



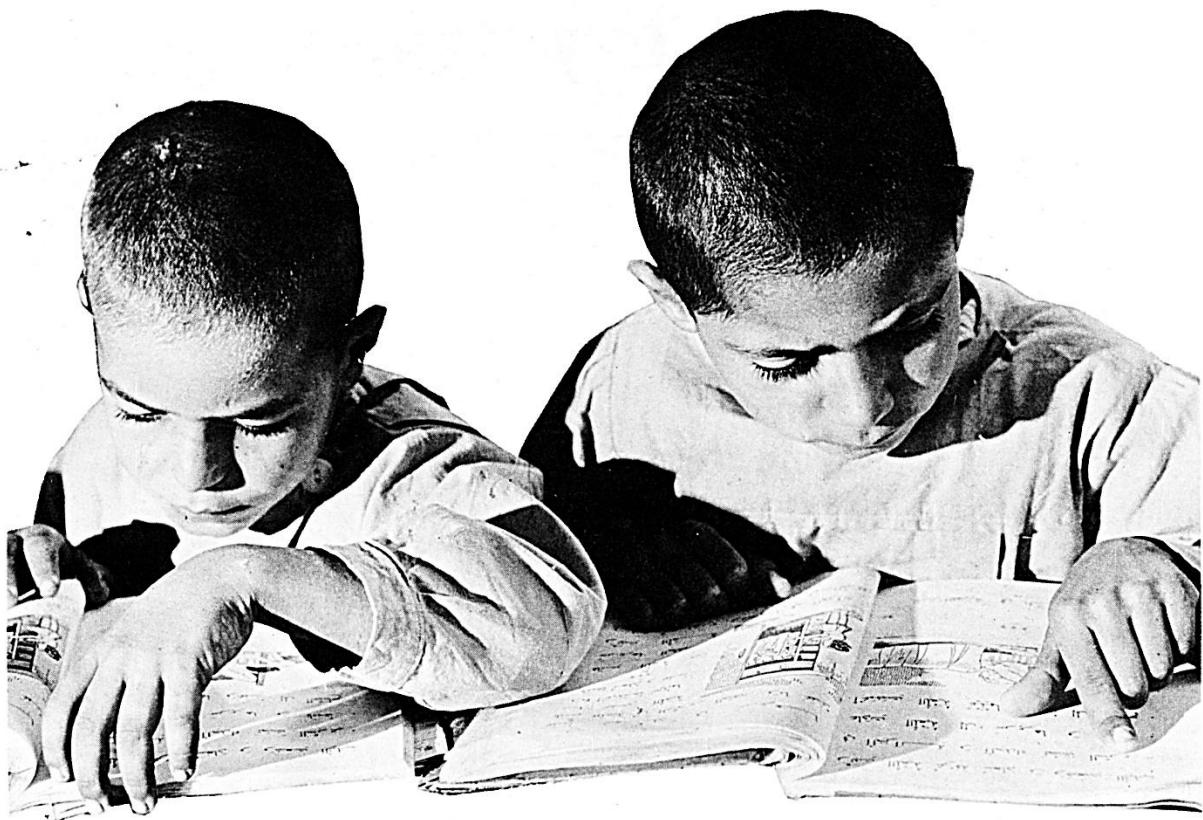
PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

An **UNRWA** Newsletter

No. 33 April--May 1964



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INTRODUCTION

This is the third in a series of UNRWA Newsletters devoted to each of the four countries in which the Agency operates: Lebanon, Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Gaza Strip. Previous editions have outlined the situation of the refugees and the work of UNRWA in the Gaza Strip (No. 19) and in Jordan (No. 25). Copies of these issues are still available.

This edition is devoted to LEBANON.

Refugees in all four "host" countries have the same basic problem of providing for themselves and their families. However, the situation of the refugees in each "host" country differs according to the effect of economic, social and political factors in each country. This edition of the UNRWA Newsletter outlines the situation of the refugees in Lebanon within the context of these factors in an attempt to promote a deeper understanding of UNRWA's role, particularly in the fields of education and vocational training.

UNRWA IN LEBANON

The problem of the Palestine refugees is less evident in Lebanon than in Jordan or the Gaza Strip, for Lebanon does not have the vast numbers of refugees that are in Jordan or the extreme concentration of refugees of the Gaza Strip.

However, the plight of the refugees in Lebanon remains serious, and a combination of factors makes UNRWA's aid for the needy as necessary in Lebanon as in any of the four "host" countries.

At 1 January 1964 there were 152,747 refugees registered with UNRWA in Lebanon, which has a nonrefugee population estimated at 1,780,000. The refugees represent almost 8 per cent of the total population of the country and 13 per cent of the total number of refugees (1,228,064) registered with the Agency in Lebanon, Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Gaza Strip.

Nabatieh Camp. Two or three families live in each shelter.



Lebanon: the land

Lebanon lies along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, bounded on the north and east by the Syrian Arab Republic, on the south by Israel and on the west by the sea. The country is roughly 120 miles in length and tapers from about 50 miles wide in the north to 20 in the south. Its area is 4,300 square miles, slightly more than half the size of the state of Massachusetts in the United States or a little smaller than the county of Yorkshire in the United Kingdom.

Lebanon may be divided roughly into four geographical regions: a narrow coastal plain which is up to 5 miles wide in parts and practically disappears in others where the mountains meet the sea; the Lebanon range of mountains which runs parallel to the coast, with peaks of over 10,000 feet; the fertile Beqa'a Valley which runs the length of the country from north to south; and the Anti-Lebanon range of mountains, also parallel to the coast and straddling the Lebanese-Syrian border with Mount Hermon in the south.

Most of the country enjoys a mild Mediterranean climate, although the winters are more severe in the mountains.

Lebanon is a heavily populated country, with an average of more than 400 people to the square mile. Most of the population is concentrated along the coast, with an estimated one-third of the total population living in and around Beirut, the capital. There is a continuing flow of population from the rural towns and villages to the major urban centres. This is explained in part by the fact that the Lebanese economy is primarily a commercial and not an agricultural economy and in part by the over-population of the rural areas.

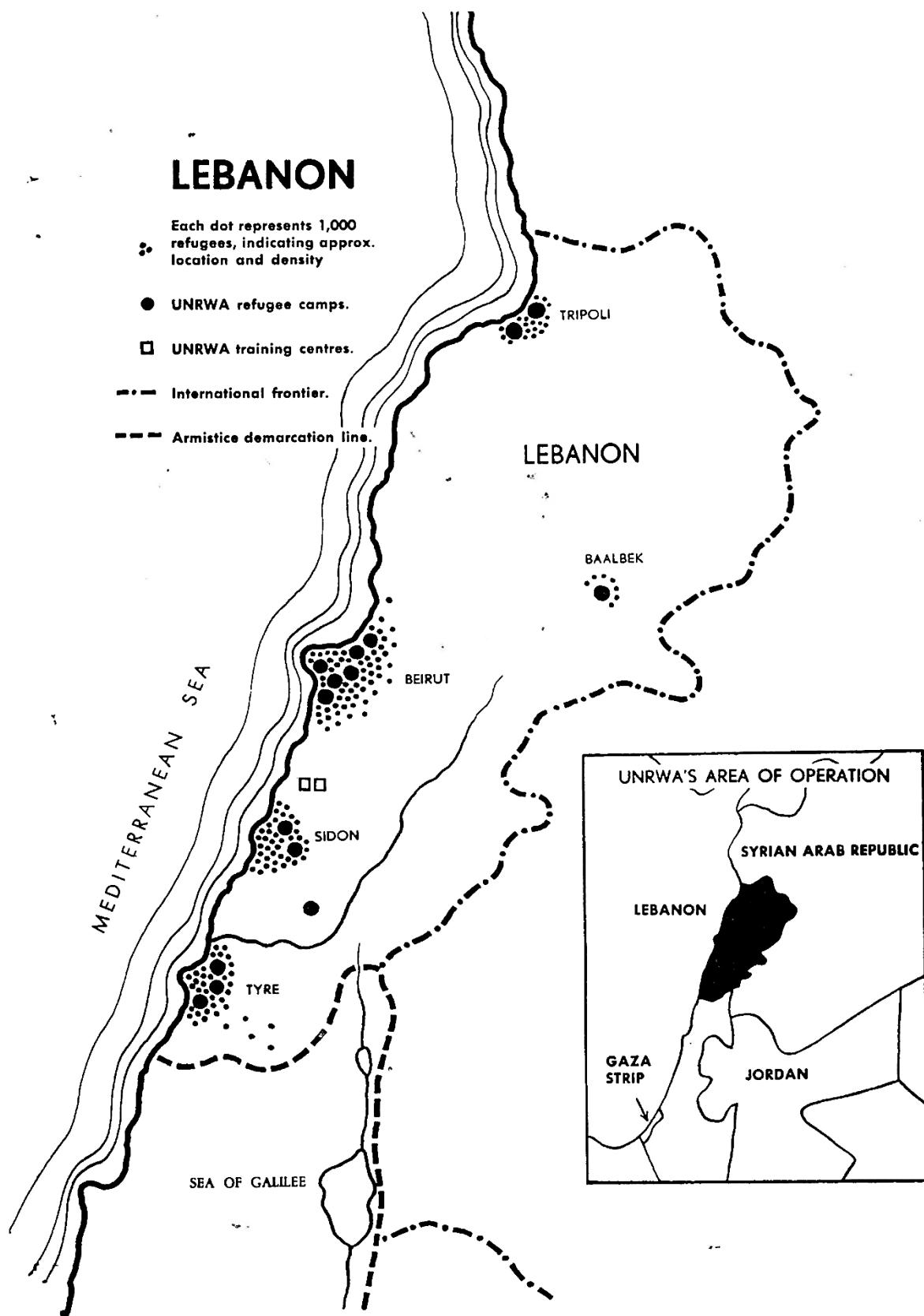
Compared with the other "host" countries, Lebanon is relatively prosperous, despite the fact that it has very limited resources. The major part of the national income is earned from commercial and other forms of service; from trading, banking, importing and transshipping goods, insurance, tourism and remittances from Lebanese abroad. The Lebanese merchants are worthy successors to the ancient Phoenicians who once lived in what is now Lebanon and whose reputation as traders still survives.

Agriculture plays a lesser role in the economy of Lebanon than of any of the four "host" countries, although in recent years exports of fruit,

LEBANON

Each dot represents 1,000 refugees, indicating approx. location and density

- UNRWA refugee camps.
- UNRWA training centres.
- International frontier.
- Armistice demarcation line.



particularly citrus fruits and apples, have increased. The narrow coastal plain and the Beqa'a Valley provide fertile land, and the lower slopes of the mountains are cultivated by means of terracing wherever the terrain is suitable. About 30 per cent of the country's area is under cultivation with varying degrees of intensity. There is generally not enough cultivable land to support the rural population, and there can be little extension of the arable area, since only land of a marginal or an unsuitable nature remains uncultivated. Irrigation projects under construction in the southern part of the Beqa'a Valley will increase the productivity of a substantial area but will open little new land to cultivation.

The development of heavy industry is hampered by the shortage of local supplies of raw materials in the country. There has, however, been considerable development of light industry over the past few years. The building trade is particularly flourishing, as is apparent from the modern blocks of flats and offices rising in Beirut and, to a lesser extent, in the other urban centres.

However, the prosperity that is so evident in Beirut does not extend to all segments of the population. There is a substantial surplus of unskilled labour in the towns and cities, due largely to the influx from the rural areas where the standard of living is low. The large number of Lebanese who have emigrated is some indication of the paucity of opportunities; it is estimated that there are as many Lebanese living outside as there are within Lebanon.

The refugees in Lebanon

Most of the refugees who fled to Lebanon as a result of the conflict in Palestine in 1948 came either from the northern part of Palestine or from the coastal region. Many fled by land from the Galilee region to southern Lebanon. Others fled by boat from Acre, Haifa or other points along the coast of Palestine to Tyre, Sidon or Beirut in Lebanon.

Sixteen years later, the bulk of the refugees are still concentrated in these three centres and in Tripoli in northern Lebanon. There is more chance of finding work in these large communities, although the number of refugees

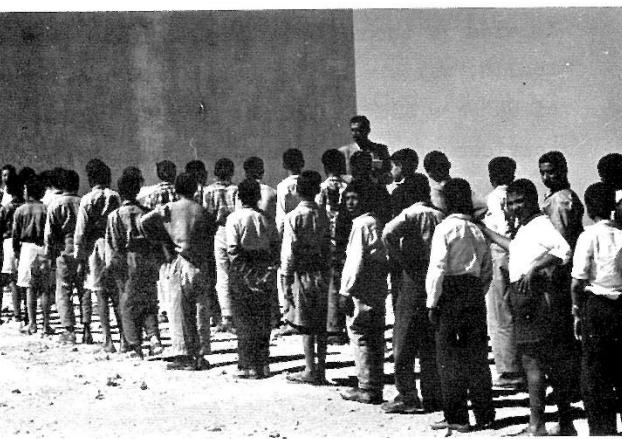
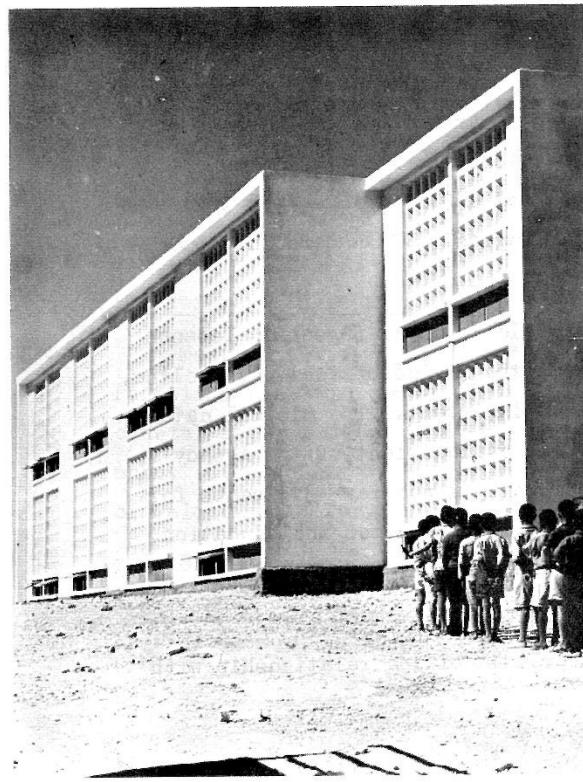
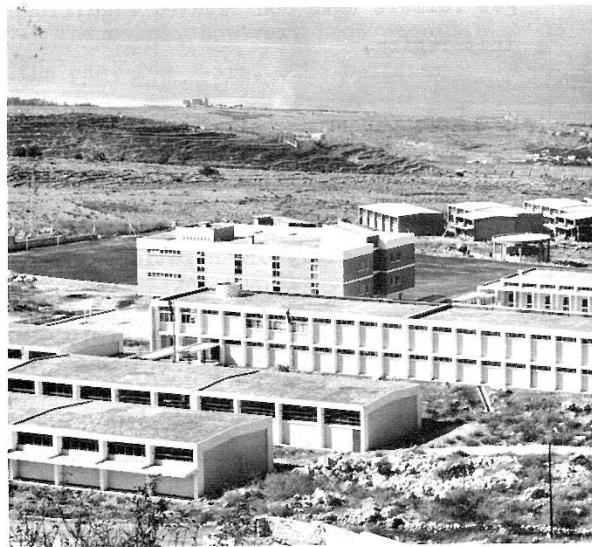
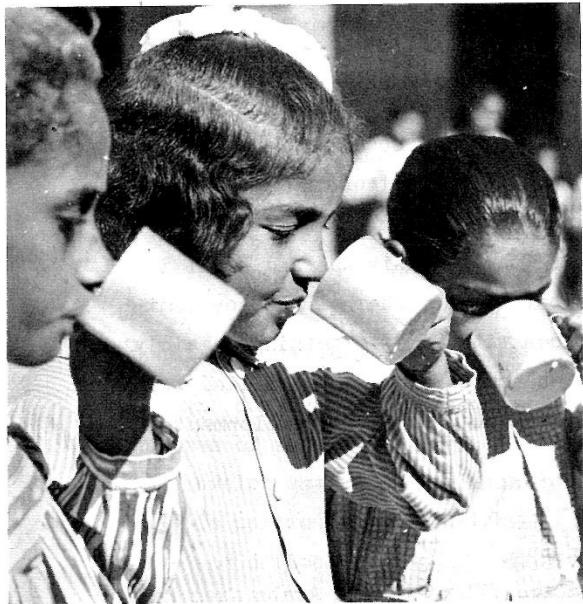
who have been able to find satisfactory full-time employment has been limited by two factors: the many Lebanese who are also seeking such employment and the refugees' lack of skill or training. Those professional men and skilled craftsmen who fled to Lebanon from Palestine were soon able to find positions, for their skills were in great demand in the developing economy of the country. However, Palestine's economy was basically rural, and most of the refugees were farmers, herdsmen, agricultural workers or small merchants, for whom there were few opportunities in Lebanon, where the emphasis was and still is on commerce and trading. Nevertheless, a substantial number of refugee families are able to supplement their UNRWA rations with limited earnings, mainly from casual or seasonal work. In southern Lebanon particularly, skilled refugee farmers have contributed significantly to the agricultural development of that region.

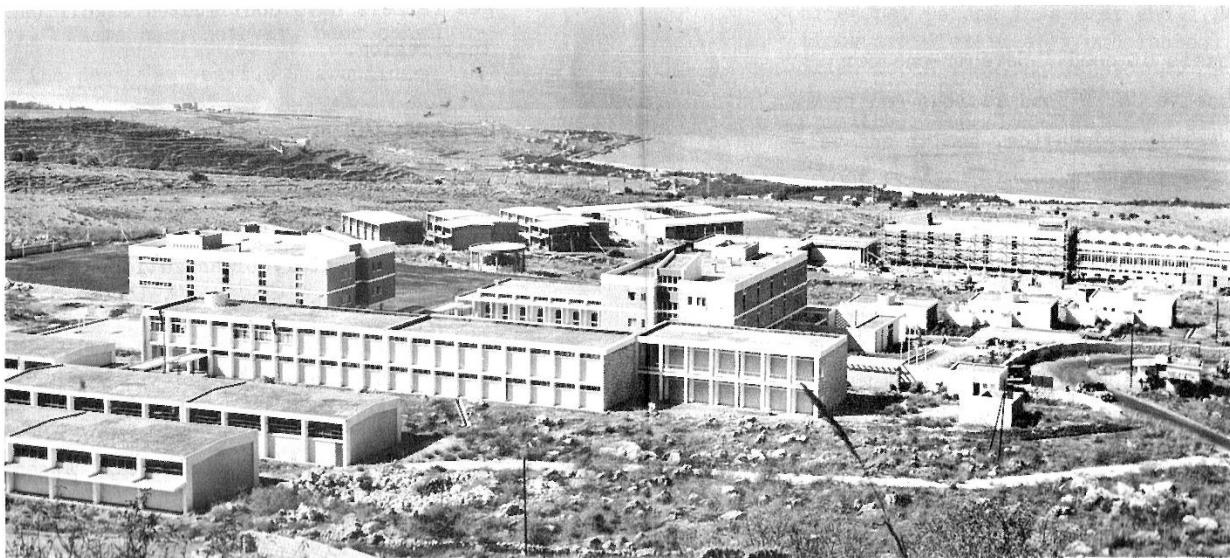
UNRWA in Lebanon

During the months immediately following the flight of the Arabs from Palestine and the influx of refugees into Lebanon, aid was given on an emergency basis by voluntary organizations, with the League of Red Cross Societies providing the bulk of the assistance in Lebanon. This emergency aid was coordinated and financed during much of 1949 and 1950 by the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR). When it became apparent that the problem of the Palestine refugees would not be solved as quickly as had first been anticipated, the United Nations General Assembly created UNRWA in late 1949 to assume the task of providing assistance to the refugees. UNRWA came into operation in May 1950.

As in the other "host" countries, UNRWA's aid to the refugees in Lebanon is wide in scope, providing basic assistance in the fields of feeding, shelter, health, welfare and education, but very limited in extent. The minimal nature of UNRWA's aid is evident from the fact that the average cost of the Agency's services amounts to only 9.6 cents (U. S.) per refugee per day--3.4 cents for food and 6.2 cents for shelter, medical care, welfare services and education, including vocational training and university scholarships.

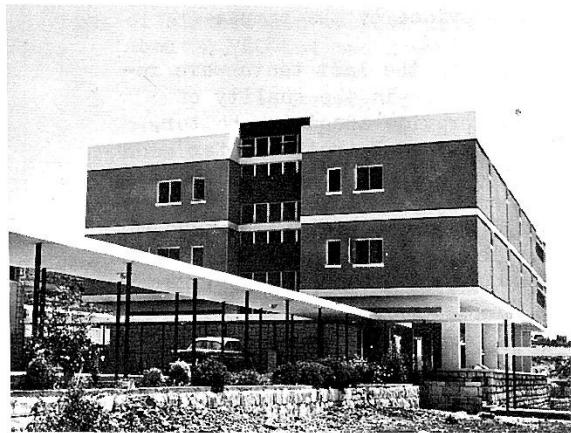
UNRWA's operations in Lebanon are conducted with the cooperation of the Government of Lebanon. The Agency enjoys a cordial working relationship with







More than half of the refugees in Lebanon are youngsters below the age of 18. Much of UNRWA's assistance is directed towards these young refugees. Particularly important are UNRWA's programmes of education and vocational training. The boys' school in Nabatieh camp (bottom left) is one of UNRWA's 60 schools in Lebanon. UNRWA's two training centres are seen in the centre picture, with the Siblin Vocational Training Centre in the foreground (also bottom centre) and the Technical and Teacher Training Institute behind it. Sixteen courses are offered at the Vocational Training Centre, including machine fitting (top centre). UNRWA's programmes of milk distribution and supplementary feeding (top left and bottom right) provide extra nourishment for refugee children.



the Directorate of Palestine Arab Refugees, the department of the Ministry of the Interior that is responsible for refugee affairs. The Government of Lebanon has always shown concern over the plight of the refugees and has done much to help them, providing land for camps and many services in the fields of health, education and security.

The headquarters of UNRWA are located in Beirut. The operations of the Agency in Lebanon are directed from headquarters and administered through a field office, also in Beirut. The present Director of UNRWA Affairs in Lebanon is Marcel Beroudiau (Belgium), who directs a staff of 24 international employees and 1,838 locally recruited employees, almost all of whom are Palestinians. Fourteen of the 24 international staff are engaged in the programmes of vocational and teacher training.

UNRWA's assistance is provided on the basis of need. Seventy-one per cent (108,430) of the refugees in Lebanon receive UNRWA food rations and benefit from the other services provided by the Agency (education, health and welfare services). Some 20,500 others receive only these services, and 23,700 are classified as self-supporting and receive no aid from UNRWA.

Shelter

When the refugees fled to Lebanon in 1948, some found temporary shelter in towns and villages, and others gathered in emergency encampments. A Greek Orthodox community, for instance, fled en masse and found shelter in a Greek Orthodox convent near Beirut. They have since moved to a camp beside the convent.

Today there are 15 UNRWA camps in Lebanon, 13 of which are in or near the large coastal communities of Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon or Tyre. The camps give shelter to 65,561 (43 per cent) of the refugees registered with UNRWA in Lebanon. The others have found their own accommodation in towns or villages, often no better than the accommodation provided by the camps.

The camps are all of solid construction, for the last tents were replaced by huts by 1956. However, the camps vary greatly in the quality of the accommodation they provide. Most of the camps provide adequate shelter, but a number, particularly three camps in the vicinity of Beirut, are far from satisfactory, consisting mainly of ramshackle shanties erected by the refugees themselves. UNRWA has not made improvements to these camps because it has been planned for some time that they should be closed and the refugees transferred to better accommodation. The Agency is presently exploring the possibility of establishing one new camp to replace the three old camps.

Another unsatisfactory camp, in which 3,500 refugees had been living in a disused army barracks, was closed in late 1963 when the residents moved to new shelters built for them by UNRWA.

Camp residents live in small huts, some built by UNRWA and some constructed by the refugees themselves with financial assistance from the Agency, with an average of four or five persons to each 10-foot-square room. The facilities of a typical camp include a school, a clinic, a supplementary feeding and milk distribution centre and, depending on the size and location of the camp, a youth activities centre and a sewing centre.

Rations

Once a month UNRWA distributes dry rations to those refugees who are eligible for them. In quantity, the basic rations are enough to ward off starvation but little more, for they provide a daily intake of only 1,500 calories per person in summer and 1,600 calories in winter. In variety, the rations are dietetically unbalanced, for of necessity they consist only of dried foods that can be stored. However, the refugees are generally able to supplement the UNRWA rations with fresh vegetables, eggs and meat, either from their occasional earnings or by bartering.

Each ration recipient is entitled to (per month): 22 pounds of flour, 1.3 pounds each of sugar and pulses (dried vegetables), 1.1 pounds of rice and 12 ounces of oil or fat. In the five winter months additional flour and pulses are allocated. In addition, they receive one piece of soap each month, and 1.5 litres of kerosene for heating and cooking are issued each winter month to ration recipients in UNRWA camps. Those in need of clothing are provided with about 4 pounds of used clothing each year, collected overseas by voluntary agencies and shipped to the Middle East at UNRWA's expense.

Supplementary feeding

As a preventive measure, UNRWA provides additional nourishment for those vulnerable to malnutrition through its programmes of supplementary feeding and milk distribution. The Agency has 22 supplementary feeding centres and 30 milk distribution centres in Lebanon. All refugee children below the age of six are entitled to a daily hot meal, and other children up to the age of sixteen can receive daily meals on the recommendation of an UNRWA doctor. About 4,700 hot meals are served daily.

An average of 33,300 refugees receive a cup of milk each day, including children up to the age of sixteen, infants under one and pregnant and nursing women. Extra dry rations are given to an average of 4,900 women from the fifth month of pregnancy to one year after their babies are born and to TB out-patients. Children up to six years of age and elementary school-children receive cod-liver oil capsules.

Health

UNRWA cares for the general medical needs of the refugees in Lebanon at its 18 clinics, which offer both preventive and curative medical care. Seventeen of the clinics are either in camps or in towns and villages where there are large concentrations of refugees. A mobile clinic covers the more widely scattered refugee communities in south Lebanon. In addition, two small clinics operated by voluntary agencies using UNRWA medical supplies serve a number of refugees.

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; the more serious cases are referred to private hospitals, in which a total of 302 beds are subsidized by UNRWA for refugee patients. The Agency has a polyclinic in Beirut which gives treatment and undertakes minor operations. A 15-bed hostel in one of the Beirut camps provides temporary accommodation for refugee patients from outside the city or from other "host" countries who are receiving out-patient treatment or waiting for admission to a hospital. Serious TB cases are referred to a sanatorium in the hills outside Beirut where UNRWA has reserved a wing for refugee patients.

A health education programme encourages the refugees to improve their living conditions and habits. The Agency's health division is also responsible for the basic sanitation services of the camps, such as refuse and garbage removal, the maintenance of drains and the provision of adequate drinking water.

In general, UNRWA provides a health service for the refugees that is comparable to that available to the poorer sector of the indigenous population of Lebanon. UNRWA's health service, with a ratio of one doctor to approximately 6,500 people, fulfills the basic needs of the refugees but cannot be regarded as anything more than minimal.

Education

More than 29,000 refugee children in Lebanon were receiving education with help from UNRWA during the 1963-64 school year. UNRWA's 60 elementary and preparatory schools, staffed by 694 teachers, had an enrolment of more than 22,000 pupils, and 7,000 young refugees were attending local schools through grants from the Agency.

UNRWA makes available six years of elementary education to every refugee child and a further four years of preparatory schooling to all who qualify. A smaller but increasing number of young refugees advance into local secondary schools subsidized by UNRWA. Equal opportunities are given to boys and girls, and there is a continuing trend for an increasing number of girls to attend school. During the 1963-64 academic year, 42 per cent of the students at UNRWA schools in Lebanon were girls, compared with 33 per cent in 1952.

UNRWA's schools, most of which have about 50 pupils to each class, follow the curriculum of the government schools in Lebanon. The standard of instruction is constantly improving but is still less than satisfactory, since many of the teachers are not fully qualified. UNRWA has recently established an Institute of Education, with offices in Beirut, to conduct programmes of in-service teacher training to raise the standard of UNRWA teachers in Lebanon and in the other "host" countries. The training will include correspondence courses, summer courses and regular seminars.

Eighty-seven one-year university scholarships were made available by UNRWA in the 1963-64 academic year for the most promising refugee students from Lebanon, of whom 35 were studying engineering, 30 were enrolled in faculties of arts and science and 15 were in medical school.

Vocational training

One of the most tragic problems in Lebanon, as in the other "host" countries, is that of the young refugees as they reach adulthood. Without training or skill, all too many of them stand little chance of leading worthwhile, productive lives. UNRWA has established two residential training centres in Lebanon to give some young refugees the opportunity of learning a skill. Both centres are located at Siblin, about 25 miles south of Beirut.

The Siblin Vocational Training Centre, opened in 1962, has a capacity of 412 young men. The Centre offers 16 courses, including radio/TV mechanics, plumbing, carpentry, auto mechanics, business and office practice, welding and upholstering. The courses are taught by Arab instructors, most of them refugees, under the supervision of international specialists. Most courses are of two years' duration. The Centre was established with donations from Canada during World Refugee Year.

The Siblin Technical and Teacher Training Institute was established with a technical assistance grant from the Swedish Agency for International Assistance and inaugurated in 1963. The Institute, which has a capacity of 264 trainees, offers training for teachers, handicraft teachers, telecommunications mechanics and vocational training instructors or industrial foremen. The course for instructors or foremen is of particular importance, for it produces young men with skills and experience greatly needed in the developing Middle East and also provides an opportunity for advanced instruction for graduates of UNRWA training centres. The technical assistance agreement includes a scheme under which 50 graduates go every year to Sweden to train and to work in industry for 12 months. They then return to the Siblin Institute for the one-year instructor/foreman's course.

Thirty-eight young refugees are enrolled in other training institutions in Lebanon with grants from UNRWA.

The young refugees graduate from the training courses with skills that are greatly needed in the developing Arab world, and they have little difficulty finding opportunities to put these skills to good use.

Welfare

"UNRWA's welfare services in Lebanon fall into two main categories: the provision of special aid to refugees in extreme hardship and the provision of assistance and encouragement in the field of community development.

The Agency makes small grants of cash, clothing or blankets to individual cases of extreme hardship who may also be helped by consultation with UNRWA case workers. A small number of crippled or handicapped children receive treatment and training with help from the Agency, which pays subsidies to private institutions.

In the field of community development, UNRWA runs five sewing centres, five youth activities centres and three play centres for small children.

The six-month courses at the sewing centres enable refugee girls to sew for their families and sometimes to earn a little money by doing odd jobs. Illiterate girls attending the courses are also taught the rudiments of reading and writing.

The youth activities centres provide programmes of recreational, cultural, sporting and social activities for young men, helping to fill the long hours of unavoidable idleness in the camps. Refugee Scout troops have been formed in connection with some of the youth activities centres. Volunteer leaders for the youth activities centres in Lebanon and in the other "host" countries are trained in a Youth Leadership Training Centre in Broumanna, Lebanon, which is run jointly by the World Alliance of Y. M. C. A.'s and UNRWA.

Encouragement and assistance is given in the formation of small refugee cooperatives which may provide work and a little extra income for a few families. There are presently three cooperatives in Lebanon: a woolknitting cooperative, a consumers' cooperative and a cooperative school canteen.

A mobile cinema tours the camps regularly, showing health and educational films as well as general entertainment. The mobile cinema helps to raise the morale of the camp residents and is one of the channels through which the health education programme is conducted.

Summary

Even though Lebanon has a smaller number of refugees and a more advanced economy than either Jordan or the Gaza Strip, the plight of many of the refugees in Lebanon remains serious. Continued assistance to needy refugees is essential, both to prevent undue suffering and to maintain stability in the area.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a special, temporary, nonpolitical 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: 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; its current mandate expires on 30 June 1965.

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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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