

PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

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UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

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COVER PICTURE

The daily hot meal for young children - highly important if malnutrition is to be avoided (see SPC statement, p.5).

**FURTHER INFORMATION
MAY BE OBTAINED FROM :**

UNRWA Public Information Office,
Museitbeh Quarter,
Beirut,
Lebanon

UNRWA Liaison Office,
Palais des Nations,
Geneva,
Switzerland

UNRWA Liaison Office,
United Nations,
New York,
U. S. A.

COMMENTARY

"Commentary" will highlight interesting and significant events affecting UNRWA and the refugees at this difficult stage in the Agency's existence, but will not aim to be an exhaustive record of UNRWA's visitors, contributions, etc.

1 OCT. CHANGES IN SCHOOL CURRICULA DENIED

Teachers in UNRWA/Unesco refugee schools in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon who had been on strike over conditions of service have now resumed work after discussion with Agency officials.

In the wake of the strike press reports referred to charges that UNRWA had changed school curricula in the Israeli-occupied West Bank of the Jordan. UNRWA denied the charges, and said that in all its schools refugee education was still based on the curricula of the Arab host countries.

5 OCT. TRAINEES OFF TO FEDERAL GERMANY

Today 86 young refugees, graduates of UNRWA training centres, flew to the Federal Republic of Germany to spend a year gaining on-the-job experience in industry. The majority are now working with the Mercedes Company, alongside 70 graduates who have been invited by the Company to remain for a second year of training.

8 OCT. FIRST CONTRIBUTION FROM NEW RELIEF AGENCY

UNRWA received its first contribution (\$40,000) from American Near East Refugee Aid Inc. - ANERA - a new co-ordinating relief agency for Arab refugees. ANERA's President is Dr. John H. Davis, a former Commissioner-General of UNRWA.

22 OCT. FURTHER SUPPORT FROM ITALY

In addition to its regular contribution of \$158,600, the Italian Government has made a special donation of \$80,000. This will provide solid shelter this winter for 2,300 displaced people in east Jordan presently living under canvas.

24 OCT. SERVICES SUSPENDED IN LEBANON CAMPS

The recent crisis in Lebanon over relations with Palestinian commandos interrupted UNRWA services for a short period. They were quickly resumed: distribution of rations continues and clinics and schools are in full operation. The Commissioner-General paid a short visit to Beirut (26 OCT - 6 NOV) from New York where he is attending the General Assembly session, and later gave an account to the Assembly's Special Political Committee (17 NOV) on his return. He said that despite an abnormal situation in which police and other Government representatives had been temporarily withdrawn from the refugee camps, he was satisfied that the integrity of UNRWA's operations had been preserved and that services were going to those entitled to them.

10 NOV. "SEQUEL" PUBLISHED: PRICES ARE 5/- (UK) AND 75 C (USA)

UNRWA's newest publication is a "SEQUEL" to its previous photographic report "Twice in a Lifetime", and tells the story of the east Jordan emergency camps during 1968-69. Its publication has been made possible by a generous donation from the Iraq Petroleum Company.



The Federal German Ambassador to Jordan, H.E. Dr. H. Hille (left), inspecting UNRWA refugee shelters built with the aid of the Special Federal German donation

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY HELPS UNRWA

Official documents are usually precise and uninspiring - prosaic in fact - and may reveal little of the human reality that lies behind them. Take, for instance, the agreement between the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and UNRWA for a multi-million dollar programme of assistance for Palestine refugees. The phrases of the agreement - which takes the form of an exchange of Notes Verbales - are dry and formal, but they have already moved 30,000 refugees out of tents into solid huts, have sent nearly 600 men and women to university and have guaranteed the expansion of a vocational training centre to equip young men with skills in demand in the Arab world.

In the latter half of 1968, the Federal German Government decided to allocate DM 50 million (\$12.5 million at the then rate of exchange) for special aid to Palestine refugees, at the rate of DM 10 million a year. UNRWA's extensive operations and expertise made it a natural channel for the funds, which are additional to the regular annual contribution made by the Government to UNRWA.

Discussions held at UNRWA Headquarters with representatives of the Federal German Government, and promptly concluded, led to the exchange of Notes setting out the basic agreement for co-operation. The first projects were approved for funding, subject to the endorsement of the host government - in this case, Jordan - which was quickly forthcoming, and the programme was launched late in 1968.

Emergency shelter

Top priority was given to the emergency shelter construction programme in east Jordan. Despite the tragic conditions in the emergency camps there, which have been sheltering 90,000 refugees and other displaced Arabs from Gaza and the West Bank, UNRWA was short of funds to replace worn-out tents, let alone to provide any better form of shelter; its resources were fully committed to maintaining regular relief, health and education services for the 1.4 million Palestine refugees.

The Federal German Government agreed that the situation in these emergency camps required immediate measures and the sum of \$1,000,000 was allocated under the new aid programme to construct nearly 5,000 temporary, one-room shelters in Baqa'a emergency camp.

These were erected early in 1969, and have since been sheltering some 30,000 people from the extremes of winter cold and summer heat. There are two basic types : timber frames with sheet asbestos walls and corrugated asbestos roofs, and prefabricated shelters of galvanised sheet steel. Shelters were also erected in other camps, thanks to donations from the Italian Government and several voluntary agencies (including America's NEED and Britain's OXFAM).

But the urgent need for shelters had still not been fully met, and so again in 1969, the Federal Government has agreed to allocate funds to enable UNRWA to build shelters that could not be provided from the Agency's own resources. With the agreement and co-operation of the Jordan Government, the remaining 24,000 people in tents in east Jordan camps will therefore be provided with temporary shelters in the course of this winter, at a cost of \$800,000. Contracts have been awarded and construction has already started. Each family shelter costs over \$200, erected on the site. It is a modest enough protection against the elements in a country where the temperature can range between - 5°C (23°F) and 44°C (111°F); but it is still a vast improvement on a tent.

Educational projects

UNRWA has always attached great importance to its vocational and teacher-training programme. Already before the 1967 conflict, demand for places at the training centres was heavily over-subscribed. The exodus to east Jordan of several hundreds of thousands of refugees and other displaced persons, the vast majority of whom were unable to return to their former places of residence after the cease-fire, meant a further large increase in the number of applicants in that area. Demand for places is now such that one in six only of the applicants (all in the 16-21 years age-group) has been able to attend the UNRWA Vocational Training Centre at Wadi-Seer, near Amman.

In view of this situation, UNRWA decided that increased training capacity for young refugee men should be provided in east Jordan through the expansion of Wadi-Seer, and the Federal German Government agreed to meet the cost of new buildings and equipment.

Wadi-Seer Vocational Training Centre was built with UNRWA funds and opened in 1960 with capacity for 232 trainees. It was expanded to take 400 students in 1962, with funds provided by the Governments of Kuwait and Morocco and the Australian World Refugee Year Committee.

There are currently 560 students at Wadi-Seer : some 200 of them in a temporary teacher-training section the operating costs of which are paid for with funds from NEED following the 1967 emergency. (The 200 teacher-trainees will continue at Wadi-Seer until the end of the 1969-70 school year, after which they will be accommodated in a new training centre for 300 men and 400 women, now under construction near Amman with funds provided by NEED.) Meanwhile the regular, vocational training programme at Wadi Seer is being expanded to take 792 students by the 1972/73 school year.

Of particular interest in the planned expansion is the introduction of the following courses which are new to the Agency's vocational training programme: Tool and Die Maker; Precision Mechanic; Office Machine Mechanic and Advanced Office Machine Mechanic. In addition, it is intended to introduce six courses at the centre which, although conducted in other UNRWA training centres, have not so far formed a part of the Wadi Seer curriculum.

Because of UNRWA's budgetary difficulties, the Federal Government plans to include in its aid programme the operating costs of the whole centre for a period of five years. Indeed, UNRWA could not afford to undertake the project without help for operating costs. Some \$1,210,000 will have been spent on the Wadi Seer expansion by the end of 1969: if the operating costs of the whole centre are met, the total expenditure for the project will rise by 1973 to about \$3,500,000.

University scholarships and other projects

Additionally, \$275,000 in 1968 and \$237,000 in 1969 have been provided to give university scholarships to needy refugee students. Tuition is free in the majority of Arab universities, but students need board, lodging and basic expenses if they are to study away from home. UNRWA itself has regularly financed a number of scholarships, but this new source of funds has already enabled 550 additional young refugees to receive the further education for which their intelligence, but not their pocket, qualifies them.

A number of other programmes are under way : health service costs will be covered in east Jordan's emergency camps, together with construction of - and equipment for - two health centres, and student subsidies at a technical centre on the West Bank, originally built with German funds. Other projects will be submitted for consideration each year.

Extra-Budgetary Funds

One question that may well be asked is : How has this aid affected UNRWA's budget deficit of some \$4 million in 1969? The answer is that the special allocation is quite distinct from the Government's regular contribution to UNRWA's programmes, which now amount to \$5,888,000 since 1950; it is intended primarily for capital projects additional to UNRWA's regular programmes but no less important to the welfare of the refugees - such as the shelter programme and the Wadi-Seer expansion. Both were urgently needed, but regular funds were fully committed to the vital task of simply keeping the mass of refugees and newly-displaced people alive and healthy.

Where a capital project has created new operating costs, though, is with the expansion of Wadi-Seer VTC, whose operating costs will be met for a number of years. However, in view of the acute financial situation in which UNRWA finds itself, with the threat of reductions in essential services, the Federal German Government has agreed to devote part of the aid to operating costs that are associated with a capital project, or are of a special character, e.g. the cost of health services in the emergency camps.

STATEMENT OF THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL

The Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Mr. Laurence Michelmore, delivered the following statement to the Special Political Committee of the United Nations on 17 November, 1969.

In our annual report for the year ending 30 June 1969, document A/7614, we have attempted to emphasize four main points which we believe deserve the attention of the General Assembly:-

- (a) The total needs of the refugees continue to increase - for relief services, for health protection, and especially for education and training.
- (b) It is of the greatest importance that these needs be met, both from the humanitarian standpoint of ensuring the physical survival and health of the refugees and the preparation of the young for a useful future life, and also from the standpoint of avoiding a catastrophic worsening of conditions in the area.
- (c) The cost of maintaining these services has risen significantly, and income to finance them has fallen considerably short of what is needed, with a resulting deficit this year, and the threat of a deficit next year that will put the whole programme in jeopardy.
- (d) The circumstances under which UNRWA operates, which have always presented problems, have become much more difficult as the crisis in the Middle East has deepened and tensions have increased throughout the area.

The months that have passed since the report was drafted have given added emphasis to each of these factors and intensified the difficulties facing the Agency.

The refugee population continues to grow, and the sheer increase in numbers adds to the demands for assistance. There are now over 1,400,000 names on UNRWA's lists of persons who have asked for assistance. (This number does not include persons displaced for the first time in 1967; the care of these newly displaced persons has been undertaken almost entirely by the Governments concerned, and UNRWA's assistance has been required only in Jordan, and there only to a limited extent.) Of the 1,400,000 registered refugees, some 150,000 are not now receiving any assistance from the Agency, and their names have been put in an "N" or "No service" category. This would correspond to an inactive file in any other relief-giving agency. If UNRWA receives information that any of these persons have died, their names are removed. Some deaths may have occurred of which we have not been informed, and some persons may have moved from the areas where UNRWA was last in touch with them, but as they are not eligible for assistance, their absence has no financial implications.

Excluding this group, or "N" category of 150,000 persons, there are some 1 1/4 million persons who are regarded as eligible for some form of UNRWA



This Bethlehem family are in UNRWA's No service category (see below). Despite the difficulties of a low income and the uncertain situation in the West Bank of the Jordan, they live without UNRWA assistance.

assistance. We have continued to report that some of the persons listed may not be eligible because of unreported deaths, absences from the area, or income adequate to meet their own needs. In view of the very large number of corrections that have been made in the lists over the years, I believe that the number of ineligible names remaining on the lists is not a large percentage of the total. As there are many thousands of infants and children not yet registered for technical or other reasons, I believe that the figure of 1 1/4 million persons eligible for all or some kinds of assistance from UNRWA is a reasonably close approximation of the needy refugee population.

Not all of this number receive all of the services provided by the Agency. So far as relief services are concerned, only two-thirds, or a little over 840,000 persons receive the monthly food ration - flour, some other dry foods and cooking oil, providing 1500 calories a day and costing about four cents a day. Except for a few months following the hostilities of 1967, when some emergency rations were issued, the number of persons receiving these rations has not exceeded the pre-hostilities level, although the population has increased and so has the degree of need. A ceiling was put on the number of rations to be issued many years ago, and this ceiling is still being observed. Were it not for this ceiling, some 300,000 registered refugee children could ask for rations. Another relief service expanded after the hostilities for certain groups who were believed to be in special need is the provision of ration supplements or of hot meals for children and other vulnerable groups. These increased food services have been trimmed back where this has seemed possible, but they are still above the pre-1967 level, and on the basis of advice from the World Health Organization, the Agency regards the maintenance of the present supplementary feeding as highly important if malnutrition is to be avoided.

One of the relief services which has had to be increased very substantially and at great cost is shelter, and the need for this service continues to increase. In the six camps established in east Jordan since 1967, there were 75,000 persons by mid-1968 - both registered refugees and other displaced persons. The number has now grown to 92,000. Originally protected only by canvas tents, two-thirds of the inhabitants, or a little over 10,000 families, were provided with

solid but temporary huts in the course of 1968-early 1969. I am glad to be able to report that additional special contributions have now been received to build similar huts for the remaining 5,200 families in these camps, and this work is proceeding as rapidly as possible. Thanks also to special contributions to UNRWA from many sources, and to the efforts of a number of non-governmental organizations, many of the other necessities in these camps have now been provided - roads, paths, storm water drainage, sanitation, health clinics, food distribution centres, school buildings and other facilities. This has been a major achievement and it has saved many lives, but the facilities provided by UNRWA in these emergency camps are still minimal to the extent that, for example, we have not yet succeeded in bringing the number of latrine seats to two per 100 camp residents, but hope to do so shortly.

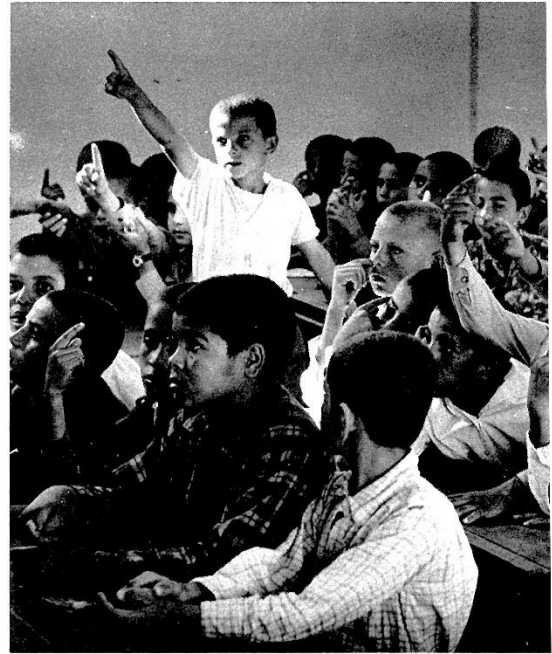
In Syria, four new camps for refugees who were displaced again in 1967 sheltered 7,700 persons by mid-1968. The number has now increased to nearly 10,000. Basic facilities have been provided in these camps also, but the inhabitants are still living in tents. Before the winter of 1970, these tents will have to be replaced with new tents, or with huts like those in the Jordan camps. No funds are yet in sight for this purpose.

It must be emphasized that although there is now better protection for the inhabitants of the camps in Jordan and Syria against the threat of epidemics or violent storms, their standard of living is still only at the level of survival or bare subsistence. It is indicative of the need among the rest of the refugee population that many more families, in addition to those now in the camps, are expected to ask that they be provided with these facilities.

In the field of health, it has been necessary to increase sanitation services in the camps - latrines, garbage removal, and the control of fleas, flies and other pests - and to meet the greater demand for medical services. The number of inoculations for protection against various diseases has been greatly increased. There has also been a substantial increase in the number of persons coming to UNRWA health centres for the treatment of illness. This increase is not due to a higher incidence of disease. On the contrary, for most diseases and in most areas, the incidence has declined. In the case of eye diseases which have been prevalent in the Middle East, the decline over the last few years has been dramatic. In the last year, there were 6,150,000 visits to UNRWA clinics. The explanation of the greater demand on UNRWA health services is to be found, I believe, in the increase in population, and in the fact that many families who could previously pay for private doctors, are no longer able to do so and now depend on UNRWA's services.

It is in the third major area of UNRWA's programme - education and training - that the greatest increase of demand has been felt. When the schools opened in the fall of 1968, the number of pupils enrolling was far above that of the previous year, and far above our estimates. Again, when the present school year 1969-1970 began a few weeks ago, the enrolment was much greater than last year (229,000 as against 209,000) and quite a bit higher than we had anticipated.

Demands for higher level training in UNRWA's teacher training and vocational training centres were also at a record level. Applications for admission were in some centres four or five times the number of places available. Special earmarked contributions have made it possible to expand the physical facilities for vocational and teacher training. Operating costs of these centres are also covered by special earmarked contributions to a considerable extent, but not totally.



(1) & (2) The number of pupils enrolling was far above this means double-shifts and crowded classrooms in many
 (3) Tents at Dera'a emergency camp, Syria — these will be
 (4) Health Education : an important aspect of preventive

The economic condition of the refugees has not improved. Some few groups in some areas may find themselves better off, but many others have lost income, and almost all have had to face significant increases in the cost of things they buy. On the basis of all the information available to UNRWA, I feel certain that the total needs of the refugees have steadily mounted since June 1967, and that their capacity to meet their own needs has decreased.

The refugees depend, for their survival, for the protection of their health, and for the education and training of their youth, on UNRWA. If a just settlement of the refugee problem could be achieved, as the Security Council proposed as part of the measures included in its resolution 242 of 22 November 1967, presumably other arrangements would eventually be worked out to provide the individuals concerned with these vital services. At present, however, the responsibility rests with UNRWA. From the humanitarian standpoint, it would be catastrophic if these services were stopped, or significantly reduced. In the present atmosphere of tension and stress which exists throughout the areas in which the refugees live, stopping or reducing aid to the refugees could have extremely dangerous consequences, and further complicate and retard efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement. Events of recent weeks have given even greater emphasis to these implications.



(2) The number of pupils enrolling was far above that of the previous year... — means double-shifts and crowded classrooms in many schools
ents at Dera'a emergency camp, Syria — these will have to be replaced during 1970
ealth Education : an important aspect of preventive medicine



previous year... —
 placed during 1970

UNRWA can discharge the mandate given to it by the General Assembly, and maintain the vital services which it provides to the refugees only if it is given adequate funds and resources. The critical financial position of the Agency was reported to the General Assembly at the twenty-third session by the Commissioner-General, and in very strong terms by the Secretary-General when he spoke to this Committee one year ago. A special report warning that the crisis was drawing nearer was circulated by the Secretary-General in July of this year (A/7577). The Secretary-General noted his deep concern over the extremely serious deficit facing UNRWA and asked the Governments to give the matter urgent attention. He expressed the hope that the General Assembly at this session would take urgent and effective action in the future financing of UNRWA. I might add that the Director-General of WHO has informed all members of that organization of UNRWA's needs, stressing the importance of the health programme, and the Director-General of UNESCO has written to the Foreign Ministers of a number of governments to express his concern because of UNESCO's interest in education and training.

In the last few months the outlook has not improved. Additional contributions have been offered by a few governments and some non-governmental contributors, and I would like to express UNRWA's deep appreciation to them. Unfortunately

these improvements have been offset by a shortfall in income which had been hoped for from other sources. In addition rising living costs have required the Agency to increase the compensation of some groups of the staff, and it now appears that further increases will be unavoidable if UNRWA, as a United Nations body, is to maintain its obligation to be a descent employer. UNRWA's salaries and allowances are very modest. Labourers receive little more than one dollar a day, and the average for all the 13,000 local staff - half of them teachers and doctors - is about \$100 per month. But even a small increase for each employee has a large total impact. To compensate the staff for the higher living costs that confront them, and to keep pace with salaries and allowances paid by governments in the area would add a very large sum to the budget.

Shortly I hope to circulate a paper showing the most recent estimates of expenditure and income for 1969, and revised estimates for 1970. So far as the current year is concerned, some of the increased expenditure - for shelter construction, for example - will be matched by contributions to cover these particular items, and thus will not affect the deficit. Some additional expenditures, as for increased staff compensation and increased school enrolment, will add to the deficit. For 1969, the shortfall of income in relation to expenditures, which we had estimated in the annual report at \$3.3 million to \$3.8 million, is now expected to be above \$4 million. For 1970, for the reasons already mentioned, the estimated cost of maintaining the present programme of activities will now have to be materially increased above the figures given in the annual report.

From the beginning of next year, we can no longer draw on reserves from the past, and we shall have to "pay as we go". If we are to continue the present programmes in 1970, we shall somehow have to secure new income of about \$5 million above the level of this year. I feel that I must repeat today, with the greatest possible emphasis, the appeal which the Secretary-General made in July, and which was stated in our annual report, that the General Assembly set the Agency's finances on a firmer foundation and assure it of funds adequate to its task.

At the beginning of my remarks, I referred also to difficulties confronting UNRWA in conducting its operations under the circumstances which exist in the Middle East. Examples of various kinds of difficulties are given in the report. Throughout its life, UNRWA has been conscious of the delicate relationships that arise when an international agency conducts such sensitive functions as relief assistance, health services and education and training within the areas of sovereign states. UNRWA, as a United Nations body, has always considered that its activities must be in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter, relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, staff regulations and financial regulations established under United Nations authority and in accordance with United Nations' principles, the Convention on Privileges and Immunities and applicable provisions of other international legislation. Questions have arisen in the past in cases where there appeared to be some conflict between UNRWA's operations and the actions of governments and their officials, based on considerations of security in relation to external or internal factors, or taken in the exercise of other functions which they considered reserved to them. In most instances acceptable solutions have eventually been found. As many such problems have implications that extend to the United Nations as a whole, UNRWA has often sought and been given advice and help by the Secretary-General and his associates.

The circumstances since June 1967, with two-fifths of the refugees living in areas under military occupation, and separated from other areas by the "cease-fire", and with the mounting tensions and stresses which have been evidenced in the region, have given rise to an increase in problems of this kind. Security

considerations have been given greater emphasis by all of the governmental authorities with whom UNRWA has to deal, and there have been increased restrictions on the movement and activities of UNRWA personnel and the transportation of supplies which are said to be based on security considerations. To the extent that UNRWA feels obliged to defer to the judgement of governmental authorities in this field, it finds its area of discretion in relation to its own operations, and consequently the effectiveness of these operations, more restricted.

UNRWA is determined, for so long as it is given authority by the General Assembly, to pursue its mandate with all possible vigour, and to maintain its services to the fullest extent of its financial capacity, but continuing to observe the constitutional, legislative and treaty provisions which govern it. Within this framework UNRWA will make every effort to seek solutions to the problems which exist or which may arise in future, in order that assistance to the refugees may be fully maintained. However, should situations arise in which the requirements of governments and the performance of UNRWA's functions in accordance with its mandate cannot be reconciled, the Commissioner-General would propose to seek the advice of the Secretary-General on the steps which should then be taken.

Situation in the Refugee Camps in Lebanon

Members of the Committee may expect me to say something about the press reports of the last few days regarding the situation in the UNRWA camps in Lebanon. I had not originally intended to make any comments at this time, as I have assumed, and still do, that the abnormal situation which has existed in those camps for the last three weeks or so is temporary, and that the conditions there would soon change in the direction of the previous pattern.

There have been press reports that commandos have taken control of most of the UNRWA camps in Lebanon.

The word camps may be misleading, and may suggest that people are confined in them. This is not so. These camps are like villages, or particular areas within the larger cities. Normally, people can enter or leave the camp areas freely, as they would in any other community.

UNRWA has established and maintains certain facilities in these camp areas - roads and paths, water supply points, sanitation, health centres, schools, food distribution, supplementary feeding, distribution of kerosene, blankets, and clothing to especially needy families, and in some camps, youth activities centres and women's centres. All of these activities are performed for eligible refugees, by UNRWA staff, and UNRWA is completely responsible for these activities. This continues to be true in Lebanon.

Responsibility for other functions rests with the Government - the maintenance of law and order, the administration of justice, issuing permits for new building construction within the camp areas, and so on. For these purposes, the Government normally post police or security officers, and a few other Governmental staff in each of the camps.

In the last few weeks, armed men have been present in a number of the camps, and the Government's regular police and other staff have been absent. At times, the armed men have exercised control over entry to and departure from the camps. For a few days, UNRWA staff were unable to enter some of the camps, but there-

after they have had access, and UNRWA services have operated in a nearly normal manner. In a few camps, the armed men have occupied one of the UNRWA buildings - a youth centre, or a women's centre - perhaps six buildings altogether in the whole of Lebanon. Except for these instances, which have interrupted the activities normally conducted in those premises, UNRWA's activities (and supplies) have not been interfered with. So far as the occupied buildings are concerned, UNRWA has requested the Governmental authorities to arrange for their early return to UNRWA's use.

UNRWA is continuing its programme of humanitarian services, and maintains its control over the assistance it provides up to the point where the assistance is received by the intended beneficiaries - the needy refugees. In the case of two-thirds of UNRWA's programme it is quite obvious that the assistance is actually received and used by the persons for whom it is intended - children attending UNRWA schools, students in training centres, persons given medical assistance in the health centres, children drinking milk or eating hot meals provided in supplementary feeding centres. The remaining third of the programme is the distribution of food rations. Here, too, rations which have been authorized for the eligible members of each family are placed in the hands of the head of the family who is required to identify himself as the authorized recipient. I am satisfied that the integrity of these UNRWA operations has been maintained, that UNRWA assistance goes, as it is intended, to needy refugees, and that it is not diverted to other purposes.

As is the case with other United Nations agencies, UNRWA's relationship is with the Government. UNRWA is in consultation with the authorities in Lebanon with a view to maintaining its humanitarian services and to resolving any difficulties that may exist.

Secretary-General's Remarks

In order to bring attention back to the refugees, whose needs and hardships must be our central and principal concern, I would like to repeat the words with which the Secretary-General ended his remarks last year:-

"Of all the humanitarian situations with which the United Nations is concerned, the plight of the Palestine refugees should arouse the most active compassion of all the governments and peoples of the United Nations, for we are dealing here with nothing less than a twenty-year-old tragedy for a group of people who considerably outnumber the whole population of a number of the States which are Members of the United Nations.

"Members may differ on the rights and wrongs of the situation in the Middle East, of which the Palestine refugees are the innocent and long-suffering victims. Efforts may be expected through the United Nations, or outside it, to find solutions to the problems of the Middle-East, of which the refugee problem is a major one.

"I believe, however, that everyone will agree that the tragedy of the Palestine refugees, who three times in twenty years have known at first-hand the cruel blast of war, demands that the United Nations should live up generously, and without hesitation to its humanitarian duty towards them. I earnestly hope the action of this Committee collectively, and of its members individually, will allow the United Nations to meet this responsibility to the fullest possible extent."

RIBHIYEH- A TEACHER



"Do not try to type quickly, but to type accurately. Speed will come with practice, precision will not." When teaching English and Arabic typing, Ribhiyeh Taffal can draw on her own experience as a secretary. This practical knowledge gives added impact to her course, although she is only six or seven years older than her pupils.

Born in August 1944 in Kaqoun village, Ribhiyeh has known much hardship in her young life. Until 1948, she lived on the family farm, which she still remembers as a cheerful place full of bustle and noise. When conflict broke out between Israel and the Arab States, her father was among the many refugees who fled to Jordan. They found shelter in Tulkarem camp, where more than 6,000 refugees are living. There she grew up with her older sister and her four much younger brothers. Her father found seasonal work in the orange and olive groves and the gardens nearby, but his earnings were not sufficient to feed his family and he still had to depend on UNRWA assistance.

Ribhiyeh went to the UNRWA school in the camp and was noted for intelligence and industry. She was particularly bright at English and was sorry to leave after she had completed the six years of elementary and the three years of preparatory schooling given in UNRWA-Unesco schools. She could have continued her education at the Government's secondary school in Tulkarem with UNRWA assistance, like many gifted young refugees, but did not try because she married when she was just sixteen. A boy, Ala, was born to the young couple in 1962, but the marriage did not turn out well and was dissolved when the child was six months old.

Ribhiyeh, a divorced mother at eighteen, had to make a fresh start. She talked the matter over with the headmistress of her former school, and decided her best plan would be to pass the high school certificate. Staying with her parents at the camp, she worked ten hours a day and succeeded in completing three years' studies in one year. In 1964, she passed her examination with better grades than many of the girls who had gone to secondary school.

What she now needed was a chance to train for a job; and again her headmistress gave her good advice. She sat for the entrance examination at UNRWA's Women's Training Centre, at Ramallah near Jerusalem, and was admitted to the two-year Business education course. With her discipline of hard work, she had no trouble assimilating all she was taught: shorthand and typing, business practice and geography, principles of commercial law, also hygiene, cooking, sewing and knitting (which all the Centre's trainees are taught whatever their trade). UNRWA's income is not sufficient to cover the full operating costs of the vocational and teacher training centres it has opened for young refugee men and

women: the Agency has therefore been appealing for training scholarships (amounting to \$550 a year) and Ribhiyeh was awarded a scholarship from NAJDA, an American Women's organization for the Middle East. She did very well at the Centre and, after graduation in 1967, was immediately offered a job as secretary in UNRWA's area office at Nablus.

The work was interesting, but she did not hesitate when, two years later, she was offered the chance to become instructress at the Ramallah Centre where she had been trained. She had not forgotten the friendly, yet purposeful way in which refugee girls from camps, villages and towns were taught more than a trade: to become resourceful, responsible and self-reliant. She felt she should do her part in showing the girls what would be expected of them once they worked in some big firm or institution.

Since September 1969, Ribhiyeh has been living at the Centre and, according to her colleagues and to Ramallah's principal, she is a very good teacher indeed. Does she enjoy her work?

"I love it", she replies. "It is stimulating to teach refugee girls how to earn their living. It is encouraging to see their progress. I am happy to know that I can help in my own way to bring girls from the camps out into the modern world."

What does she do in her free time?

"I have tried to knit a pullover for Ala, but I am not very good at it. What I generally do is listen to soft music and read, mainly biographies and historical novels. One of my favourite books is Tolstoy's War and Peace. It is marvellous to meet so many people, rich and poor, clever and silly, and to get to know them so well. What struck me most was that many of them could not grasp the sense of the war because they were caught up in it."

As often as possible, she goes home to her family, generally taking some small gift for her son, who is now at school. Does she spoil him? "Certainly not", she says; "I want him to become a man and a good citizen."

Ribhiyeh and her typing class at work



A Gulbenkian donated ambulance in east Jordan

SPOTLIGHT

GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION



One bright morning in June this year, four sparkling new ambulances were paraded for inspection at UNRWA's Base Warehouse in Beirut. The ambulances, a gift to UNRWA from the Gulbenkian Foundation, were receiving a final check before their assignment to duty stations in east Jordan and Syria.

Now, as the heavy rainstorms of the Middle Eastern winter sweep across the hills of Jordan and the Syrian plains, the ambulances will carry sick refugees who need hospital treatment: each camp has its own day clinic, but hospitals are often far away. The new ambulances will replace unsatisfactory and worn-out vehicles in carrying patients speedily and more comfortably.

The Gulbenkian Foundation, or Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian as it is normally known at its Portuguese headquarters, was set up by the Armenian oilman and philanthropist, Calouste Gulbenkian. Gulbenkian became known as "Mr. Five-per-cent" from the size of his shareholding in the Iraq Petroleum Company: the dividends from this holding now go to the Foundation.

Some 30 per cent of the Foundation's support for UNRWA has been in the field of vocational training. In the last four years, 35 two-year scholarships have been provided for refugee boys and girls attending UNRWA training centres. Typical of the young men currently benefiting from the Foundation's grants is Youssef Mohammed Ali (see photograph overleaf), training to be an auto-mechanic at UNRWA's Damascus Vocational Training Centre. Youssef is 19, and his father was a farmer near Safad in Palestine prior to the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1948.

Youssef's father then brought the family to Syria, but being penniless they were lucky to be given a tent in a refugee camp at Damascus. Here they still live: Youssef is a boarder at the training centre, while his five brothers and three sisters live with their parents in a small concrete shelter in the camp.

Youssef is enjoying his training: he is also a keen volley-ball player, and gets regular opportunities for sports at the centre. His father, who has struggled for twenty years to rear a family of nine children, can measure his success by the achievement of Youssef, the eldest. When Youssef graduates in 1971, his UNRWA diploma will help him find regular employment, probably somewhere in the Gulf. He will then be able to help support the family as his father grows older and his brothers and sisters grow bigger.

The Gulbenkian Foundation, however, has not confined its assistance to training scholarships. In response to the 1967 emergency, \$50,000 was given to finance the purchase of five 10-ton trucks to help move emergency supplies: these



trucks are now added to UNRWA's transport pool, which must meet the new demands of emergency UNRWA and government ration distribution in east Jordan.

Funds were also provided for the extension of UNRWA rehydration and nutrition centres at Ein el Hilweh Camp, Lebanon, and Yarmouk Camp, Syria - where babies suffering from the summer outbreaks of gastro-enteritis can receive the prompt, skilled treatment they need.

The Gulbenkian Foundation has given UNRWA more than \$100,000 in the last four years.

Youssef with a crankshaft at his workbench

WHERE EXAMS ARE WELCOME..!

On 30 September 1969, an official of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation - Unesco - arrived in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip with a packet of more than 5,000 secondary school-leaving diplomas that he had brought from Cairo, in the United Arab Republic.

His arrival was the climax to lengthy and involved negotiations that have now opened the way to university studies for the successful Palestinian students.

The problem of holding in Israeli-occupied territory examinations that would be recognised by Arab governments was realised immediately after the 1967 hostilities. Both Jordan (whose West Bank was now occupied) and the U.A.R. (which had previously administered the Gaza Strip) wished to do all they could for the Arab students - both residents and refugees - in those areas, but in the prevailing political climate direct negotiations with Israel were not practicable.

A solution was soon arrived at in the West Bank. The Israeli Government's "Open Bridges" policy, which permitted contact across the Jordan river between occupied and unoccupied Jordan, made it a relatively simple matter for education authorities in Amman to keep in contact with teachers and educators in the Israeli-occupied zone. These West Bank educators formed a committee to conduct the secondary-school leaving examinations with the full agreement of the authorities concerned. Successful students are issued with a certificate which, if later taken to the Education Ministry in Amman, can be exchanged for the state examination certificate normally required before university entrance is possible.

In Gaza, matters were more difficult. Owing to the distance of the Strip from the cease-fire line of 1967 - the Suez Canal - and with continuing military action in this area, direct contact between local people and U.A.R. authorities has been almost impossible.

Nevertheless the Gaza Department of Education and Culture, with the agreement and approval of the Government of Israel, ran its own examinations in January 1968 (for 1967 school-leavers) and July 1968 (for 1968 school-leavers), but these were not recognised as valid for entrance to Arab universities. The number of candidates for the school-leaving certificate examinations continued to build up, while the students' future was threatened by a complete halt to their further studies.

The problem naturally came to UNRWA's attention because the Agency looks after the needs of the two-thirds of Gaza's population who are refugees from the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict. With Unesco's technical cooperation, UNRWA operates elementary and preparatory (first-stage secondary) schools in the Gaza Strip for refugee children, and also subsidizes their secondary education in the schools operated by the Gaza Department of Education and Culture.

UNRWA's Commissioner-General, Laurence Michelmore, asked Unesco's Director-General René Maheu if Unesco could find an answer to the problem.

This was the sort of situation where perhaps only a United Nations body could help. Mr. Maheu negotiated separately with the U.A.R. and Israeli Governments to see if the examinations could be held under Unesco auspices. He undertook that test papers set in Cairo would be collected, and returned, under Unesco seal. He guaranteed that the papers and answers would be handled entirely by Unesco staff, that the examination regulations would meet the U.A.R.'s standards and that the contents of the papers would conform with the ideals of Unesco, of which both Governments are members.

The two Governments agreed to these proposals earlier this year, and the way was then clear for the examinations to be held.

Unesco officials took nearly half-a-ton of question papers from Cairo to Cyprus, and from there via Tel Aviv to Gaza, where the sealed packets, unopened by Israeli customs officials, were delivered to the 7,176 candidates who sat for the examination at 16 centres set up by the Gaza Department of Education and Culture. An UNRWA/Unesco team of 19 international staff members from nine countries invigilated the examinations at the end of August, collecting and sealing the papers each day in special envelopes, and finally sending a ton-and-a-half of answers back to Cairo for marking.

Arriving in Gaza with the diplomas that were eventually awarded to the 5,109 successful candidates were entry forms from Egyptian universities. For many, the Tawjieh diploma will be the passport to a first job as a teacher or clerk. When travel formalities have been successfully worked out and they are able to leave the Gaza Strip with an assurance that they can return, many others of these young people will go to university, and will one day use their degree as a means of escape from the grim life of a refugee camp.

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