



Palestine  
Refugees  
Today  
No. 101





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**1 Lebanon  
emergency**

UNRWA operations in Lebanon are gradually getting back to normal with three-quarters of the UNRWA schools now open and medical services at 90 per cent of the prewar level. The most serious problem remaining is the rehousing of the homeless. This issue of the Newsletter provides an update on the situation and a report on conditions as seen in late autumn.

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**4 UNRWA  
operations  
in the  
S.A.R.**

The UNRWA Field Office, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic became the focal point for supplies into Lebanon early in the 1982 emergency and for a few weeks when Beirut was cut off had responsibility for the Beqa'a and Tripoli areas of Lebanon.

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**8 Improving  
UNRWA  
Services**

In August 1982, Commissioner-General Olof Rydbeck announced the phasing out of UNRWA's basic ration programme. The poorest refugees, however, will continue to receive food rations and increased welfare assistance and the Agency is strengthening and improving its education and health programmes.

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**10 Doubly  
Disabled**

A report by David Ward on care for the mentally retarded in Jordan at the Swedish Home outside Amman and at a centre in Baqa'a refugee camp.

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# Palestine Refugees Today

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Cover photo: Ein el-Hilweh, Sidon. Clearing operations.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency  
for Palestine Refugees in the Near East



The autumn rains make bad living conditions even worse. Shatila camp, Beirut.

## Lebanon Update

Clearance of refugee camp sites in Beirut and south Lebanon is almost complete, UNRWA's Commissioner-General Olof Rydbeck told the Special Political Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in late November.

Mr. Rydbeck reported that clearance work at five of the seven camps was finished and others would be completed shortly. The work consists of removing war debris and levelling the sites for the erection of tents.

There is strong refugee resistance to UNRWA's plan to erect tents, said Mr. Rydbeck. For homeless refugees, tents represented a return to the condition of 1948, when they left Palestine, and they had destroyed the first tents to be put up, believing that Israeli prefabricated shelters would be provided. UNRWA had therefore changed its plans and was offering plots of prepared land, plus tents for those refugees willing to accept them. Refugees whose homes are repairable are being offered cash grants and building materials.

In October the Israeli authorities, saying that they wished to co-operate more actively in providing

shelter, announced an offer of 200-250 precast concrete units and other assistance. After discussions with UNRWA, Israel revised this offer to one of cement, to be distributed by UNRWA so that refugees could build walls around tents, or repair damaged homes.

### Refugee security

Mr. Rydbeck expressed a strong sense of moral obligation to act on the security of refugees living in camps, as a result of the September massacre in Sabra and Shatila. He said he had raised the issue with Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, and the Israeli, Lebanese and other governments.

### Emergency Appeal

Contributions in cash and kind have reached more than \$ 35 million in response to an appeal by UNRWA for contributions to its emergency relief programme in Lebanon. The estimated cost of the current emergency operation is \$ 43.4 for the 12 months to the end of June 1983.

More than \$ 6 million of the total contributed was given in kind and some \$ 65,000 in cash came from private individuals, many of them UNRWA's own staff in the Middle East.

Major contributing governments include: Australia (\$ 575,000), Canada (\$ 758,000), Denmark (\$ 377,000), Federal Republic of Germany (\$ 392,000), Finland

(\$ 531,000), Italy (\$ 2.76 million in cash and kind), Norway (\$ 1.2 million), Sweden (\$ 1.6 million), Switzerland (\$ 550,000), United Kingdom (\$ 1.9 in cash and kind) and the United States (\$ 16.5 million). The European Community is giving UNRWA \$ 1.2 million in cash and \$ 2.2 million in commodities through the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO).

More than \$ 500,000 has been donated to UNRWA from non-governmental organizations such as American Near East Refugee Aid, Christian Aid, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Save the Children (U.K.) and World Vision.

### UNRWA film: Lebanon 1982

UNRWA has produced a 15-minute colour film on the Lebanon emergency. The 16 mm film shows UNRWA operations, destruction in refugee camps and scenes after the massacre in Sabra and Shatila. The film may be borrowed free of charge (except for return shipping costs) or purchased for \$ 165. Lebanon 1982 is also available on video cassette at about \$ 35. Please specify the type of video system required. Contact: UNRWA Public Information, Vienna International Centre, Box 700, A-1400, Vienna, Austria.



# Lebanon: Autumn 1982

Bombs were still going off in Beirut late in October, detonated by bomb disposal squads. An explosion and a rush of warm, heavy air: windows rattle, a puff of white smoke and a thin cloud of dust settling gradually.

In the ruined camps of south Lebanon, bulldozers were still turning up unexploded shells. At Burj el

Shemali near Tyre, Adib Bridi of UNRWA's Technical Office calls to an Israeli soldier, "We've got five more shells. Can you take them away?" Bridi has been assigned temporarily to UNRWA's Tyre Office to help run the clearance of the three camps in the area. Five engineers, sent by the Swedish Government, and two engineers from OXFAM (U. K.) have been working with UNRWA in Tyre and Sidon for some weeks to help with the clearing.

Most of UNRWA's services in Lebanon are gradually getting back to normal — medical services, supplementary feeding and ration distribution are going well.

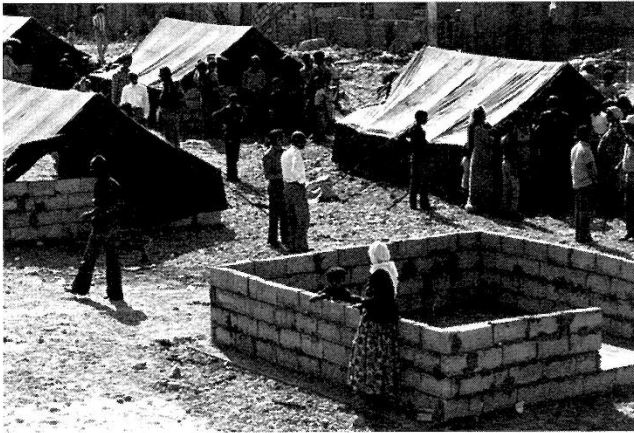
By mid November over 60 of the Agency's 85 schools were operating again although, in the Sidon region, only three out of 20

schools were functioning. Many of the schools are still occupied by displaced refugees, some were destroyed or damaged and several were still occupied by Israeli or militia forces.

## Clearing camps

Bulldozers were at work clearing four camps at Sidon and Tyre. Mobs of women and children follow the lumbering machines salvaging rags, pieces of wood or pieces of damaged household effects from the piles of rubble pushed up by the bulldozers.

In the Beirut camps, clearance was being done by hand. UNRWA hired 140 casual labourers to clear up pockets of destruction in Mar Elias, Shatila and Burj el Barajneh camps by hand. A slow job, as



The first tents to go up at Ein el Hilweh. Because of refugee resistance to tents, UNRWA is offering prepared plots of land for refugees wishing tents. The Agency has also introduced a self-help shelter repair programme.



Clearing the debris of war at camps in south Lebanon.



Amidst the debris, many refugees began to rebuild their own shelters.



The first tents to go up at Ein el Hilweh. Because of refugee resistance to tents, UNRWA is offering prepared plots of land for refugees wishing tents. The Agency has also introduced a self-help shelter repair programme.



Clearing the debris of war at camps in south Lebanon.



Amidst the debris, many refugees began to rebuild their own shelters.



heavy machinery can't negotiate the narrow, winding passages in the camp.

Families are helping with the clean-up. Women and children are seen on the tops of piles of concrete that once were their homes, salvaging concrete blocks.

In El Buss camp, Tyre, a number of families have already rebuilt their homes. Old men, women and even children mix mortar and lay concrete blocks. Most of the clearing is now finished and sites for tents are being marked out by UNRWA staff.

The idyllic setting of Rashidieh camp, south of Tyre, beside a wide, sandy beach on the Mediterranean is desecrated by cracked walls, steel rods jutting from the rubble, hundreds of square metres of broken and crushed concrete and brick. Two large tents with an Israeli flag stand sentinel over the camp.

### Beqa'a Valley

Stalls with cabbages bigger than footballs and apples as big as grapefruit line the roads in the lush Beqa'a valley. They are lined too, with various military checkpoints – first, coming out of Beirut, the Israelis and the Lebanese army, then the Syrians.

The weather is much cooler in the Beqa'a. Geoff Shakespeare, then UNRWA's officer-in-charge for Baalbeck and Tripoli, sits in his cold office shivering in a sweater and a coat. He's working on lists of UNRWA staff who fled to the area in June from south Lebanon, trying to find ways to return them to their duty stations. Today he has managed to get an instructor back to the Siblin Training Centre.

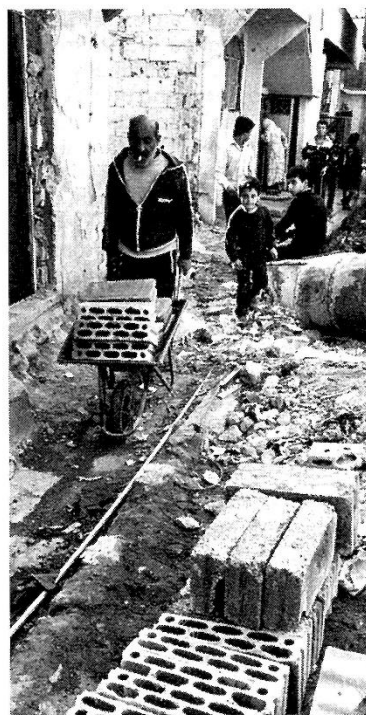
There were already some 10,000 Palestine refugees in Baalbeck and district before the war. Added to this are 6,200 displaced refugees – a figure that recently was more than 12,000. Wavel camp in Baalbeck, 4,500 refugees before June, has almost doubled in population. Refugees were crowding in with relatives or friends and 238 of them had found shelter in the two camp schools. In the third floor rooms of one school the desks from the occupied classrooms are piled high to ceiling level.

## Self-help repair programme

The homes of thousands of Palestine refugees were destroyed or damaged during the bombing and shelling of Palestinian neighbourhoods in Beirut during the summer of 1982. Only one room was left undamaged in the home of Othman Ali Othman, Shatila camp. But the family has completed repair work on the house with the help of building materials supplied by UNRWA.

In Beirut and south Lebanon UNRWA has introduced a self-help shelter repair programme under which refugees either receive building materials or cash grants to buy building materials. Cash grants range from \$ 500 to \$ 1,500 depending on the size of the family. Up to 19,000 families will be able to benefit from the programme.

The following photos show Othman Ali Othman signing an agreement with UNRWA to receive building materials; carrying building blocks through the narrow, winding lanes of Shatila; and working on his home with the help of his children.







## Lebanon emergency:

# Affect on UNRWA in Syria

The emergency in Lebanon following the June invasion by Israel has put additional burdens on UNRWA's Field Office in the Syrian Arab Republic.

In early June, contact between the Lebanon Field Office in Beirut and Tripoli in northern Lebanon was broken, and later Beirut was isolated from the Beqa'a valley area. So responsibility for the two areas was taken over by UNRWA in Syria. The first shipment of relief supplies from UNRWA's warehouse in Damascus reached the Beqa'a valley on 15 June.

Full responsibility for the areas lasted only a few weeks after which responsibility reverted to the Lebanon Field Office. But most supplies for the two areas are still sent through Damascus.

In the words of UNRWA Field Office Director in the SAR, Robert Gallagher, the emergency has given his office both added responsibilities and additional refugees. More than 8,000 registered displaced Palestine refugees have come to Syria since June. The office is establishing an emergency camp for these refugees at Khan Dannoun, 23 kms. south of Damascus.

## Relief Services

Both in Syria and in the Beqa'a and Tripoli areas of Lebanon, UNRWA has provided displaced refugees with food, stoves, mattresses kitchen kits, eating utensils and blankets. Additionally the Relief Department is providing a ration of 2,000 calories a day to each displaced refugee most of whom arrived and now have no means of livelihood.

The UNRWA office in Syria, unlike Lebanon, only provides help to registered refugees.

## Health services

In the Beqa'a area, the first priority was to provide a clean and adequate supply of water for drinking, personal hygiene and for cleaning latrines, etc. The municipal water system was not functioning properly in Baalbeck as there was no electricity to operate automatic chlorinators.

At first the SAR office provided two water tankers — each making three trips a day to the various locations where refugees filled their plastic containers with water.

From mid September to late October, water tankers were used to keep the 100 cu. metre water reservoir at Wavell camp filled. From there water can go directly to shelters. And Oxfam provided special metal containers which are filled by tankers and taken to the various areas where refugees are located. UNRWA chlorinates both the water in the containers and the reservoir at Wavell.

But problems still exist. Wavell camp is overcrowded and at the peak there were an extra 12,000 displaced refugees in the area to be supplied. Additionally the schools, mosques and other buildings which the displaced are occupying have only limited sanitation facilities.

Nevertheless, Dr. F. Moussa, Field Health Officer in Syria, is very pleased that the summer passed with no serious health problem and that the nutritional status of the refugees is satisfactory.

Not least, this is due to the extension of medical services, a reinforcement of health manpower in the region and the mass vaccination of children carried out during August.

A separate major problem in the Beqa'a area has been the lack of proper hospital facilities for refugees which was evident even before the emergency. As of 1 August an arrangement to provide treatment to refugees was finally made with a private hospital in Baalbeck.

## Education

With the influx of displaced refugees into the Syrian Arab Republic, UNRWA schools are facing higher enrolments in the 1982-83 school year. By early November the total number of displaced refugee children in the UNRWA schools of Syria had reached 1,000.

As of 26 September in Yarmouk, there were 110 males and 135 female children from displaced families registered in the elementary cycle. They could not be absorbed in existing UNRWA schools, so the Field Office had to find rented space to provide enough classrooms to absorb all of them, but the 60 pupils registered for the preparatory cycle can be placed. In Qabr Essit, where more than 110 displaced pupils were registered, classes were already being held in rented rooms. Now UNRWA had to rent more rooms there as well. UNRWA may also have to reopen a 4-room school on double shifts at Khan Danoun, where the emergency camp for 500 families is being established.

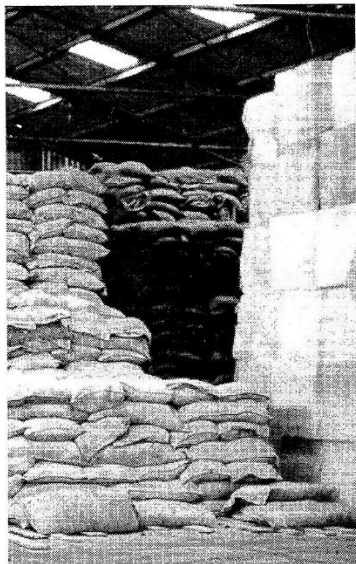
Many of the new pupils have no certificates or records, so UNRWA education staff have had to test the students for proper placement. If pupils held certificates from their former schools in Lebanon, they were placed in the grade they would normally have been going into.

## Transport and Warehousing

UNRWA's warehouse in Damascus has been flooded with work since the beginning of the Lebanon emergency as for a time it became the focal point for supplies into Lebanon. The warehouse can hold 3,000 tons of food, flour, rice and other basic commodities, and it also includes a general store for UNRWA in Syria, carrying 2,000 items ranging from printed forms to school supplies.

The warehouse has also stored supplies and handled customs formalities and general paperwork for other UN agencies and the In-

ternational Committee of the Red Cross. Most basic commodities arrived via Aqaba in Jordan, through Amman, to Damascus. Other items such as tents or stoves came direct to Damascus by air or through the Syrian ports of Latakia and Tartous. To move back supplies in to Lebanon, UNRWA has to rely mainly on private trucking contractors.



The main warehouse in Damascus was stacked high with sacks of flour, sugar and rice. There were piles of sponge mattresses, drums of cooking oil from Holland, cans of sardines from Italy, corned beef from France, boxes of soap from Jordan. There were boxes of apricot jam, skimmed milk, kerosene stoves as well as baby food and blankets being stored for UNICEF. And there were tents from Sweden, waiting for sites to be prepared to receive them. Working in a crisis is sometimes easier than normal times, says Mr. A. Saad, UNRWA's Field Supply and Transport Officer. Paperwork often moves faster when people know they are able to help. Despite the added workload for the UNRWA office in Syria, things have run comparatively smoothly but there have been many days when roads were not open, supplies could not be shipped or trucks were forced to return or off-load before reaching their destination.

## Flight to Syria

"How they got here, no one knows". The reference is to the several thousand homeless Palestine refugees who have arrived in the Syrian capital, Damascus. The speaker is Dr. Said Kinge, UNRWA's Field Relief Services Officer in Syria.

Officially, the over 8,000 refugees of whom he speaks should not be here. But here they are, seeking refuge from the rubble of their previous society in neighbouring Lebanon which in the summer of 1982 suddenly became a very difficult place in which to live.

Many arrived with only the clothes they were wearing. Very few had any identification papers. Almost every family was incomplete, missing fathers, sons, brothers, husbands. Sometimes parents had become separated from their children.

Dr. Kinge has been with UNRWA since 1951. Much of the misery that comes with being uprooted he has seen many times before. But this time there is a difference, he says.

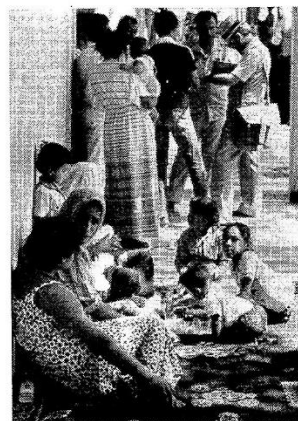
He pauses in his work and thinks back to the early days, 30 years ago, when UNRWA came into being, when it was a temporary arrangement to provide help for just a few months. He recalls the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973.

Then, he says, things were more clear cut. "This time the people are lost. They keep moving on. They have no idea where to go next."

Most of the families now displaced in Syria came from south Lebanon. The Mahmoud family illustrates the story of many.

"I'd go back to south Lebanon if it were safe," says Khalil Mahmoud who is now living in a dilapidated, unused UNRWA school at Khan Danoun, 23 km. south of

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic. But his real dream is to go back to his home in the Gallilee area of Palestine, a village now called Kiryat Shmona.

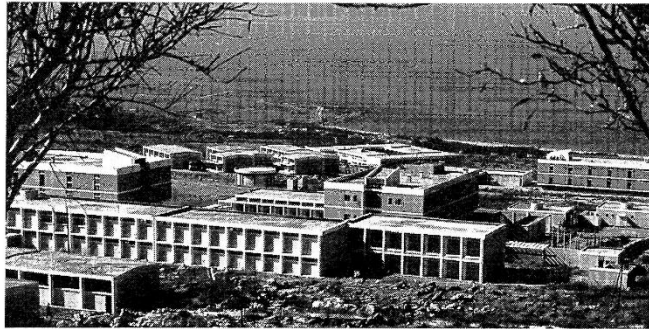


The Mahmoud family left Burj el Shemali camp near Tyre in early June, travelling for 15 days to reach Khan Danoun. They are sharing one room of the old school with relatives — a total of 15 persons. Six families are occupying the four-room school.

One of Mr. Mahmoud's daughters has a tiny baby. They don't know where the father is. He was detained by Israeli authorities. It is estimated that 60 per cent of the families who fled to Syria have no male head of family. Most of the displaced are women, children and older people.

The Mahmoud family cooks and eats on a sheltered, concreted area outside the former classroom and uses the room for sleeping. In one corner is a baby's basket strung up by rope so that the baby can be easily rocked. In another corner is a pile of mattresses and bedding. All they brought was some clothing, a few blankets and some personal belongings. The rest is probably all gone, destroyed when hundreds of homes in Burj el Shemali were demolished.

## Siblin transformed



UNRWA's Siblin Training Centre near Sidon, Lebanon is undergoing a transformation. The Centre was closed in early June 1982 at the beginning of the war in Lebanon and briefly occupied by Israeli forces during June. Then 2,000 squatters moved in. On 5 June seven women students and a women instructor had been killed when a rocket hit their bus. When the squatters moved out, the cleaning and preparation for the 1982-83 school year began. Part of the task includes re-equipping the training centre where equipment, ranging from screw drivers to lathes, was missing. The looted equipment will cost \$ 1.2 million to replace.

Siblin provides both vocational and teacher training. In the 1981/82 school year, there were 781 trainees, including 187 women. A recent investigation undertaken by UNRWA found that the premises of the school had been misused by the PLO for about two years, unknown to the Agency's administration. Military training was given to students before or after regular classes and many were denied their diplomas until they had completed a year of service with the PLO. Disciplinary action has been taken against those staff members responsible for the situation.

### Chance to rebuild

We now have a chance to rebuild, time to correct everything, says Farid Assi, the Centre's Acting Principal. Mr. Assi has been an instructor in business and office practice at Siblin for seven years and was appointed Assistant Principal only two months before the war began.

Farid Assi points with pride to the transformation taking place. Buildings, inside and out, are being repainted, drains and pipes being repaired, new windows put in. All the work is being done voluntarily by students and staff, cutting costs dramatically. The cost of repainting alone which would have been LL 150,000 (\$ 40,000) will be cut to LL 10,000 using voluntary labour.

The biggest job will be to replace looted equipment. A language lab was totally removed, typewriters were missing, almost every thing needed for a vocational training school had been taken. One wall of a workshop was demolished to remove a number of lathes.

Classes are starting up, gradually — there were 65 students on 19 October; 140 five days later; and 155 in early November. Typewriters have been bought for the business and office practice course, but it will take a long time fully to restore

the school. The second year machinist welder course will have to be modified this year because of missing equipment. The sheet metal and public health courses may not start up partly through lack of equipment but also because some teachers are still missing or unable to return.

So far only 2nd year courses have been started, but soon there will be a limited intake for first year courses.

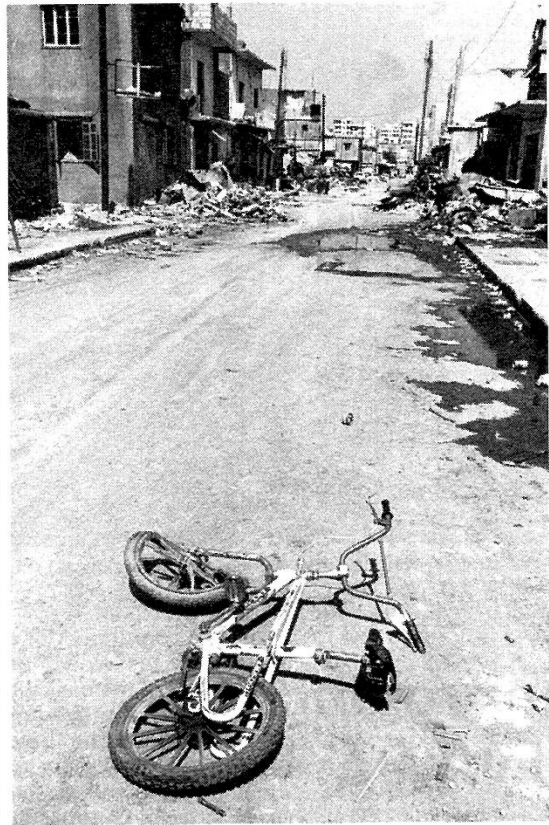
### New School

In part of the teacher training section, UNRWA has temporarily opened a school with elementary and preparatory classes, with almost 300 children, to replace UNRWA schools in the area which have been damaged or destroyed or are still occupied by homeless refugees. The new school is called Wadi Zeineh after the area where most of the refugees live.

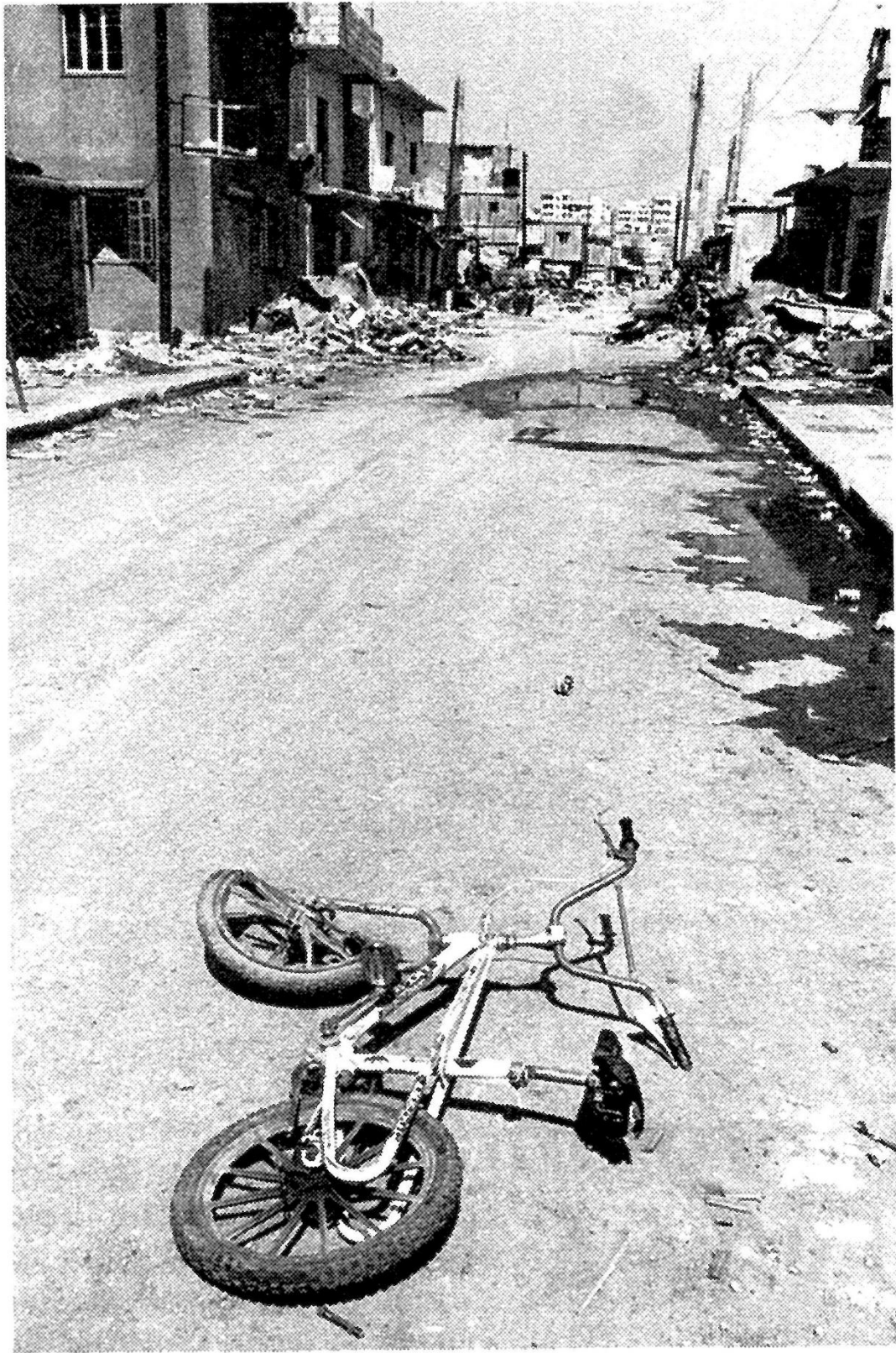
Wadi Zeineh is now one of UNRWA's best equipped schools as it has access to all the facilities of Siblin — labs, a library, a gym. At least science can be taught in a proper laboratory, — a rarity in UNRWA schools, — and children can learn how to use a library.



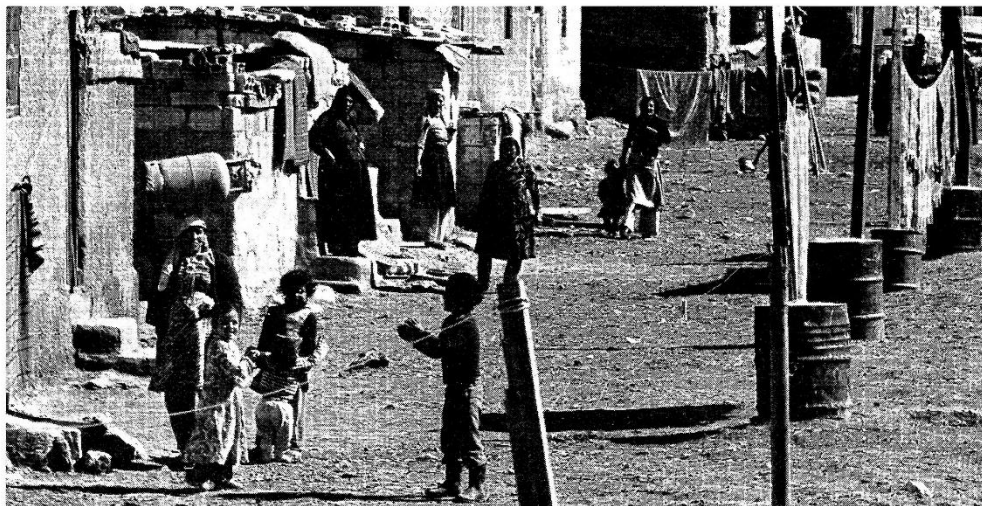
Shatila, 20 September 1982











UNRWA's relief programme now focuses on the poorest refugees.

## Improving UNRWA services

UNRWA has recently undertaken a review of its programmes with the aim of meeting the real needs of Palestine refugees. "By shifting available resources to priority areas", says UNRWA Commissioner-General Olof Rydbeck, "the Agency intends to improve education and health services and to repair the ravages that the lack of maintenance to schools, clinics and other installations (for lack of funds) has caused in the past few years. It is also the intention of UNRWA to use available resources to improve its welfare services for the most needy and the most vulnerable groups".

### Basic ration phased out

In August 1982, Mr. Rydbeck announced that the basic ration

programme for about 830,000 refugees would be phased out. In 1978 the basic flour ration was cut in half as the Agency did not have the funds to buy food. Since then, UNRWA has been distributing only food received from the European Community and several governments.

But the poorest refugees will continue to receive rations of about 2,000 calories a day; UNRWA's supplementary feeding programme for children and others on medical recommendation is being continued; and pregnant and nursing women and tuberculosis patients have already started to receive rations of substantially increased food value.

### Priority for education

It has generally been accepted that UNRWA's priority programme is education. But education has been seriously threatened with cuts in the past two years due to lack of sufficient funds while tens of millions of dollars in contributions in kind were tied up in the ration programme which now must be given far lower priority than the other services provided to refugees.

Against this background, the General Assembly of the United Nations, in March 1982, decided unanimously, without a single delegation dissenting, that governments which have been giving contributions in the form of food stuffs should be asked to convert them into cash or should allow UNRWA to sell them for cash. Some major donors of food stuffs have already expressed their willingness to follow this course in the future. This will mean that UNRWA's cash resources will increase while the food gifts will be reduced.

This holds out the hope that the annual threat to the education programme can be avoided for some time to come.

### More schools

Improvements in all of UNRWA's programmes are already being introduced. A programme of school construction is underway — three schools in Jordan; four buildings for six schools at Homs, Syrian Arab Republic; four schools in the West Bank; and in the Gaza Strip, 18 new classrooms and a home economics unit — at a total cost of \$4.1 million.

The school health programme will be upgraded and powdered milk,



issued to young children, will in future be hygienically packed as it has become possible to buy machinery for packing which has been done manually until now.

### **Expanded Welfare**

Changes in the Agency's welfare programme began in 1978 with the development of the special hardship case programme. The programme now serves about 40,000 refugees. Families in this category have no family member who is able to earn more than a pittance.

In its initial stages, special hardship cases were identified to receive extra food rations. When the Agency had to cut back on the basic ration because of lack of funds, special hardship cases continued to receive full rations.

The object of UNRWA's welfare programme is to relieve distress caused by social, economic and personal problems. This is to be done by providing assistance to refugees in the form of social counselling, organization of community projects and the provision of aid in cash and kind, leading to rehabilitation where possible.

### **Training for welfare workers**

In its five fields of operation (Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip), UNRWA has a network of Welfare Workers, Area Welfare Officers and Field Relief Services Officers. To enable them to better serve the refugees and keep up with developments in the welfare programme, UNRWA began in-service training for the welfare staff in 1980.

The first course was held in August 1980 and two more were held in 1982. The courses give participants formal training in the basics of social work and an opportunity to discuss problems common to all welfare workers.

### **Assistance with shelter repairs**

Beginning in 1979, UNRWA has been allotting a small sum each

year for the repair, reconstruction or maintenance of shelters occupied by special hardship cases. Many refugees do have adequate living conditions but there are thousands still housed in poor quality shelters. This programme is helping to prevent the collapse of shelters occupied by special hardship cases and improve the standard of others.

Special hardship cases also receive blankets and used clothing donated by church groups and voluntary agencies. Each eligible recipient receives a blanket every two years.

These cases also receive small cash grants from UNRWA. The cash help is only \$5 per person per year but the Agency hopes to increase this element of the welfare programme with savings from other services.

### **Youth and Women's Activities**

UNRWA's welfare department operates 36 Youth Activities' Centres in Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Originally begun to provide idle young men with some kind of recreation, Centre members now include school boys and young men who are employed. Some of the Centres have become almost self-supporting and members have raised money to improve athletic facilities, pave playgrounds and even install lights for sports activities after dark.

One example of this type of centre is at Beach Camp in the Gaza Strip. The Centre has more than 500 members and is administered under the camp welfare office by a committee elected by Centre members. In addition to sports and games, members have been involved in camp clean-up work and health campaigns. In some Centres, members provide help to the elderly, teach reading and writing and provide other community services. Leadership and sports training is provided at the Centres with the help of the Young Men's Christian Association.

The Agency is currently trying to improve the facilities and equip-

ment of its 14 Women's Activities Centres and 33 Sewing Centres. Centres provide various programmes for young women and sewing courses which give the less well educated young refugee women almost the only opportunity to obtain some vocational training so they can make a contribution to family income. Some 850 young refugee women are enrolled in the 11-month sewing course at the Sewing Centres.

### **Help for the Disabled**

In the past, help for the disabled refugees has primarily been limited to placing a small number of disabled children in governmental or private institutions for education and training. UNRWA also operates the Gaza Centre for the Blind, funded by the Pontifical Mission for Palestine. And the Agency issues prosthetic devices to about 600 refugees a year.

In conjunction with the International Year of the Disabled, UNRWA engaged a consultant to look at ways for improving services to the disabled.

Out of this has come a pilot project funded by OXFAM which has already hired a co-ordinator to supervise the project. The Agency hopes this can be replicated in other refugee communities. Surveys have been undertaken in most fields of operation to identify the size of the problem so that the Agency can channel its health and welfare programme to meet the needs of disabled Palestine refugees.

### **Limited means**

UNRWA has limited financial resources to carry out its education, health and welfare programmes. But the Agency is moving into new areas to try and meet the real needs of refugees. The great majority of refugees have become self-sufficient through education but, as in any community, there are the very poor and the sick or disabled who need help. UNRWA is now focusing its welfare programme on this group and will continue to look for new ways of meeting their needs.

# The Doubly Disabled

By David Ward

When the Jordanian Ministry of Social Affairs asked Gunhild Sehlin to raise the intake of her home for mentally retarded children, she refused.

The Ministry then offered to supply new buildings and provide the money for the running costs of a new extension which would almost double the size of the home. This, Mrs. Sehlin was cautiously prepared to accept. "It made me happy, but apprehensive at the same time", she said recently. "It meant our work was being recognised. But it will mean much more responsibility."

Many of the children are doubly disabled, they are not only mentally handicapped, but are also Palestine refugees.

Gunhild Sehlin comes from Sweden. She is a slight, handsome woman. For 14 years she has been director of the "Swedish Home". The Home is a cluster of low modern buildings, erected in 1975, high up in an area of dusty rolling countryside some 12 kilometres west of Amman, capital of Jordan. The Home overlooks the small town of Sweileh. There are black cows on the open land in front of the Home. There is a Bedouin tent flapping in the warm breeze. Half a dozen young children from the Home are being taken for a ride in a small cart drawn by a donkey. All the children suffer from autism.

## Private Contributions

The Swedish Home is run by a non-profit making organization "for individual relief" called "IM". It was founded in 1938 and works in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. It depends mainly on funds from private voluntary contributions in Sweden.

The Swedish Home at Sweileh in Jordan has close links with UNRWA. Palestinians account for 60 per cent of the children who at-



tend the Home, and 80 per cent of the staff.

The reason that Mrs. Sehlin initially rejected the Ministry's request for expansion was partly because of "IM"'s preference for giving help to limited numbers.

"IM" started work in Jordan in 1966 and its first care home, a rented villa, catered for 15 severely mentally handicapped children. In 1970 a second centre was opened before the present Home was built at Sweileh in 1975. Here a staff of 70 provides help for about 200 mentally handicapped children and young people.

The extension to the Swedish Home is due to open early in 1983 and will expand the number of severely retarded children in care from 36 to 66. There will also be a day centre, the first of its kind in Jordan. (There are already several day centres for less retarded cases.)

The Home comprises a carehome, a day centre with a special school, a vocational training centre, and a

sheltered workshop. The manager of the training centre is a Jerusalem-born Palestinian, Inaam Budeiri.

"Our main aim", she says, "is integration. Not as workers, very few will ever be able to achieve so much, but if they take care of their appearance and have self-respect then they can be accepted into the community".

Self-respect, she feels, is of major importance. "They tell me when they go out they are followed by hordes of children. If they are laughed at, all our work goes in a snap of the fingers."

Part of the work of integration consists of regularly listening to the radio news and study of geography, even for the most retarded. The children clearly feel a strong sense of identity. The many and profuse potted plants around the centre are not the property of the centre, the children say, "they're ours."

Outside too there are small trees and hardy shrubs. "IM" owns sev-





eral acres of land and could be self-supporting in fruit and vegetables. Many kinds of fruit are harvested including almonds. Almonds, rosemary and lavender have been dried, packed and sold by the Home. But a lack of water limits the extent of the garden produce.

The slow growth of the Home reflects the resistance that has been encountered; Inaam Budeiri says, "It took a lot of convincing to get people to agree to starting the vocational training centre . . . but now they can see we are a success."

Salam Nimir is one of the Swedish Home's social workers responsible for contact between the children and their own families. She was born in Nablus in the West Bank and came to Jordan in 1973.

Traditionally, mentally retarded children have been regarded as a burden on the family, she says, since their working capacity is restricted or non-existent.

Accordingly they were often "forgotten" and even hidden away, which made it difficult to identify the size of the problem. Miss Nimir says in recent years there has been less "hiding away". One positive effect of the United Nations International Year of Disabled Persons, she believes, was to make families less ashamed of their less fortunate members.

### No rejects

On one point Salma Nimir is adamant. "We never accept rejects", she says. New admissions to the Home follow an application from parents. "But we never ac-

cept applications from rich families and neither do we when the handicapped child is an only child. "And the children have to be loved. If a family says good riddance, then we will not accept the child."

Miss Nimir sees parental interest as a way to extending the activities of the Home. Increasingly, she says, parents are asking "what can we do to help?" Miss Nimir hopes soon to start groups to which parents can come for guidance and counselling.

Visitors to the Swedish Home at Sweileh meet clusters of children in the class rooms, some curious, brighteyed, others busy with tidying or cleaning. ADL (Adaptation for Daily Living) is one for the main training principles. The teachers feel self respect among the children begins with simple skills such as eating with a spoon, and matters of personal hygiene. A child who has learnt to dress himself has a much greater chance of being integrated into his home community.

In 1975 the vocational training centre was started, to meet the needs of those children who had reached the age of 16 and yet who still needed further help. The centre continues the school subjects of reading and writing, mixing with, and meeting people, study visits and camping. Every summer the home holds an annual camp on the Dead Sea coast.

In the centre, the girls are weaving, making carpets, rugs, scarves and hats. Inaam Budeiri explains. "In the Middle East it's difficult to send

girls out . . . this work they can do at home."

The older boys are working in the carpentry workshops. Around the walls are things they have made — boxes to hold tape cassettes, painted toy blocks, wooden stools, and hanging flower baskets ("very popular in England"). Leftovers are made into coasters for glasses. In another room there is a stone polishing machine and in the entrance hall are small pendants and other items of simple jewelry the boys have made.

"They make what they can, and what will sell", says Miss Budeiri. Hand-made ceramic pots will sell easily in Sweden but not in local markets, she says.

### Baq'a Centre

A few kilometres away from the Swedish Home, beside the road from Amman to the Syrian border is Baqa'a refugee camp. It too, has a centre for retarded children.

The Baqa'a centre consists of some low buildings around a small whitewashed courtyard. The main room is a prefabricated hut painted in bright colours. The centre is run by a woman who lives in the camp; and the centre's costs are paid for by the Jordanian Mental Health Society, a charity subsidised by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

There is room for 30 mildly retarded children. More severe cases are admitted, if they are lucky, to the Swedish Home. At Baqa'a, the main aim is to help with simple reading skills and behaviour, including table manners and personal cleanliness.

The Principal is optimistic and believes there will be improvements. But she estimates there are at least 1,000 mentally retarded children in the camp (total population, approx 60,000) many of whom are still "hidden away" by their families, despite the International Year of Disabled Persons.

The main causes, intermarriage and overmedication of pregnant women, she feels, are finally being recognised. She is also hopeful about the chances of her children . . . teasing of mentally retarded children is not common in the camp.



## Aftermath of war — the children











# UNRWA Publications

## GENERAL

What is UNRWA? (PL 12)

Printed Leaflet (Arabic, English, French, German, Spanish).

After 30 Years . . . UNRWA's 30th anniversary (PL 1008).

Printed Leaflet (Arabic, English, French, German).

Map of UNRWA's area of operations with refugee location data (Arabic, English).

Survey (PB 1002)

Brochure of facts and figures (Arabic, English, French and German).

## PROGRAMME LEAFLETS

Education (PL 13 – Arabic, English, French and German).

Vocational Training (PL 14 – Arabic, English, French and German).

Health (PL 15 – Arabic, English, French and German).

Relief (PL 16 – Arabic, English, French and German).

Palestine Refugees in Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. A series of five leaflets covering UNRWA's five fields of operation (English).

## POSTERS

UNRWA and Children

A set of three black and white posters on Palestine refugee children. Titles in English, French or German.

Family Album

Shows the lives of three young Palestine refugees from birth to today. Black and White. Text in English, French or German.

Faces in the Crowd

A colour poster showing faces of Palestine refugees with text in English, French, German or Spanish.

UNRWA and the Aged

Colour poster to mark the World Assembly on Aging. Text in English, French, German or Spanish.

Palestine Refugees in Camps

A colour poster showing refugee camp life with text in English, French or German.

## AUDIO-VISUAL PRODUCTIONS

ST 1002 – a seven-minute slide/tape production showing UNRWA's activities for Palestine refugees. Commentary in Arabic, English, French or German.

ST 1003 – Through the Eyes of Ibrahim, a 10-minute slide/tape presentation in Arabic, English, French, German or Swedish. Kit with map, posters and teaching notes included. Available on loan or purchase at \$ 45 per set.

Palestine Dresses – A set of 27 colour slides showing Palestine dresses from various regions. Included is a descriptive note in Arabic, English, French or German.

## FILMS:

My Name is Fadwa

A 15-minute, 16 mm colour film on a deaf Palestine refugee child. Available for loan or purchase in English, French, German or Italian.

My Father's Land

A half-hour, 16 mm film on the Gaza blind school for Palestine refugee children. Available for purchase or loan in English, French or German.

Born Homeless

A 20-minute, 16 mm colour film showing the work of UNRWA through a refugee family in Baqa'a camp, Jordan. Available for purchase or loan in Arabic, English, French or German.

NOTE: A complete catalogue of UNRWA publications and audio-visual productions (including historical films) is available from the offices listed below.

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