



# PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

**An UNRWA Newsletter**

No. 17

June 1962



FOR REFUGEE GIRLS:

*New Opportunity*

This issue of the Newsletter is devoted entirely to the subject of teacher training and vocational training for refugee girls.

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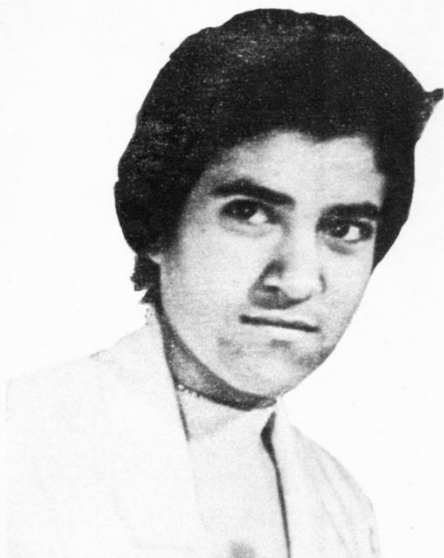
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The pictures used in this Newsletter, and other pictures of Palestine refugees and of UNRWA's work, may be obtained from : UNRWA, Museitbeh Quarter, Beirut, Lebanon.

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Suad Massad is 17 years old.

She was only three when she and her family fled from their home in Sirin, Palestine, during the Arab-Israeli war in 1948.

Since then, they have been refugees. Since then, life has brought poverty and despair to Suad and her family.

They fled to Jordan, where they now live in the Irbed region. The family is almost destitute, for it is a large family, and money and work are scarce. Without help from UNRWA, Suad's father would find it impossible to feed, house, clothe and care for his five sons and four daughters.

In many respects, Suad is typical of the 15,000 young refugee girls who reach womanhood each year -- with a head full of dreams and hopes and ambitions.

But she is more fortunate than most.

Her dreams and ambitions are coming true.

Last year, Suad began training for her career as a teacher in UNRWA's Girls' Teacher Training Centre in Ramallah, Jordan. Later this year she will be transferred to the new centre for girls at Ramallah, a combined vocational and teacher training centre operated by UNRWA -- the largest and only institution of its scope in the Middle East.

Suad and the other girls who will enter the Ramallah centre have the opportunity of their lives almost within their grasps. . . the opportunity of building a productive life away from the misery and despair of the refugee camps which have been their homes ever since they can remember.

But before their dreams can come true, they all need one thing more.

They need to be "adopted".

To pay for the education and training of the refugee girls, UNRWA has launched an "adoption" scheme, under which a donor can pay for a year's training for a girl by providing a \$500 scholarship. In return, UNRWA will send the donor a picture of the "adopted" trainee, and a short biographical note about her.

### The Scholarship Plan -- Facts and Figures

The need : 1962/63 academic year: 294 scholarships  
1963/64 academic year: 475 scholarships  
After 1964: 633 scholarships a year.

The Scholarship : \$500 or £180 or the equivalent.  
It pays for one year's training for one girl, including board and lodging, text books and equipment, teachers' and instructors' salaries, a little spending money and miscellaneous costs.

To donate or make further inquiries Write to :  
Contributions Officer, UNRWA, Museitbeh Quarter, Beirut, LEBANON or UNRWA Liaison Office, Palais des Nations, Geneva, SWITZERLAND.

The donors : A few scholarships have already been given. The donors include: Inter-Church Aid (UK), 23 scholarships; Government of Finland, 20; Caritas, Vienna, 8; Christian Women's Fellowship of National City Church, Washington, U.S.A., 3; Christian Women's Fellowship of First Christian Church, Wichita Falls, U.S.A., 2; and eight donors of single scholarships.





## KNOWLEDGE AMONG THE OLIVES



In the treeless kingdom of Jordan, every tree is an item of value, revered by the people and protected by the government.

The site chosen for the UNRWA Girls' Training Centre at Ramallah was a terraced olive grove, on the summit of a hill overlooking the town.

The architects of the new centre therefore planned the buildings around the olive trees, in an effort to spare as many as possible.

As one strolls around the vast complex of buildings that forms the centre, their success is apparent. It is almost like walking through an orchard, for every 15 or 20 yards there is an olive tree. The infant care unit was moved more than three yards after the first plans were drawn up, to preserve two trees. Now there is just enough room for the trees to spread their knuckly branches.

Before building began, there were 1050 olive trees on the 20-acre site. Only 25 were cut down, and of these, six were transplanted.

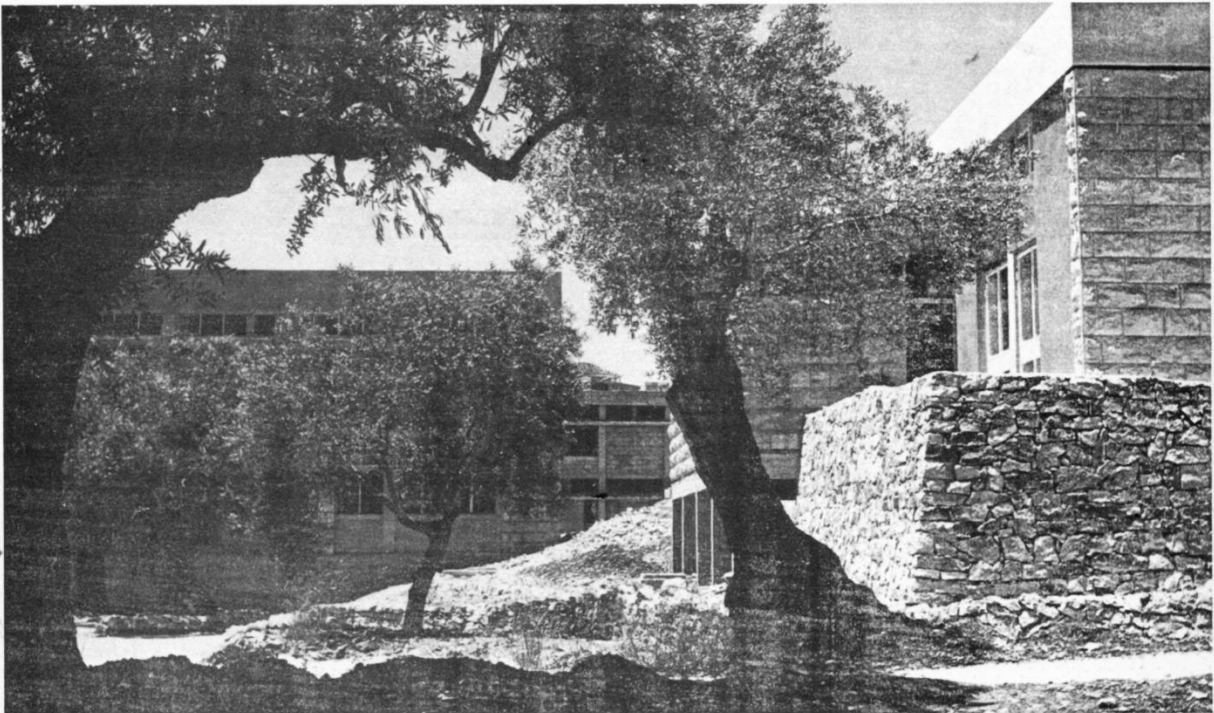
This "campus" has been built on one of the highest hilltops in Jordan (more than 2,400 feet above sea level), about 10 miles north of Jerusalem. On a clear day, the blue Mediterranean Sea is visible beyond the rolling hills of the Holy Land to the west, and to the east can be seen the Jordan Valley.

The centre itself is built just below the summit, in the lee of the hill, where it is protected from the chill winds that blow in from the sea during the winter. The large and modern buildings rise far above the olive trees, but the light Jordanian stone of which they are built blends them into the terraced hillside.

The site chosen for the centre was apparently regarded as a choice location many centuries ago, too. A large Roman cistern, carved out of solid rock, was found by workmen as they cleared the ground. It will be cleaned, and may be used for water storage for the centre.

When in full operation, the residential centre will accommodate 300 girls in the teacher training section, and 333 vocational trainees. Although much of the curricula will be different, there will be no separation on the basis of courses. The student teachers and the girls following vocational courses will live, play and sleep side by side, for it is thought that all the girls will benefit from the broader outlook gained from mingling with as

Below: Olives frame the vocational training block (left). At right is the infant care unit.



many interests as possible.

When the centre is opened later this year, 294 girls will enter -- 150 teacher trainees and 144 vocational trainees. Of the 150 student teachers, 100 will be starting their three-year course, and 50 will start their second year, having been transferred from the old UNRWA girls' teacher-training centre, also at Ramallah, which will be absorbed by the new centre.

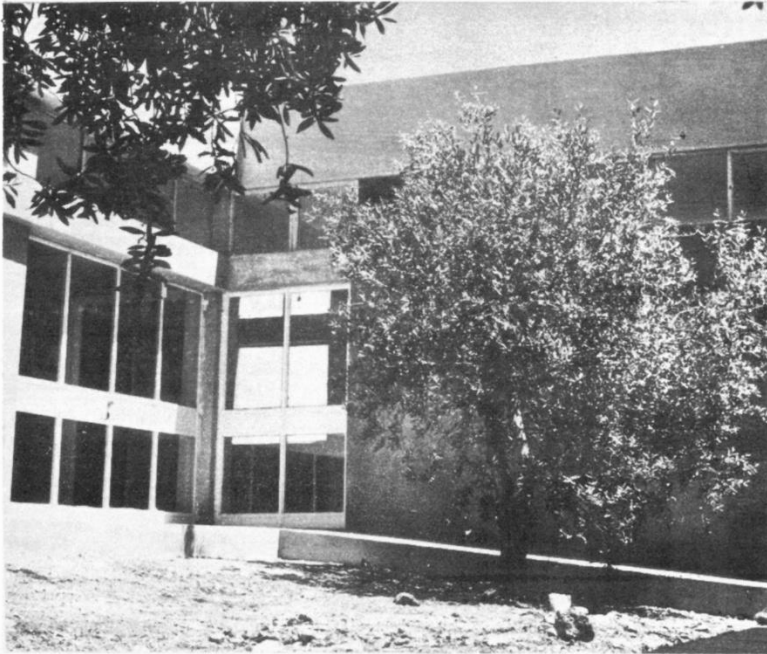
The teacher trainees will study six main subjects during their three years at the centre: Arabic, English, mathematics and science, educational psychology, infant teaching and social studies. In addition, they will all take arts, music, home economics and physical training.

As an alternative to teacher training, girls can follow any one of 11 regular courses: clerk/typist, secretary (one additional year after the two-year clerk/typist course), home management, institutional management (one additional year), infants' and children's clothing, lingerie making, hairdressing, infant leadership, preparatory nursing (all two years), dress-making or fine needlework (three years).

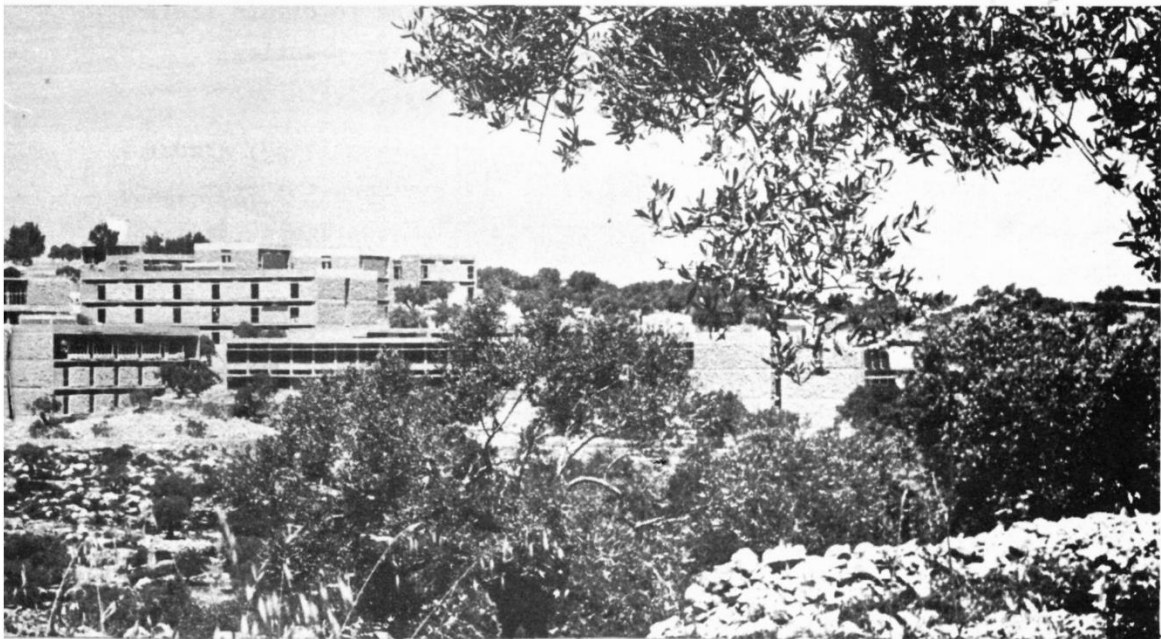
The girls graduating from the preparatory nursing course will have

This panoramic view shows the hill-top position of the centre. At the left, with the vaulted roof, is the common room-library-refectory block. The three small buildings at the top are staff residences. In front of them are the two dormitory blocks.

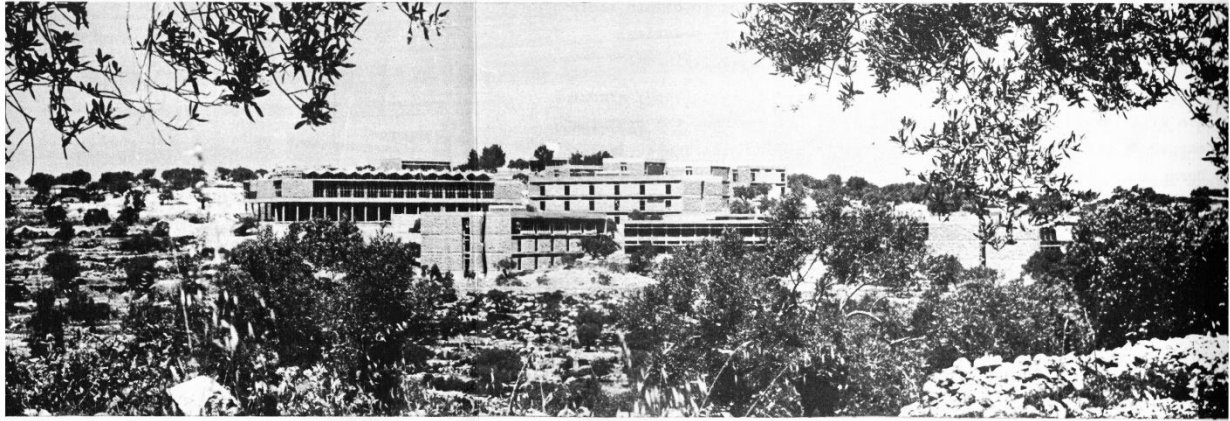




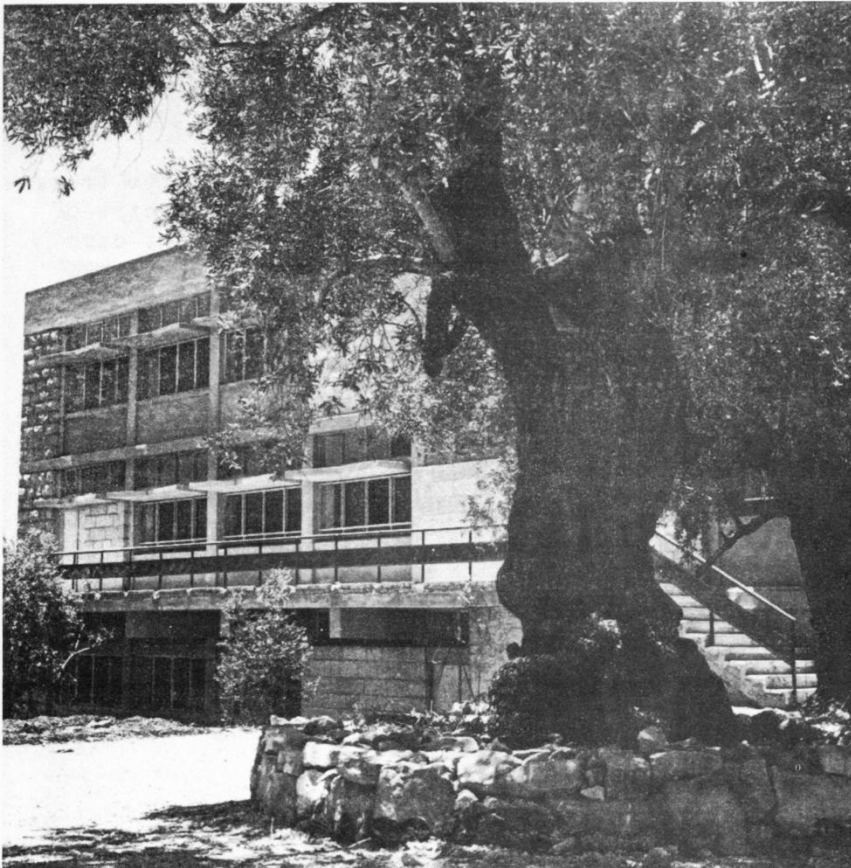
These olive trees in the centre of the infant care unit were saved by planning the building around them. Here, the girls will learn child care, obtaining experience by working with babies brought in by local mothers. The mothers will also be taught the elements of infant care.



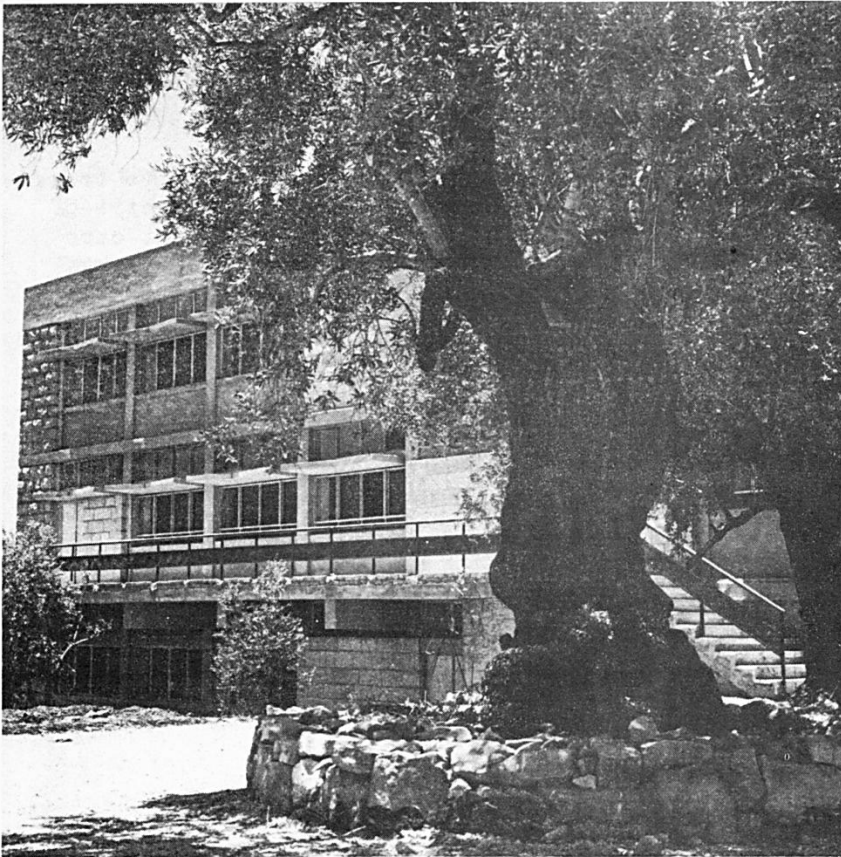




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In the vocational training block, girls will prepare food on a variety of equipment — and eat it. Those in the hairdressing course will practise on their colleagues. Items made in the fine needlework course may be offered for sale, although the purpose of the course is instruction, not production.



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to continue their training at a recognized school of nursing to obtain their full diploma. However, they will find ample opportunities as practical nurses, doctors' nurses or midwives without continuing their training.

The girls will be taught by local teachers and instructors, almost all of whom will themselves be Palestine refugees. Supervizing the training and the curricula will be specialists, who come from the Netherlands, England, Norway, Burma and Germany.

The centre was built with World Refugee Year donations. Of the total cost of more than \$764,400, \$440,000 came from the United States Government, \$310,000 from the United Kingdom World Refugee Year Committee, and \$14,000 from miscellaneous sources.

Utility has been the main aim during each stage of the planning and construction of the centre, in an effort to do as much as possible with

limited financial resources. To many of the girls coming from drab refugee camps, the centre's living conditions may seem wonderful by comparison. But in some respects, their life will be fairly spartan. The high elevation of the centre will bring chill winters, through which the girls will live with no heating in their dormitories or classrooms.

They will sleep in two dormitory blocks, each accommodating 300 girls. The blocks are divided into 16-bed rooms, where the girls will sleep in two-tier bunks.

For the thousands of refugee girls growing into adolescence, and the thousands more growing into womanhood, UNRWA's vocational and teacher training centre is a new beacon of hope. It represents a chance to raise themselves and their families both culturally and economically; a chance to give their children a life more fruitful than that of a refugee.

Only comparatively few can attend the centre. But for young refugee girls in their early teens, there is always the hope that they may be one of the lucky few.

And hope is what is so often missing from the life of a refugee.

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#### WHY VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR GIRLS?

UNRWA's combined vocational and teacher training centre for girls is part of a larger vocational training programme launched in 1960. Under this programme there will be nine vocational and teacher training centres in operation by 1963 in Jordan, Lebanon, the Gaza Strip and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Of the nine -- which will eventually produce more than 2,000 graduates a year -- eight are for boys.

Why the new step of introducing vocational training for girls?

There are two main reasons. The first is that girls need training to make use of their innate abilities just as much as boys do. The very fact that they are refugees is a handicap to them. As refugees without any training, they would have little hope of building a career. But with training, and with the acute shortage of trained women in the Middle East, there is every chance that their new-found skills will be put to good use.

The second reason is the long-term constructive effect that trained and educated girls will have on their communities. Educated girls will soon become enlightened wives and mothers. As in most parts of the world, it is the mother who supervizes the bringing up of the children and creates the atmosphere of the home.

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#### A NEW ROLE FOR REFUGEE GIRLS

The new UNRWA girls' centre at Ramallah is a pioneer institution in the Middle East, since the very idea of vocational training for girls is just emerging in the area.

Fifteen or twenty years ago, such a centre would have been without purpose, for the concept of the woman's role in society was such as to have discouraged girls from attending such a centre.

A generation ago in the Middle East, as in many other parts of the world, tradition limited women and girls to one major role -- that of a wife and a mother. As such, she usually led a secluded life, seldom traveling outside her town or village, and rarely taking part in community events outside her immediate family circle. The very notion of a girl learning a trade for the purpose of earning her own way was frowned upon.

Gradually, a few parents began to allow their daughters to become teachers, which became to be considered a respectable profession. (UNRWA has been training girls to become teachers since 1956, and almost half the students at the new centre will be teacher trainees). But nursing, secretarial work and other professions were almost out of the question.



That tradition, though still very strong, is gradually changing throughout the Middle East. UNRWA is not actually initiating the change, but is moving in harmony with it. The Agency's new girls' centre has been built in response to a demand on the part of the girls of today, who want to play a more active role in the lives of their communities. As indicated by the list of vocational courses offered at the centre, the girls will have opportunities which were not so readily available to their mothers or grandmothers.

The principal of the Ramallah girls' training centre is Mrs. Inam Mufti, a Palestinian Arab woman who is enthusiastic about training and education for girls. In addition to her work for UNRWA, she runs a home for her husband and their two children.

"At last, most women's professions are regarded as being fairly respectable," comments Mrs. Mufti, "although some parents may still be hesitant about letting their daughters become nurses."



Mrs. Inam Mufti, the principal of the Ramallah centre, will be assisted by two vice-principals -- one for the teacher training section, and one for the vocational training side.

The hesitancy is natural. It is the result of centuries of tradition that still clings to the smaller communities and has only recently begun to release its hold on the larger towns and cities.

The hesitancy usually comes from the older generation, not from the girls themselves.

"One of our big tasks is to convince the parents that their daughters should receive vocational training," says Mrs. Mufti.

UNRWA's efforts to convince the parents, and their daughters, are made through three channels: radio, the printed word, and personal contact.

A series of 15 radio programmes, prepared by Mrs. Mufti in conjunction with Jordanian broadcasting officials, is under way, telling prospective candidates about the new centre, and outlining

the need for trained girls and the advantages of receiving vocational training.

Recognizing the importance of informing the parents as well as their daughters of the nature of the UNRWA courses, the Agency has prepared a series of leaflets, one for each vocational course, and a special brochure for the girls to take home to their parents.

Beginning a year ago, while the centre was still in the planning stage, a vocational training specialist began visiting girls' schools in the area to tell the refugee girls about the opportunities they would soon have.

Today, UNRWA's efforts to interest girls in vocational training give promise of being successful. If the present rate continues, there will be more than 700 applications for the 294 vacancies this year by the time the deadline for applications closes. At the time of writing, more than 600 have been received.

Mrs. Mufti says she is particularly encouraged by the number of girls who have listed vocational training courses as first choice on their applications.

"As might be expected, a majority of girls made teacher training their first choice. But a surprising number opted for a vocational course," she adds.

The number of applications is further evidence of the trend towards a more active life for women in the Middle East -- a trend which UNRWA is following.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a special, temporary, non-political body established by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1949. In co-operation with the host governments (Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, and the United Arab Republic) it carries out its two-fold task: immediate: to provide food, health services, education, training and shelter for the refugees; long-term: to assist the refugees to become self-supporting.

UNRWA began work in May 1950 and its present mandate expires on 30 June 1963.

Further information may be obtained from:

UNRWA Liaison Office  
Palais des Nations  
Geneva  
Switzerland

UNRWA Public Information Office  
Museitbeh Quarter,  
Beirut  
Lebanon

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(For information purposes - Not an official record)

