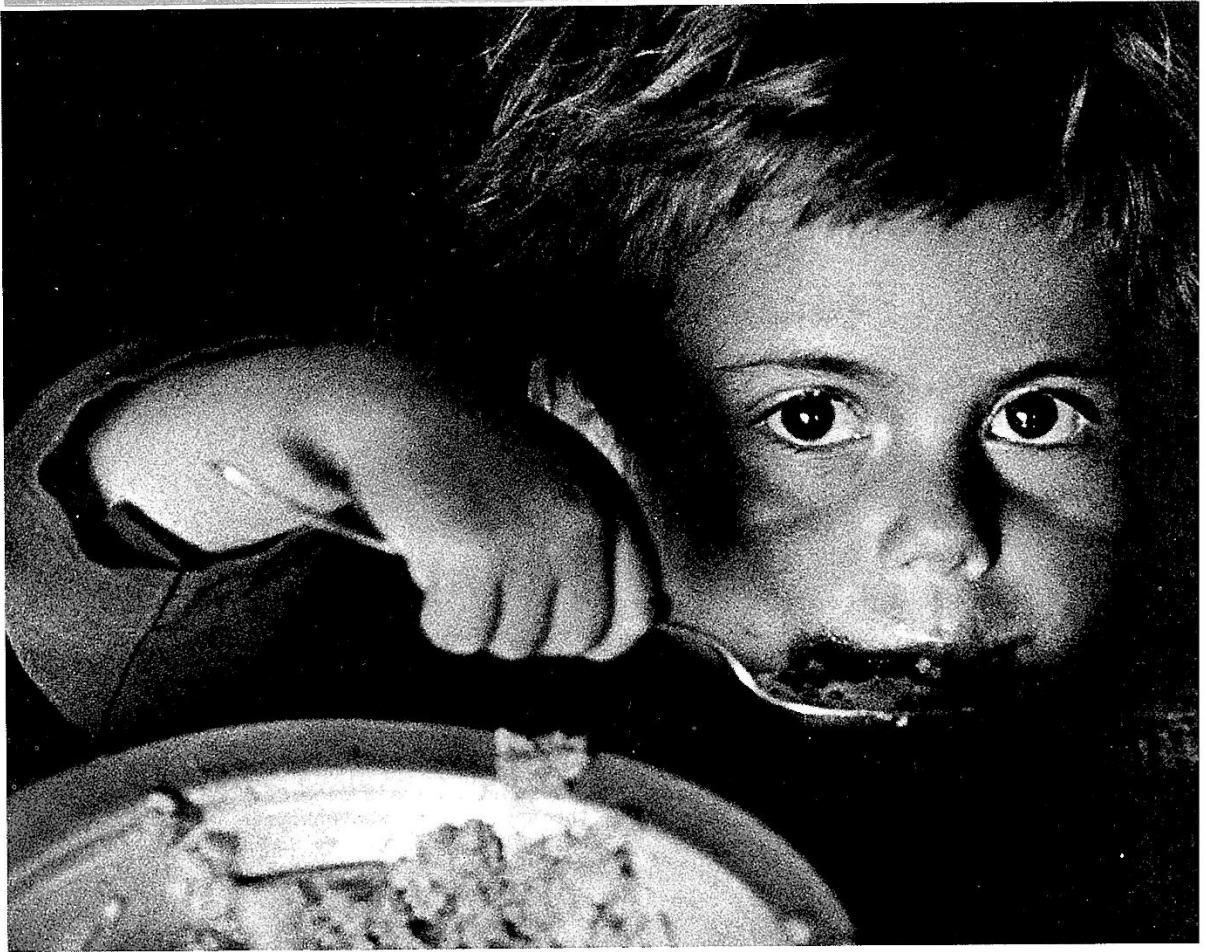


PALESTINE REFUGEES TODAY

Newsletter No. 79



HEALTH FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN

COMMENTARY



C. William Kontos (left) taking leave of Sir John Rennie, Commissioner-General.

DEPARTURE OF DEPUTY COMMISSIONER-GENERAL

UNRWA staff recently said goodbye to Mr. C. William Kontos, Deputy Commissioner-General, recalled to take up an assignment in the Department of State in Washington, D.C. An American national, Mr. Kontos came to UNRWA in 1972 on secondment from the United States Government.



Thomas W. McElhiney

APPOINTMENT OF NEW DEPUTY COMMISSIONER-GENERAL

After Mr. Kontos's departure on 5 April, the appointment was announced of Thomas W. McElhiney as Deputy Commissioner-General of UNRWA. Mr. McElhiney is a retired United States Foreign Service Officer who has served in Europe and Africa, most recently as Ambassador to Ghana, as well as in Washington D.C. Born in 1919, Mr. McElhiney was educated at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland. He is married, with a daughter and two sons. Mr. McElhiney assumed his duties in Beirut on 12 April 1974.

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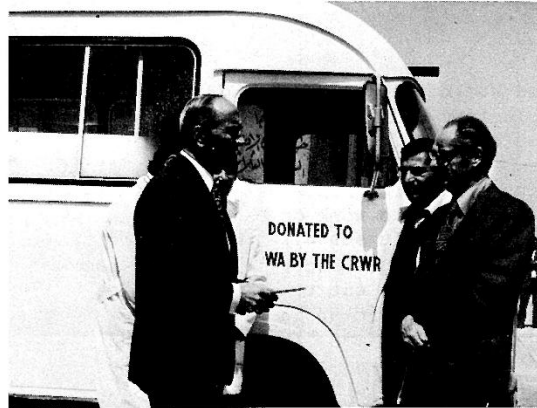
Front Cover:

A small boy eating his daily hot meal at an UNRWA supplementary feeding centre (see story on page 14).

NEW AMBULANCE FOR BAQA'A CAMP

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) of Michigan, U.S.A., has donated an ambulance to UNRWA for use in Baqa'a emergency camp, east Jordan. In March of this year, the new ambulance was officially handed over to the Director of UNRWA Affairs in Jordan, Mr. John Tanner, by the Executive Director of CRWRC, Mr. Louis Van Ess.

Baqa'a emergency camp, which was set up to shelter needy refugees and other persons displaced as a result of the 1967 hostilities, is now the home of over 55,000 persons.



John Tanner (left) thanks Louis Van Ess (far right) for the new ambulance.



Ineke Esseiva's painting (original in color): "Green Bird among the Ruins".

SALE OF PAINTINGS TO AID PALESTINE REFUGEES

The exhibition and sale of gouaches, prints and collages by the Swiss artist, Ineke Esseiva, raised LL. 12,415 (approximately \$5,270) for Palestine refugee women's and children's projects.

Lady Rennie, President of the Auxiliary, announced that this sum will be used to finance special welfare projects for Palestine refugee women and children -

either in the field of rehabilitation or in the provision of prosthetic devices for disabled children.

The exhibition, held in Beirut in March, showed 70 new works inspired by the artist's stay in the Middle East since 1968. A member of the Swiss Society of Women Artists, Mrs. Esseiva has taken part in both national and local exhibitions in Switzerland. Her husband is the Director of the UNRWA/Unesco Institute of Education.

THE WOMEN'S AUXILIARY

The Women's Auxiliary of UNRWA is a small voluntary body whose membership is composed of the wives of Agency staff and a few female members of the Agency's staff, plus a number of interested "outsiders". Its aim is "to work on behalf of the Palestine refugees within the policy of UNRWA". In pursuance of this aim, the Auxiliary sets out to raise funds to support specific projects within the Agency's programme of activities and for some years it has concentrated on supporting projects for the benefit of Palestine refugee women and children.

The Women's Auxiliary, which is based in Beirut, is almost as old as UNRWA itself. It had already been in existence for some years before it obtained formal recognition of its status as a charitable body in April 1956. Each year UNRWA requests the Auxiliary to provide money for specific projects. The Auxiliary then considers whether it can meet this request and does its best to raise the necessary funds. This year members aim to raise \$7,000 to finance the operation of 11 women's activities centres and 33 cooking courses for Palestine refugee women.



"Madonna and Child". From: Kutahya Tiles and Pottery from the Armenian Cathedral of St. James, Jerusalem, Vol. 1, by John Carswell; Oxford, 1972.

PREPARATIONS FOR CHRISTMAS

One of the most successful fund-raising projects is the annual sale of Christmas cards, which last year raised about \$6,000. Early in the year the new designs are selected, and the cards are then printed in the UNRWA Printing Unit. The cards are folded and cellophane-wrapped in batches of 10 entirely by hand - a task which takes teams of volunteers working four or so hours a day several weeks to complete, packing 4,000 cards a day.

By June all the cards must be ready for distribution to the various sales areas. This year three designs have been chosen for the cards: an old engraving of the City of Jerusalem, a detail from a sample of Palestinian embroidery, and an early eighteenth century Kutahya tile, showing the Madonna and Child, from the Armenian Cathedral of St. James in Jerusalem.

UNRWA HANDBAGS PROJECT

An interesting and successful project sponsored by the Auxiliary and known as the "UNRWA Handbags Project", was the establishment of a Sewing Centre for women in Ein el-Hilweh camp in south Lebanon. Here cushion covers and handbags are made up in attractive materials and embroidered by hand in traditional Palestinian designs. Proceeds from the sale of the articles are used to cover the cost of the materials and to pay the wages of the 26 girls who work in the Centre. The sum of \$531 is set aside each year to support the operation of Ein el-Hilweh Women's Activities Centre. The Handbags Project was started in 1966.

The Women's Auxiliary membership is some 68 persons. Thanks to the efforts of this small and dedicated group, UNRWA will this year once more be able to support welfare activities for Palestine refugee women and children which fall outside the scope of its regular budget.

THE ROAD FROM QUNEITRA

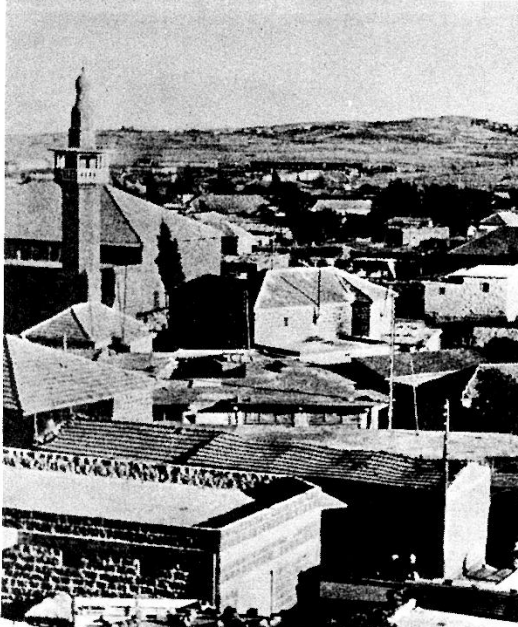


Yahya Masri - Palestine refugee

Damascus, one of the oldest cities in the world and one-time heart of the great Omayyad empire, is still today a bustling capital. Its hotels are overflowing with diplomats, journalists, businessmen of many nationalities, government experts and United Nations personnel, witnesses to the disengagement of the Syrian and Israeli armies some 60 kilometres to the south. More immediately affected by the withdrawal of forces are those who expect to return to their homes and land in the central zone controlled by UNDOF (United Nations Disengagement Observer Force), which includes the town of Quneitra.

Quneitra, an administrative centre and market town in the south-west of Syria, became in 1948 a place of refuge for thousands of Palestine Arabs fleeing Palestine during the last days of the British Mandate, and immediately after. In less than two decades the town's population - Syrian mainly, but with a significant Palestinian element - had grown to 30,000.

The people who sought refuge in the town and district of Quneitra tragically lost their homes for the second time in their lives as a result of the Arab/Israeli hostilities, renewed in June 1967.



A view of Quneitra before 1967.

One such person is Yahya Masri, a Palestine refugee now living in Jaramana refugee camp on the outskirts of Damascus, not far from the historic "street which is called Straight" (Via Recta), scene of St. Paul's baptism. Nearby stands the Church of St. Paul, built against the Kissan Gate which forms part of the old city wall. The church was erected to commemorate St. Paul's miraculous escape from the city by means of a rope lowered from a small window.

Yahya works as UNRWA Camp Services Officer. He is usually to be found in the small two-room concrete building which serves as the UNRWA office in the camp. On a spring day in Jaramana, the temperature is already some 24° in the shade and the narrow streets of the camp are dry and dusty. The small shelters which are the present homes of the refugees huddle together. At the communal water point, women in the traditional long black or purple robes of northern Palestine are busy filling jugs and buckets with water for the day's needs. Children invent their games in the streets, their only



The ruins of Quneitra - July 1974.

playground. Around shop doorways are gathered those young men who have little to do but talk and watch the world go by, for job opportunities are few.

Yahya Masri, a thin, spare man, wearing the traditional white Arab headdress, the "hatta", has a gentle dignity which pervades both his voice and his gestures. It is a dignity which is innate and has remained unimpaired despite the upheavals which have shaken his life.

Yahya was 16 year old in 1948 when he left Palestine. His father, a farmer in the village of Muftakhara on the Lake Hula plains, had raised livestock and grown cereals and vegetables. When Yahya, his parents, four brothers and two sisters fled the area together with the other villagers, they left everything behind. With only the clothes they were wearing and a small sum of money, they set out on a three-day journey which eventually led them to the small town of Waasit, some seven kilometres west of the town of Quneitra.

Here, like so many other refugee families in 1948, the Masri family at first slept out in the open, relying on the assistance given them by the local people, until organizations such as the International Red Cross came to their rescue with tents, rations, clothing and medical attention, and, with Unesco's help, set up the first tented schools. In May 1950 the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) took over the main burden of providing assistance for the refugees.

Conditions improved over the years, but life was still difficult. Work was hard to obtain and many of the men journeyed as far as the Mediterranean port of Latakia in western Syria, a distance of some 400 kilometres, in order to find it. In this case, men spent the greater part of the time separated from their families. The fortunate ones mainly hired themselves out as casual labourers for a minimal daily wage, Yahya and two of his younger brothers among them. They did their best to support the rest of the family; Yahya's third brother was too sick to work. Schools had been set up, but it was out of the question for the Masri boys to go back to school when the urgent necessity of feeding and clothing a family had to be faced. Yahya's father was unable to work and, as is traditional in the Middle East, the responsibility for the well-being of the family devolved upon the sons, particularly the eldest son. Yahya therefore had to assume this responsibility.

Some years later, thanks to the efforts of the children, the Masri family were able to construct a simple house of mud-brick, a traditional building material in this part of the world. Made of a mixture of mud and straw, these bricks may last for generations. However, during the long hot summers, the mud dries out and the bricks crack. When winter comes, the rains can easily find their way through split roofs; but during the rainy season the mud-brick becomes malleable once more, and split roofs can be rolled flat again, so that the cracks knit together. The Masri's one-room house had no water, sanitation or



Jaramana camp today, home of over 3,500 Palestine refugees.



Jaramana camp in 1968 when emergency shelter was provided by tents. These tents have been mostly replaced by mud-brick buildings (see photo on page 7).

electricity but, however lacking in amenities, it was at least their own and represented the fruits of their efforts.

In 1955, Yahya was able to secure regular employment with UNRWA as a ration distribution supervisor. His brothers still worked as casual labourers and all continued to support the rest of the family. Three years later, at the age of 26, Yahya married a girl who had come from his own district of Palestine, and began to think of the future with some confidence.

In 1967, when war broke out again in the Middle East, Yahya had a job, a home, a wife, and children. But not for long. Yahya's small home was bombed. On 9 June the population left in a body, Syrian villagers and Palestine refugees together heading towards safety. For those Palestine refugees, the second exodus had begun.

The extent of the suffering engendered by that brief period of hostilities is indicated in the following extract from the Introduction to the Annual Report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for the period 1 July 1966 - 30 June 1967 :

"On 5 June 1967 armed conflict erupted between Israel and certain Arab States. When the firing ceased, Israel was in occupation of the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank of Jordan and the Golan Heights and Quneitra area in the south-western corner of Syria. More than half of the refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had been living in these areas; over 300,000 persons, including some 120,000 registered refugees, are reported to have been rendered homeless or to have left their homes as a

result of the hostilities. Many had lost their homes for the second time in their lives" *

In Syria, over 115,000 people moved northwards and eastwards from the area newly-occupied by Israel, mainly to Damascus and the border town of Dera'a. About 17,500 of this number were Palestine refugees already registered with UNRWA. Most of the people from the Quneitra area, Yahya and his family among them, headed towards the town of Damascus. With little food or water, the people marched for six days, always in fear of pursuit. As night fell, they stopped to rest, often on the outskirts of Syrian villages. Poor as they were, the villagers offered what little assistance they could. The whole dreadful sequence of events - fear, flight and dispersal - had begun again. Once more homes, jobs and possessions had been abandoned, and as the families struggled along, they must have wondered what safety and shelter they could hope to find.

They were several thousand who arrived in

* Within one year the total number of Palestinians who had left occupied territory since the beginning of the hostilities had been estimated at over half a million.

the Damascus area exhausted and destitute. Schools and public buildings were put at their disposal as temporary shelter both in and around Damascus, but some still had to live in the open air. Meanwhile UNRWA was doing all possible to relieve suffering and discomfort and to protect the health of the newly-displaced refugees. Temporary health centres were set up, an emergency supplementary feeding programme came rapidly into action, providing a daily hot meal and milk six days a week for all displaced children up to 15 years of age, as well as a monthly protein supplement for all displaced refugees in Syria. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic took charge of the displaced Syrians. Voluntary agencies helped both the refugees and Syrians. For a period of over two months the Syrian Government also gave foodstuffs and cash grants to the displaced UNRWA-registered refugees as well as to Syrian displaced persons.

One of UNRWA's main problems was to provide shelter for those displaced refugees who needed it. Donated tents were not forthcoming in sufficient numbers, and the Agency arranged for the local manufacture of 1,200 tents. At first, it was hoped that tents would only be required to provide temporary shelter, for already on 14 June 1967, the Security



Yahya Masri looks out over Jaramana camp, his home for six years.

Council, in Resolution 237 called upon the Government of Israel "to ensure the safety, welfare and security of the inhabitants of the areas where military operations have taken place and to facilitate the return of those inhabitants who have fled the areas since the outbreak of hostilities". On 4 July the terms of that resolution were endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in its Resolution 2252 (ES-V) on Humanitarian Assistance.

It soon became clear that, despite the resolutions, the refugees in the three tented camps set up in Sbeineh, Qabr Essit and Dera'a were likely to spend their winter under canvas. UNRWA realised that it would be necessary to reinforce the tents to protect the refugees against winter rainstorms and flooding. To this end, it was decided to construct concrete storm water disposal systems and concrete floors with low skirting walls.

Schooling posed another problem. As a consequence of the 1967 hostilities the Agency lost the use of its 17 schools in the Quneitra area. At the beginning of the 1967-68 school year, some 3,000 displaced refugee children had to be found places in schools elsewhere. Most of the children were enrolled in UNRWA/Unesco schools in and around Damascus, which operated a double shift to accommodate the increased numbers of pupils in that area. Because many of the classrooms were being occupied by refugees waiting until other accommodation could be found for them, the opening of schools in the fall had to be delayed. Despite these difficulties, by the end of October 1967, all of the Agency's schools were operating.

The winter of 1967/68 was a particularly harsh one in Syria, marked by severe cold and storms. Some 800 newly-displaced refugee families spent this winter under canvas. Early in the new year, a proposal was made to establish a fourth tented camp at Jaramana, to accommodate 300 families. A camp site was provided in April and the work of pitching tents and carrying out the winterization programme began in the same month. This was followed in May by the construction of pathways, storm water disposal and canalization systems.

By 30 June 1968, 7,746 of the refugees displaced from south Syria had been accommodated in emergency tented camps, including some 1,500 refugees living in the newly-established camp in Jaramana, while others had gone to live with friends or relatives in the areas near Damascus and Dera'a in the south-west.

Living conditions in Jaramana, as in other emergency camps, were at first spartan and over-crowded, and an already demoralized people was compelled to live with the barest minimum of comfort.

Since that time, improvements have been made in Jaramana camp, not least of them the replacement of tents by concrete-block shelters. Eight Agency schools - six elementary and two combined elementary and preparatory schools - cope with the school-age children of Jaramana camp, as well as refugee children who are living nearby. All the schools operate on a double-shift basis as it would otherwise be impossible to find space enough for the 3,686 refugee children enrolled.

A new clinic was completed in Jaramana this year, and the full range of UNRWA medical services, covering all aspects of general health needs as well as maternal and child health services, is available to the people in Jaramana camp. The first supplementary feeding centre is still functioning, while construction has already begun on a new supplementary feeding centre funded by the European Economic Community.

To set beside these improvements, there are still many inconveniences and difficulties. The shelters, although solid, have neither running water nor electricity. Water is available to all at communal water points, but has to be fetched and carried. This is exhausting work in the heat of summer, particularly for those with large families who may have to go more than once to collect enough water for the day's needs.

The weather is hot and dry in summer, but grows cold and rainy in winter, with dust turning to mud and water sometimes seeping into shelters. During the winter of 1973, a shortage of kerosene - a consequence of the October fighting -

meant that even those families who owned kerosene heaters were frequently unable to use them, and many suffered from the cold.

Another problem is the lack of space available in and around the camp, which is situated on private land rented by the Syrian Government. The people of Jaramana, most of whom are of farming stock, are thus unable to grow their own vegetables. Food is an expensive commodity, with meat at 15 Syrian pounds a kilo, (the average daily wage for an unskilled worker is approximately 11 Syrian pounds) being far too expensive to have a regular place on a family menu. Instead the people live on the traditional staples of the poor: broad beans, cereals and bread. UNRWA rations of flour, sugar, rice and cooking oil, distributed once a month to eligible refugees (2,545 persons in Jaramana), help to supplement what the refugees can afford to buy, while the supplementary feeding programme provides a nutritionally-balanced hot meal six days a week to those - mostly pre-school age children - whose health most needs to be protected.

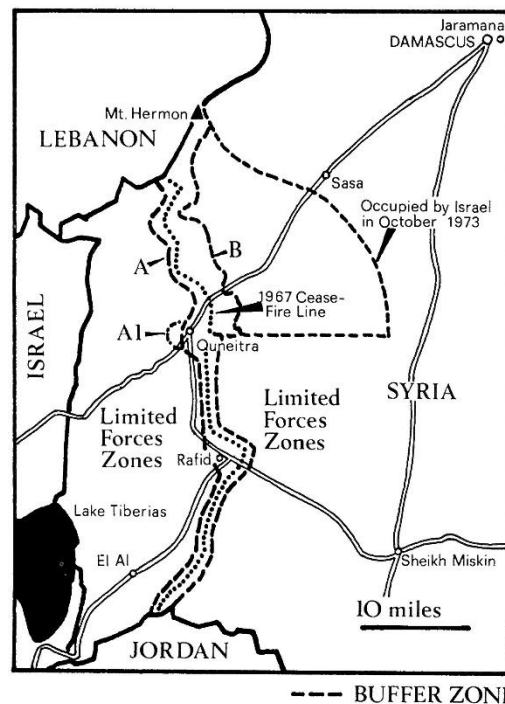
Compared with many, the Masri family have been lucky. Yahya was recently able to rent a tiny two-roomed dwelling for himself, his wife and their 11 children, just outside the camp. It has both water and electricity. Kept scrupulously clean and neat, the rooms are sparsely furnished. There are a few upright chairs and a table in the main room. In one corner stands the cot belonging now to the youngest child, who is one year old. During the day the family's bedding is rolled up and stacked away. Some of the glass panes in the door are broken, but in such an atmosphere of neatness and order this is scarcely noticeable.

With their light hair and eyes of green or tawny gold, the Masri children are very attractive. They range in age from a girl of fourteen to the baby, a year old. Those who are old enough are attending UNRWA/Unesco schools in the camp, while the younger ones still spend their days playing in the street in front of the house. Like children everywhere, unaware of the greater problems of the world outside, they are happy as long as their lives are stable. For the Masri

children, parents and home and school provide this stability.

But what of the future? For the Palestine refugees displaced as a result of the 1967 hostilities, life had once more begun to take on a fixed, if sad, pattern.

Now this is changed. For those in Syria, a return to Quneitra in the near future is a distinct possibility and there will be the work of reconstruction. After that, who knows? One thing is sure. As interested governments' discussions switch from military disengagement to the broader question of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East the future of the Palestinians will not be overlooked.



Map of the June 1974 separation of Israeli and Syrian forces on the Golan Heights. Israeli forces must remain west of line A, except in the Quneitra area where they must remain outside of A1. Syrian forces must remain east of Line B. The buffer zone is patrolled by forces of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF).

A refugee searches through the rubble of her home in Rashidieh camp, where nine refugees were killed and 20 injured in attacks on 19 May and 20 June.



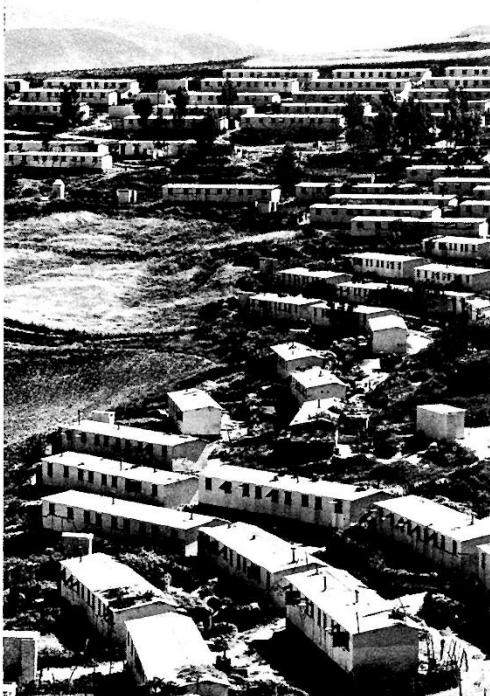
SOUTH LEBANON — MAY AND JUNE 1974

In the latter half of May UNRWA was called upon to supply emergency aid to Palestine refugee families in need as a result of Israeli air and sea strikes which caused casualties (25 refugees reported killed, 121 injured) and damage in Ein el-Hilweh, Nabatieh and Rashidieh refugee camps in south Lebanon. Towards the end of June renewed air attacks resulted in further casualties (12 dead and 85 injured) and damage in Ein el-Hilweh, Rashidieh and Burj el-Shamali refugee camps in south Lebanon. In both series of raids the damage included the destruction or partial destruction of a large number of shelters.

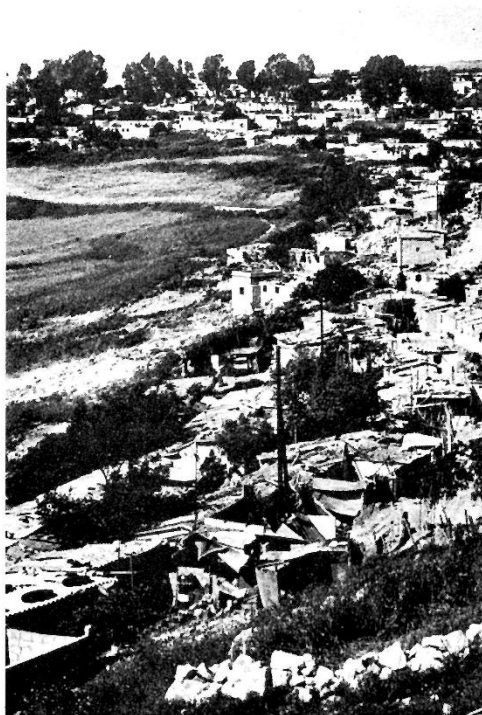
After the first attacks an emergency feeding programme was set up and 1,000 blankets were despatched to the scene. A mobile medical unit remained on stand-by in the area and an UNRWA survey team went to Nabatieh the morning after the attack to report more fully on the situation. A further issue of 500 blankets and dry rations was made after the second group of attacks in June. Estimates of the cost of repair and reconstruction have been prepared and amount to about \$1 million. The means of financing this rebuilding programme are under consideration. This figure includes shelters and extensions to shelters built by the refugees themselves and provides for roofs of concrete instead of asbestos sheeting.

Homeless refugees sheltering in Nabatieh camp's mosque - one of the few remaining buildings.





Nabatieh camp before 16 May 1974: over 3,000 Palestine refugees lived here in concrete-block family shelters erected by UNRWA.



Nabatieh camp after 16 May 1974: seventeen people were reported killed and 91 injured by the air attack on 16 May. Sixty per cent of the shelters were destroyed and a further 20 per cent severely damaged. UNRWA installations, including the ration distribution centre, the temporary clinic and temporary feeding centre, were also destroyed.

Mother and child salvage belongings in Burj el-Shamali camp, where three refugees were killed and 35 were injured by an air attack on 20 June. Fifty refugee shelters were completely destroyed and 160 damaged.



Mother and child salvage belongings in Burj el-Shamali camp, where three refugees were killed and 35 were injured by an air attack on 20 June. Fifty refugee shelters were completely destroyed and 160 damaged.



HEALTH FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN



A very sick baby receiving treatment at the UNRWA/Swedish Health Centre in the Gaza Strip.

Palestine refugee babies and young children still fall victim to a number of killer diseases. This fact emerges in a Report on Childhood Mortality Patterns among Palestine Refugees recently made by the Health Department of UNRWA. The Report's conclusions are based on an analysis of statistical data collected in two separate but closely-related investigations: an infant mortality study conducted since 1960 in selected camp communities and a childhood mortality survey conducted since 1970 among refugee children under six years of age in Lebanon, Syria, east Jordan, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the five fields of UNRWA's operations.

Infant and child mortality data are recognised as the most sensitive indicators of the health status of a given community. Such data are therefore of vital importance, both in highlighting what still remains to be done and in illustrating the progress already made by the health services in that community. In the case of the two studies mentioned above, it was hoped that by analysing the statistical data which had been collected it would be possible to draw practical conclusions from the findings of the various Fields on which to plan further preventive action.

The Palestine refugee community as a whole faces special health problems occasioned by the particular circumstances in which the community lives. The majority of the refugees live in over-crowded conditions in which poverty and attachment to tradition, and therefore to traditional protections and remedies, combine to make them particularly vulnerable to disease. Fear of new methods of prevention and treatment must first be overcome and this is a process which takes time. The dispersal over a wide area of the refugee population who are registered with UNRWA, now numbering over 1.5 million, causes additional organisational difficulties as far as health services are concerned.

UNRWA HEALTH SERVICES

Despite the problems, however, UNRWA health services have developed to the point where they now include preventive, curative and rehabilitative medical care (with particular stress on maternal and child health), dental care, environmental health services, nutrition and supplementary feeding services, and a programme of education and training in health subjects for Agency-sponsored students. As UNRWA's Director of Health, seconded to UNRWA by WHO, observes, the health services have "all along been operating in a tight financial jacket and certain essential and much needed improvements have been put off from year to year simply for lack of funds, with the exception only of those minor items which could be implemented through special contributions."

What the health programme aims to do was summed up in the Annual Report of the Director of Health (1973) as follows:

"The health programme of UNRWA has been developed over the years as a matter of necessity and in a manner which takes into account the essential needs of the refugees and the impact on their health of the unwholesome physical and psychological environments in which they and their families live, and which offers them opportunities more or less similar to those enjoyed by the local population in the area for the protection of their health and for the achievement of a measure of positive health in accordance with the humanitarian policies of the United Nations and the principles and objectives of the World Health Organization. Care is taken, of course, to ensure that the programme remains by and large in consonance with and at a level similar to that provided by the Arab host governments at public expense for the indigenous populations in identical economic circumstances. The programme is developed also on as comprehensive a basis as can be economically achieved within the restricted financial resources available to UNRWA."

The UNRWA health services, like UNRWA programmes of assistance as a whole, labour against constant financial strains. Total expenditure of UNRWA for 1974 is now estimated at \$85.9 million, some 12% of which (about \$10 million) will be allocated to health services.

INFANT MORTALITY

From the Report, it emerges that deaths reported during the first month of life (neo-natal period) represent approximately one third of the total deaths occurring during the first year of existence.

The first month of life is a hazardous time for any baby, but particularly so for a refugee baby. Refugee mothers are accustomed to having their babies at home. Although increasing numbers (some 13% of all births last year) are now giving birth in the UNRWA maternity centres (hospital beds are reserved for primiparas and births expected to present complications), by far the largest number of refugee babies are usually born at home - which may be no more than a one-room concrete shelter. What happens to the baby after birth depends largely on the midwife and the parents of the new-born child. A baby may have problems which are not immediately recognized or thought to be important. Although the birth will be reported, problems may not be. Much valuable time may thus be lost between the first signs of illness and parental action.

The most important contributory factor in neo-natal deaths was found to be "prematurity", referring to babies born before term, or born at full term but severely underweight. Such babies, who may weight 2,500 grammes (5.5lbs) or less at birth, are particularly vulnerable to infection. Nevertheless, in many cases their lives could be saved if additional funds and additional qualified staff were available, and if parents recognized the danger to their child and brought it promptly for treatment.

The second most important group of contributors to neo-natal deaths are the respiratory infections, followed by perinatal causes (which include complications



Weighing a healthy baby at the Mother and Child Health Centre, Askar camp, the West Bank of Jordan.

of pregnancy, injury at birth, congenital defects and specific diseases of the newborn).

In the case of respiratory infections, a group of diseases which remain in second place as a contributory factor in post neo-natal deaths (29 days - 1 year), the only measures possible are curative. As yet no vaccines exist to protect against such infections. Once again much depends on the health officials concerned being notified of the infection when it can still be dealt with. In this respect, as

in the case of other diseases which contribute to neo-natal and post neo-natal deaths (diarrhoeal diseases, nutritional deficiency), health education, particularly of the mother, has an important role to play. Increasingly attempts are made by UNRWA health services at every stage of a woman's pregnancy and confinement to educate her in the kind of measures she can take to protect both herself and her children from disease. She learns about personal and food hygiene, nutrition, and the benefits of vaccination as a protection against disease.

Major contributors to infant deaths during neo-natal and post neo-natal periods
(in per cent of total infant mortality all Fields - Period 1970-1972)

	Neo-Natal Deaths		Post Neo-Natal Deaths	
	No.	%	No.	%
Respirat. infections	250	16	1381	33
Diarrhoeal diseases	144	9	1666	39
Nutrit. deficiency	91	6	380	9
Prematurity	580	37	151	4
Measles	1	0	169	4
Perinatal causes	229	15	11	0
Congenit. anomalies	134	8	129	3
Accidents	1	0	42	1
Others	139	9	307	7
Total	1569	100	4236	100

The presence of the two major contributors to post neo-natal deaths, diarrhoeal disease and respiratory infections, is expected in developing countries.

In order to combat the effects of diarrhoeal diseases and the nutritional deficiency which frequently results, UNRWA in 1961 established the first rehydration/nutrition centre where sick babies are treated with drugs to overcome the infection and a salt solution which helps to restore the chemical and fluid balance of the body. When a child is on the way to recovery in a rehydration/nutrition centre, he is fed a special diet. Mothers learn about home treatment and how to avoid recurrence of the infection. Twenty such day centres now exist and last year treatment was given to 2,385 children, mostly in the first two years of life. There is no doubt that young lives are saved in these centres, but once again, their success depends on parents realising at an early stage that their child is sick and bringing him for treatment.

Some parts of the supplementary feeding programme, another initiative taken by UNRWA, are designed to protect the health of young children. In 102 centres, refugee children up to the age of six years eat a nutritionally-balanced hot meal six days a week. Older children and sick adults upon medical recommendation may also attend the centres. The supplementary feeding programme helps to ensure that the youngest refugees have a nutritionally good start in life, vital for children whose family menus are likely to consist principally of rice, beans and bread, occasionally supplemented with a few fresh vegetables or fruits. Daily issues of milk are also made to infants, young children, and to pregnant and nursing women.

The Report points out that infant mortality (0 - 1 year) is mainly attributable to preventable conditions. It suggests that, although nutritional deficiency takes third place as the underlying cause of mortality in the post neo-natal period, its role as an associated cause must be much greater, as many malnourished infants survive their deficiency for

months before dying from infectious diseases because of their increased vulnerability.

DECLINE

One encouraging conclusion to emerge from the Report is the "uniform and persistent decline in the reported infant mortality" during the period from 1960 to 1973 under review. The infant mortality rates among Palestine refugees living in camps in Lebanon and Syria in the early 60's were in the region of 120-110 per thousand live births; since then they have declined to their present level of around 70-60. Similarly, during the same period the rates in Gaza appear to have declined from an early level of 140-130 to the present 90-80 per thousand. The study which started in West Bank in 1967 showed an estimated mortality rate of 110-100 which has declined to an approximate level of 80-70 at present.

While this decline in infant mortality reflects credit on the work of the Agency,



A baby recovering from gastro-enteritis or malnutrition is fed a special diet.



A baby recovering from gastro-enteritis or malnutrition is fed a special diet.



Waiting their turn outside the UNRWA/Talbiyeh Clinic, east Jordan.

it is not possible to determine to what extent the implementation of specific health programmes has contributed to the decline, or what part of it should be attributed to a general improvement in the socio-economic conditions and the educational level of the refugees during the same period. Nevertheless, it is an encouraging trend.

MORTALITY IN CHILDHOOD

The Report reveals that for the baby who survives until his first birthday, the second and third years of life remain the most hazardous period. This is especially true for babies who have had a difficult start (e.g. premature birth, underweight) and who are therefore more vulnerable to infection. After the third year of life, mortality seems to decline rapidly.

During the second year of life the death rates fall to between 7-10 per thousand of the population. During the third year the death rates are expected to be between 2 and 3.5, while during the fourth, fifth

and sixth years mortality rates remain in the vicinity of 1.5 per thousand population.

Whereas during early childhood, the majority of deaths are due to infectious diseases (mainly diarrhoeal diseases and the broad groups of respiratory infections), measles is revealed as an important cause of death particularly during the second and third years of life. In 1970-1972, nine per cent of all deaths in the 2-3 year age group were recorded as due to measles. This fact underlines the importance of UNRWA's attempts to organise a specific immunization programme, such as already exists against poliomyelitis, tuberculosis, diphtheria, tetanus and the other important childhood diseases.

Immunization against measles with Further Attenuated Measles Vaccine began in 1969 with a 32,000 dose donation and led to a significant decline in the number of reported cases. For several years UNRWA's measles immunization programme was dependent on special donations but last year, the tremendous value of measles

immunization in the saving of young refugee lives having been demonstrated, UNRWA, in spite of severe financial strains, decided to make the vaccine available as a programme item.

If enough vaccine can be obtained to cover all infants as they reach nine months, measles can be practically eliminated as a disease problem among the refugees. (See Newsletter No. 75 - Measles - the Forgotten Killer).

The Report once again draws attention to the fact that although in early childhood the role of nutritional deficiency as an underlying cause of death remains modest, this condition may frequently be present as an associated cause, as deaths from infectious diseases are more likely to occur among under-nourished children who represent the most susceptible and vulnerable group. It suggests that the close relationship expected to exist between nutritional deficiency and death from infectious diseases needs to be clarified.

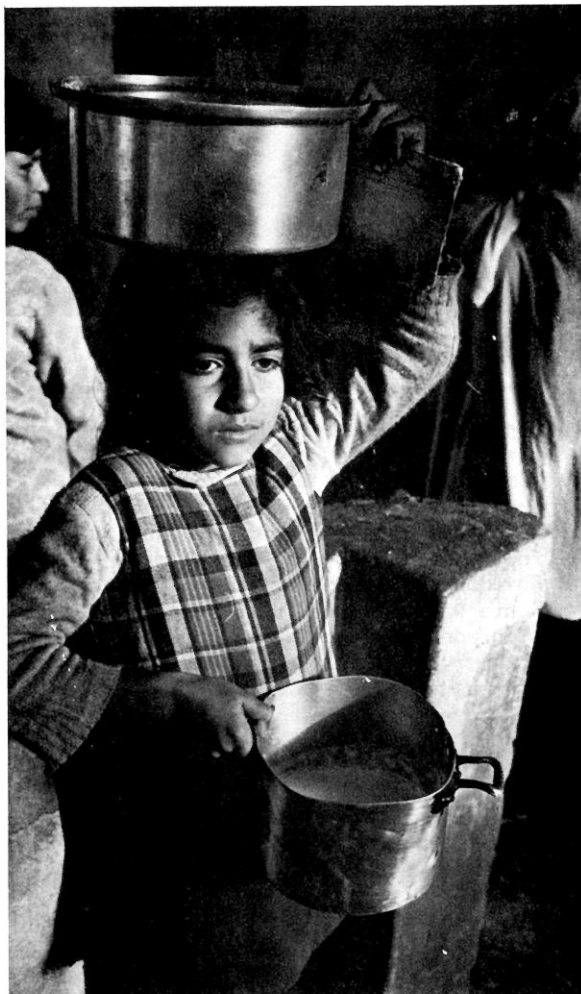
RESULTS OF THE STUDIES

The findings which emerge from these studies of infant and child mortality are not new discoveries, highlighting as they do the very problems which the UNRWA health programme is doing its best to combat. As well as showing the positive results of the health programme's efforts, the studies do confirm the need for even greater efforts towards the prevention of infectious diseases.

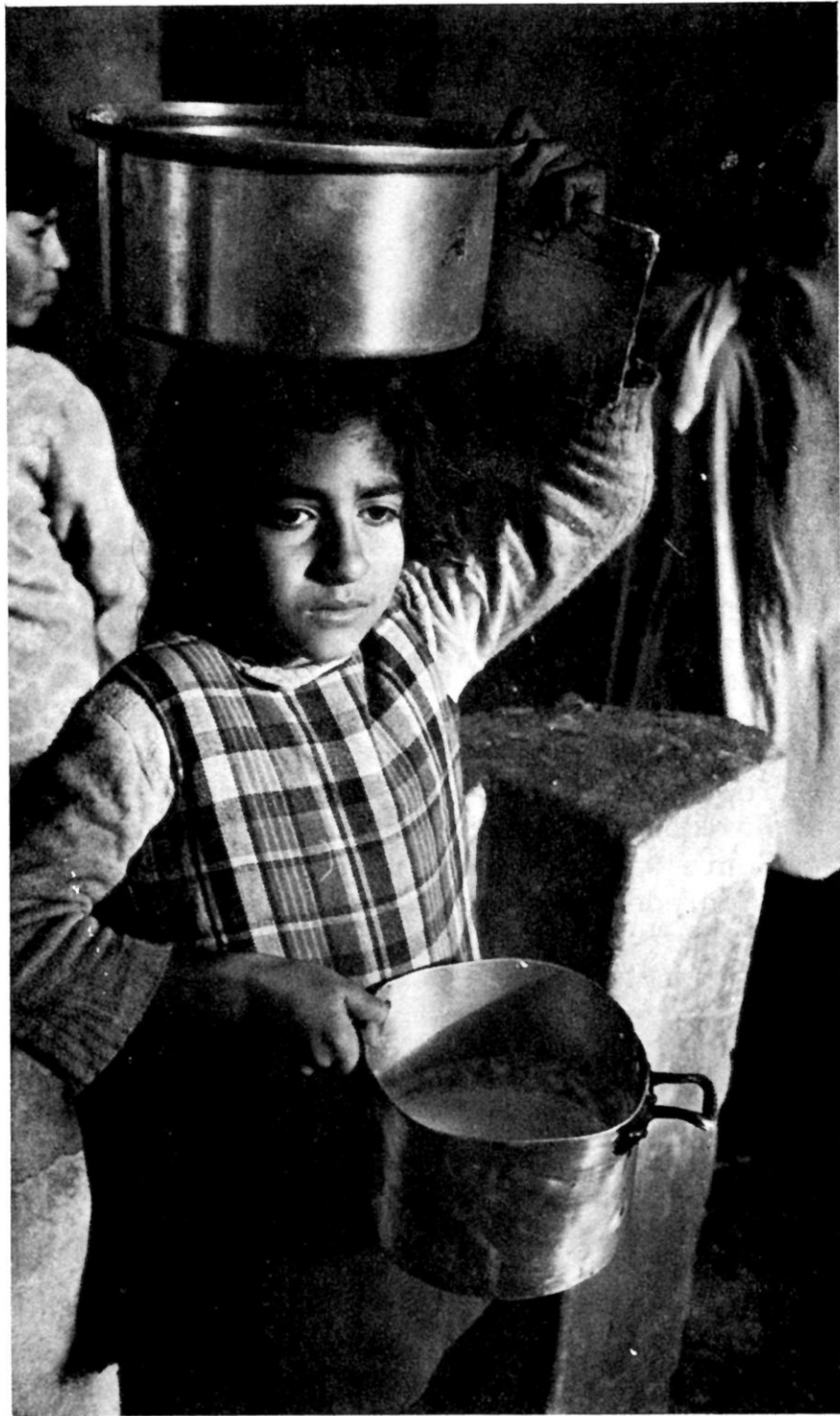
Specific immunization campaigns, improvement of community water supplies and health education of the mothers are suggested as measures likely to contribute to a decline in child mortality. It is suggested that the prevention of low birth weights could be achieved through close pre-natal supervision and complementary feeding of pregnant women. The Report also recommends that special attention be paid to the prevention and early rehabilitation of nutritional deficiency in early childhood, and urges that the supplementary feeding programme

be devoted primarily to the under-three age group.

The Report concludes that progress in the direction of reduced mortality rates in early childhood will depend not only on the implementation of the above measures, but also on improvements in the general living conditions of the Palestine refugees.



A refugee girl collects her milk ration.



A refugee girl collects her milk ration.

A NEW-FOUND DIGNITY



A view of Ramallah Women's Training Centre.

Long before the term "women's liberation" was being bandied about, but around the time when the right of women to equal franchise with men was just becoming an important issue, a unique organization for women sprang up. It was on 8 November 1919, in Buffalo, New York, that Zonta was organized under the title "Confederation of Zonta Clubs" with nine charter clubs in three States - New York, Pennsylvania and Michigan. Membership of Zonta clubs - a name derived from the Sioux Indian word meaning "honest, trustworthy" - is restricted to women and is by invitation only. Members are women who have become respected leaders in their profession or who are active on an executive level in business.

After the organization of a club in Toronto, Canada in 1927, the name of the clubs was officially changed to "Zonta International" at the 1930 convention. This is the name by which they are known today. Membership steadily increased until, by July 1968, there were some

20,000 Zonta members in more than 500 clubs in countries all over the world.

One of the aims of Zonta International, perhaps a self-evident one for a group of clubs composed of a membership of professional women, is "to improve the legal, political, economic and professional status of women". In 1962 Zonta International saw a further opportunity to work towards the fulfilment of this aim when UNRWA opened a training centre for Palestine refugee girls in Ramallah, 15 kilometres north of Jerusalem, in Jordan's West Bank.

ZONTA'S LINK WITH RAMALLAH

Ramallah Women's Training Centre is something of a landmark in the history of women's education in the Middle East. The first girls' training centre of its size and scope in the Arab world, it offers teacher or vocational training on a residential basis to 640 students. The Centre was built on land donated by Ramallah town with donations from the United States Government and the United Kingdom World Refugee Year Committee. An expansion programme was paid for after the 1967 hostilities by the American organization, Near East Emergency Donations (NEED).

The first UNRWA training centre was established at Kalandia in the West Bank in 1953, reflecting early recognition by UNRWA and UNESCO - jointly responsible for the education programme - of the importance of providing advanced training opportunities for Palestine refugee youth. Kalandia was intended for male students. With the opening of Ramallah WTC, UNRWA was able to begin to extend to refugee girls educational opportunities equal to those provided for young men.

Since 1962, nearly 2,500 Palestine refugee girls have graduated from Ramallah, having acquired not only a training for future employment but also a new confidence in their potential as productive members of society. Recognising from the very beginning the tremendous value

both for the girls and for the future economic and social development of the Arab world of this training project, Zonta International began, in 1962, to support students at Ramallah through a scholarship programme.

Training courses at Ramallah are of two or three years' duration, scholarships being tenable on a yearly basis. Since 1962 Zonta International has provided 406 scholarships for 199 trainees representing some \$230,000. These scholarships have been worth much more than money alone to the girls who have benefited from them, for they have provided openings to the kind of opportunity otherwise so often denied to refugee girls.

Helvi Sipila, Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations, past President of Zonta International and holder of that office in 1961 when she was responsible for creating the first link

between UNRWA and Zonta members, recently had this to say about the training given to refugee youth:

"The training given to the refugees has a most valuable positive impact on the preparation of young men and women for various employment opportunities to meet the growing need for a skilled labour force in the infrastructure of a rapidly developing region which has enormous potentialities for further growth. The integration of youth and women in the development effort is one of the goals and objectives of the International Development Strategy for the 1970's. In this respect UNRWA's training project at Ramallah can be mentioned as a most remarkable project, which despite its emergency character has also proved its permanent value during the 12 years of Ramallah's existence".

MISS NIHAYA



On the dreariest days in the sprawling village of shelters called Askar refugee camp, near Nablus in the West Bank of the Jordan, Nihaya A'Saqa, 22, is a ray of sunshine.

Six days a week, between 11 and 3 o'clock, in an UNRWA-administrated play centre Nihaya gives pre-school instruction and invents games for 35 children aged five to six who would otherwise have to stay at home or play in the camp streets that are often muddy in winter or choked with dust in summer. Her work frees mothers to care for their younger children or enables some of the mothers to work and help support their impoverished families.

When Nihaya is not at the centre, she often visits the children's homes to advise their mothers about types of toys and ways of playing with the children that will help them develop and raise the level of their future education.

A bright, cheerful young woman who exudes enthusiasm despite the pervasive dreariness of Askar camp in which she was born and raised, in 1973 Nihaya graduated from Ramallah, where she had been sponsored in the teacher training course by Zonta International.

Because she graduated from Ramallah, Nihaya is more respected in her camp. « They call me Miss Nihaya, now, » she says with a smile and adds: « Ramallah gave me an increased sense of responsibility, and an opportunity to meet other girls from other places and learn new ways of life. It also gave me a sense of self-reliance and independence, although I still live with my family because I give my parents all my salary. »

1) Nihaya at home in Askar camp.

2) Teaching games in the play centre.





About half of Ramallah students come from the Gaza Strip, half from the West Bank. Most of them come from families in which the difficulties of finding employment have bred frustration and disillusionment. Until coming to Ramallah - a complex of modern buildings set on a hilltop - many of the girls had lived in refugee camps and had known little else but the dreary atmosphere of camp life.

The girls have to cope with the new experience of being away from their families for the first time, a difficult experience perhaps for girls brought up in the close-knit circle of a Middle East family, but one which the girls decide is an enriching one, as they learn independence and self-reliance for the first time and begin to develop as individuals. To girls whose lives have been bound by tradition and by limited expectations, Ramallah opens up the possibility of a new role in the developing Arab world.

NEW SKILLS TO BE LEARNED

In the courses at Ramallah the students are exposed to a combination of theoretical lessons and practical work which includes on-the-job training.

For girls on the kindergarten-teacher course, the Centre has a modern nursery school where students can observe children as individuals and as a class. Recently, many of the course's Gaza girls have found employment in the Quaker-run pre-school play centres in the Strip.

Girls in the teacher-training section study to qualify as elementary school teachers, often in an UNRWA school. For this, they need education and psychology courses, advanced Arabic and English, social studies and community development, maths and science, health education, library science and religion. The trainees practise teaching in two UNRWA schools in nearby camps. They also spend two weeks in a school in their own locality before graduation.

Other courses at the Centre include business education, hairdressing, home and institutional management, dressmaking,

and the recently established laboratory technician and assistant pharmacist courses. The latter two are also attended by 19 male students who are accommodated in the nearby UNRWA Ramallah Men's Teacher Training Centre. This co-educational programme offers the men courses not taught in the area's other centres and provides the girls with an opportunity to learn to work on an equal footing with men.

FINANCE

To meet the annual running costs of the Centre, UNRWA receives a major contribution in the form of technical assistance funds from the Danish Government and also depends on non-governmental sources (business organizations, professional organizations like Zonta, voluntary agencies and private individuals) who provide scholarships for training at the Centre.

RESULTS

There can be little doubt that the girls who have the chance to study at Ramallah benefit immeasurably from their stay. The training opportunities offered to them, together with the experience of studying with other young women who have similar problems and anxieties, cannot help but encourage them to think of the future with renewed optimism.

Zonta International President, Harriette Yeckel, speaks for Zonta members: "It is seldom that such a service as Zonta's support of the vocational and teacher training for Arab refugee girls at Ramallah is so immediately gratifying.

Zontians are proud and appreciative of their part in UNRWA's compassionate and constructive striving for the whole welfare and hope for the future of a displaced people".

Mrs. In'am Mufti, Ramallah's Principal, sums up her feelings when she says: "For me, the greatest satisfaction is when I can see the change in a girl's dress and outlook, her new-found independence, poise and dignity."

These are the real benefits of Ramallah.



A lively class at Ramallah.

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ERRATUM

On page 19 of Newsletter No. 78, part of a sentence was erroneously omitted in quoting from the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly (document A/9156). It concerned the number of displaced inhabitants who had fled Israeli-occupied areas since the outbreak of the June 1967 hostilities.

The sentence should read as follows: "So far as is known to the Agency, up to June 1973 about 6,200 displaced refugees returned from east Jordan to the West Bank and 220 from east Jordan to the Gaza Strip."

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*A refugee with her children in Askar
camp, the West Bank of Jordan.*



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