costs, and scholarships are donated by the Holy See, Zonta (a service organization of business and professional women), the International and National Federations of Business and Professional Women, American Middle East Rehabilitation, the Finnish Refugee Council, and Ridda Barnen (Sweden).

By October 1962 the Centre was ready to open. It was to be entirely residential, and unique in that there were no institutions of comparable size or character open to Arab women in the Middle East. Two-year courses were to be given to girls wanting to become teachers or to take diplomas in dress-making,





(Left) Ramallah Women's Training Centre among its ancient olive trees. In the foreground are classrooms and dormitories, with staff housing higher up the slope

(Below) Sunlight and smiles. Mrs. Mufti relaxes with some of her trainees.



business education, hair-dressing, infant leadership, home and institutional management, and the mass production of clothing. In this the Agency was being something of a pioneer, for, although teaching was already considered an acceptable career for a woman in the Arab world, the same could not be said of all the proposed courses. Both to attract candidates, therefore, and to overcome any reluctance on the part of parents to let their daughters leave



home, an intensive publicity campaign had been carried out for some months beforehand, and when the time came there was no shortage of recruits for the nearly 600 places the Centre had to offer. Initially girls came from Lebanon, Syria and Gaza as well as Jordan, but since the hostilities in 1967 it has not been practicable for trainees from the two first-named countries or from east Jordan to attend.

The new centre was fortunate to have an exceptional woman as its first, and so far its only, principal. Small, vivacious Mrs. Mufti, herself a refugee from Galilee, qualified in education at the American University of Cairo when already a young wife and mother, later working as a teacher. Prior to coming to Ramallah she was producing a radio programme for women in Jordan, so that she was well equipped to understand and deal with the problems of emergent Arab womanhood - and those of a new training centre. Including both professional and domestic staff she has over 100 people to help her in her task, some of whom live on the premises and others in the neighbourhood.

From the beginning, Mrs. Mufti took and was encouraged to take a large view of her responsibilities. Many of the girls coming to the Centre had known no life outside the refugee camps, and it was clear that if they were to be acceptable to employers they must also be given some general cultural background. No

matter what course a girl follows, therefore, she also gets lessons in art, music, hygiene, housekeeping and physical training. Prior to June 1967 the intermixing of girls who had grown up in different countries also had the effect of widening each others' horizons, and now that this influence is no longer available Mrs. Mufti feels that the non-professional instruction is of still greater importance. Nobody who has seen the results of this doctrine will need any further persuasion. In two years in the modern, cultured environment of Ramallah, even the more backward students change into poised young women with a pride in their profession. Their influence on the future development of the Middle East must surely be great, both in their work and in their families.

The courses and curricula at the Centre are under constant study so that the training shall be adapted as closely as possible to the needs of the area and the opportunities for employment. During their two-year course the teacher trainees spend about nine weeks doing practical teaching in schools, and the vocational trainees go for a similar period to offices, salons, or other businesses or institutions appropriate to their fields of study. Frequently these contacts lead to an offer of employment and an invitation to the Centre to send more trainees.

When the fighting broke out in June 1967, Mrs. Mufti received instructions to send West Bank girls to their homes and to get the others to east Jordan. Within a couple of hours the convoy of buses was on its way. For two months they were unable to return, and so, after several moves, a temporary centre was set up near Amman, which is still functioning for the benefit of girls from east Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. When return became possible, it was so only for Mrs. Mufti and girls from Gaza, who were rejoined at the Centre by those from the West Bank. That October the intake was necessarily small, so that the following year there had to be a large one to fill up the places. Apart from the temporary problems caused by this numerical imbalance, the impracticability of having trainees cross the ceasefire line has had at least three important effects on UNRWA's programme and on the centres on the West Bank. First, it has made more urgent the construction of the new joint centre for girls and young men from east Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, which is being built near Amman with funds provided by Near East Emergency Donations (NEED). Second, it has restricted the intake of the Ramallah Women's Centre, of the Ramallah men's teacher-training college, and of the men's vocational training centre at nearby Kalandia, to students from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (though all three are nevertheless over-subscribed). And third, it has, for the moment at least, made it more difficult for graduates to find work.

This last consideration is in some ways the most serious of the three. Formerly, a high proportion of Ramallah graduates easily found work in other Arab countries thanks to their growing reputation for competence and good work, but it is no longer possible for recruiting teams from Arab business corporations to enter the West Bank. Moreover, graduating trainees are afraid that, once over the cease-fire line, they will not be allowed to return to their families. In these circumstances the possibilities of employment are limited, but UNRWA is actively looking for ways of improving the situation.

What of the future? The Centre is too valuable an institution to be allowed to stagnate. With funds provided by the American organization NEED, therefore, it is being enlarged. There has also been talk of sharing parts of a three-year teacher-training course with the nearby men's college in order to make the best use of highly qualified teaching staff. Despite present difficulties the graduates, with their high standard of education and enlightened attitude, are still making a positive contribution to their communities, and the Centre will continue to give hope for a better life to its young people and to play its part in the development of the Middle East.



OXFAM's contribution in Gaza to UNRWA's supplementary feeding programme provides a hot meal every day for 4,000 children like those shown here in Rafah Camp

**OXFAM's aid to UNRWA**

OXFAM - The Oxford Committee for Famine Relief - gave UNRWA over \$550,000 worth of assistance during 1968, and has already given a further \$105,000 in 1969.

This bald statement hides the fact that, apart from continuing a regular programme of aid begun in 1960, OXFAM has in 1968 paid for the whole of UNRWA's emergency feeding programme for the UNRWA refugees displaced or otherwise in greater distress as a result of the 1967 hostilities. The sum of \$426,000 has been used to provide extra food which has been vitally needed in the emergency camps in Syria, east Jordan (where severe weather has turned living conditions from bad to worse) and the Gaza Strip, where unemployment and consequent loss of earnings have been two of the conflict's most unfortunate side effects.

A regular supplementary feeding programme is also operated for vulnerable categories of the refugee population. UNRWA's normal ration consists mainly of flour, with some rice, sugar, oil and pulses, and by itself does not contain enough protein or calories even for a subsistence diet. Most refugees are able to supplement these rations by seasonal earnings or remittances from abroad. The very young, the aged, the sick, and nursing and pregnant women are, of course, always particularly vulnerable, and extra protein and calories are therefore provided for them in UNRWA's own feeding centres. But the emergency, and the depressed economic conditions in Gaza, Jordan and Syria, have meant that many refugees are no longer able to supplement their UNRWA rations. OXFAM's grant has made it possible to provide thousands of them with a hot meal every day.

Why has OXFAM helped UNRWA so generously? These donations were, in the words of Malcolm Blaymires, OXFAM's Field Director for the Middle East, "a mark of our concern with the need to assist in maintaining an adequate feeding programme among refugees". OXFAM is perhaps the largest of the British voluntary agencies operating on an international basis, and is known throughout the world for its famine relief programmes in Africa and Asia. When UNRWA appealed for increased aid to cope with the emergency, it was therefore not surprising that OXFAM should be interested in giving help with the kind of programme for which it has become famous.

But OXFAM has been helping the refugees in many other ways, and also has an aid programme of its own, distinct from the donations it makes to UNRWA. Through UNRWA it has channelled numerous donations for scholarships to Arab universities, for operating costs for rehydration and nutrition centres, and for medical supplies,





Mrs. Ausma Acworth (right), OXFAM's Field Secretary for the area, and Mr. Blaymires (in light-coloured jacket) are seen talking to trainees and instructors on a recent visit to Kalandia Vocational Training Centre

blankets, tents, and the construction and running costs of health projects.

OXFAM has regularly supported UNRWA's scholarship programme whereby young refugees can attend UNRWA training centres in order to become qualified teachers or mechanics, plumbers, machinists and so on. Altogether, OXFAM has given UNRWA 394 scholarships since 1960, at a cost of \$197,000, and has recently increased the number of trainees it supports.

In 1968 there was a new and imaginative development when, for the first time, five Palestine refugee medical students were offered six-year scholarships which thus guaranteed them financially against any interruption to their studies. One of the five is Talal Al Ayyoubi, who was born in Jaffa in 1945, and whose family became refugees in Lebanon. He is one of seven children, and his father is now too ill to work. Talal passed his baccalauréat in Lebanon with the excellent average of 63.6 per cent, and with OXFAM's help he can now continue in the preparatory class of the Faculty of Medicine at Cairo University.

One of OXFAM's major contributions in 1969 will be the provision of \$72,000 (£30,000) for temporary shelters in the east Jordan emergency camps. The money will be presented through the British Standing Conference for Aid to Refugees, who are providing durable shelters for about 700 families now living under canvas in the hills north of Amman. The value of this contribution is \$125,000 (£52,200).

But this is unlikely to be the end of OXFAM's involvement in the Palestine refugee problem. As Mr. Blaymires expressed it: "During my recent visit to the camps in Jordan, I was deeply impressed at the good work being done by UNRWA and the voluntary agencies. At the same time, I was deeply conscious of the vast amount of work remaining to be done. It's because of considerations such as these that we feel further aid to UNRWA is deserved."



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

Photo : Odd Uhnbom

