



PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

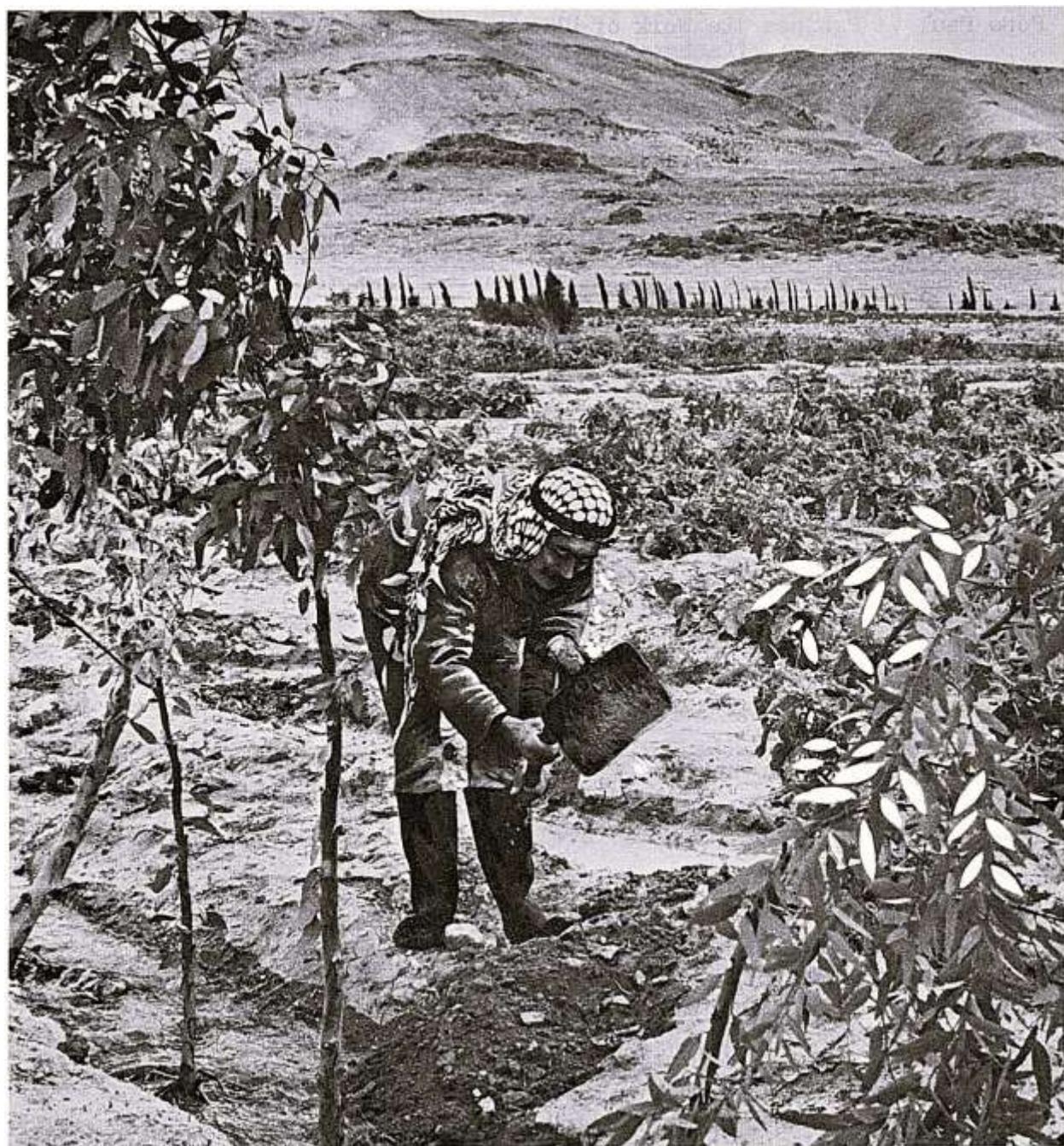
An UNRWA Newsletter

No. 31 February 1964



PROGRESS
IN THE
JORDAN
VALLEY

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The cover picture shows Mahmoud Musa (article on page 3) as he clears the irrigation ditches on the farm that is now partly his.

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PROGRESS IN THE JORDAN VALLEY

Along the southern reaches of the Jordan Valley, unchanged almost since the time of Christ, changes are taking place.

Between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, the River Jordan snakes through a wide valley. The southern part of the valley, with the exception of the lush oasis around Jericho, had always been arid and unproductive. But recently parts of the bleached, salty floor of the valley have begun to change as patches of green appear and gradually spread.

Nearly all of this new cultivation -- taking place in an area that is currently in the news as a result of the dispute over the waters of the Jordan -- is the work of Palestine refugees. Much of it has been made possible by the Development Bank of Jordan, established jointly by UNRWA and the Government of Jordan.

The 125-acre farm which Mahmoud Musa shares with a group of his fellow refugees is a good example.

Mahmoud lives with his wife and two children in a one-room hut in UNRWA's Karameh refugee camp, which gives shelter to 20,000 refugees. He was one of a number of refugees from the camp who had worked on the nearby farm for some years on a share-cropping basis. However, most of them were still dependent on UNRWA assistance, for their income was not enough to support their families.

Now, however, Mahmoud and his fellow refugee farmers are well on the road to becoming self-supporting, for in December 1963 they bought the farm on which they had previously been employed. Last year they formed a cooperative and applied to the Jordan Development Bank for a loan to buy the land and installations and other equipment. After thorough investigation by the Bank, the 17-member cooperative was granted a loan of \$61,000 which enabled them to buy the farm under very advantageous terms. In 11 years, providing that they pay their annual installments to the Bank, the land will be theirs. The farm is well irrigated from a plentiful well, and the refugee farmers expect a good crop of tomatoes and other vegetables in a few weeks. The sub-tropical climate of the Jordan valley, the lowest place on earth, gives farms



in the valley the only winter crop in the area, assuring their produce of a ready market. In addition to the continued cultivation of the presently developed land, the co-operative plans to bring under cultivation a further 15 acres.

This one loan from the Jordan Development Bank has benefited 78 refugees, the members of the cooperative and their families and illustrates the way in which the Bank accomplishes its two-fold purpose: to further the development of Jordan and to give financial assistance to projects that will give employment to refugees.

The Bank, established in 1951, carries out its double task by making low-cost loans available either for projects that guarantee to employ refugees or for projects submitted by groups of refugees. The majority of the projects assisted by the Bank are agricultural, although some loans have been made to industrial enterprises. It is es-

LEFT: A refugee farmer, well on the road to becoming self-supporting, proudly displays part of the winter crop on the cooperative farm in which he has a share.



timated that since its inception the Bank has enabled some 3,550 refugees to find employment. With an average of five persons per family, about 17,500 refugees have thus been assisted, and the Bank has more acceptable projects on its waiting list than its limited funds can deal with. The Bank has, moreover, played a valuable part in Jordan's general development. Although its funds are not large, it has, in addition to its assistance to agricultural development, helped the establishment of industrial projects, including six factories, and aided the expansion of the tourist industry. One of Jerusalem's major hotels was partly financed through a Development Bank loan.

The activities of the Bank in the field of agricultural development and in the creation of employment for refugees are, however, limited by the shortage of natural resources in Jordan, particularly of adequate water supplies and of cultivable land available to the refugees. Because of these limitations, only a small proportion of the refugees in Jordan stand to benefit from this type of assistance.

Most of the projects financed recently by the Bank fall under its programme of special refugee loans, under which the borrower pays only 3 per cent interest per annum, compared with the Bank's normal interest rate of 6 per cent. The period of repayment is longer also in the case of these special refugee loans. Twenty-three projects are currently being assisted with special loans of this kind, and many were made possible by a donation of \$343,000 from the United Kingdom World Refugee Year Committee to UNRWA. This donation is thus being used as a revolving fund to assist the refugees in becoming self-supporting.

Some 85 per cent of the Bank's capital is provided by UNRWA and the remainder by the Government of Jordan with three Middle East banks providing token participation. Currently the Bank has 567 sanctioned loans totalling \$2,296,000. As the loans are repaid, the funds are made available to other projects under a revolving loans programme. The special refugee loans scheme, for which the U. K. World Refugee Year Committee donation was used, has already given assistance to projects that will benefit a total of more than 900 refugees. Most of these projects are in the Jordan valley, although there are other projects scattered throughout the country.

Some of the earlier projects assisted by the Bank now boast fine orchards of citrus or banana trees where there was formerly only arid land. On some of the newer projects refugees will soon harvest the first crops from land that has stood uncultivated for centuries.

The success of the Jordan Development Bank and the value of the U. K. World Refugee Year Committee's donation to it through UNRWA can be seen both in the spreading patches of green in the Jordan valley and in the proud faces of men like Mahmoud Musa.

Before the 1948 conflict that made him a refugee, Mahmoud had lived in the Ramleh district of Palestine, in the plains west of Jerusalem, where his father was a farmer. He had been raised in a farming community where the honest work of tilling the soil and tending the crops enabled a man to provide adequate support for his family. When Mahmoud and his fellow farmers are fully able to support themselves through the sale of their crops, they will be removed from UNRWA's relief rolls in accordance with the Agency's established practice.

Mahmoud will know, for the first time in 15 years, the pride of being able to support himself and his family through the toil of his own hands and not through the charity of others.

* * *

POPE PAUL VI PRAISES WORK OF UNRWA

Following his recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land, His Holiness Pope Paul VI expressed his "high regard" for the work of UNRWA and made a donation of \$5,000 to the Agency.

The Pope's donation was accompanied by a letter from Monsignor Lino Zanini, Apostolic Delegate in Jerusalem. Monsignor Zanini's letter said that the contribution "represents an expression of the high regard of His Holiness Pope Paul VI for the wonderful work of charity which your Agency performs in serving the Palestinian refugees." Monsignor Zanini added that His Holiness was particularly pleased to hear of the close cooperation that has existed for

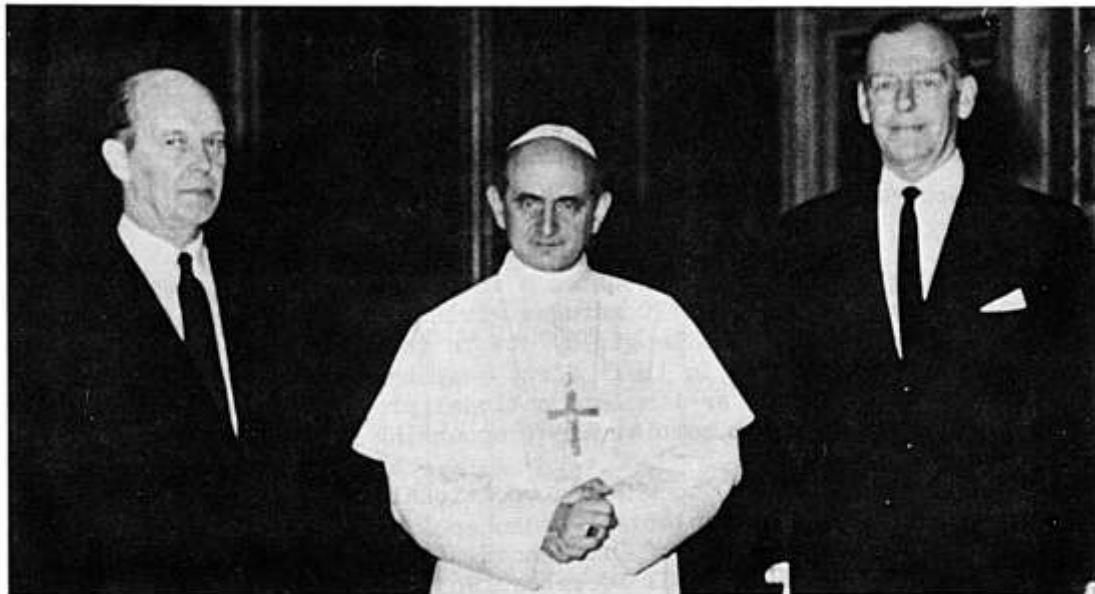
so many years between the Pontifical Mission and the "dedicated staff of UNRWA" and that the Holy Father would continue to remember in his prayers the entire staff of UNRWA and the refugees whom they serve.

The Pope's donation and Monsignor Zanini's letter were presented to the Acting Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Mr. John Reddaway, by Monsignor Joseph T. Ryan, the President of the Pontifical Mission for Palestine. The contribution will be used by UNRWA in its programmes of education and training for young refugees.

Commissioner-General's Audience with The Pope

Shortly after his return to Rome, His Holiness received in private audience Mr. Laurence Michelmore, who was en route to Beirut to take up his duties as Commissioner-General of UNRWA.

Mr. Michelmore was accompanied by Mr. Raymond Courvoisier, UNRWA's Director of Liaison for Europe. The Commissioner-General thanked the Holy Father for his donation and gave an account of UNRWA's programmes of assistance to the refugees.



ABOVE: Mr. Michelmore (left) and Mr. Courvoisier
with His Holiness Pope Paul VI

IN BRIEF

Mr. Michelmore Arrives in Beirut

Mr. Laurence Michelmore, who assumed the duties of Commissioner-General of UNRWA on 1 January 1964, arrived in Beirut on 20 January. En route from New York where he had previously served as Deputy Director of Personnel in the United Nations Secretariat, Mr. Michelmore visited London, Paris, Geneva and Rome and, besides his audience with Pope Paul VI, had talks with Government officials, the heads of United Nations specialized agencies and of the European Office of the United Nations and the representatives of voluntary agencies concerned with the problem of the Palestine refugees.

Visitors

Mr. Wilhelm Böe, the Secretary-General of the Norwegian Refugee Council, visited UNRWA's Siblin Technical and Teacher Training Institute in Lebanon and UNRWA installations in Jordan while passing through the Middle East. Mr. Böe was previously in the area in 1962, when he attended the inauguration ceremony for the extension of UNRWA's Gaza Vocational Training Centre, which was financed by a donation from the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Mr. Joseph Mitty, General Manager of Oxfam (Oxford Committee for Famine Relief) Gift Shops in the United Kingdom, and Mrs. Mitty spent 10 days in Lebanon and Jordan acquainting themselves with refugee conditions and investigating the possibility of selling refugee handicrafts in the Oxfam Gift Shops.

Mr. Thomas Singleton, Director of Training of the Centre for Educational Television Overseas in the United Kingdom, spent three weeks studying UNRWA's education programmes in the four "host" countries.

Donations

Zonta International has donated a further \$10,000 to provide vocational training scholarships for 20 refugee girls at UNRWA's girls' training centre at Ramallah in Jordan. The girls, now in the second year of their training, were also sponsored in their first year by Zonta. Since it decided to support the girls' centre as its international project, Zonta International has contributed a total of 72 scholarships, amounting to a value of \$36,000.

A donation of \$3,500 to UNRWA's vocational training scholarship programme has been made by four Protestant churches in the United States "in recognition of the devoted service" of Dr. John H. Davis, who resigned as Commissioner-General of UNRWA on 31 December 1963. The donation, made through the Near East Christian Council Committee for Refugee Work, comprised contributions from the United Presbyterian Church, the Disciples of Christ, the United Church of Christ and the Protestant Episcopal Church.

A further donation of \$3,000 has been received from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). Six young refugees in their final year of the electricians course at UNRWA's Damascus Vocational Training Centre in the Syrian Arab Republic have received scholarships from the donation. They were sponsored during their first year with a similar contribution from the ICFTU.

The AMF Foundation (American Machine and Foundry Company) has donated \$2,500 to provide second-year scholarships for five of the sixteen young refugees sponsored by the Foundation last year. The trainees are in the plumbers course at UNRWA's Wadi Seer Vocational Training Centre in Jordan.

The Government of Saudi Arabia has made a donation of \$2,000 in response to an appeal from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), of which Saudi Arabia is a member. The contribution has provided four training scholarships for trainees in the plumbers course at Wadi Seer Vocational Training Centre.

The Ottinger Foundation in the United States has sponsored a trainee in the architectural draughting course at UNRWA's Kalandia Vocational Training Centre for the two years of his course with its donation of \$1,000.

The firm of Lollo Oy in Helsinki, Finland, has pledged a two-year training scholarship for a refugee girl in the dress-making course at the Ramallah girls' centre.

* * *

FORMER COMMISSIONER-GENERAL HONOURED

Dr. John H. Davis, who served as Commissioner-General of UNRWA for almost five years until his resignation at the end of 1963, has recently received decorations from four countries in recognition of his service to the refugees.

In a ceremony at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in New York, Dr. Davis was invested as Commander of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem. This honour was sanctioned by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who is Sovereign Head of the Grand Priory in the British Realm of the Order of St. John.

Before leaving the Middle East, Dr. Davis was also decorated by Lebanon with the Order of the Cedar (Grand Officer), by Jordan with the highest rank of the Order of the Star and by the Syrian Arab Republic with the Order of Merit.

During his term of office, he had also received the Plaque of the Norwegian Refugee Council and a citation for meritorious and distinguished service from the United States Committee for Refugees.

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INCREASED ENROLMENT IN UNRWA SCHOOLS

School enrolment statistics for the 1963-64 academic year show that the number of refugee children attending UNRWA-UNESCO schools has increased by 8 per cent over the 1962-63 enrolment.

In December 1963 there were 157,331 children in the Agency's 403 schools, compared with 145,458 in May 1963.

The breakdown of the current school attendance figures is as follows:

COUNTRY	ELEMENTARY			PREPARATORY			Agency Total
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
Gaza	20,534	18,747	39,281	7,461	6,320	13,781	53,062
Jordan	27,534	23,723	51,257	6,460	2,590	9,050	60,307
Lebanon	10,387	8,115	18,502	2,471	1,102	3,573	22,075
Syria	9,615	7,156	16,771	3,571	1,545	5,116	21,887
Total 1963-64	68,061	57,741	125,811	19,963	11,557	31,520	157,331
Total 1962-63	64,537	52,493	117,030	18,501	9,927	28,428	145,458

* * *

SCOUTING IN THE CAMPS

Thirty-eight young refugees recently gave a dramatic demonstration of the value of Boy Scout training, just one week after they had become Scouts.

The young men, camping near Bethlehem in Jordan, were awakened one night by the member on watch. A nearby refugee hut was on fire. The Scouts scrambled from their tents and ran to the hut with fire-fighting equipment which they had been taught to use just two days earlier.

The fire, started by an exploding primus stove, had not had time to spread far. The boys led the mother and two young children from the burning hut and extinguished the blaze. They took the woman and children to the camp's first-aid tent, where they treated minor burns on their faces and arms.

BELOW: Refugee Scout Leader Farouk Maualla (right) teaches two members of the Amari Camp Scout troops some basic knots.



The prompt action of the Scouts prevented the family's meagre belongings from going up in flames and saved the family from possible death or serious injury.

The 38 young men were attending a Scout leadership training camp at the time of the incident, learning the principles and some of the basic practices of the Scouting movement, which is being received with increasing enthusiasm by young refugees.

Scouting was introduced to the refugees by UNRWA as a means of supplementing its youth activities programme, which attempts to provide constructive and educational activities for young men in the camps. Scouting gives the young refugees an opportunity to channel their energies into worthwhile programmes of training and community service.

There are presently 27 refugee Scout troops: 13 in Jordan, 7 in the Syrian Arab Republic, 5 in the Gaza Strip and 1 in Lebanon. The troops include Cub Scouts, Scouts and Rover Scouts. A Sea Scout troop in the Gaza Strip has almost finished building its own 16-foot canoe. There are also three troops of Girls Guides: one at UNRWA's girls' training centre in Ramallah, Jordan, in which the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts has taken a particular interest, and two in Syria.

Almost 600 young refugees have so far become Scouts or Guides. During 1964 the Agency plans to establish another dozen troops, raising the total membership to some 900 youngsters. All the troops are affiliated with the local Scouting organizations in the respective "host" countries.

The Scouting programme was established with the help of a one-time allocation of \$10,000 from UNRWA's budget to train volunteer leaders and to obtain uniforms and equipment. There is no lack of enthusiasm among the young refugees, although since this is their first introduction to Scouting, there is a lack of experienced leaders. The first leaders were trained in 1962 under the Youth Leadership Training Programme which is run jointly by UNRWA and the World Alliance of YMCA's. Later training programmes, like the one held near Bethlehem, were run by UNRWA with the assistance of members of its staff who had had previous Scouting experience. All Scout leaders have as minimum qualifications the tenderfoot and wood badges.

Farouk Maualla, age 20, was among the young men who extinguished the fire during the training course near Bethlehem. He is now the leader of the Scout troop in UNRWA's Amari Camp, 10 miles north of Jerusalem. The troop, established four months ago, has 21 members, and about a dozen others have applied for membership. They meet once a week in the camp's youth activities centre, where they learn the principles and the skills of Scouting, including first-aid, signals, cooking and camp routine. They go on regular hikes and have made a camping trip to the Dead Sea.

On the night of 9 December 1963, torrential rains struck the Jerusalem area. The Amari Scout Troop was mobilized and spent most of the night patrolling the camp, ensuring that drains were kept open and helping families in danger of being flooded.

"'General service' is our motto," said Farouk. "I think we helped many people that night."

As the refugee Scouts help their fellow refugees, so they in turn are being helped by the Scout movement -- helped to build more meaningful and useful lives amid the depressing atmosphere of the refugee camp.

* * *

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 cooperation 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.

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Further information may be obtained from

UNRWA Liaison Office
United Nations
New York

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In the United States, the United States Committee for Refugees is an organization cooperating with UNRWA.

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