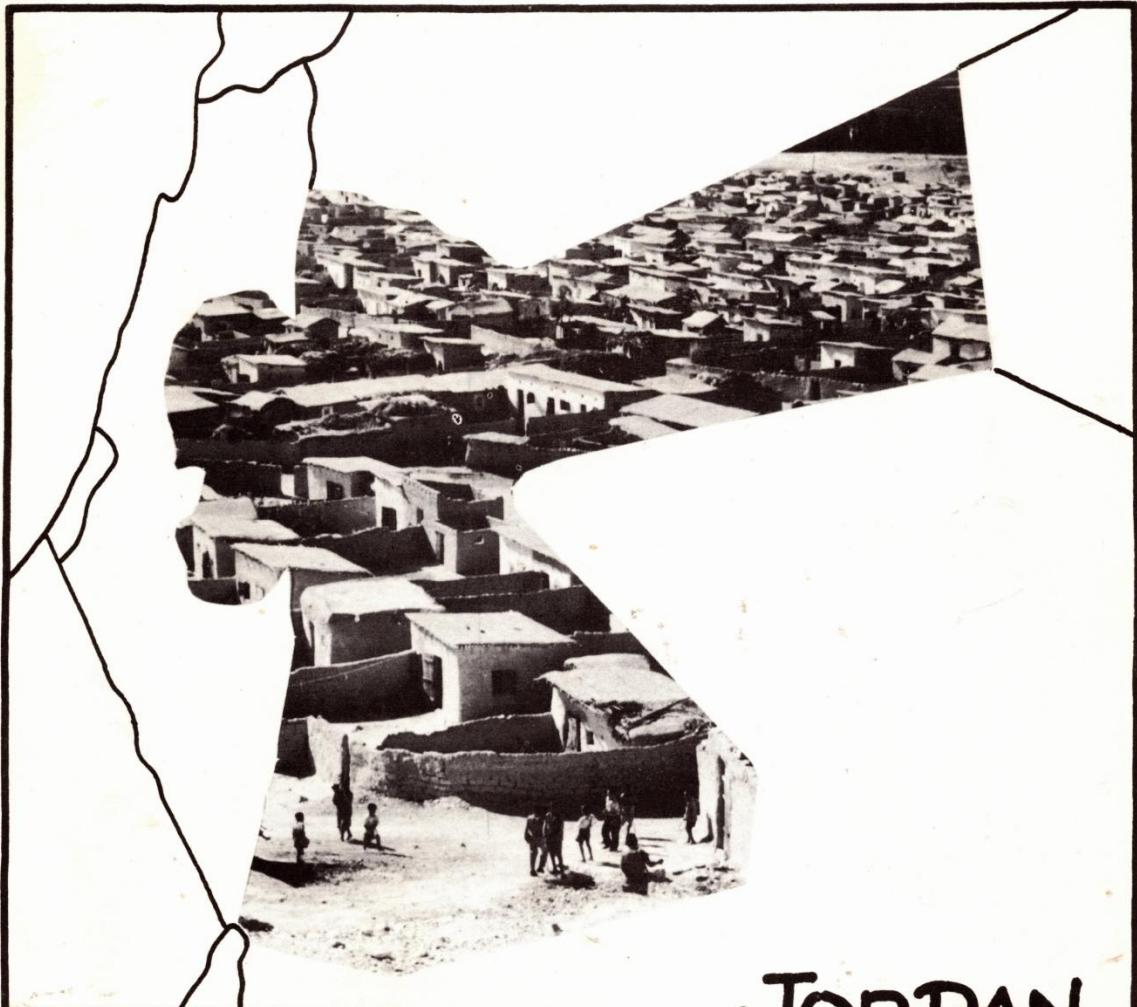




# PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

An **UNRWA** Newsletter

No. 25 APRIL-MAY 1963



**JORDAN**

## INTRODUCTION

Many of the problems faced by the Palestine refugees are the same in all four "host" countries (Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Gaza Strip): material problems of providing the necessities of life from their slim resources and the minimal aid given by UNRWA; psychological problems of maintaining their self-respect after living for a decade and a half on international charity, and above all, the problem faced by the 30,000 young refugees who reach adulthood each year - the problem of finding opportunities.

For these youngsters, the future is likely to be one of unavoidable idleness, unless, through the acquisition of education or specialized training, they can put their latent talents to good use. UNRWA's Vocational Training Programme is designed specifically to alleviate this problem for as many of these young refugees as possible, by giving them the skills that will enable them to put their innate abilities to productive use.

Comprehension of the importance of this Vocational Training Programme requires some understanding of the present economic conditions in the four host countries, of the historical events which helped to mould the present conditions, and of the difficulties confronting young refugees whose fathers are not working.

As a means of presenting such background material, the Agency is publishing special editions of the UNRWA NEWSLETTER devoted to each of the four host countries. The first, concentrating on the Gaza Strip, was published in September 1962 (copies are still available).

This, the second in the series, is devoted to JORDAN.

Opposite: Aqabat Jabr camp, at the foot of the Mount of Temptation near Jericho.

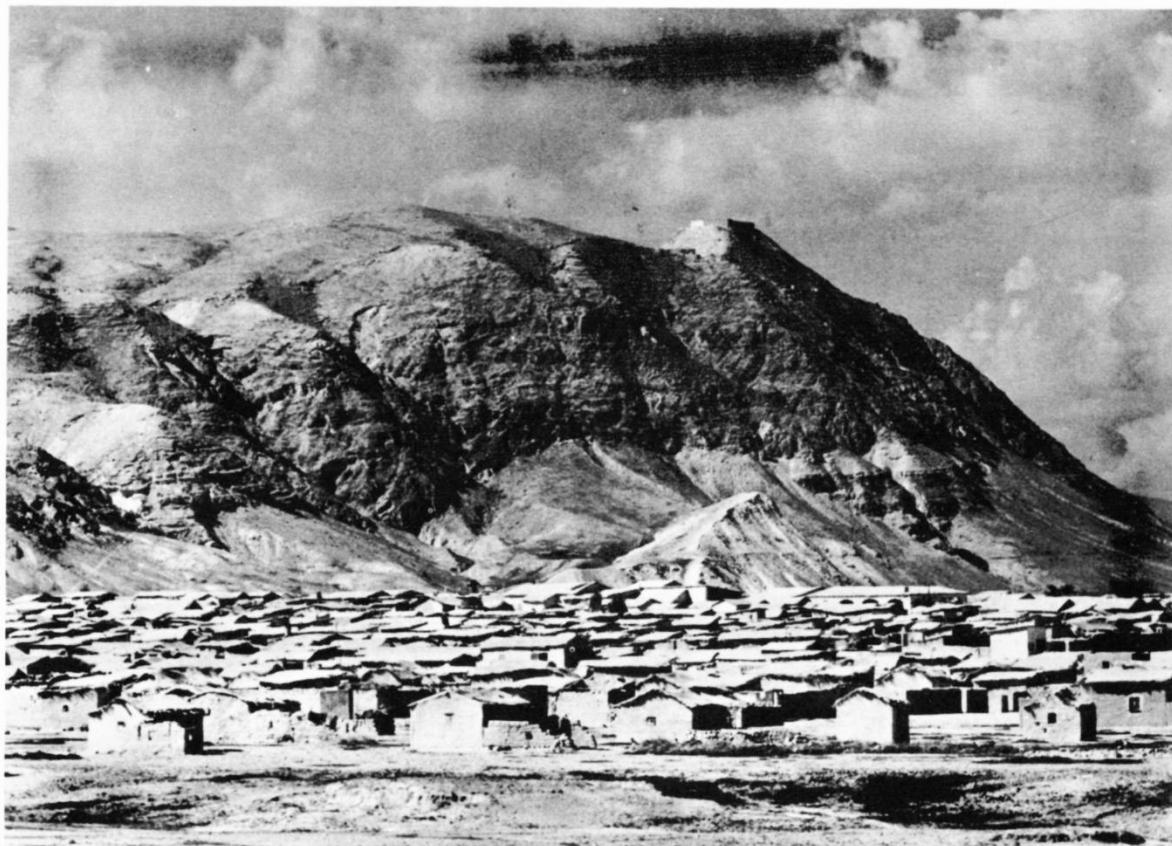
## JORDAN

The conflict in the Holy Land in 1948, and the succeeding events, brought about sudden and far-reaching changes in the Middle East, including the creation of the country of Jordan in its present form.

Today, almost fifteen years after the conflict, the effects are still to be seen and felt in Jordan, which shelters more than half of the one million Palestine refugees. At the beginning of 1963, there were almost 645,000 refugees registered with UNRWA in Jordan -- more than one third of the entire population.

### Jordan: the land.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was proclaimed in 1949. It incorporates what was formerly Transjordan (to the east of the River Jordan) and part of what was formerly Palestine (to the west of the river). Commonly known as the East Bank and the West Bank respectively, the combined territories comprise about 36,715 square miles.



The country is bounded on the north by the Syrian Arab Republic, on the north-east by Iraq, on the east and south by Saudi Arabia, and on the west by Israel. The land is cleft from top to bottom by a wide gorge, which forms the Jordan Valley in the north, through which the River Jordan winds from Lake Tiberias to the Dead Sea. South of the Dead Sea, the valley continues into the arid desert to the Gulf of Aqaba.

The Jordan Valley, 10 miles wide in parts, forms a fertile ribbon flanked by mountains. From the lowest land point on earth (1,300 feet below sea level at the Dead Sea), the mountains rise gently to the west, giving way to the rocky, rolling hills that form the West Bank. To the east of the valley, the hills flatten out into rocky steppe country which blends into the desert further east.

Most of the country enjoys a Mediterranean climate, except for the Jordan Valley, where it is intensely hot during the daytime in summer, and mild in winter, and for the desert areas to the south, which are extremely hot in summer. Rainfall varies from a fair amount in the upper part of the country to nil in the desert areas.

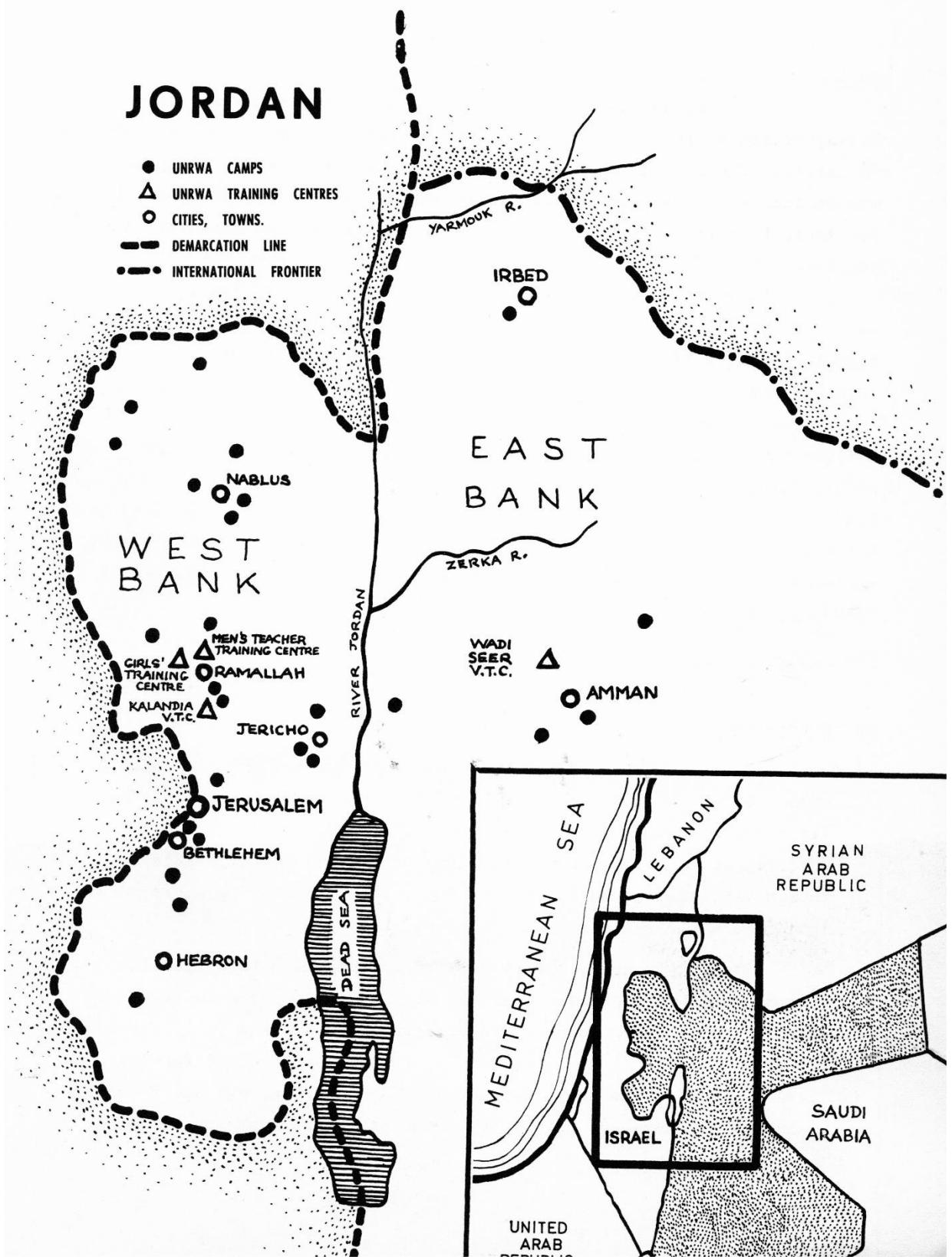
Before 1948 . . .

. . . Transjordan, as it was then called, was a country of some 400,000 inhabitants, most of whom were of Arab bedouin ancestry. Its capital, Amman, was a small town of 30,000 people. It was almost entirely an agricultural society, for the amount of cultivable land, though limited, was sufficient to support the relatively small population.

What is now the West Bank of Jordan was before 1949 the central region of Palestine, with a population of about 400,000. By itself, the area was never self-supporting, for it was fully integrated with the rest of Palestine, and many of its people relied for their livelihood on the Mediterranean ports, the railways, and the fertile plains to the west, on which they produced the bulk of their food.

# JORDAN

- UNRWA CAMPS
- △ UNRWA TRAINING CENTRES
- CITIES, TOWNS.
- DEMARCTION LINE
- INTERNATIONAL FRONTIER



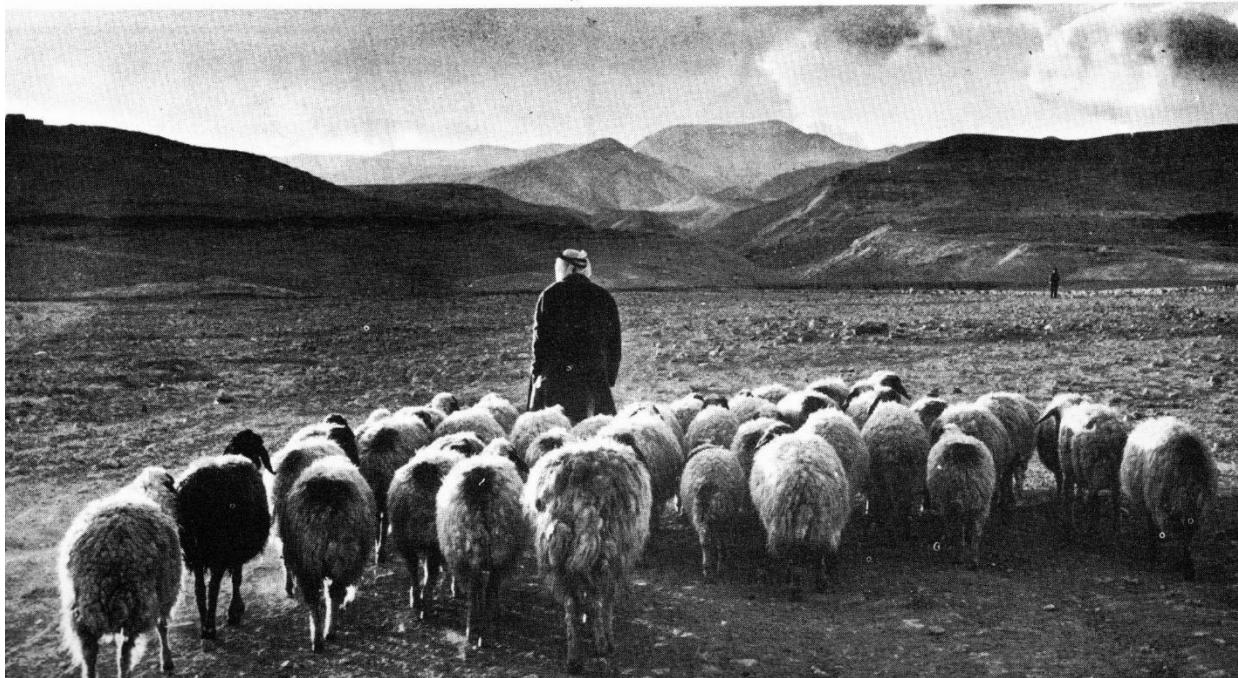
During 1948 . . .

. . . in the period of open conflict, there was a mass exodus of Palestine Arabs from the troubled areas, seeking refuge in the neighbouring territory. The majority of the Palestinians fled eastward. Of these, some crossed the river into Transjordan, but most of them remained in the central region of Palestine, which was then, as it is now, in the hands of the Arab peoples.

In 1949, after the open hostilities had ceased, the 2,165 square-mile area of central Palestine in Arab hands was united with Transjordan, together forming the State of Jordan. The population of the new country was an estimated 1,300,000 in 1949 -- more than three times the population of old Transjordan. For with the addition of the West Bank came also some 850,000 people: the 400,000 residents of the area, and the refugees who had found shelter there. While accurate statistics on the exact number of refugees who fled to what is now Jordan have never been available, the Agency estimates the figure to have been about 550,000 -- some 20 per cent of whom soon obtained employment within the new state or elsewhere and never became dependent on UNRWA assistance.

The economic situation . . .

. . . of both the refugees and the country combined to create a grave problem.



The majority of the refugees fled from their homes bringing with them only the few clothes and valuables that they could carry. Most of these were farmers and labourers, who found themselves among the barren hills of the West Bank and in the Jordan Valley where there was little chance for employment.

Particularly serious was the fact that the West Bank region of Palestine was cut off from the fertile coastal plains, which had provided much of the food for the area and employment for a high percentage of its residents. Before 1948, the region was strongly oriented in a westerly or coastal direction, both economically and geographically, as a result of its vital links with the hinterland of Palestine and with the Mediterranean ports. Consequently, the new country of Jordan was seriously crippled by the severing of those links and by the heavy influx of needy refugees. Neither the agricultural nor the industrial resources of the state were adequate to meet the need.

Further complicating the economic plight of the country was the drastic way in which the armistice demarcation line severed villages from their farm lands -- thus depriving their inhabitants of a livelihood. Some 180,000 villagers were thus reduced to a state of poverty or near poverty.

Jordan today . . .

. . . still faces, to a critical extent, the same basic problem that it faced when the country first came into being: too many people for its limited resources. This is so, despite the fact that the leaders of the country are making a concerted attempt to develop the country on the basis of a carefully prepared five-year development plan -- a plan designed to put to constructive use the resources that are available.

Presently, the amount of cultivable land remains seriously inadequate. A multi-phase irrigation project is under construction in the Jordan Valley, most of which is potentially fertile if it can be irrigated. The first phase of the project, which will eventually open

Opposite: Much of the Jordan Valley is fertile, but the southern section is salty and arid, affording little opportunity for development.

up 123,000 acres for cultivation, is already in operation along a 15-mile strip of the valley. But even when these irrigation schemes are in full operation and are augmented by the use of known sources of sub-surface water, there will still be a limit to possible expansion of the rural sector of the economy, both in terms of production and employment.

While the industry of Jordan has increased significantly during recent years, it started from a small base and still offers only limited opportunities for employment. The phosphate and potash resources have a potential for further development, but at best this cannot supply work for more than a few thousand. Meanwhile, more and more people flock to the towns and cities in search of something productive to do, even though opportunities for full and worthwhile employment are inadequate -- particularly for the masses who lack suitable skill or training.

The situation is further complicated in Jordan -- as in all host countries -- by the fact that Paragraph 11 of the United Nations General Assembly's Resolution 194 (III), calling for repatriation or compensation for the refugees, has not been implemented.

The result is that the refugees still need outside assistance to meet even their basic needs. Such assistance is given by UNRWA, through its programmes of relief.

Moreover, many young refugees have been handicapped by not being able to learn the skills of their fathers, who have not been working. Even more serious is the fact that many have not learned good working habits and the self-discipline which is essential to employment, because they have never been employed. UNRWA is seeking to overcome this handicap by elementary and secondary education, vocational training and university scholarships.

UNRWA in Jordan

During the months immediately following the influx of refugees into the area that is now Jordan, aid was given on an emergency basis by the International Red Cross and other voluntary groups, with United Nations coordination during much of 1949 and early 1950. When it became apparent that the problem would be of longer duration, UNRWA was created by action of the United Nations General Assembly in late 1949, and assumed the task of providing assistance to the refugees in May 1950.

UNRWA's aid to the refugees, although comprehensive, has never been anything more than minimal, providing only the bare essentials for a life which is in many cases little higher than subsistence level. The total cost of the Agency's relief services (food rations, shelter, health and welfare services), amount to about 7 U.S. cents per refugee per day, and education and vocational training programmes (including elementary and secondary education, vocational and teacher training and university scholarships) raise the per capita figure to about 10 cents per day.

UNRWA's operations in Jordan are carried on with the cooperation of the Government of Jordan, which has always shown great concern over the plight of the refugees, and has done much to help them, providing land for camps and training centres, and many services in the fields of health and education.

UNRWA has a staff of 40 international employees in Jordan, and about 4,500 locally-recruited staff, almost all of whom are Palestinians. More than 50 per cent of all the staff in Jordan are employed in the education and training programmes. The Agency's operations in Jordan are directed from headquarters in Beirut and administered through the UNRWA Field Office in Amman, the capital, which has a Sub-Field Office in Jerusalem and six area offices within the country. Dennis Holland (UK) is presently the Director of UNRWA Affairs in Jordan.

The Refugees

Jordan is the only one of the four host countries which has granted national citizenship to the refugees within its borders. (Those in the Gaza Strip are on the soil of Palestine but have no national citizenship since the Strip is not a country). The refugees enjoy the same privileges and obligations as non-refugee Jordanians: they can work without a special permit, providing that they can find employment; they can vote; they have the right to acquire property, and they are required to pay taxes, to the extent that they have assets or income.

The refugee population of Jordan forms 36 per cent of the total population of the country; there are (at 1 January 1963) 644,940

mostly children. Additional monthly dry rations are given to some 16,000 refugees, including TB out-patients, and women from the fifth month of pregnancy to one year after delivery.

Education

The Agency operates 173 elementary and preparatory schools in Jordan, staffed by 1,614 teachers. Every refugee child is offered six years of elementary education, and if they can qualify, they are eligible to receive an additional three years of preparatory schooling. Education, including secondary education for a limited number of young refugees, is also available at Government and private schools, through grants from UNRWA which total about \$500,000 a year. During the present (1962-63) academic year, there are 46,893 children (25,701 boys and 21,192 girls) attending UNRWA elementary schools; 8,778 (6,454 boys and 2,324 girls) at Agency preparatory schools, and about 34,000 refugee students in Government or private schools, bringing the total number of refugee pupils taught or otherwise aided by UNRWA to more than 89,000.

During the current academic year, UNRWA has made available 212 university scholarships for the most brilliant of the students from Jordan.



An increasing number of students in UNRWA schools are girls.

Vocational Training

The refugees in Jordan, as in the other host countries, seek the opportunity to become self-supporting. But with so many unemployed, the opportunities come to the few who have acquired specialized skills. UNRWA's vocational training programme attempts to provide as many young refugees as possible with such skills.

The Agency operates four training centres in Jordan: two vocational training centres for young men, a men's teacher training centre, and a combined teacher training and vocational training centre for girls.

Kalandia Vocational Training Centre, which now has an enrolment of 392 young men, was the first training centre to be established by the Agency, and was opened in 1953 for less than 50 students. Built just north of Jerusalem on land donated by the Government of Jordan, the centre offers 15 courses, most of which are of two years' duration.

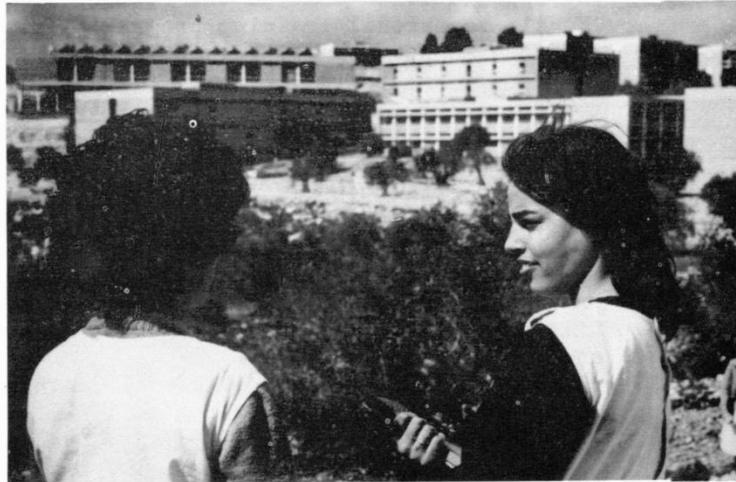
The Wadi Seer Vocational Training Centre was opened in 1960, and additions were inaugurated in 1961. Sixteen courses are now taught at the centre, which has a capacity of 404 trainees. Trainees at both vocational training centres learn trades such as carpentry, auto mechanics, radio and TV mechanics, welding, plumbing, electrical wiring and business and office practice.

The radio-TV workshop at UNRWA's Wadi Seer Centre.



The Ramallah Teacher Training Centre for Men was opened in 1958, and extensions, built with a donation from the Danish Refugee Council, are due to be inaugurated this year. The additions have raised the centre's capacity from 200 to 400 trainees, who follow a two-year curriculum.

Also in Ramallah is the Girls' Training Centre -- the first such training centre for Arab girls in the Middle East. The centre, which was built by UNRWA and dedicated by King Hussein in October 1962, combines teacher training and vocational training. When in full operation, there will be 300 teacher trainees, and 333 girls in the vocational training section, following courses such as dress-making, preparatory nursing, hair-dressing, infant leadership and secretarial skills.



#### Health

The general medical needs of the refugees in Jordan are cared for at the Agency's 26 clinics, which offer both preventive and curative medical care. In the field of preventive medicine, immunization programmes are carried out, and infants and pregnant women are examined regularly at the maternal and child health centres attached to the clinics. Sick refugees are treated at the clinics, and serious cases are referred to hospitals. UNRWA has 952 hospital beds available for refugee patients in Jordan, 136 in its own two small hospitals (a TB hospital at Nablus and a 36-bed hospital at Qalqilya camp) and the remainder in hospitals run either by the Government or by voluntary agencies, and subsidized by the Agency. In addition to the Agency's 26 clinics in camps and towns there are 5 mobile clinics, which provide health care to refugees living in the more remote villages.

A health education programme encourages the refugees to improve their living conditions and habits. The Agency's health staff also supervise and operate the basic sanitation services of the camps, such as garbage and refuse removal, and the provision of adequate water.

#### Welfare

The Agency's Welfare services fall into two main categories: assistance to those in extreme hardship, and aid to those who want to improve their positions through self-help and community development projects.

Individual cases of particular hardship are helped with small cash grants, with extra clothes or blankets, or by consultation with UNRWA case workers.

Through the encouragement and establishment of small cooperatives, youth activities centres and adult training courses, the Agency helps to fill the long hours of idleness which lie heavily upon so many refugees, and gives them the opportunity to help themselves and to improve their communities.

There are 23 refugee cooperatives in Jordan, including bakery, handicraft, poultry and mat-making cooperatives, 10 school savings cooperatives and four cooperative school canteens. The largest, and one of the most successful cooperatives in any of the four host countries, is the Karameh Agricultural Cooperative in the Jordan Valley. Fifty families now benefit from this 130-acre cooperative farm which was set up in 1958 with a grant from UNRWA, a loan from the Jordanian Government, and the contributions of the members.

Youth Activities Centres have been established in 18 camps in Jordan. Each has a small library, and provides programmes of recreational, sporting, social and cultural activities for young men. The YMCA International Alliance has cooperated with UNRWA in offering youth leadership training to several hundred selected young men, many of them from Jordan. Also, the Agency is helping to sponsor boy scout troops in cooperation with the organized scouting programme in the country.

The 16 UNRWA sewing centres in Jordan give six-month courses to refugee girls, enabling them to make clothes for their families, and even to earn a little money through odd jobs. Some 480 girls attend these centres each day.

The first UNRWA woodwork centre in Jordan was recently opened in Karameh camp, where 20 boys learn the basic skills of carpentry in a one-year course.

One of the most popular aspects of the Welfare Division's programme is the mobile cinema, which travels from camp to camp, showing instructional and health films in addition to general entertainment.

A limited number of refugees have found employment through the assistance of the Development Bank of Jordan. The Bank was established in 1951 by UNRWA and the Government of Jordan to provide low-interest loans for projects employing refugees. An estimated 13,000 refugees have found employment on projects aided by the Bank.

#### Summary

The sheer weight of numbers makes the refugee problem more serious in Jordan than in any of the other host countries. The need for aid, coupled with the economic difficulties which the hostilities of 1948 thrust upon the country, makes the assistance given by UNRWA essential in Jordan, both for the well-being of the refugees and for the stability of the area.

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: first: to provide food, health and welfare services, and shelter for the refugees; second: to provide education and training to refugee children and young adults including general education, vocational and teacher training, and university scholarships.

UNRWA began work in May 1950 and its mandate expires on 30 June 1965.

Further information may be obtained from :

UNRWA Liaison Office  
Palais Wilson,  
Geneva,  
Switzerland

UNRWA Public Information Office  
Museitbeh Quarter,  
Beirut,  
Lebanon

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(For information purposes - Not an official record)