

PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY



Newsletter No 75 January-February-March 1973



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

CONTENTS

- 3 ... The Agency's Financial Situation in 1973: Cause for Serious Concern
- 4 ... Commentary
- 6 ... Increased EEC Aid for UNRWA
- 7 ... How School Re-opened in Karameh
- 10 ... A New UNRWA Supplementary Feeding Centre
- 15 ... Measles, the Forgotten Killer
- 17 ... Scholarships for Successful Students

FURTHER INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM:

UNRWA Public Information Office
Museitbeh Quarter
Beirut
Lebanon

UNRWA Liaison Office
Palais des Nations
Geneva
Switzerland

UNRWA Liaison Office
United Nations
New York
U.S.A.



This photo taken in Brussels, at the time of the signature of the Convention between UNRWA and the European Economic Community, shows from left to right Mr. Jean-François Deniau, then Member of the Commission of the EEC, Mr. M. Schmelzer, then President of the Council of Ministers of the Community and ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, and Sir John Rennie, Commissioner-General of UNRWA. (see p. 6)

Front Cover: Lesson in dressmaking by 'Itaf Mustafa Daoud, a refugee graduated in 1966 from the UNRWA Ramallah Women's Training Centre and now an instructress at the UNRWA Amman Training Centre.

THE AGENCY'S FINANCIAL SITUATION IN 1973: CAUSE FOR SERIOUS CONCERN

At the beginning of January 1973, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA considered that the Agency's financial position was less desperate than at the beginning of 1971 and 1972, even though there was still cause for some anxiety in view of the steadily increasing inflationary pressures. The budget deficit for 1973 was estimated at \$1.4 million, on the basis of estimated expenditure of some \$54.5 million and an estimated income of \$53.1 million.

However, the recent re-alignment of currencies and the continuous rise in costs within and outside the Middle East have resulted in the increase of the estimated expenditure in 1973 to \$61.0 million and of the estimated income to only \$56.7 million. Thus, the prospective deficit

for the year is now \$4.3 million, representing an estimated increase of \$2.9 million. Even this amount is subject to changes since the Agency is not certain that provision for the full effect of the dollar devaluation has been made.

Thus the picture has changed radically for the worse and if additional income is not forthcoming, the Commissioner-General will most probably be forced to consider the possibility of reductions in the Agency's programmes.

The Working Group for the Financing of UNRWA, which was established by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1970 to assist in finding solutions to the Agency's financial problem, has been alerted to this serious situation.

* * * * *

COMMENTARY

14 December - An increased \$600,000 contribution was made to UNRWA by the Government of the Libyan Arab Republic. This sum represents the Libyan Government's \$150,000 contribution to UNRWA, pledged in November 1971, a further \$150,000 in response to the United Nations Secretary-General's appeal for funds to reduce UNRWA's budget deficit, and a special \$300,000 contribution to the UNRWA/Unesco education programme. At the United Nations General Assembly's Pledging Conference held in New York on 27 November, announcement was made of the Libyan Government's intention of contributing \$600,000 to UNRWA for 1973, of which \$300,000 were to be used for education.

18 January - During a ceremony at the UNRWA Teacher Training Centre in Deir Baalba village, near Homs (Syria), the Centre was handed over by UNRWA for operation by the Syrian Government as an Agricultural Technical Secondary School to which Palestine refugees and Syrian students will be admitted on equal footing.

The Centre was built by UNRWA with funds contributed by the Government of Canada during World Refugee Year. The Centre, temporarily closed at the time of the renewal of hostilities in the Middle East in 1967, was then used to accommodate Syrian displaced persons from the Quneitra District. As UNRWA's continued financial difficulties precluded the reopening of the Centre under the Agency's auspices, it was decided, in consultation with the Syrian and Canadian Governments and as a means of ensuring that the Palestine refugees would benefit from the capital investment, to hand over the Centre for operation by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

UNRWA REJECTS ISRAELI CHARGES OF COMPLICITY IN PALESTINIAN FEDAYEEN ACTIVITIES

24 February - After the attack by Israeli forces on 21 February on refugee camps in North Lebanon, a senior staff officer of Israel's Ministry of Defence was reported to have said that refugee camps had an extra-territorial status and implied there was complicity by UNRWA in the activities of Palestinian fedayeen because one of the "bases" attacked was "housed in an UNRWA store".

UNRWA issued on 24 February the following reply rejecting these charges :

"These statements give a misleading impression of the role and responsibilities of UNRWA. Contrary to the staff officer's reported statement, refugee camps do not possess an extra-territorial status. The status, origin and nature of these camps were described in some detail in paragraphs 55 to 57 of UNRWA's Commissioner-General annual report for 1970-71 as follows :

'55. On its establishment in 1950, UNRWA took over from its predecessors (United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees and Voluntary agencies) about 60 "camps", that is, tented collections of Palestine refugees for whom shelter and other relief were being provided. These camps had been hastily improvised, and services normally provided by Governments or municipalities (or not provided at all in sparsely populated rural areas) became the responsibility of UNRWA, for example, sanitation services, roads and paths. In the course of time, tents were replaced by shelters,

some of them constructed by UNRWA, others by refugees themselves, with or without UNRWA assistance in cash or in kind, and in both cases frequently improved or extended by individual or family effort. After the hostilities of June 1967 and again after further hostilities in the Jordan valley in early 1968, new "emergency camps" were established by UNRWA on the east Jordan plateau in co-operation with the Government of Jordan. In Syria also, four emergency camps were established to shelter displaced Palestine refugees, in co-operation with the Government of Syria. In these emergency camps, tents have gradually been replaced by shelters, but the process is not yet complete and many families are still living in tents after four years. '

'56. In both kinds of "camps", UNRWA provides services for refugees - basic rations, supplementary feeding, medical care, education - as it does for refugees outside the "camps" (who, as will be seen from paragraph 58 below, constitute a majority of the Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA). In addition, however, (a) because of the concentration of refugees in an area represented by a "camp", it maintains installations, such as distribution centres, food centres, clinics and schools, and staff for the administrative co-ordination of these services and for liaison with the local representatives of the Government of the host country ; (b) in default of any other competent authority, it provides sanitation services in the interests of public health ; (c) it has replaced tents by shelters in most cases and laid down some essential infrastructure. '

'57. These camps were constructed on government land or on private land made available (with one or two minor exceptions) by the Governments, which remained responsible for the maintenance of law and order and similar governmental functions as part of their normal responsibilities towards the population within their borders, that is, the "camps" are not extra-territorial areas and UNRWA has no legislative or police power. '

The UNRWA store to which reference was made has not been under UNRWA's control since 1969 when it was seized by a Palestinian organisation along with a number of other buildings in camps (most of them formerly used by the Government representatives who left the camps at the time and all of them of minor importance). The seizure was reported at the time to the General Assembly which has been kept regularly informed of UNRWA's unsuccessful efforts to recover them through the Government of Lebanon. '

In the circumstances to describe the United Nations as "playing host to Fatah" is to give a false impression of complicity.

Apart from the seizure of the buildings referred to, no evidence of exploitation of UNRWA facilities and funds for wrong purposes has been produced."

INCREASED EEC AID FOR UNRWA

As a result of a Convention recently concluded between the European Economic Community and UNRWA, and of previous agreements, the Agency has been assured of increased EEC contributions in 1973. These contributions will be additional to the bilateral aid already provided by individual member states of the Community.

The Agency expects to receive contributions of cereals (flour and rice) and butter oil under the EEC's normal programme of food aid. In addition, as part of a new three-year aid programme, the Community will supply the Agency for the first year of the application of the Convention (1972-73), with sugar for use in basic rations* which the Agency distributes monthly to 830,000 refugees. The Community will also supply the Agency with sugar, flour, rice and milk powder for the Agency's supplementary feeding programme, make a cash contribution to cover staff costs and the purchase of fresh food for that programme and finance the construction of three supplementary feeding centres in Syria.

(*) Basic rations issued monthly consist of 10,000 grammes of flour, 600 grammes of pulses (or approximate calorific value in flour or rice), 600 grammes of sugar, 500 grammes of rice and 375 grammes of cooking oil.

The supplementary feeding programme is designed to protect the health of the groups of Palestine refugees who are nutritionally at risk, mainly infants and children, but also sick adults upon medical recommendation. The programme provides a hot meal six days a week for over 45,000 beneficiaries, and daily issues of milk for babies, infants, pregnant and nursing women, sick adults and school-children.

The value of the first year's contribution under the Convention, which has retrospective effect to 1 July 1972, is about \$4,355,000, of which about \$1,869,000 represents cash for the construction of feeding centres, the purchase of other foodstuffs and such directly related local costs as transport and distribution of foodstuffs and the preparation of meals.

Under EEC's normal food aid programme for 1971-72 the Agency will receive 8,700 tons of flour and 3,000 tons of rice. In addition, a special contribution of 2,000 tons of butter oil, with cash for the cost of internal distribution, has been pledged.

Discussions are continuing with the EEC on the possibility of further contributions for education and health services and will also take place on the allocation of foodstuffs under the EEC's normal programme of food aid for 1972-73.

CONTRIBUTIONS PLEDGED TO THE AGENCY BY THE E.E.C.

<u>Contribution</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Use</u>
Flour	8,700 tons)	
Rice	3,000 tons)	basic rations
Butter oil	2,000 tons)	
Sugar	6,000 tons)	
Flour	3,070 tons)	
Rice	240 tons)	
Sugar	150 tons)	supplementary feeding programme
Skim milk	1,100 tons)	
<u>In addition :</u>		
Cash contributions	\$75,941	1) to cover internal transport and distribution costs (sugar)
	\$30,000	2) to cover internal transport and distribution costs (butter oil)
	\$1,747,910	3) to cover purchase of foodstuffs, staff costs and distribution costs (supplementary feeding programme).
	\$45,055	4) for construction of three supplementary feeding centres in Syria.

HOW SCHOOL RE-OPENED IN KARAMEH

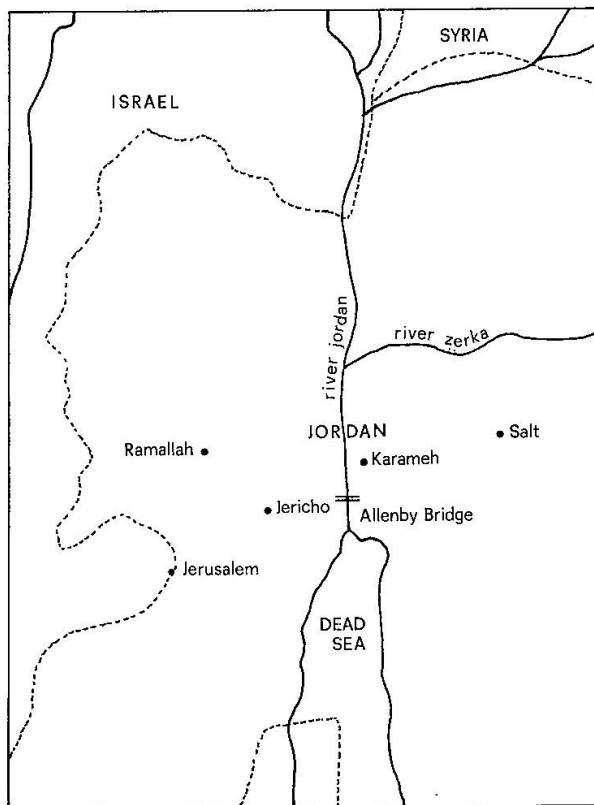
At the beginning of 1967 the Jordan Valley was a fast developing farm area. Situated on the valley's east Bank, the thriving town of Karameh, in 1950 merely a group of tents housing refugees from seven villages around Ramallah, had a population of 40,000, including some 23,000 registered refugees. Over the years, tents had been replaced by family shelters built of mud brick and the fact that many of Karameh's inhabitants had been able to find work as farm labourers or in the marketing, packing and distribution activities of the town had brought a measure of stability to the population.

When the 1967 hostilities ended, Jericho on the West Bank in what had become Israeli-occupied territory, found itself cut off from the east bank behind the ceasefire line along the River Jordan. Supplies of agricultural produce from Jericho could no longer be transferred to Amman, east of the river. The east bank was therefore required to meet Amman's needs by supplying the kind of produce which it had formerly received from Jericho. Thus Karameh, which even before 1967 had outstripped Jericho as the commercial focal point of the valley, grew in importance.

By February 1968, however, the peaceful, agricultural life of Karameh and the Jordan valley had been shattered several times by a series of military incidents along the River Jordan, causing widespread alarm among the population living on the valley's east side. Among those who lost their lives or suffered injuries were some of the refugee residents of Karameh. The UNRWA warehouse at Karameh was destroyed and several UNRWA schools, health and other facilities damaged.

Finally, on 21 February, the 75,000 Palestine refugees and displaced persons and many of the Jordanian villagers in the valley abandoned their homes and camps and sought refuge on higher ground to the east. By 1 March less than 500 remained in Karameh camp.

New emergency camps were established to shelter the flood of refugees and dis-



placed persons from the valley and the population of existing UNRWA camps in Amman virtually doubled overnight.

Most of those who fled the Jordan Valley in 1968 have since lived in the emergency camps on the Jordanian plateau, at Baqa'a and Souf. Living at first in tents, they withstood the rigours of emergency camp life in the cold winter climate, thankful to be at least temporarily safe.

In March 1968, Karameh was the scene of a clash between Israeli forces from the West Bank, the Jordanian Army and the fedayeen. External damage was done to buildings.

Only a few chicken farmers remained in the ruins of Karameh, and the abandoned lands became dry and brown once more.

Karameh had been the centre of commercial and agricultural activity in the valley and its success was also the success of the refugees in building new lives after the 1948 disaster. As the many agricultural opportunities of the Jordan Valley remain unexploited, neglect will undo the steady work of years and the task of renewing the past success of the valley will become more difficult. For this reason alone it is important to get Karameh going again.

In attempting to bring refugees back to their former homes in the valley, UNRWA and the Jordan Government* faced several problems, principal among them the refugees' own reluctance to return until the situation became stable. UNRWA already confronted with financial problems, could not transfer staff from schools and health centres in the emergency camps, where they were much needed to serve the large camp populations until Karameh itself was inhabited once more.

Some progress in resettling erstwhile inhabitants of the valley who decided to return was made through the combined efforts of UNRWA, the Jordan Government, voluntary agencies, and, most important of all, the inhabitants themselves.

As far as Karameh is concerned, assistance came from the Lutheran World Federation, which offered building materials for families wishing to return and rebuild their homes, and CARE, which pledged financial assistance to repair the pipe on which Karameh depended for its main water supply. However, the lack of community services, such as schools and clinics, damaged during the hostilities, continued to discourage families from returning to Karameh.

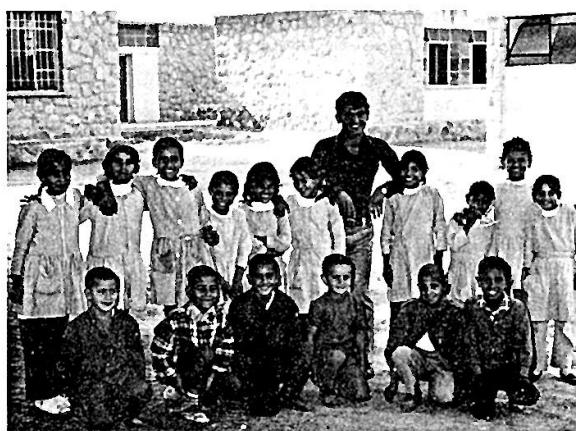
* At the request of the Jordanian Government, UNRWA continued its services for persons remaining in the valley and worked closely with the Government in providing emergency assistance to the persons newly displaced from the Jordan Valley.

Refugee parents know that education offers their children the chance of obtaining the qualifications necessary to enable them to take their place in the competitive modern world. Families were reluctant to move their children to an area where schooling was not assured. In view of the need to maintain services in the emergency camps, UNRWA was unable to embark on a building programme and it seemed that Karameh must remain empty, a symbol of shattered hopes.

New Hope

It was not until late in 1971 that hopes for the future of Karameh were rekindled. In a tour of the Middle East at the end of that year, the Executive Vice-President of ANERA (American Near East Refugee Aid), Mr. John P. Richardson, visited the ruined town and discussed with UNRWA the possibility of getting the UNRWA school going again. Information about this trip and an article on Karameh in the ANERA newsletter of January-February 1972 aroused interest in the possibility of re-opening the UNRWA school and enabled ANERA to earmark a contribution of \$5,000 for that purpose.

ANERA is already well-known in the Middle East where, since its inception after the June 1967 hostilities, it has directed aid to UNRWA and many other organizations. Set up as a humanitarian, non-political organization in order to raise money and co-ordinate existing fund-raising efforts in the United



Some of the pupils of the Third Elementary Class in the compound of the Karameh School.

States, its primary aim is to assist the Palestine refugees, although it also provides assistance for other needy individuals in the Arab world.

ANERA aims to maximize its assistance to the refugees by avoiding setting up a field staff of its own and by making grants on a selective basis to existing organizations which are in a position to do more if they have adequate funds. Over the past four years ANERA has made contributions of over \$32,000 to UNRWA projects, mainly for elementary school sponsorship and vocational training scholarships.

The AMER Division of ANERA, formerly American Middle East Rehabilitation, Inc., is responsible for ANERA's programme of assistance in kind to the refugees, primarily pharmaceutical products donated by American manufacturers.

As late as the summer of 1972 it was impossible to be sure that Karameh school would re-open as families still hesitated to return to Karameh. In late August an UNRWA registration team went to Karameh and began to make arrangements to open the former Boys' Preparatory School building as an elementary and preparatory school on 2 September, and at last the resettlement of Karameh could be seen as a real possibility.

ANERA's \$5,000 contribution was to be used to guarantee a year's education for a hundred pupils. Other contributions were later added to ANERA's original \$5,000 and it was decided that ANERA would be responsible for sponsoring the whole school under UNRWA's elementary schools' sponsorship programme. Under this scheme, a donation of \$50* per year ensures a year's education for a refugee child in the elementary cycle.

The school did indeed open as planned on 2 September with 217 pupils. Enrolment increased during that month until by October there were 258 pupils at Karameh school: 212 in the elementary cycle and 46 in the preparatory cycle. By March 1973 the number of pupils had risen to 340.

The school has been repaired with funds donated by LWF, which also undertook to repair and operate the clinic. The resumption of health facilities is an equally important factor in encouraging the return of families to Karameh.

The one-storey school building now has 12 rooms, among them a handicraft unit and a science laboratory, the first in the Jordan Valley. The school's 11 teachers are all men, themselves Palestine refugees.

Unusually for a school in the Middle East, boys and girls are attending classes together. At first only a third of the pupils were girls, as families hesitated to expose their womenfolk to the possible recurrence of hostilities. Men and boys of working age began to return to the valley, which offers ample opportunities for employment in agriculture. Later when life in the valley seems more secure, the female members of the family will return.

Today life has been brought once more to Karameh. Almost half of the 500 recently-constructed shelters are occupied by the 225 families (about 1,350 persons), who have already returned. If the security situation remains favourable, more families will return to a place where work is available, the climate more hospitable and, most important of all, where they can be sure that their children can safely work and play.

* Because of the devaluation of the US dollar this amount will have to be increased.

A NEW UNRWA SUPPLEMENTARY FEEDING CENTRE

It's 5 a.m., and in Dera'a Camp, in the Syrian Arab Republic, the day's work at the UNRWA Supplementary Feeding Centre has just begun. Here, six days out of seven, the Centre's staff of eleven start the day by preparing for the 6 a.m. distribution of milk.

The new Centre, where both milk and hot meals are prepared and distributed, serves the 11,000 registered refugees in the Dera'a area, and the day's schedule is a heavy one. The simple one-storey concrete building contains a dining area, a kitchen with an annexe for meal preparation, a room for the preparation and distribution of milk, two store-rooms and a small office. The dining area is furnished with wooden benches and Formica-top tables; although the Centre has electricity, the store-rooms are not equipped to store perishable goods. In the kitchens, bottled gas is beginning to replace kerosene for cooking.

Construction of the Centre was made possible by a \$10,000 donation from the Finnish Refugee Council which, since 1966, has sponsored several UNRWA projects, including contributing nearly \$58,000 for vocational training scholarships, and over \$37,000 for alterations and building at Bureij TB Hospital, Gaza. Before completion of the Centre in April, 1971, the Agency made use of an old rented building, carrying out its supplementary feeding programme as efficiently as possible under poor conditions.

By 6 a.m. the first of the 600 or so mothers and children who will call at the Centre during the morning to collect milk are waiting, ration cards in hand, for distribution to begin. Mothers take the milk ration away to use it at home where it is either drunk or converted into the traditional yoghurt-type dishes which are

prepared all over the Middle East. The two types, known as "Laban" and "labneh", are eaten almost daily by many families in the Arab world. "Labneh", which is thick and creamy, is eaten with a little added olive oil and bread. The thinner, more liquid "laban" is frequently taken as a drink or added to meat or rice dishes.

The milk ration is intended for infants, pre-school and school children, pregnant or nursing women, and rations are also issued to sick refugees upon medical recommendation. Each group receives a ration made up of slightly different proportions of dry milk powder and boiled water.

The daily ration for infants under one year is 30 grams dry whole milk powder and 30 grams skim milk powder reconstituted with boiled water in proportions of 1 to 7 by weight.

Children from 1 to 6, displaced children from 6 to 15 and pregnant or nursing women and sick adults receive a daily ration of 40 grams dry skim milk powder reconstituted with water in proportions of 1 to 6. Each ration provides an average of 125 calories and 12.3 grams protein daily.

Every school day the Centre distributes reconstituted skim milk to children in the nearby UNRWA/Unesco elementary classes. Each ration is made up of 40 grams dry milk powder reconstituted with water in proportions of 1 to 3. Three times a week during the school year school children receive vitamin A & D capsules.

When milk distribution is over at 7.30 a.m. the kitchen must be cleaned and the work of preparing meals begins, to be ready for distribution at 10 o'clock. The thousand or so hot meal recipients, all children under six or older children receiving medical treatment, are admitted

in groups of 80-100 at a time for their cards to be checked. Their natural exuberance makes meal distribution a lively affair.

The meal prepared by the Centre is a nutritionally balanced one consisting of a stew of fresh or dried vegetables, a portion of rice or burghol (parboiled wheat) prepared with soya oil, 60-70 grams of Arabic bread and some fruit (banana, dates or orange depending on the season).

There are slight variations in this menu, according to availability. The fruit is sometimes replaced by rice prepared with milk or starch. Two or three times a week tinned meat is added to the vegetable stew served to the children.

Under the recent Convention concluded between UNRWA and the EEC*, as part of a three year programme the Community will supply the Agency with sugar, flour, rice and milk powder for the Agency's supplementary feeding programme and make a cash contribution to cover staff costs and the purchase of fresh food for the programme. It will in addition finance the construction of three new supplementary feeding centres in Syria.

While ration cards are being checked, the Centre's staff distribute the vitamin capsules to the children under six and during the summer vacation, to all school children. After each group has finished eating, the aluminium plates and spoons are washed ready for the next arrivals.

UNRWA supplementary feeding centres serve about 45,000 hot meals daily, mainly to children. The hot meal programme aims to ensure that children who are nutritionally at risk have at least one balanced meal a day, six days out of seven. For various reasons not all children who are eligible are able to benefit from this programme, for example, families may live too far from a distribution centre.

Between milk distribution and the distribution of hot meals, staff at the Dera'a

Centre have been busy preparing the special post-diarrhoeal diet for the 20 or so children suffering from gastro-enteritis who are being treated at the nearby clinic. This high protein/high calories diet typically consists of a vegetable stew, mixed with rice and milk; a puree of fruit, with added vitamins A & D; and a traditional milk dish with added olive oil.

Gastro-enteritis is still the major cause of infant deaths in the Middle East. In 1972 some 27% (463) of all reported deaths among refugee children up to six years were due to diarrhoeal disease.

Even when it does not result in death, gastro-enteritis leads to dehydration and malnutrition with varying degrees of severity. In 1972, 73,205 cases of diarrhoeal disease were reported among children age three and younger. To provide the prompt treatment necessary, UNRWA has 22 rehydration/nutrition centres where sick children can receive daily care. The post-diarrhoeal diet is served to children whose conditions is already improving.

At 1 p.m. the assistant start to clean the Centre and the cooking equipment while clerical staff bring records up-to-date and draw up the daily report.

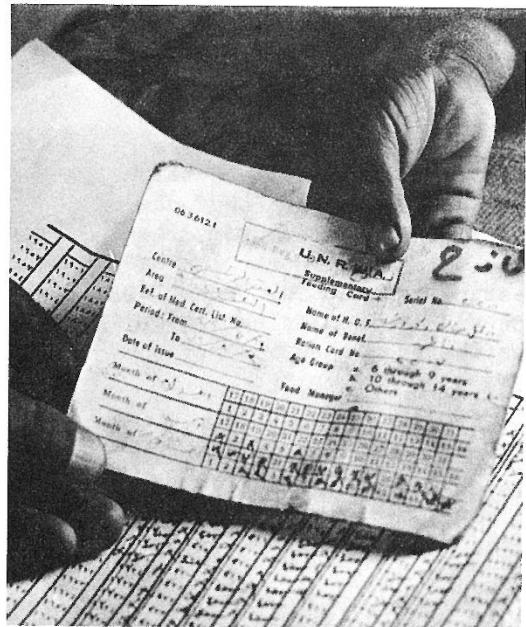
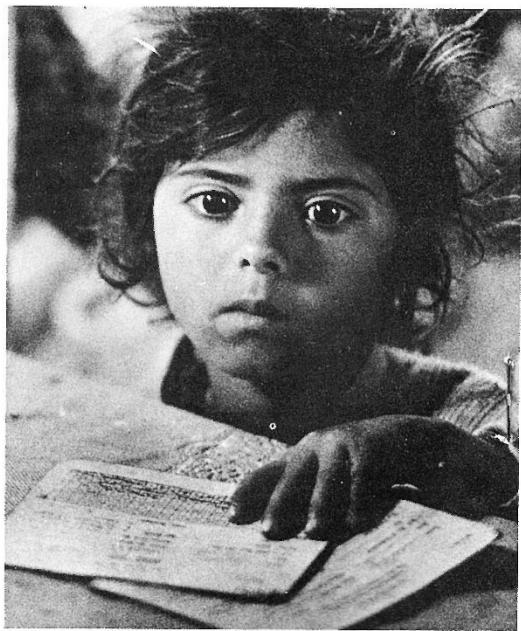
In all but a few details, the activities of the Dera'a Centre are the same as those carried out in other UNRWA supplementary feeding centres. Over a hundred centres carry out the work of preparation or distribution of milk and hot meals, some of the smaller centres dealing only with hot meal distribution and not preparation. To protect the health of thousands of Palestine refugee children, they daily dispense about 45,000 meals, 165,000 milk rations and prepare and serve over 700 special post-diarrhoeal meals.

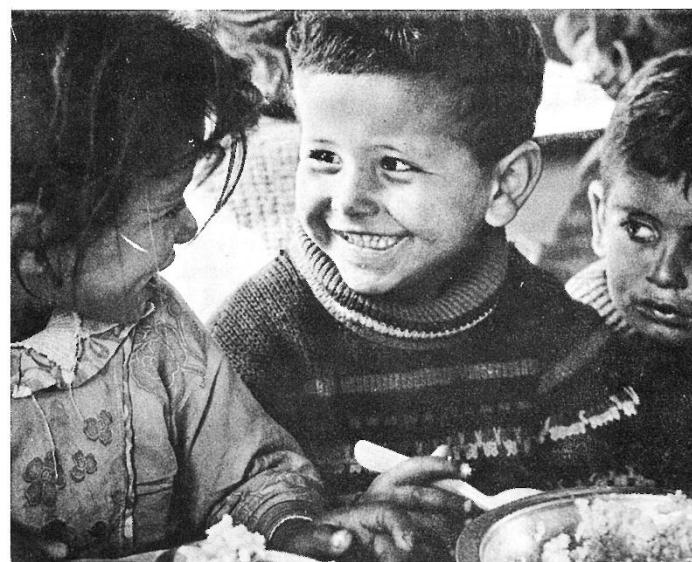
The traditional Middle Eastern diet relies heavily on cereals and is low on animal protein. Basic monthly rations provided for 830,000 refugees by the Agency, consisting as they do of quantities of flour, sugar

* See page 6 of this issue.



UNRWA Supplementary Feeding Programme is designed to prevent nutritional shortages in the most vulnerable groups of refugees: growing children, pregnant and nursing women, tubercular refugees and certain other medical cases, and displaced refugees in the emergency camps.





rice and oil, contain neither animal protein nor fresh food and do not provide a balanced diet. In addition, supply difficulties and, in view of the Agency's financial problems, the need to make use of whatever contributions in kind are received by the Agency and the inability to make up for deficiencies by cash purchases, have led to ad hoc alternations in the composition of the monthly basic ration by the substitution of available commodities for others. Thus the normal issue of pulses, a source of protein, has been replaced by an additional allowance of flour.

Inadequate or wrong diet, and the prevalence of diarrhoeal disease, mean that many of the refugees, particularly the very young, run the risk of malnutrition. The situation is further aggravated by the fact that traditional ideas often lead mothers to wrong feeding. Where very young children or an already sick child are concerned, the consequences can be serious. The supplementary feeding programme aims to protect the health of the Palestine refugees by preventing malnutrition and overcoming nutrition deficiencies wherever they occur.

Supplementary Feeding Programme

Average Number of Beneficiaries
1 July 1971 - 30 June 1972

Field	D A I L Y			M O N T H L Y		
	:		Hot Meal	Milk	:	
	:	:	:	:	Dry Rations	:
East Jordan	:	9,407	:	34,334	:	94,637
West Bank	:	9,523	:	15,578	:	36,302
Gaza	:	15,517	:	50,792	:	62,963
Lebanon	:	4,493	:	21,577	:	23,429
Syrian Arab Republic	:	8,882	:	38,861	:	40,843
Total	:	47,822	:	161,142	:	258,174
	:	:	:	:	:	

MEASLES, THE FORGOTTEN KILLER

For most people measles means nothing more than a childhood memory of discomfort, soon alleviated by prompt care from parents and doctors. But for refugee children, this childhood disease can become a killer.

Rubeola (simple measles), more serious in its effects than the milder Rubella (German measles), is an acute virus infection of early childhood, having as its main symptoms high fever, generalized rash, eye irritation and presenting otherwise signs similar to those of the common cold.

Measles is endemic in most parts of the world and has epidemic cycles amongst young children every two to three years. It is a highly contagious disease without any particular predisposing factors, although of course crowded conditions encourage the spreading of the disease. Almost all children are susceptible to measles, until they have had an attack or until they have been immunized against it, and epidemics are most likely to occur amongst pre-school children, with particularly serious consequences for children under three years of age. The 30,830 births registered with the UNRWA Health Service in 1971 give some indication of the problem facing UNRWA from year to year in protecting high-risk children from the time they reach their ninth month.

The problem is further aggravated by the fact that although epidemics are most likely to occur in pre-school children

(children up to five or six years old), there may in certain circumstances be extensive outbreaks among school children, when the latter belong to a non-immunized group.

The 4,113 cases of measles reported in 1971 in all UNRWA areas of operation probably experienced the usual discomfort which accompanies measles' symptoms, but, particularly if the sufferers were pre-school age children, they also ran the risk of experiencing serious complications which include encephalitis, middle ear infection, pneumonia and even death.

Encephalitis may lead to serious disturbance of nervous and mental functioning, and middle ear infection may result in mild or serious deterioration of hearing. Serious as these consequences are and debilitating as the disease is, the fact remains that measles, in the words of Dr. J. McPhail, Chief of UNRWA's Preventive Medicine Division, "is attended with very significant mortality in the Middle East, as in other developing areas of the world". The fact that it is still a killer is due in part to already existing under-nutrition in many of its victims, as well as to the inadequacy of facilities for giving prompt treatment. Seriously ill children should be hospitalized, but in certain areas, Syria for example, sufficient paediatric beds are not available. In the Gaza Strip, facilities for treatment in government hospitals are not up to standard. Another problem arises from the fact that parents sometimes do

not realise how sick a child is, and if they live some distance from a hospital may well hesitate to make the journey. In 1971, in the 0-6 year age group, 20 of the 647 hospital deaths registered in all Fields were measles deaths; in 1970, the figure was 28 out of 659 hospital deaths, while in 1969, the year of the opening of the UNRWA immunization programme, hospital deaths in only four Fields totalled 748, of which 46 (or 6.15%) were measles deaths.

While measles is an important disease among children in Europe, it is not so serious either in its debilitating effects or in its complications and sequelae. This is essentially due to the better state of nutrition and general health, and to more adequate facilities for providing prompt and effective treatment.

The high incidence of measles can be reduced only by an immunization programme, such as the Agency's health services are already attempting to put into effect.

Immunization with Further Attenuated Measles Vaccine began in 1969 in all Fields and led to a significant decline in the number of reported cases. The 1969 figure of 5,888 cases fell very substantially, when the immunization programme became established, to 3,470 and 4,113 in 1970 and 1971 respectively.

The higher figure recorded in 1971 was mainly due to an increase in cases in east Jordan. In certain Fields, progress in immunization has taken longer as the people have to be educated and convinced of its value. The constant troubles in east Jordan made it difficult to start a programme there, and progress has also been slow in Syria. Through the Agency's health education programme, efforts are being made to popularize vaccination through explanation and demonstration of its effectiveness, and these efforts are likely to gradually be crowned with success. When this happens, all refugee mothers will no doubt bring their young infants to be immunized at the ideal age for maximal protection of about one year. At present, because of the high risk at earlier ages among the refugees, infants

of nine months onwards are immunized. In a non-immunized population, immunization continues for children up to the age of three years.

UNRWA aid has proved invaluable in this domain. UNRWA hopes for the future are expressed in Dr. McPhail's words: "If we manage to get enough vaccine, we can cover all infants as they reach nine months of age and practically eliminate measles as a disease problem among refugees".

UNRWA's whole immunization programme is dependent on special donations, without which it would be unable to continue.

To date a certain supply of the vaccine has been received as government donations and, through approaches made by WHO Headquarters, certain pharmaceutical firms have been encouraged to contribute to the scheme.

This was the case with the Merck, Sharpe and Dohme pharmaceutical company, which first made a 32,000 dose donation in 1969, and a second donation of 13,420 doses at the end of 1972. It is destined for the refugees in Syria, east Jordan and Lebanon and is expected to meet UNRWA's supply needs in these countries until July 1973.

In the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Israeli Health Authorities make measles vaccine available to UNRWA for refugee children.

When present supplies of measles vaccine have been exhausted, UNRWA will be dependent on further donations in order to carry out its immunization programme, and in order to maintain protection of these groups most at risk will need approximately thirty-two thousand immunization doses annually. Sixty-five cents would cover one complete immunization.

* * * * *

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

It looks very much as if 1973 will be a bumper year for education as far as UNRWA is concerned. Enrolment in UNRWA/Unesco elementary schools is expected to reach a record 206,000, and together with refugee pupils attending preparatory schools and government and private secondary schools, there could well be over 335,000 refugee children in schools this year. The increasing numbers create a financial headache for UNRWA, which this year will allocate not less than 48% of its annual budget of approximately \$61 million to the education programme. The recent devaluation of the US dollar, which increased UNRWA's estimated budget deficit for 1973 from \$1.4 million to \$4.3 million overnight, has not made matters easier.

Refugee parents are keenly aware of the importance of education for their children as a step towards a better future and value UNRWA's ability to respond to this need.

After six years elementary schooling, about 79% of elementary pupils enter the three-year preparatory cycle. UNRWA does not operate secondary schools and refugee pupils must find places in government or private schools. In the past UNRWA paid subsidies to local governments to offset some of the cost of

refugee pupils, but for lack of funds these payments have had to be withheld in recent years; the Agency still gives grants to assist refugee pupils in private schools, when there are no places in government schools.

This year over 20,000 Palestine refugee children are attending government and private secondary schools. Many of them are good students with the ability to benefit from education beyond the secondary level.

For the calendar year 1973, less than 1% of the \$29 million budget for Education will be set aside for university scholarships. Only a very small percentage will have the opportunity of continuing their education at a university or college. Many of those refugee children who continue to advanced education will only be able to do so through outside help, mostly in the form of grants or scholarships, or thanks to older brothers and sisters or family relatives who are able to contribute financially to their education.

Special contributions, like the five-year scholarship programme funded by the Federal Republic of Germany from 1968 at a cost of \$850,000, can ensure that some scholarships are available. Under this

programme, which was designed to assist Palestine refugee students whose university studies had been affected by the 1967 hostilities, \$130,000 for 252 scholarships was allocated for 1971-1972, and \$50,000 for 1972-1973 when the programme will be completed.

Aramco (Arabian-American Oil Company) also provides a \$40,000 annual contribution which covers awards to students in various disciplines. Scholarship awards tenable at universities in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the Arab Republic of Egypt and Saudi Arabia are distributed and cover all expenses incurred by the student during his studies (tuition, living expenses and, where necessary, travel), depending on the capacity of his family to contribute to the costs.

Thousands more young refugees hold Arab government scholarships and a few students receive direct aid from UNRWA.

High academic standards are required from candidates as only a limited number of scholarships is available.

Holders of scholarships in the previous academic year may be considered for renewal of their award, provided that they have been promoted by the university to their next higher class. Students whose scholarships have been discontinued as a result of their failure to be promoted to the next higher class are not reconsidered for restoration of the award. This ruling is designed to ensure that scholarships continue to be attributed only to the best students.

A distinction is made between grades required from students already enrolled in universities according to field of study. In practical subjects (Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, Pharmacy, Science, etc.) grading must be "good"; in theoretical studies (Arabic, English, Social Studies, etc.) grading must be "very good".

The majority of scholarships of all types are awarded to science students, particularly to those in medicine and engineering. Figures for the academic year 1970-71 reveal that, out of a total of 872 scholarship awards, only 34 were for art students, and 7 for fine arts, whereas 311 scholars studied medicine and 189 engineering. In 1971-72, out of 687 awards, 260 were for medicine, 167 for engineering and 66 for arts. For the 1972-73 academic year a similar tendency is apparent in the breakdown of awards by subjects. The total number of scholarships has decreased with the phasing of the special post-1967 programme to 455, including 202 for medicine, 118 for engineering, 24 for arts as a whole, and, as in the previous academic year, none for fine arts.

These figures are the result of several factors. Students intake is geared to future employment possibilities, and arts graduates find it more difficult to obtain worthwhile jobs. Parents and schools tend to encourage children towards science subjects, the study of which offers greater possibilities of employment. As grades are a prime consideration for the award of UNRWA scholarships, and as the highest-ability students tend to be in the science "stream", more scholarships naturally go to science students. Awards are not made available for study courses in journalism and law because of lack of opportunities of employment.

A predictably larger number of scholarships goes to young men rather than women. A breakdown of the 1970-71 figures according to sex shows that out of the 872 scholarship holders, only 83 were girls, with 18 in medicine, 7 in engineering and 14 arts students.

In part this can be explained by socio-logical factors, as in many Middle Eastern families (and this idea still has its adherents in the West), a boy's education has priority. More acceptable within the economic context of the refugees where

educating one child out of a large family may mean sacrificing the chances of the others, it is perhaps natural that parents should think of giving first priority to a boy who will one day be a bread-winner with a family of his own to provide for.

Thus in spite of the old adage, "to educate a woman is to educate a family", in the Middle East at least, boys are still more inclined to see themselves in the traditional male role of sole purveyor to a family's needs.

The Scholarship Programme in action

The allocation of scholarships funds among the five UNRWA fields of operation is based on the number of refugee pupils receiving education in UNRWA, government and private schools (including elementary, preparatory and secondary education) in each field of operation, with a quota for each.

Since 1965-66 each new UNRWA award has been limited to a maximum annual amount of \$500. This has been increased to maintain the value of the awards in local currencies. This sum varies in accordance with each student's personal circumstances and his selected place of study. It is intended as a contribution towards tuition fees and living expenses (where the student is living away from home), but such is the nature of the sum that it cannot in many cases cover both.

It is the responsibility of the UNRWA Education Officers in the various fields to publicize the university scholarship programme, including conditions of award, and call for candidates.

Primary selection of likely candidates is made according to academic grading, but family circumstances and background also come under consideration. A family income ceiling exists, above which scholarships are not awarded. Each award is

re-examined every two years to ascertain what changes, if any, in family circumstances have taken place and the award is adjusted accordingly.

In each UNRWA field of operation there is a University Scholarship Advisory Committee to consider applications. It is composed of the Field Education Officer and a representative of the UNRWA/Unesco Department of Education and a representative of the host government (where applicable). The Director of Education is responsible for the final selection of candidates for new scholarship awards as well as for determining which scholarships of continuing scholars will be renewed.

Generally, scholarship students are expected to make their own arrangements for admission to the university and faculty of their choice. UNRWA university scholarships are valid for one academic year of 9 to 12 months, depending on whether attendance at summer courses is required or not.

Scholarships may be discontinued on the grounds of failure in the end-of-year examination, unless it is due to illness or other acceptable reasons; or for misbehaviour or change of the field of study or acceptance of financial assistance from any other source without prior consultation with, and approval of, the UNRWA/Unesco Department of Education. Scholarships may also be discontinued as a result of reinvestigation of the economic need of continuing scholars, who according to the scholarships scale of family income, are found to be ineligible for scholarship awards, or for other reasons approved by the Director of Education on the recommendation of the Scholarship Advisory Committee or the Field Education Officer.

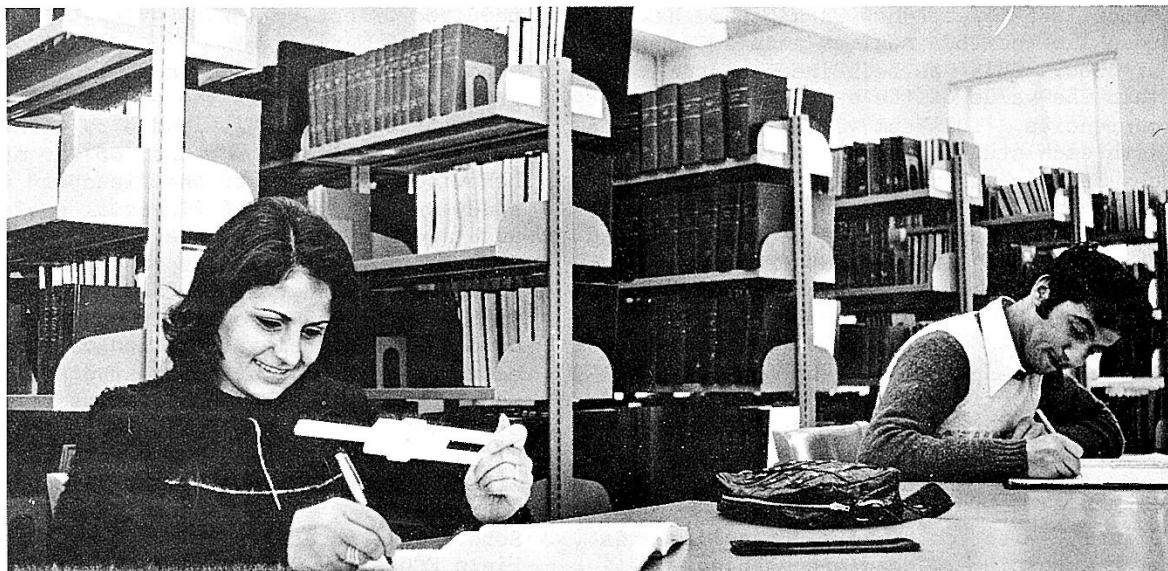
NADA HASSAN

The American University of Beirut, founded in 1866 by Dr. Howard Bliss as the Syrian Protestant College, is now one of the biggest centres of learning in the Middle East. Its attractive landscaped campus overlooks the Mediterranean and its several faculty buildings and halls of residence are within easy reach of the town centre. Its students come from all over the Arab World as well as from Europe and the United States.

Among the new graduates who will leave the University at the end of the academic year in June will be Nada Mustapha Hassan, the first girl to graduate in electrical engineering from that university. The first out of her family of six brothers and sisters to receive a university education, Nada spent her early life in a refugee camp in the Lebanon where her parents, younger brother and two younger sisters still live.

Nada and her family came to Lebanon from the small village of Lubieh, near Lake Tiberias. Her father worked as a labourer when work was available and family income has always been low.

Nada always worked hard at school, and early in her life showed the kind of determination which has led her to academic success. She began her secondary education at the National Evangelical School in Zahle, some distance from her home in the camp, which meant two hour-long bus journeys a day to and from school. At the end of her long school day there was homework to be done and lessons to prepare for the following day. Nada herself admits that she was very strict about studying, making sure that her younger brother, Tariq, and two sisters, Lutfieh and Zakieh, settled down to quiet study with her. She is lucky in having parents who believe in the value of education and her father



Nada Hassan searching for documentation in the library of the American University of Beirut

particularly has always encouraged her. Later, when she transferred to the Good Shepherd Secondary Institute in Beirut to prepare for the Baccalaureat examination, she knew that she wanted to continue her studies after leaving school and began to think of becoming a doctor or an engineer.

The problem of course was how to pay for studies which would extend over a period of several years, an apparently insoluble problem for someone in family circumstances like Nada's. When she learned about the UNRWA scholarship scheme, she decided to apply. In the second part of her Baccalaureat examination she obtained the good results she needed to qualify for a scholarship and, finally choosing engineering as her course of study, she applied for a place at the American University. As one of the conditions of award of an UNRWA scholarship is that the applicant has first obtained a place in an institution of further study, Nada was delighted when she learned that she had been accepted to begin her studies at the American University in October 1969. Now that she had a university place, Nada's future hinged on the acceptance of her application for a scholarship, and she was relieved when she learned, as term began, that she was to receive an UNRWA scholarship funded by ARAMCO.

ARAMCO scholarships, awarded to the most promising students, cover all the costs incurred by university studies. For the first time in her life Nada left her home and parents to live in a hall of residence on the university campus, within easy reach of classes.

Her four-year engineering course began with a year of general studies which included among other things analytical geometry, engineering drawing and a study of man's cultural evolution. Lectures are given in English, the official working language of the University, Nada speaks English well as has retained

her affection for English classics such as "Wuthering Heights" and "Pride and Prejudice", which she re-reads in her spare time. Recently she has been attending optional German classes to enable her to read German language textbooks on engineering.

At the end of the third year of study, all engineering students must spend a period of practical training outside the University. Nada spent this 10-week period, a useful one for gaining practical experience, working with three other students for a television company on a lighting project. Lighting is a particular interest of hers which she hopes to pursue after graduation if she finds work with a civil engineering firm.

Nada would really like to continue her studies by working for a Master of Science degree. Unfortunately, because of family obligations, she knows that this will not be possible. Tariq is 18 years old, and her sisters, Lutfieh and Zakieh, are 15 and 13. All three are still at school and Nada hopes they will eventually be able to continue their studies too. This will be an expensive business and as Nada wishes her brother and sisters to have the same opportunities which she has had, she is prepared to work to pay for their education. This deep concern of one member of a family for its younger members is not at all unusual in the Middle East where family ties are very strong. The family unit is still the most important social entity and takes precedence over considerations of individual rights.

When Nada enrolled as an engineering student, she was the only girl in her year. Last October four girls enrolled to study engineering. Nada is proud to be the first girl to graduate in electrical engineering from the American University, and she is delighted that other girls are following in her footsteps.

BASIM ASMAR

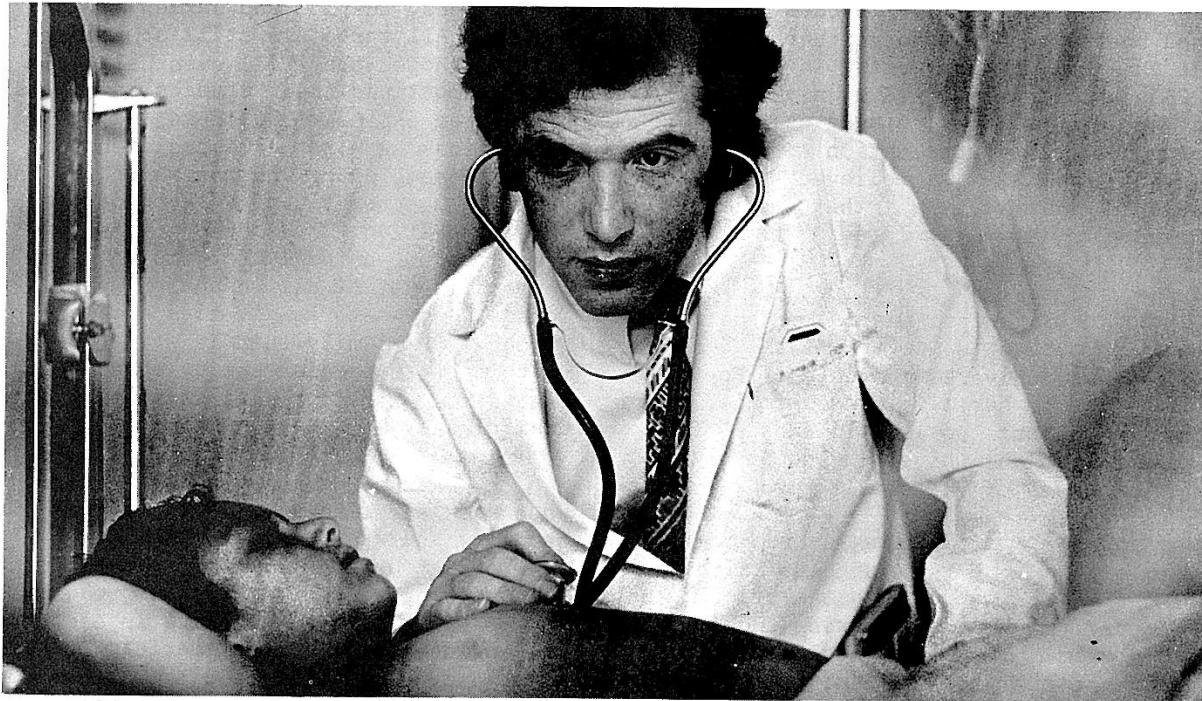
Basim Issa Asmar is a final year student in the Medical School attached to the American University of Beirut. This year, his eighth as a student, is being spent as an interne on the Paediatric ward of the American University Hospital, as this is the field in which he intends to specialize. Good in most subjects at school, Basim always had a natural inclination towards scientific subjects, and while still a high school student, decided he wanted to be a doctor.

Born in Jaffa in 1946, Basim is the third in a family of six children. All except one are grown up and live away from home.

Basim attended the Beirut Baptist School and left in 1965 after successfully sitting part I of the Baccalaureat exam. At that time the second part of the Baccalaureat was not required as an entrance

qualification to the American University, and Basim applied for, and obtained, a place to begin the three-year pre-medical training. Basim is the first member of his family to go to university and his parents, although in favour of his plans, worried about how his studies were going to be financed. Home was a refugee camp in Beirut and money extremely scarce. Nevertheless his parents wanted to do everything possible to help their son and they set about trying to borrow enough money from various sources to allow Basim to take up his university place. Basim obtained a small grant from the university and with the added help of a brother-in-law and some family friends, was able to begin his first year of training.

It was only during his first year of studies that Basim learned of the possibility of obtaining an UNRWA scholarship. He



Basim Asmar examining a patient in the paediatric ward of the Beirut American University Hospital.

decided to make an application and on the basis of his grades and his family circumstances, he was awarded a scholarship for the year 1966.

UNRWA scholarships are renewable, subject to the holder's academic progress. Basim's consistently reliable results have enabled him to renew his scholarship and continue his studies.

At the end of his pre-medical training, during which time he followed the Freshman, Sophomore and Junior Science courses, he obtained his Bachelor of Science degree and began his medical training proper with two pre-clinical years of study. He then embarked on the Three-year clinical training which he will complete in June when he becomes a fully-qualified doctor.

Basim's plans for the next two years are to continue specializing in paediatrics by working as a general paediatrician, completing his paediatric residency in the same hospital in which he is now an

interne. His outside interests are at present very limited owing to pressure of work. An interne's day is a long one and does not finish on leaving the work, as time must be set aside for theoretical studies. Basim used to play football on the Medical School team, but now he expresses his interest in the game merely by watching when he can.

Once Basim starts to earn a living, he will probably contribute to the education of his younger brother, Elias, who will be leaving school in the near future. His family has been lucky in that over the years their circumstances have improved as the children have grown up and left home. Basim describes his family background as "fairly happy", saying that poverty did not make a great deal of difference to the family atmosphere he remembers as a child. He has emerged from the unfortunate events which befell his family a well-balanced and serious young man, involved in his work and hopeful of being able eventually to make a better life for himself and his family.

University scholarship holders by course of study and country of study
during the academic year 1971-1972

Course of study	: Syrian			: Jordan			: Saudi			Total
	: Egypt	: Lebanon	: Arab	: East	: West	: Iraq	: Turkey	: Arabia	: Bank	
Medicine	: 168	: 11	: 72	: -	: -	: 9	: -	: -	: -	: 260
Pharmacy	: 16	: 2	: 17	: -	: -	: 5	: -	: -	: -	: 40
Dentistry	: 3	: -	: 6	: -	: -	: 5	: -	: -	: -	: 14
Veterinary	: 5	: -	: -	: -	: -	: 1	: -	: -	: -	: 6
medicine	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -
Public health	: -	: 1	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: 1
Engineering	: 73	: 23	: 34	: -	: -	: 32	: 1	: 4	: -	: 167
Agriculture	: 8	: -	: 1	: -	: -	: 1	: -	: -	: -	: 10
Teacher training	: 5	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: 5
Commerce and	: 4	: 5	: 1	: 30	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: 40
economics	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -
Arts	: 18	: 12	: 18	: 16	: 1	: 1	: -	: -	: -	: 66
Science	: 11	: 18	: -	: 36	: 3	: 10	: -	: -	: -	: 78
	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -
TOTAL	: 311	: 72	: 149	: 82	: 4	: 64	: 1	: 4	: -	: 687
	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -	: -

Distributed in the United States by
UNITED STATES COMMITTEE FOR REFUGEES
20 West 40th Street
New York, New York 10018



Immunization against measles
at Burj el - Barajneh Health
Centre (in the suburbs of
Beirut). (see page 15)

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
NEW YORK, N.Y.
PERMIT NO. 2126

